

THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 2, 2017

**THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA), PRESENTS
*ADRIÁN VILLAR ROJAS: THE THEATER OF DISAPPEARANCE***

**October 22, 2017–February 26, 2018
The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA**



LOS ANGELES—The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), presents *Adrián Villar Rojas: The Theater of Disappearance*, a site-specific installation inside The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA's warehouse space. Villar Rojas (b. 1980, Rosario, Argentina) has built a singular practice by creating environments and objects that seem to be in search of their place in time. Villar Rojas's interventions beckon viewers to consider fragments that exist in a slippery space between the future, the past, and an alternate reality in the present. With his post-human artworks, Villar Rojas posits the question: What happens after the end of art?

Villar Rojas's method is emphatically site-specific, requiring a deployment of project-based teams who work on-site for extended periods of time to fabricate the installations. Long before the beginning of a project, he makes a series of site visits to immerse himself in the social, cultural, geographical, and, above all, institutional environment where he will work. This inherently nomadic process echoes his own personal trajectory as an itinerant artist, one of constant travel and engagement with a diversity of sites across the globe. Villar Rojas's approach is two-pronged. First, before beginning to insert objects into a given space, he considers the ways in which a space might be modified or adapted in relation to the incoming exhibition. Employing a keen sense of spatial awareness, he considers how visitors move through the space, their relationship to scale, and the affective potential of lighting. This sensitivity to the poetics of space is at the core of Villar Rojas's practice, and no work can begin on a site before these considerations are taken into account, resulting in modifications to the existing space. He can mandate small changes, such as to the size of doorways or color of walls, or structural changes, such as moving the placement of windows or adjusting floor heights. Villar Rojas sees each project as an educational opportunity not only for those who visit the exhibition but equally so for himself. The institutions are given an opportunity, in turn, to reconsider the use of their own architectural assets, filtered or focused through the lens of Villar Rojas's highly attuned sensitivities.

More than purely aesthetic, this invasive dynamic allows Villar Rojas to develop an almost—in his own words—“parasitic relationship” with the institution; it is in this radical dialogue and exchange where both the artist-parasite and the institution-host explore the limits of what is possible and what is not, what is acceptable and what is not, what is negotiable and what is not. Ethics and politics, no less than agency and decision-making, are at stake in the project, opening a series of tough questions: When and where does a project actually begin? What if an invisible series of housekeeping-like tasks, part of a wide range of circumstances that have been dismissed since the very beginning of art as secondary, is, on the contrary, key to producing that optical illusion we call a “work of art”? What if we made a radical inversion and took the work of art as an excuse to do the housekeeping?


Once Villar Rojas has tuned the exhibition space to meet his goals, the second phase of his process can begin. Although what the artist and his collaborators introduce into the exhibition spaces could ostensibly be called sculpture, it differs due to their functions in a variety of modes. The constructions, produced on-site during installation, take form in concrete, stone, raw clay, and organic and inorganic things that keep on changing over time through growth and decomposition. Old tennis shoes and fruit peels find themselves embedded in the floor of a gallery, or are seen as part of the geological strata that form a tower of differently colored layers of concrete. Villar Rojas determines the forms and objects that will be included in these juxtapositions of organic and inorganic, permanent and impermanent materials. The artist attempts to view these man-made fossils as an alien might, with no preconceived associations and complete horizontality—a profound equalization of art and non-art materials. The visitor becomes a witness to the entropy of these objects as they decompose or become obsolete over the course of the exhibition. For Villar Rojas, the gallery visitor arrives halfway through the process, somewhere between the project’s creation and decomposition.

Although what Villar Rojas will introduce into The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA’s exhibition space could reasonably be understood as sculpture, it also acts as the material basis for his ontological inquiries. In an effort to undermine the critical terms that often enable and sustain the commercial and institutional art world, such as endurance, reproducibility, tradability, and transportability, everything in Villar Rojas’s project is carefully planned to show its temporal side: What is doomed to disappearance, what cannot be preserved. Villar Rojas unveils this spatial and material fragility to remind us of the fleeting and minuscule presence of our own existence in the universe.

For his project at MOCA, Villar Rojas will radically transform the Little Tokyo space, employing dramatic architectural and aesthetic shifts. In preparation for the installation, Villar Rojas spent a great deal of time exploring technologies used in Hollywood special effects and was struck by the universal digitization of the industry. From his perspective, it echoes a kind of post-human world dominated by technology, and in response, he will create an environment in The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA that is at once tactile and ephemeral, otherworldly and utterly human. Villar Rojas will use remaining materials and surviving bits of “art” from projects produced across the globe and recycle them into new “art,” this time tailor-made for The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. Petrified wood from Turin, stratified columns from Sharjah, and silicone molds from Istanbul will not be reinstalled as what they once were but instead will have a second, unpredictable life. These elements will journey from “art” to “non-art” and back again to “art,” reinforcing their impermanence and our own in relation to our attempts to ascribe imperishable meanings and values to the world around us.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a full-color publication with an introduction by MOCA Research Assistant for Latin American Art Bryan Barcena, and a conversation between Villar Rojas and MOCA Chief Curator Helen Molesworth. Vividly illustrated using computer renderings and drawings, the publication provides a glimpse into the process by which an Adrián Villar Rojas project comes to fruition.

Adrián Villar Rojas: The Theater of Disappearance is organized by Bryan Barcena, Research Assistant for Latin American Art, and Helen Molesworth, Chief Curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Lead support is provided by the Aileen Getty Foundation, kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Maurice Marciano, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris, London, and 

Major support is provided by Charlie Pohlاد and the Pohlاد Family, and Maria Seferian.

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Generous support is provided by Suzanne and David Johnson, and Kaitlyn and Mike Krieger.

Additional Support is provided by the Brener Family.

Exhibitions at MOCA are supported by the MOCA Fund for Exhibitions with lead annual support provided by Sydney Holland, founder of the Sydney D. Holland Foundation. Generous funding is also provided by Allison and Larry Berg, Delta Air Lines, and Jerri and Dr. Steven Nagelberg.

In-kind media support is provided by KCRW 89.9 FM and **KOET**.

Image credit: Adrián Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearance*, 2017, Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz, photo courtesy of the artist, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris / London, and kurimanzutto, Mexico City, photo by Jörg Baumann

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THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA)

About MOCA: Founded in 1979, MOCA's vision is to be the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth with three Los Angeles locations of architectural renown; a world-class permanent collection of more than 6,800 objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

Hours: MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue in Downtown Los Angeles) is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11am to 6pm; Thursday from 11am to 8pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 5pm; and closed on Tuesday. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (located at 152 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012) has the same hours as MOCA Grand Avenue during exhibitions. Please call ahead or go to moca.org for the exhibition schedule for The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. MOCA Pacific Design Center (located at 8687 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood, CA 90069) is open Tuesday through Friday from 11am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm; and closed on Monday. The MOCA Store at MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue) is open Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 10:30am to 5:30pm; Thursday from 10:30am to 8:30pm; and Saturday and Sunday from 10:30am to 6:30pm.

Museum Admission: General admission is free for all MOCA members. General admission is also free for everyone at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm, courtesy of Wells Fargo. General admission is always free at MOCA Pacific Design Center. General admission at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA is \$15 for adults; \$8 for students with I.D.; \$10 for seniors (65+); and free for children under 12 and jurors with I.D.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

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