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**Mateo López**

*Círculo de Palabras*

March 10 – April 30, 2022

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce Mateo López: *Círculo de Palabras* (*Circle of Words*).

For his third solo exhibition with the gallery, the artist presents a body of work conceived of and developed in his hometown of Bogotá. Returning from New York City's dense metropolis, which he called home for more than half a decade, López shifted his focus to the recent and distant histories of the Colombian landscape.

For López, whose practice spans drawing and sculpture to choreography and performance, the temperament of location binds disparate disciplines. Through an art-historical lens, the artist's reverence for the traditions, symbols, and raw materials indigenous to the Andes and the Amazon informs what follows.

Drawings on paper and wall-based sculptures orbit a circular pedestal that serves as support for a sequence of objects. Functioning as the heart of the exhibition, this structure mirrors a ceremonial practice wherein communities gather around a central spiritual leader within a maloca, a communal dwelling used by indigenous peoples of the Amazon. López considers the collective intention of gaining wisdom through the recounting of ancestral histories. Wrapped around a column, this architectural element behaves as a manufactured construction that exists symbiotically with the natural world.

A single bronze hand, *Argument* (2020), invites the viewer to explore a sequence of eight objects that punctuate the central axis. In *Wiphala* (2021), the square flag representing the native peoples of the Andes is dimensionally erect with hand-painted wooden blocks. The pyramid formation echoes the structures of the ruins of Central America. Kinetic frictions also dominate in López's work—organic material is covered in synthetic matter; industrial products are adjacent to artisanal motifs. In *Totumo* (*Motorcycle gas tank*) (2021), a gourd often used as a utensil or vessel such as a cup is rendered cavernous and covered with automotive paint.

Deepening his exploration of geographically-specific resources, this presentation marks López's first use of Yanchama, a hand-pounded bark from the Amazon. In *Bosque paralelo* (*Parallel forest*) (2020), a wall-based arrangement of six rectangular structures, López considers the positive and negative spaces that equalize in the natural landscape. Turmeric and achiote, a red powder derived from the seeds of a native achiote tree, are extracted and used as pigment in a further effort to maximize the materials at hand. The same powder coats a linen suit, as seen in *Achiote Suit* (2021), which hangs on the wall from a wooden dowel, ready to be worn or idolized.

A grid of drawings and collages provide a foundational backdrop. As is true for all of López's works, the 'line' is the origin of every action. As the line bleeds into the three-dimensional, from paper to constructed object, López expands the scope of drawing to consider the medium in time and space as it relates to his own body. A recent series of bronze sculptures cast from his ear or fingers are composed with a grey oxide patina akin to graphite, framing the exhibition at unexpected heights that mimic the artist's measurements.

In an infinite exchange, locale defines material, in turn informing the tools we use and how our bodies comply. Engaging an ongoing architectural device employed throughout his practice, López presents a carved wooden bench in *Banco de Pensamiento* (*Turtle Bench*) (2021). It is an homage to an artifact of a seated thinker, whose meditative state is defined by one's posture. A photograph of the bench in situ echoes. As the stool jumps off the wall and into space, the body flexes to adapt.