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## **THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN BRINGS EXHIBITION BY ARTIST ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS TO ITS DOWNTOWN MUSEUM LOCATION, THE JONES CENTER ON CONGRESS AVENUE**

*Bridging sculpture, conceptual art, performance, and community engagement, Abraham Cruzvillegas: Hi, how are you, Gonzo? is co-organized by The Contemporary Austin and the Aspen Art Museum. After its presentation in Austin, the exhibition will travel to Aspen in fall 2019.*



### ***Abraham Cruzvillegas: Hi, how are you, Gonzo?***

March 30 – July 14, 2019

**MARCH 18, 2019, AUSTIN, TEXAS** – From March 30 through July 14, 2019, The Contemporary Austin—led by Executive Director and CEO Louis Grachos—will present an exhibition by artist Abraham Cruzvillegas (born 1968 in Mexico City) at its Jones Center location, 700 Congress Avenue in downtown Austin.

*Abraham Cruzvillegas: Hi, how are you, Gonzo?* will fill both floors of the museum with site-specific, mixed media work in which recycled materials are transformed into abstract sculptural objects. These objects are then used as platforms to engage other artists, community members, and museum visitors as active participants in the artworks, allowing for creativity, experimentation, and social dialogue through collaborative “activations” that complete and transform the works on view.

The exhibition is co-organized by Heather Pesanti, Chief Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs at The Contemporary Austin, and Heidi Zuckerman, the Nancy and Bob Magoon CEO and Director of the Aspen Art Museum, where the exhibition will be on view from October 25, 2019, through January 2020.

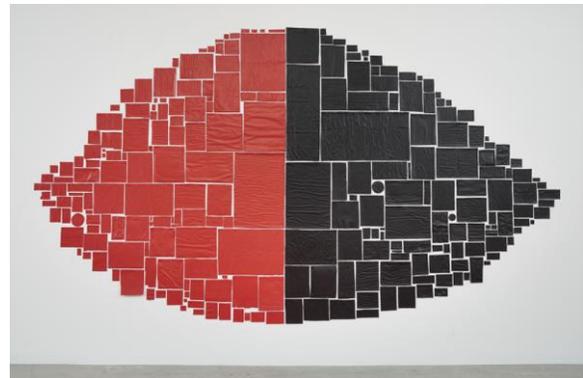
Abraham Cruzvillegas’s dynamic artistic practice begins with the concept of *autoconstrucción*—loosely defined as “self-construction,” an idea inspired by the artist’s home outside Mexico City and his interest in transformation, collaboration, and improvisation. Constructed in partnership with both The Contemporary Austin and the Aspen Art Museum, the sculptures in *Hi, how are you, Gonzo?* begin as a set of sketches and conceptual instructions from Cruzvillegas. The artist asked museum staff at both venues to source recycled or discarded materials such as wood, scrap metal, plastic, found signs, and cardboard and repurpose them to build the sculptures. In the case of this exhibition, The Contemporary Austin and the Aspen Art Museum each gathered materials, and then pooled them together to create the set of artworks. In this way, the sculptures become a tangible link between the two museums

# The Contemporary Austin

and a physical reflection of each city. After the sculptures are constructed, museum staff complete the works by painting them in red and black, with some parts of the original materials exposed. No new materials were to be used to build these assemblage sculptures, which will also function as ramps, platforms, stages, seats, tables, and more throughout the life of the exhibition. As the exhibition progresses, the objects will accrue evidence of the performative actions that take place. Through this process, each work of art becomes specific not just to the museum but more broadly to the cities and communities within which they are presented.

“Abraham’s work is, on one hand, playful and humorous, and on the other, quietly anarchist, in the manner in which it breaks down institutional and political boundaries. He is deeply connected to local culture and geography, inspired at the source by the community of collaboratively built structures in his hometown of Ajusco, south of Mexico City, but extending to each of the communities in which he exhibits and works,” said Heather Pesanti. “The participatory nature of *Hi, how are you, Gonzo?* mirrors Abraham’s own activist spirit, loosely connecting autobiographical elements of the artist’s life, improvisation, and the gestures of others. This collaborative working process, involving museum staff, participants, and community members from Austin, Aspen, and Mexico City, has been deeply meaningful, allowing for an organic and unpredictable evolution of ideas that ultimately might lend itself to both failure and innovation.”

The interactive sculptural works in *Abraham Cruzvillegas: Hi, how are you, Gonzo?* will be joined by several works on paper. These include large-scale India ink drawings from the artist’s *Nuestra imagen actual* series, depicting images of primates painted by the artist with brooms on large sheets of painted kraft paper. The exhibition also includes three *Blind self-portraits*. While these look like minimalist compositions of monochromatic, painted paper and cardboard shapes pin-mounted across the walls, they are in fact collections of artifacts from moments in the artist’s life—tickets, receipts, posters, napkins, etc.—painted over on the front-facing side to obscure their origins and installed in site-specific arrangements.



Heidi Zuckerman, the Nancy and Bob Magoon CEO and Director of the Aspen Art Museum, added, “At the AAM we have long exhibited and fostered works by contemporary artists that invite collaboration, challenge our perceptions of what art can be, and, ultimately, activate audiences’ engagements with them in unexpected and, hopefully, transcendent and joyful ways. Abraham’s works for *Hi, how are you, Gonzo?* are a multilayered set of just such activations—from his ambitious connections of geographical locales and the shared gathering of its materials on through each community’s ultimate interactions with its resulting objects. As Heather and I both acknowledge as part of this great partnership between our institutions and communities through his efforts, Abraham’s works have the potential to raise questions both simple and profound and foster further connections that—while impossible to predict—will nonetheless have resounding and lasting impacts on those who enjoy them within our galleries.”

## EXHIBITION ACTIVATIONS

Visitors to The Contemporary Austin may experience *Hi, how are you, Gonzo?* as a traditional exhibition of sculptures and works on paper. Large drawings and collages will be arranged on walls and sculptures will be installed throughout both floors of the museum. Visitors will also be invited to interact physically with a number of the three-dimensional works.

However, every Tuesday and Saturday during the run of the exhibition, the museum will engage individuals and groups in collaborative “activations” of the sculptures, during which the works themselves and the spaces they define in the museum galleries become stages, workshops, performance spaces, and more. In this way, the exhibition

# The Contemporary Austin

departs from the static, traditional format of most institutional exhibitions, and museumgoers become active participants rather than passive viewers.

The museum will present a widely varied calendar of activations that is still growing—each chosen through a collaborative process that involved the artist and the entire museum staff, from front desk attendants to curators, along with community partner organizations and other local individuals. The artist's loose directive that the activations share information and invoke "warmth, ease, and necessity" guides the final roster of activations. He has left it open to each museum (in this case, The Contemporary Austin and the Aspen Art Museum) to determine how its own local activations connect to the spirit and meaning of his work. While a few of the activation partners will be visiting from Mexico City at the artist's invitation, most participants in the exhibition at The Contemporary Austin live and work in Austin.

During each activation, the participants move the sculptures around the galleries and incorporate them in different ways, and it is in the process of these events that Cruzvillegas's works shift from traditional sculpture or conceptual work to community-centered performance art and social sculpture, becoming vehicles to highlight the skills, projects, and passions of the diverse range of collaborative partners. As each activation transforms the structures on view to accommodate it, visitors coming to the museum outside of these events will also be viewing a unique permutation of the exhibition, reflecting the evidence of what has recently taken place. Sculptures may be moved, scents may linger, and other signs of recent participatory projects may be left behind.

Andrea Mellard, The Contemporary Austin's Director of Public Programs & Community Engagement, notes, "Traditionally, museums have staged lectures, films, and other passive events that interpret art from an institutional perspective for the public. However, this exhibition invites many people from the local community and some guests from Mexico City to respond to Abraham Cruzvillegas's art and to use the museum in active, new, experimental ways. During *Hi, how are you, Gonzo?* this programming exists not *in conjunction with* the show but as an essential, living part of the exhibition itself, as conceived by the artist. I hope visitors come to the museum again and again, as their experiences will be utterly changed with each diverse 'activation.' "

With more than thirty different activations between March 29 and July 14, the experience of the exhibition will change frequently and often in surprising, unexpected ways, given the broad range of activities and the open, improvisatory nature of some of the events. An arrangement of sculptures intended to facilitate a roller derby or skateboarding demonstration, for instance, will differ greatly from that for an open movement group workshop or a gathering of families making art from food.

**A current list of scheduled activations is below.** New activations will be added throughout the run of the exhibition. All activations are included with museum admission. Advance tickets are recommended for timed events. Admission is free of charge every Tuesday; complimentary advance tickets for Tuesday activations are encouraged.

*Up-to-date information, details, and advance tickets can be found on the museum's website at [thecontemporaryaustin.org](http://thecontemporaryaustin.org). All Activations take place at The Contemporary Austin – Jones Center unless otherwise specified.*

## March 29

6–9 pm

*Evolving Sculpture, Solo Percussion, Clay Making & Ceramics Workshop*

Ceramicist Marcela Calderón Bony, percussionist and sound artist Diego Espinosa Cruz González, and choreographer Nadia Lartigue from Mexico City each present pop-up performances throughout the evening, including clay making, instrument solos, and

an interactive, evolving sculpture. (*During the Members' Preview and Opening Reception*)

## March 30

12–1 pm

*Evolving Sculpture*

Percussionist and sound artist Diego Espinosa Cruz González and choreographer Nadia Lartigue from Mexico City perform an evolving sculpture,

# The Contemporary Austin

transforming and interacting with a set of sculptural materials in the exhibition through body and sound.

1–3 pm

## *Clay Making & Ceramics Workshop – Part I*

Mexico City–based ceramicist Marcela Calderón Bony demonstrates how to knead water and earth into clay. The clay will be used in the ceramics workshop with Bony on March 31. Advance tickets required at [thecontemporaryaustin.org/clayactivation](http://thecontemporaryaustin.org/clayactivation). This workshop is organized in collaboration with the Art School at Laguna Gloria.

3–4 pm

## *Solo Percussion*

Percussionist and sound artist Diego Espinosa Cruz González from Mexico City performs compositions by experimental musicians using instruments and objects in the exhibition, exploring space and acoustics.

**March 31**

12–1 pm

## *Evolving Sculpture*

Percussionist and sound artist Diego Espinosa Cruz González and choreographer Nadia Lartigue from Mexico City perform an evolving sculpture, transforming and interacting with a set of sculptural materials in the exhibition through body and sound.

11 am–5 pm

## *Clay Making & Ceramics Workshop – Part 2*

Mexico City–based ceramicist Marcela Calderón Bony brings traditional processes and techniques in burnished pottery to Austin from her hometown of Patamban, Michoacán, in this two-day workshop at The Contemporary Austin – Art School at Laguna Gloria. Advance tickets required at [thecontemporaryaustin.org/clayactivation](http://thecontemporaryaustin.org/clayactivation). This workshop is organized in collaboration with the Art School at Laguna Gloria.

**April 2**

12–1 pm

## *Evolving Sculpture*

Percussionist and sound artist Diego Espinosa Cruz González and choreographer Nadia Lartigue from Mexico City perform an evolving sculpture, transforming and interacting with a set of sculptural materials in the exhibition through body and sound.

5:30–7 pm

## *Arrhythmia*

Using instruments, objects in the exhibition, and the human body, Diego Espinosa Cruz González and Nadia Lartigue perform a dynamic exploration of the concept of the “arrhythmic,” a term referring to an irregular beat. Here the concept of arrhythmia becomes a tool to modify space and transform time through movement and sounds that clash, coexist, and influence each other, both inside and outside the human body.

**April 6**

12, 2, and 4 pm

Bowie High School Percussion Ensemble

**April 13**

11 am–3 pm

Second Saturdays Are for Families: Food Art

**April 16**

Bowie High School Percussion Ensemble

**April 20**

Chulita Vinyl Club

**April 23**

Herbalist Caroline Caswell

**May 4**

Making Art with The Contemporary Austin Art School

**May 7**

Making Art with The Contemporary Austin Art School

**May 11**

1–3 pm

Moms and Mole: Mole Poblano Tasting & Tortilla Making

**May 14**

Visiting collaborators from Mexico City

**May 18**

Visiting collaborators from Mexico City

**May 25**

Body Shift: Dance Workshops in Mixed-Ability Improvisational Dance

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# The Contemporary Austin

## June 1

Chulita Vinyl Club

## June 4

Storytelling

## June 11

Animal Facts Club

Storytelling

## June 15

Sotol Tasting with Desert Door

## June 18

Storytelling

## June 22

Workout with Erica Nix

## June 25

Storytelling

## June 29

Making Art with The Contemporary Austin Art School

## July 9

Visiting collaborators from Mexico City

## July 13

Visiting collaborators from Mexico City

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## THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

As Austin's only museum solely focused on contemporary artists and their work, The Contemporary Austin offers exhibitions, educational opportunities, and events that start conversations and fuel the city's creative spirit. Known for artist-centric projects and collaborations, The Contemporary invites exploration at both its urban and natural settings—downtown at the Jones Center on Congress Avenue, lakeside at the Laguna Gloria campus (including the Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park, the Art School, and the historic Driscoll Villa), and around Austin through the Museum Without Walls program.

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## IMAGE CAPTIONS

Installation view, Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue*, Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland, February 16 – March 25, 2018. Artwork © Abraham Cruzvillegas. Image courtesy Kunsthaus Zürich. Photograph by Nelly Rodriguez.

Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Itchy blind self portrait drinking a Colimita beer by the patio, under the shade of the Pomarrosa tree, remembering the late Valentín Campa after reading Terry Eagleton's 'Hope without optimism' while I listen to the beautiful version of 'La Martiniana' with Tinito y Porfirio's duet, but really wanting to have some cashews before going for dinner, whatever the Paleolithic menu at Lardo could include...*, 2016. Black and red acrylic paint on newspaper clippings, cardboard, photographs, drawings, postcards, envelopes, tickets, vouchers, letters, drawings, posters, flyers, cards, recipes, and napkins, and steel pins on wall. Dimensions variable (installation of 456 pieces). Artwork © Abraham Cruzvillegas. Image courtesy the artist; kurimanzutto, Mexico City; and Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco. Photograph by John Wilson White.