

Linea de hormigas (2007-2013)

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Linea de hormigas is a project that started as a collaborative sculpture, with Cristóbal Lehyt, in a group exhibition at A Gentil Carioca in Rio de Janeiro, August 2007. This exhibition (with the same title) was the culmination of a 5-week group residency spent by 4 artists Chilean at Capacete, in the same city. During these 5 weeks, we shared a house and workspace and simultaneously worked, critiqued, conflicted with each other as well as enjoyed the beach (whenever it was sunny as July and August is winter season), barbeques, Cahipiriñas, and the cultural wonders of Rio. Within these wonders, we could not end to feel honored and surprised to visit, see and bodily experience modernist architectural sites, yet also feeling slightly envious (Chile has a far less developed history of modernist architecture). While mounting the exhibition, which also included the work of Johanna Unzueta and Diego Fernández, Cristóbal and I realized, just one day before the opening, that all the installed pieces were somehow attached to the wall or close to the wall, even the 3 felt sculptures made by Unzueta, which were meant to be “on the wall”. Somehow we felt the show had a void, a literal void... a formally medium sized yet mentally uncomfortable and huge space was left empty. Something had to be done. Something had to be improvised. So, in the spot, yet based on previous conversations we’ve had about our interest and desire to create “modernist-like sculptures”, we decided to build a fragile and flimsy “homage” to Brazilian modernism, and in extension, to all Latin American modernism. We bought wood sticks, the thinnest we could find, wrapped them with black insulation tape and also used the insulation tape to join and attach the stick pieces together. The result was a contradictory piece, it looked strong and resonated the historical period and ideologies we were interested in yet it also was literally attached to the ceiling in 2 points otherwise it would have fallen. You could literary push it around... It looked like a “real” sculpture yet it worked closer to a prop... to a maquette of a real sculpture.

After this experience, a year or so later, I had a solo show which also dealt with similar ideas so I asked Cristóbal if I could build a new sculpture using the same technique and material by my self. He agreed and somehow more or less in the same period he started experimenting with string, wood, and plaster, to create his own and more visceral version of this “modernist phase” we have both undertaken. A year after, more or less, I was invited to a group show in China which I could not travel to so I proposed to the curator that I would send instructions for sculptures to be made by her friends and staff of her project space. Here the project grew into a more open and collaborative process where each participant would build his or her version of “modernist” sculpture and later photograph in a location of his or her choice (private or public). Some months later for a show in Chile, I sent instructions to 2 artists friends, who happily built 3 sculptures. Then a similar situation for a group show in Guatemala, and so on... The project snowballed... Sometimes sculptures were made by myself, to be exhibited as sculptures, or sometimes just to be photographed in different contexts and spaces... other times they would be built by other artists, curators or general staff or friends of anybody involved in the project (with the requirement of always being photographed). Going through all these adaptations and improvisations opened up the project, the notion of authorship, and simultaneously made me consider these pieces more and more as exercises and less and less as objects.

Parallel to this I’ve been working in New York for some years as an Art Consultant of New York City Housing Authority, directing 2 weekly art workshops, one with seniors and another with children, mostly at Brevoort, a community center in *Bed-Stuy*, Brooklyn. This gave me the idea to expand even further the possibilities of this sculptural project, now it could and should be used as a pedagogical and collective exercise. The first workshop experience was held at Open Source Gallery, a community-based art space located in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where I was invited to put up a solo show. The director of the space happened to run an after-school program for children, in the same gallery space, so I proposed to her to have the children build the sculptures

that would be later exhibited, as photographs. About 6 children and 2 adults participated. The second workshop was done at the community center where I teach (Brevoort, NYCHA), both with seniors and children, with about 20 participants. The third workshop was realized at Proyectos Ultravioleta, a project space in Guatemala City, where I was invited together with Johanna Unzueta to set up a 2-person show. Proyectos Ultravioleta works as a hybrid between a commercial gallery and a project space, or even a small cultural institution, somehow filling the gaps of the local cultural system. Within this context, each invited artist is asked to give a talk and at least 2 workshops and one of the workshops I made was Linea de hormigas, participants where local artists, curators, friends of the gallery and also the general public. As in previous occasions, the sculptures were made indoors and later transported outdoors, in this case, placed in the main public square of Guatemala, as a sort of semi-hippie utopian modernist protest. The fourth workshop was held the Hotspur School, in Newcastle, UK, as part of the Vamos Festival 2013, about 40 children participated.