

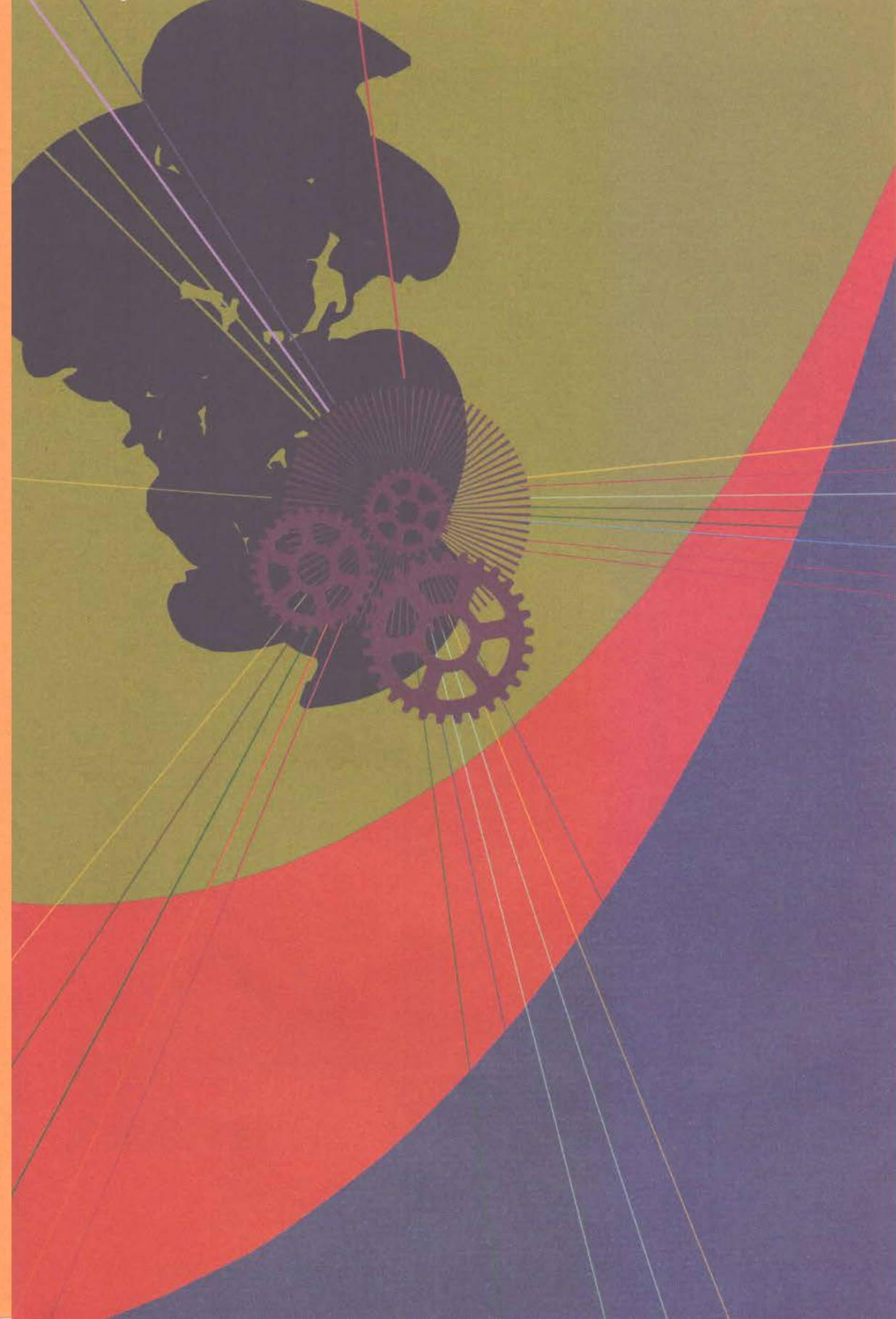
YERBA BUENA  
CENTER FOR  
THE ARTS

OCT 14, 2016—  
FEB 19, 2017  
UPSTAIRS  
GALLERIES

YBCA.ORG  
#ERICKMEYENBERG

# ERICK MEYENBERG:

**THE WHEEL BEARS NO  
RESEMBLANCE TO A LEG**





*La rueda no se parece a una pierna* (The wheel bears no resemblance to a leg, 2016), Erick Meyenberg's three-channel video installation, borrows its enigmatic title from *Les mamelles de Tirésias* (The Breasts of Tiresias), an obscure yet pivotal play written by the Polish French poet Guillaume Apollinaire in 1903 in which the term *surrealism* was originally coined. Apollinaire's play centers on a man who gives birth to children, conveying an essential idea: that imagination will preserve art from modern science through the conjunction of surprise and grotesque elements parallel to reality. Reappropriated by Meyenberg, the modernist play becomes a narrative foundation to investigate gender, pedagogical instruction, and social constructions of identity among a particular group of teenagers. They are all members of the high school marching band Banda de Guerra Lobos (literally, "military band wolves"), at the Colegio Hispanoamericano in Mexico City.

Meyenberg's project is an immersive exploration of bio-power in societies where military discipline is proposed as an idealized form of national service, and more specifically in Mexican contemporary society. Bio-power, a term first used by Michel Foucault, identifies how control is exerted on the bodies and psyches of people in everyday life through institutional norms that enforce gender-specific behavior. In the video work, choreographies and music performed by teenage bodies follow stylized military rituals. These take place within iconic urban contexts that connote Mexico's recent history, thereby exposing the ideological meaning of those sites.

Composed also of flag sculptures, a relief, text, borrowed objects, and archival materials, Meyenberg's exhibition deploys symbols of nationhood at the service of their very deconstruction. Working at the interstices of drawing, collage, video, data analysis, and sound, he generates physical proposals that merge complex processes of translation—from information to object to image—often mediated through dialogue. His formal methodology borrows from the abstract, fragmentary,

and anti-illusionist structures proposed by early twentieth-century avant-garde figures such as Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp, combined with a symphonic structure reminiscent of the composer Dmitri Shostakovich.

While it does reference historical modernist sources, Meyenberg's work is consistently reoriented. The machines of his project depart from Picabia's post-World War I mechanistic drawings, whose forms reveal both a fascination with and loss of faith in the machine as an instrument of progress, by extending their deterministic logic to the world at large. Meyenberg symbolically and formally overlays the machine of education with the military machine, both of which in turn are seen to be conditioned by the machine of history present throughout the urban context, to finally define the body as machine. As the archival materials show, *The wheel bears no resemblance to a leg* functions like a clock whose highly calibrated cogs—some formal and some social—mark time but also make reciprocal time possible. The video installation does not follow the linear time of a single modernist narrative but the imbricated, circular time of multiple discourses connecting and disconnecting, going back only to return in another form. As a phenomenological experience, the work invites a powerful sense of immersion that upends, for a moment, the rhythm of our bodies and is also influenced by early experiments in synesthesia—cognitive effects produced by the concurrency of two or more senses, such as sound and sight, or sight and touch.

*The wheel bears no resemblance to a leg*, which premieres in this exhibition, is also a careful case study of participatory creation and micropolitics—in this case between an artist and the teens in Banda de Guerra Lobos. It merges a range of experimental artistic and social methodologies and interdisciplinary interactions developed at the residency space Casa Gallina in Mexico City, which functions as the sixth edition of the public art project inSite. Selected as one of the first artists to launch the

residency program, Meyenberg worked for more than two years with the youths and curators, guest musicians, composers, choreographers, costume designers, and a video production team. Following a dialogical process that Meyenberg describes as co-participation—based on practices of exchange and mutual benefit—he and his collaborators worked with sound, choreography, and costumes, addressing various normative structures such as the relationship between collective memory and public architecture, the representational function of costumes, and the role of discipline in education and the state.

Exploring processes of identity formation among young band members, Meyenberg co-created the choreography, performative actions, and spatial paths that brought the band through some of Mexico City's most emblematic and politically marked sites: the Plaza de Tlatelolco, where in 1968, on the eve of the opening of the Olympic Games, hundreds of university students on strike were attacked, killed, or taken by police and military forces, never to be seen again; the Monument to the Revolution, commemorating the Mexican Revolution of 1910; and the shopping mall Centro Comercial Forum Buenavista, symbolizing Mexico's economic integration into the global fluxes of transnational capitalism.

Performing in historical monuments as well as in flash mobs at the shopping mall allowed the band to enact the frictions that have haunted Mexican youth since the 2014 Ayotzinapa tragedy, when forty-three students "disappeared" in a case that led to mass antigovernment protests—precisely when this work was being created. Since that event the historical wounds of Tlatelolco have been reopened, prompting collective anxieties concerning the creative and political potential of new generations in Mexico and elsewhere. In a moment when the most alarming specters of our collective histories return with worrying ease, this exhibition asks us to look again at the "surreal" not as an evasion of reality, but as an invitation to find generative points of flight and conceive other realities.

GABRIELA RANGEL AND LUCÍA SANROMÁN

## ARTIST BIO

Erick Meyenberg (b. 1980, Mexico City) studied visual arts at the National School of Fine Arts (ENAP) in Mexico City. In 2009 he was a guest student at the Berlin University of Arts (UdK), under the guidance of the German artist Rebecca Horn. His work received the honorable mention Centennial Award at ZONA MACO in 2011. His solo exhibitions have included *The Return of the Dinosaur*, Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City (2014), *Back to the Present*, Arróniz Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2011), *Das ist kein Fleisch*, International Festival of Lights (FILUX), Laboratorio de Arte Alameda, Mexico City (2013), and *Labor Berlin 2: Erick Meyenberg. Etude taxonomique-comparative entre les castes de la Nouvelle Espagne et celles du Mexique contemporain*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2010).

Cover & interior detail:

Erick Meyenberg, digital renderings for *Banderas I-IV (Territorio, Tropa & Orden)* [Flags I-IV [Territory, Troops & Order]], 2016. Courtesy the artist.





Erick Meyenberg, *The wheel bears no resemblance to a leg* (video stills), 2016. Courtesy the artist.

## PROGRAMS

### OPENING RECEPTION

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2016, 6-9 PM  
SCREENING ROOM & YOUTH ARTS LOUNGE  
Free w/ gallery admission

At 6 PM, Erick Meyenberg will be joined by co-curators Gabriela Rangel, Director of Visual Arts and Chief Curator at Americas Society; Lucía Sanromán, Director of Visual Arts at YBCA; and guest speaker Osvaldo Sánchez, Artistic Director of inSite/Casa Gallina, in a discussion on the commission, process of production and art historical context of the artworks in the exhibition.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, film/video, and civic engagement. YBCA venues include the Forum, Screening Room, Galleries, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787).

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*Erick Meyenberg: The wheel bears no resemblance to a leg* is curated by Lucía Sanromán, Director of Visual Arts, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, and Gabriela Rangel, Director, Visual Arts and Chief Curator, Americas Society / Council of the Americas, New York. The exhibition is jointly organized by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and Americas Society, and will be on view at Americas Society May 3-July 22, 2017. At YBCA the exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Panta Rhea Foundation, with additional support from the Consulate General of Mexico in San Francisco and the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation. YBCA Exhibitions 2016-2017 are made possible, in part, by Mike Wilkins and Sheila Duignan, Meridee Moore and Kevin King, and the Creative Ventures Council. YBCA Programs 2016-2017 are made possible, in part, by The James Irvine Foundation. Additional Funding for YBCA Programs 2016-2017: National Endowment for the Arts, Adobe, Abundance Foundation, Gaia Fund, Grosvenor, and members of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Free First Tuesdays underwritten by Directors Forum Members. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts is grateful to the City of San Francisco for its ongoing support.

The video piece *The wheel bears no resemblance to a leg* is commissioned by inSite/Casa Gallina 2014-2016, and curated by Osvaldo Sánchez and Josefa Ortega. The project is made possible through the generous support of Cámara de Diputados (México), Secretaría de Cultura (México), and Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo.

