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Mateo López

PEOPLE

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Mateo López (b. 1978, Bogota) presents *PEOPLE*, a selection of 20 unique photographs of sculptures rendered from daily debris and creative ephemera in the artist's Brooklyn neighborhood and studio between 2014 and 2022. Keys, lightbulbs, rulers, spoons, and wires collide, transforming into quizzical figures captured in portrait-style photographs and individually named after the artist's close circle of peers. This body of work reveals the landscapes of the artist's adoptive home through the documentation and animation of found objects and collaged elements.

Nine years ago, López relocated from his hometown of Bogota to New York City where daily walks from his apartment to his studio became a ritual that directly informed the artist's practice. Every commute was a chance to further a fastidious analysis of spatial and societal constructs. During each transient interval, López ceaselessly studied the objects, bodies, and scenes that exist within and inform built environments. In doing so, he gravitated towards discarded items that gained new life as studio treasures—bodega coffee cups, pennies, and other collected material enmeshed in his creative space.

The repurposing of physical goods and intangible ideas is indicative of the artist's broader practice in which storytelling and the overlap of histories, planes, and materials is constant. López's three-dimensional collages awakened over time through an intuitive process: a piece of plastic fruit lay dormant next to a bolt or a wheel for minutes, weeks, or months before a connection was triggered and a character was formed. The process of urban residuum intersecting with studio ephemera to form clever combinations is apparent in *Sarah* (2022), in which a study for future projects balances atop found withered machinery to form an offbeat maquette. The recycling of concepts and materials also manifests clearly in *Adrian* (2022). A copper bowl holds hundreds of collected pennies in various stages of oxidation, and it is supported by a horizontal slab of wood and a vertically oriented ruler. The scale and oblong nature of the dish echoes *Totumo (Motorcycle gas tank)* (2021)—a gourd transformed into a vessel for petroleum. Meanwhile, the pieces of the measuring instrument are from studies for *Parabola* (2020/2022). In this work, a carpenter's ruler, once erect, has been manipulated and fashioned into an arch. The device is delicately held by a bronze-cast hand of the artist, and a hand-drawn monarch butterfly is perched at its end. In all three works, Lopez considers and usurps scales, numerical rigidity, and measuring tools.

Throughout his near decade in New York, *Larry* (2022), *Paula* (2022), *Windel* (2022), and a total of five dozen characters, a selection of which is featured here, were visitors to and residents of the artist's studio. Last

year, while shuttering his Brooklyn space in anticipation of his return to Bogota, López became committed to capturing his sculptural companions with dignified portraits. The resulting images individually animate the spirit of his peers—upon second glance, amusing objects reveal endearing traits. Perhaps the most personal work in this series is *Yateo* (2022). The photograph captures two mid-century lamps cantilevered to face one another. The nearness of the fixtures and the articulation of their spines evoke an intimacy, as if a whispered conversation is unfolding between the pair. Fittingly, the title is a melding of the artist's partner's name with his own: Yanina and Mateo. This is the only work not named for a single person.

The documentation of the odds and ends of ordinary life echo Peter Fischli and David Weiss' *Equilibres (A Quiet Afternoon)* (1984–86)—a series of black and white photographs of brooms, chairs, bottles, and other ephemera that balance together on the brink of collapse. Similarly to the duo, López's cheeky arrangements invigorate discarded materials. The grid-like installation in the gallery encourages the eye of the viewer to dynamically spring from work to work, tracking the people and objects that form New York City.

López's elevation of studies and castaway materials from his life and the lives of others is an ode to his communities and surroundings. *PEOPLE*, in response, is a whimsical study of streetscapes, a constellation of ever-unfolding ideas, and, at heart, a love letter to New York.

Mateo López (b. 1978, Bogotá, Colombia) has exhibited internationally, with solo exhibitions at Blue Project Foundation, Barcelona; Drawing Center, New York; Gasworks, London; Jerusalem Center for the Visual Arts, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá (MAMBO); Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain; and Museo de Arte Moderno, Medellín. The artist has participated in numerous group exhibitions at institutions such as Bienal de São Paulo; Drawing Room, London; Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá; Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá; Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; 43 Salon Nacional de Artistas, Colombia. López is included in public collections globally including Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin; CIFO, Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami; Inhotim, Minas Gerais, Brazil; Museum of Art of São Paulo, Brazil; MoMA, New York.