

Marcela Armas. Durango, Mexico, 1976.
Lives and works in San Miguel de Allende and Mexico City.

Marcela Armas works at the intersection between art, science and technology. Armas, had explored the poetic potential of materials and mechanisms as a starting point to reflect on issues that highlight the conflicting nature of social relations and human proceed from the utilitarian conception of life. She is interested in the observation of processes and material phenomena, its transformations, overflow or sound emissions as manifestations of thought. Her machines and devices are built from an inquiry into the nature of the materials they are made; the machine or device as meaning, matter as a carrier vehicle for history. She collaborates with artist friends, researchers and inventors as Gilberto Esparza, Arcangelo Constantini, Ariel Guzik, Shaday Larios, Santiago Itzcóatl, Iván Puig, Bios ExMachina colectiva, Elena Alvarez Buylla, among others.

BFA by the University of Guanajuato and MFA by the Politecnia University in Valencia, Spain. She has been supported by the National Foundation for the Arts in Mexico for the development and research of New Media Projects. She also has been artist in residence in the New Media Research Center in Mexico City and supported by the program Arte-Actual Bancomer-MACG 2009. She directed with Gilberto Esparza, experimental electronics workshops Fundación Telefónica VIDA 10 in Peru, Argentina, Chile and Mexico. She was awarded by the ARCO/BEEP prize of electronic art at the ARCO Madrid 2012 art fair. She won the award for production incentive granted by Fundación Telefónica of Spain

Her work has been exhibited in Mexico, United States, Colombia, Spain, Brazil, Peru, Canada, France, Sweden and Italy.



Noches Incandescentes / Incandescent Nights
2008

Incandescent Nights is a work that refers to geographic locations with light pollution and high heat emissions, which correspond to human settlements in the context of an important debate on global warming. A meditation on the city, made visible by its power consumption, the piece explores urban morphologies. Observed at the distance, cities on the earth's surface resemble functional systems such as live organisms and galaxies.

Paradoxically confronting the beauty of a city's prosperous condition with its destructive nature, *Incandescent Nights* seeks to imagine a new kind of *urban cosmovision*. The city has been materialized as one of the greatest human aspirations. Now days, we have the largest global urbanization in history, and it is a hegemonic value of our time. Large cities are part of an unprecedented energy movement, marked by the hydrocarbon era.

This series consists of 25 electric light boxes with engravings of cities located around the world. The image of each city in the set was hand-drawn, based on satellite and aerial photographs.





**Estanque / Pond
2006**

This work is made up of a metal tank full of car used oil from which emerges a car door-handle. The piece offers a metaphoric –although not unreal- parallel between city life and the original idea of a garden, theorizing that just as a swamp is an ecosystem’s central engine in green spaces, likewise is oil the engine and the balancing element of the city-system.



Ocupación 2007

Ocupación is an action arising from the occupation of space for vehicular traffic, thinking, in one side, about humans as carriers and noise generators, but in the other, the lose of social space due to the invasion of machines in consumption society. The main idea is to walk instead of taking a car, taking into advantage of traffic congestion in cities.

To perform the action was developed a portable kit with a choice of 7 different car horns. A control on the arm is used to activate the devices.

This action has been executed in the streets of Mexico City and Porto Alegre in Brazil.



Neumático
2007

Neumático is a site-specific project developed with a tractor tire wheel, air pressure, a motion detector device and the physical dimensions of the space.

The project is a sound action related with the dimensions of the space. The tire wheel is showed in the space without air using an electronic device to activate an air pressure system to inflate the tire slowly. The limits are the resistance of the material and the physical dimensions of the exhibition space. The inflation process obstructs the space and generates a level of psychological tension for the visitors. The action finishes with an explosion when the material overloads its capacity.



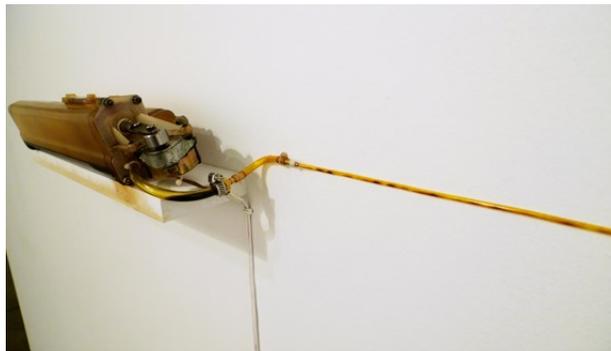
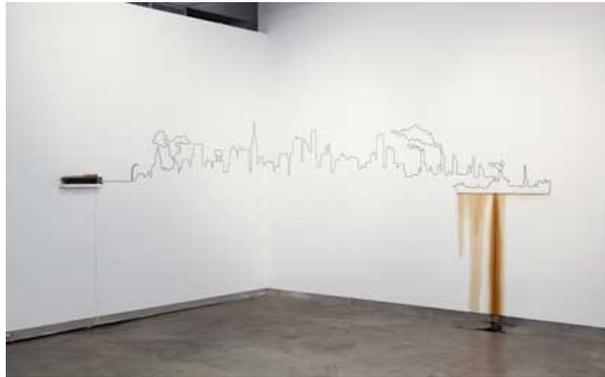
Circuito Interior 2008

Circuito Interior (Internal circuit) raises the sonic experience of displacement from the perspective of the urban landscape and the analysis of the city as a structure that privileges and prebends the functionality and mobility to the welfare of individuals. The work explores sound in motion, and reflects on the sound dimension in the context of large urban centers in Latin America.

The work is formed by a stainless steel track over the which it moves a motor with a pair of car horns. A presence sensor activates the piece when the audience enters the space. The device is moving through the path on the perimeter of space at a speed of about 15 to 20 km / hr. The place that houses the installation becomes a kind of racetrack.

Both horns are mounted on the motor, whose axes rotate in direct contact with the track, exploring the sonic possibilities related to the architecture.

The work has been developed over the past two years in the course of two exhibitions that have taken place in Mexico City and Guadalajara City.



Cenit

Plastic hose, car used oil, hydraulic pump.
2007

Soaking the gallery wall in burnt motor oil, Cenit (Zenith) is a temporal work tracing the brief history drawn by the course of 20th century fossil fuel consumption. Slowly pumping a black viscous liquid through a network of plastic piping shaped as a city skyline, the piece highlights waste and extraction as structural supports of contemporary civilization. Unfolding over a period of approximately five days, the tension in this work builds a story of excess. Much like the timeline in a film, the work starts with a place and basic premise which drives plot forward until reaching its climactic moment of release.



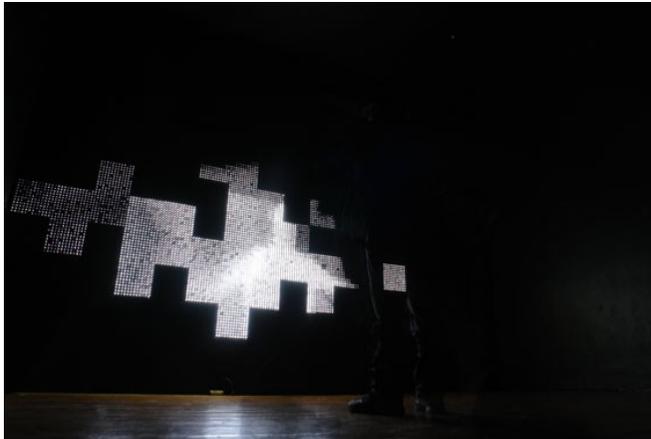
I-Machinarius

Industrial chain and gears, 1/2 HP motor AC, lubricating system, crude oil, steel tank.

2008

I-machinarius is an overflowing machine, symbolically injured, which articulates a question about sovereignty and energy dependence in the global context. The meaning of this machine arises from the idea that defines it as a conduit for intensifying energy flow, involving the extraction and waste of resources. Its functionality is a stark contrast with the field of the social imaginary, seriously disrupted by the entrenched idea of incapacity and failure.

The work has been shown at the Laboratorio de Arte Alameda in Mexico City as part of an art workshop about energy resources related to the last law reforms to the national politics. Also, the piece was shown at the University of Texas in the middle of bicentennial celebration of the Independence movement in Mexico.



Homo Orbital

Printed circuit boards, leds
2006-2009

This is a serie of site specific interventions, shaped by a variable number of electronic panels, which are sensitive to the human presence. These panels can be organized in multiple ways in space. Homo Orbital is a kind of electronic mirror that creates a human representation and point out one of the most archaic phenomena of contemplation. The work is based on the presence of the human shadow, but this shadow is a figure of light.

The essence of the work can be explained as one possibility of representation in the electronics boom, understood as a technological and sophisticated way of handling fire.

This is an expandable work, since it is integrated into space, establishing a dialogue with movement and displacement, while it creates the experience of mirror and shadow as evidence and metaphor of human been.



Obstrucción a dos tiempos / Obstruction with two-stroke engine

2 motorcycles, gasoline, plastic container, gas combustion.
2009





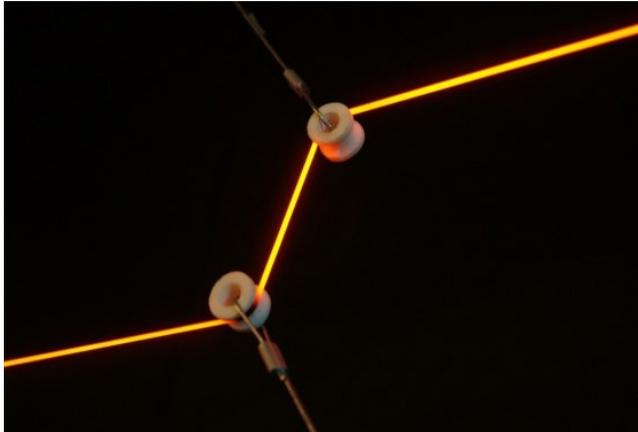
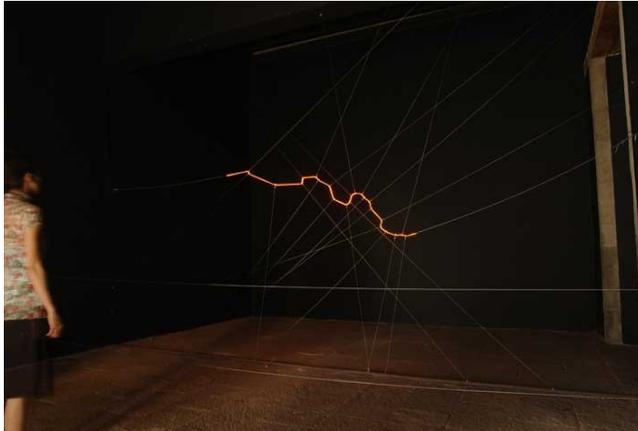
Exhaust

6 cars, gasoline, plastic container, gas combustion, bridge.

2009

Exhaust and Obstruction with two-stroke engine are part of a project intended to examine the relationship of using energetics of fossil origin to conform urban space from the presence of combustion residuals in the environment, and which are left as a disperse memory of the urban activity.

The project is based on a variety of plastic wrappings with various forms and capacities. Such wraps act as containers of gaseous residuals expelled through the exhaust of several internal combustion vehicles that are running. The work outstands the close and reciprocal relationship between those machines and the city from their potential to visualize contaminants that occupy a place on the space.



Resistencia

Heating resistance, insulators, steel cord, sensors, electricity.
2009

Resistance is a representation of the United States-Mexico border executed with a metal incandescent filament called resistance heating. The resistance used in the work establishes a metaphorical relationship to the socio-political reality that is lived on both sides of the border, by representing it as an overwhelming line filled with tension and incandescence. Resistance heating demands and consumes large amounts of energy from the electrical grid that feeds it.

The work reflects the border as a dangerous edge, as well as the rupture and distortion of relations between two neighboring nations.



Máquina Stella.

Aluminum, teflon, resistive filaments, electricity, mechanical system, electronic control.

This piece is part of a series of *devices in agony*, whose possibility of existence and materializing is determined by the potential and the strength that the current society has found in the exploitation of non-renewable energy sources.

This machine is a system in dynamic balance powered by electricity, later transformed in heat. Its modules –heating organs– are communicated with each other, producing a distribution movement from the available energy. Each module operates as an electrical terminal that powers a resistive filament while it modifies its position through a linear mechanical displacement. This terminal in movement produces a lower or higher demand from the electrical current – overflowed as heat–, thus compensating the energy demand of the rest of the modules constituting the system.

This construction tackles the idea of the machine as an analogy of the current society, understood as an order whose sustainability is given by the relation of its energy consumption and the vulnerable tension inside the order itself. The breaking of this delicate balance causes the total collapse of the system.

The work was awarded by the ARCO/BEEP acquisition prize of electronic art at the ARCO Madrid 2012 art fair.



**Vortice (Vortex)
2013**

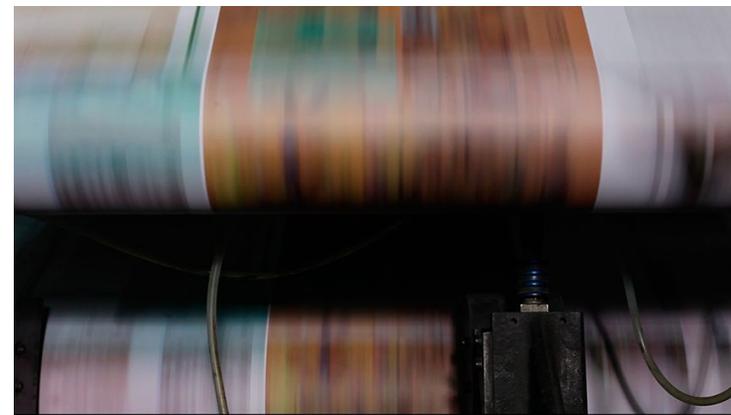
This project explores the material nature of formal education book in Mexico. By a tradition of over 50 years, the state has produced this mexican public instruction book, controlling the transmission of memory and knowledge, in one version of the story.

Historically the book has been updated and immersed in the middle of disputes and confrontations between various actors of society. For decades, the private sector, the Catholic Church and conservative groups fought over control of the production and the ideological content of the books. Currently there are more than 200 million books given out for free nationwide.

This project is a revision of the industrial order that defines the nature of the free official book. It is based on the transformation of the books on mechanical parts to build a mechanism as a metaphor of the machinery of the public educational system of State. Likewise, a video documentary shows the book production process. The video identify the stages and the source of 100% recycled paper, whose origins are obsolete files from the secretaries and departments of the government. Thus the book is a receptacle of bureaucracy on the one hand, but also of social life contained in the records destroyed.



This is a project commissioned by the University Museum of Contemporary Art at UNAM in Mexico where it is exhibited until next February 2014.



Documentary stills.