





**EUGENIO ESPINOZA**  
**Good Blue Day**

Curated by Claire Breukel

December 1, 2019 - January 26, 2020

# EUGENIO ESPINOZA

## Good Blue Day

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*Curator:* Claire Breukel

*Curatorial Assistant:* Betty McGhee

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- 5 EUGENIO ESPINOZA AND FRANKLIN SIRMANS  
In conversation
- 11 GOOD BLUE DAY: A COLORFUL REBELLION  
Claire Breukel
- 17 EXHIBITED WORKS AND DRAWINGS
- 69 EUGENIO ESPINOZA  
Julieta Gonzalez
- 74 About EUGENIO ESPINOZA
- 82 About PIERO ATCHUGARRY GALLERY



# EUGENIO ESPINOZA AND FRANKLIN SIRMANS

## In conversation

5

*Franklin Sirmans: I came to your work through your 2015 solo exhibition at the Pérez Art Museum Miami, Unruly Supports, and focused on your work produced between the 1970s and 1980s. How would you define this period in your career?*

**Eugenio Espinoza:** It was very important for me to have finally found the grid, a structure that is so simple, yet emblematic. The canvas and the wooden stretchers, the traditional supports for painting, were perfect for the grid; and also the black paint...the grid did not need color. With this simple idea I wanted to take painting to non-academic situations. I knew I was questioning the geometric tradition with all its colors, and was also aware that it was a way to contribute to the creation of an impure minimalism. When I began to use the idea of the grid, I approached geometry with an irreverent attitude filled with some sort of humor – it was preferable to taking a pseudo-scientific approach. In works like *Cuadrilatero*, its rigid structure was replaced by the naturalness of the canvas. In other works the rectangles are folded to become squares. Some grids contain sand bags used to deform the rigidity of the grid with their weight. There are also works where the square painted on the canvas is hung as if it is a hanged person. These, and the installation *Impenetrable*, contain a cautious irreverence.

*FS: This decade of work is political, yet you are removed from the figurative art traditions seen in Venezuela, and Latin America generally, during the 1970s and 1980s. How would you describe the impact of your unique approach to making art then and now?*

**EE:** It is only recently that my work is attracting some serious attention. And it may be too soon to see some impact, if any. My approach to creating art then and now has remained basically the same. Although the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas was a very prestigious cultural institution in 1972, my show then went largely unnoticed. In the 1970s, the museum Director then, Miguel Arroyo, was well known and respected internationally. Miguel Arroyo was instrumental in bringing to Caracas the works of many artists. We had exhibitions by the Impressionists, Francis Bacon, Henry Moore and other great artists, so unlike many other Latin American countries, thanks to Miguel Arroyo's efforts in winning the support of private supporters, we had the opportunity to see the works of great masters such as Cezanne, without having to travel to Europe or New York. Miguel Arroyo had a close relationship with the MoMA and because of him, many exhibitions from the MoMA travelled to the Museo de Bellas Artes. Miguel Arroyo also pioneered exhibitions of Gego [Getrud Goldschmidt]'s work as well, which incidentally went largely ignored.

*FS: Your work Impenetrable shown in 1972 at the Ateneo de Caracas for the first time, is arguably your best-known work. It was considered radical at the time, specifically within the predominating context of Kinetic and Op art. This work has been replicated and reshowed. Has the meaning of this work changed for you over time?*



**EE:** The *Impenetrable* is based on a negative reaction to Kinetic art, which promoted a festive participation of the viewer. I proposed an attitude of no participation by the observer - instead of the distraction of colors, I wanted the viewer to stop, to look to see the work itself - this is the context of the origin of this work. *Impenetrable* is also an in-situ installation that can have many different forms, each one unique. Nevertheless, around 2004-2005, I had the opportunity to recreate the *Impenetrable* in Miami, experiencing then a very significant change. *Impenetrable Wagner*, (Lummus Park, Miami) was installed in December of 2004, inside the historic Wagner house, the oldest standing house in Miami. The history of the house built in the 1850s is a tale of an inter-racial love story and secret marriage between a plantation slave owner and a Creole woman that began before the emancipation of slaves and survived into the segregation era. This historic context is very significant. In 2005, Locust Projects, Miami, expanded the original dimensions of the installation with another option, a large empty space in addition to the rooms blocked by the *Impenetrable*. The viewers forcibly gathered in this empty space from which the work could be glimpsed. It was another unrivaled context.

**FS:** *You spent four years in New York following your exhibition in Caracas. How did this change your work? And, inform your ideas at the time?*

**EE:** Most of my work was developed between 1970-1976 in Venezuela; so when I arrived in New York, I had already developed and exhibited my work. Inevitably, the few years that I lived in New York contributed in many ways to my formation as an artist. In the great museums I had direct contact with the great masters of both the past and the present. While living in the West Village, I had the opportunity to see all the early exhibitions of many of the artists who today are considered masters, like Carl Andre, Sol Lewitt, Walter De Maria, Eva Hesse, Frank Stella and Matta Clark, among others. You could run into them in the galleries in Soho, the cafes or bars. I even ran into Joseph Beuys visiting the Guggenheim. It was a very exciting time and a great learning opportunity for me. And of course, the many visits to the great museums were also an extraordinarily enriching experience.

**FS:** *Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt) is an early influence on, and collector of, your work. How did she impact your trajectory as an artist?*

**EE:** First I was acquainted with Gego's work and much later, with her after enrolling in the Instituto de Diseño where she was a faculty member. The Instituto de Diseño, Fundación Neumann – INCE was a graphic design school. Most teachers, like Gego, were architects or engineers. Gego was related to the Bauhaus School, and in her classes she emphasized the search for the essential in the graphic or tridimensional



**IMPENETRABLE, 1972**  
Acrylic on unprimed muslin, wood  
Dimensions variable  
Collection Tate, London  
*Installation at Lummus Park, Miami, 2005*



UNRULY SUPPORTS, 1970-1980  
*Installation at Pérez Art Museum, Miami, 2015*



applications. Having come from the Escuela de Artes Plasticas Cristobal Rojas, I came out of her classes painting the grid. Some time later, she visited one of my shows and purchased one of my grid paintings, then we began a friendship. It was an invaluable experience for me, and the impact of her art and teaching in my work is undeniable.

*FS: You have been classified as Latin American, yet you have worked in the USA for the past 20 years, and maintain an approach that exists fluidly between these geographies. Have the contexts in which you have worked influenced the way you are seen as an artist, and the way your work is perceived?*

**EE:** The artwork speaks for itself and should be above these classifications. These social contexts are very complex labyrinths, but in the end, it is the work itself that shatters all categorizations. Fortunately, globalization is changing many things.

*FS: Your recent work utilizes metal and color, a departure from your signature canvas and black grid works. How has your investigation with metal and color changed your approach to making art?*

**EE:** As an artist, I feel free to use any material, and my approach remains basically the same. In these series, I started to paint the metal thinking of the colors of the canvas, then, in the process the colors took over. I see these metal works as paintings, not as sculptures, which do not need colors. Although I used colors, my interest is in the materials themselves, with their own unique qualities.

*FS: This is the first comprehensive exhibition of your new work, some which was produced as early as 2003. How is your show at Piero Atchugarry Gallery a departure from other shows of your work?*

**EE:** In this new show, I have developed works that I started almost ten years ago and have wrestled with them all this time. It is only now that I have achieved some freedom. Most likely, as one thing leads to another, I will be creating works that I have never imagined before. I want to be free just for individuality or authenticity. This exhibition at Piero Atchugarry Gallery shows the beginning and the end of the beginning, and, the beginning of the end.

***Franklin Sirmans** is an American art critic, editor, writer, curator and has been the director of the Pérez Art Museum Miami since October 2015.*



## GOOD BLUE DAY: A COLORFUL REBELLION

Claire Breukel

11

Eugenio Espinoza is rebellious. When Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto created his first Penetrable work in 1967, Espinoza created *Impenetrable* at Caracas Athenaeum in 1972. His most historicized work to date, *Impenetrable* comprised a knee-high grid, which prevented the viewer from observing the work as a whole, and physically blocked access to it.<sup>1</sup> Instead of encompassing the viewer, *Impenetrable* extricated and invited them to observe, closely. This anomalous activation of the senses, coupled with a satirical socio-political critique, is key to Espinoza's practice.

Whereas Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni and even Soto are described as "great figures of contemporary skepticism," the crisis of their modernist post-war aesthetic and the end of Kinetic art is where Espinoza began.<sup>2</sup> Inspired by the use of found objects and the mischievousness of Arte Povera ("poor art"), as well as "the elasticity of shapes and spatial practices through simple structures"<sup>3</sup> in the work of Gertrude Goldschmidt (Gego), Espinoza created his own lens that interrogates the lens itself.

Using play as a tool, Eugenio Espinoza counters the conventions of art production. Although he has experimented with wearable canvases, Espinoza does not invoke explicit audience participation as Hélio Oiticica's Parangolé's might do. Instead, using the grid as his basis, he creates expected and unexpected formal and conceptual juxtapositions. Signified by squares and rectangles associated with art-making, urban planning and systems of order, the grid's manipulation creates tensions by pushing traditions of understanding. In this way, his work is performative. Over the past seven years Espinoza's shift from using canvas to metal to achieve an ideal flat grid has increasingly freed him to act upon the grid's surface and manifest "situations." Play, specifically the activation alongside the overturning of common symbols and signifiers, remains critical to his practice.

Further challenging convention, Espinoza resists the identity categorization "Latin American" as defined by his institutional legacy that acknowledges his birthplace but negates his 27 years living abroad. Rather, he is an artist of the Americas who, despite professing that the grid is "meaningless created to represent space or objects in space,"<sup>4</sup> has spent five decades interrogating it. Critic Rosalind Krauss argues, "The grid resists development." However, Espinoza is rebellious so he persists in doing exactly this—developing possibilities for the grid.

**WALGREEN, 2019**  
Oil on canvas and coconut  
55 x 55 x 58 in (140 x 140 x 147 cm)

1 Exhibition catalogue for Eugenio Espinoza, *Retro/retrospective*, 2016-1973. Published by Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, 2016. Pg. 24.

2 Jesus Fuenmayor, *Eugenio Espinoza Unruly Supports (1970-1980)*. Pérez Art Museum Miami, 2014 Pg. 19 and Pg. 34.

3 Exhibition catalogue for Eugenio Espinoza *Retro/retrospective 2016-1973*; Pg. 15.

4 Eugenio Espinoza, Interview with the author. August 1, 2019.

In his exhibition *Good Blue Day*, notwithstanding the weight of the grid, geographical politics, and art history, we witness Eugenio Espinoza's enduring use of countering as a tool of activism, a tactic that is ever relevant and necessary today. Applying this countering model, *Good Blue Day* refuses chronology. It does this to extricate Espinoza's work from the confinements of its own institutionalized history and the artist's legacy, and to resituate his work outside of Western canons of understanding. Instead, *Good Blue Day* conflates time to situate Espinoza's expansive practice entirely in the present while illustrating his recent move from canvas to metal.

*Uno Dos Tres*, 2013 is Espinoza's first major metal work. It mimics the black lines and beige of his renowned canvas grids, which are in fact three aluminum sheets layered so the first and second are hidden, impenetrable. Existing between surface and object, *Uno Dos Tres* recalls Daniel Buren's *Painting-Sculpture*, 1971 made to bisect the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum down its spiral center. Requiring circumvention, and therefore only ever partially visible to the viewer, *Painting-Sculpture* would have been both flat and multi-dimensional.<sup>5</sup> Leaning on a wall, *Uno Dos Tres* offers a machined, shinier and flatter surface, which arcs under its own weight conjointly lending it sculptural dimension. Whereas the unsupported metal, unlike a canvas requiring a frame, is the grid itself, the metal surface epitomizes the progressive hyper-efficiency of industrialization and the austerity of abstraction. Referencing the permanence of a monument the metal material is softened by Espinoza's Post-Minimalist layered approach, which counters with an impermanent open circuit of interpretive possibilities.

This subtly expressive composition is also evident in the compressed black ink of Espinoza's fax machine drawings, using rudimentary technology to achieve an ideal self-contained graphic flatness. However, as handmade brushstrokes are evident in *Uno Dos Tres*, so too are smudge marks and etchings on the fax machine transfers. Although the materiality of both works offer the probability for gridded perfection, gestural 'imperfections' reveal Espinoza's joyful play with perception through juxtaposition.

Three autonomous hard metal squares, titled *Facetious*, 2015, *Translucent*, 2015 and *Flavor*, 2015, are seductively colorful. Referencing the hues in the work of Richard Tuttle, Espinoza jibes at the metal with ice-cream tones to create a "situation" of incongruence. The minimal grids are further interrupted by fanciful hanging shapes, which recall Alexander Calder mobiles. These 'embellishments' allude to functionality, yet are functionless. The grid is present, but simultaneously displaced. Juan Ledezma describes Espinoza's *Impenetrable* installation as inhabiting an "intermediate position" between abstraction and objecthood.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum online: Daniel Buren. Accessed October 18, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Juan Ledezma, *Painting as Event in Eugenio Espinoza Unruly Supports (1970-1980)*, Pérez Art Museum Miami, 2014; Pg. 94.

Using this as a foundation, it can be argued that Espinoza's newer work requires a more deliberate term to encapsulate the brazen fusing of abstraction and objecthood within its situational make-up: *a conspiring position*. Just as Espinoza's Gemini grid is inherently oxymoronic, the shapes hanging from Espinoza's grids are forced to successfully fail.

From 1960 to today, Eugenio Espinoza has used minimalism as a basis upon which to create action. Beginning his career in Venezuela, then rich in oil, Espinoza explains Caracas as an unfinished utopia: "We were as much familiar with the Architecture of demolition as with the Architecture of creation. Our sense of navigating through cities is based on harmonizing with chaos. Within chaos we find the energy to create."<sup>7</sup> It makes sense then, as a maker who has an unscrupulous conceptual and practical connectedness to his practice, that he finds freedom in breaking free. Espinoza continues: "When I break or activate the grid, I feel like I were in the center of a process; how I imagine an expressionist painter would feel."<sup>8</sup>

In the *Untitled*, 1972 series, of which there are two recreations in *Good Blue Day*, the canvas grid is torn, folded, collaged and deformed to degrade as well as reinvent it. Similarly, *Walgreen* 2019 is a sculptural installation that takes the grid off the wall, degrading the four paintings, which sit tilted upon a single coconut. Emboldening counter-production and embracing the tensions of juxtapositions, *Walgreen* is formal and 'tropicalized,' austere and colorful, stable and unbalanced. In his 2015 exhibition, *Unruly Supports 1970-1980* at the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Espinoza emphasized his use of the grid as a platform upon which interaction and discussion occurred, that is, "a space to create an event."<sup>9</sup> Expanding this basis, Espinoza is performing the grid to conquer its geometrical boundaries, moving it from a space for an event, to the event itself.

Events occur when sensorial elements merge and/or butt up against each other in a moment of heightened, present awareness. The event space in *The mind, Closed today and tomorrow, Taxidermist and Unfold* – 2019 – is the wooden frame or the support. The canvas, felt, and vinyl coverings appear to have haphazardly entered this space and engaged in deep critical conversation, perhaps even an argument. In *Untitled* 1972, on view in *Unruly Supports 1970-1980*, and *X painting A and B*, 2019, on view in the exhibition *Room For Failure* curated by Omar Lopez Chahoud at Piero Atchugarry Gallery this year, Espinoza covered his "painting's" wooden supports in a pillow of canvas so that they appear dimensional and floating. In *The mind, Closed today and tomorrow, Taxidermist and Unfold*, this airy sweetness disappears, and the wooden support is instead a space upon which to dynamically act.

<sup>7</sup> Eugenio Espinoza interview with the author; August 1, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Eugenio Espinoza, Interview with the author; August 9, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Jesus Fuenmayor, Pg. 23.

These four 'events' are a family portrait where the support or body is the base upon which Espinoza considers each work's individualism—defined by the material, color and texture of their respective adornment. That is, the support allows Espinoza to engage in the playful personification of each piece while undoing traditional notions of painting, a dichotomy perhaps akin to Barnett Newman's expressive geometries using the representational zip to break and simultaneously adorn abstract fields of color.

A man-made boundary imposed on humankind through time, the grid is a constant, often latent guide dictating human behavior. In *Good Blue Day* Espinoza suggests that with conscious observation, control and play, it can be mastered and even defied. Yet, simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal, the grid will ironically always also be free from its own confinement.<sup>10</sup> Curator and critic Gean Moreno describes the inherent 'double citizenship' of Espinoza's works: "They are heavy with strata, if lightened by desire and play. This is the entwined penance and grace coded in the paradox that is at their core: they are old and new, exiled and at home, free and bound, light and anchored."<sup>11</sup>

Within Espinoza's rigorous investigation of form lies play and within play a place where the mind aligns with the heart—the self-imposed grid is met with nature's propensity for play. Whereas the grid is a "fundamental and elemental"<sup>12</sup> form identifiable universally, the possibilities for the grid are as infinite as the imagination's will. A frame, a building block, a window for looking through or at, a voting box, a jail, or a symbol of freedom within a world in flux that offers a constant renewal of meaning. What remains constant is Espinoza's persistence in exploring and interrogating the grid and the confinements it represents. In the words of Barnett Newman, everyday Espinoza seeks "to start from scratch, to paint as if painting never existed before."<sup>13</sup> Knowing that the grid is an endless and unending proposition, and defying the taunt that repeatedly doing the same thing with the same result deems one insane, Espinoza must persist.

Today, Eugenio Espinoza's rigorous investigation marks a restored and necessary minimalism forever ingrained in mass contradiction, yet underscored by an ever-urgent need to push boundaries. Because every day, year, decade, Espinoza inches toward a more definite and indefinite answer. In a world of chaos the grid is a constant, and there is no greater cause than conspiring how to free humanity from its borders.

10 Rosalind Krauss, *Grids in October*, Vol. 9, The MIT Press, 1979, Pgs.62, 63.

11 Gean Moreno; *Watt's Pots (or, The Beginning of Eugenio Espinoza's Late Style)*.

12 Exhibition catalogue; *Eugenio Espinoza Unlocking something*, La Galleria Umberto Di Marino, Italy; October 12, 2017.

13 The Museum of Modern Art online; *Barnett Newman American, 1905-1970*. Accessed October 16, 2019.









**EXHIBITED WORKS AND DRAWINGS**



**THE MIND, 2019**  
Felt, wood and metal brackets  
22 x 16 x 12 in (56 x 48 x 30 cm)



**UNFOLD, 2019**  
Felt, wood, wire, wood and metal brackets  
20 x 34 x 17 in (51 x 86 x 43 cm)



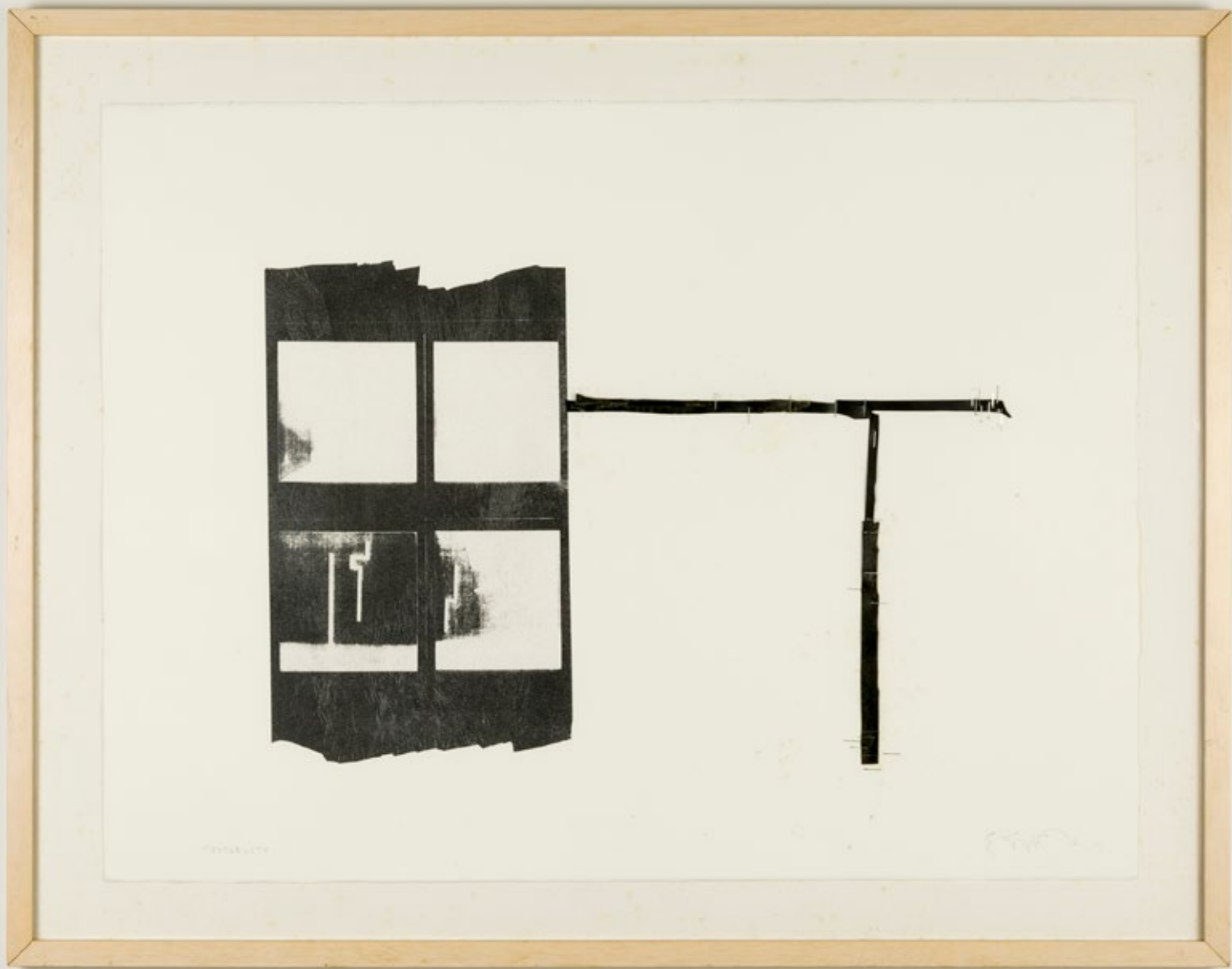




**CLOSED TODAY AND TOMORROW, 2019**  
Felt, acrylic on canvas, wood and metal brackets  
19 x 17 x 12 in (48 x 43 x 30 cm)







**TESTABILITY, 2004**  
Mixed media on paper  
29 x 22 in (74 x 56 cm)

**UNTITLED, 1972**  
(unique, reconstruction)  
Acrylic on canvas  
47.5 x 47.5 in (121 x 121 cm)





**UNTITLED, 1972**  
Acrylic on canvas  
164 x 85 in (417 x 216 cm)







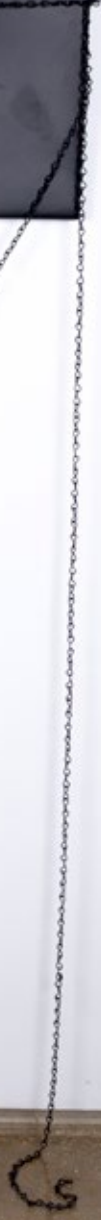








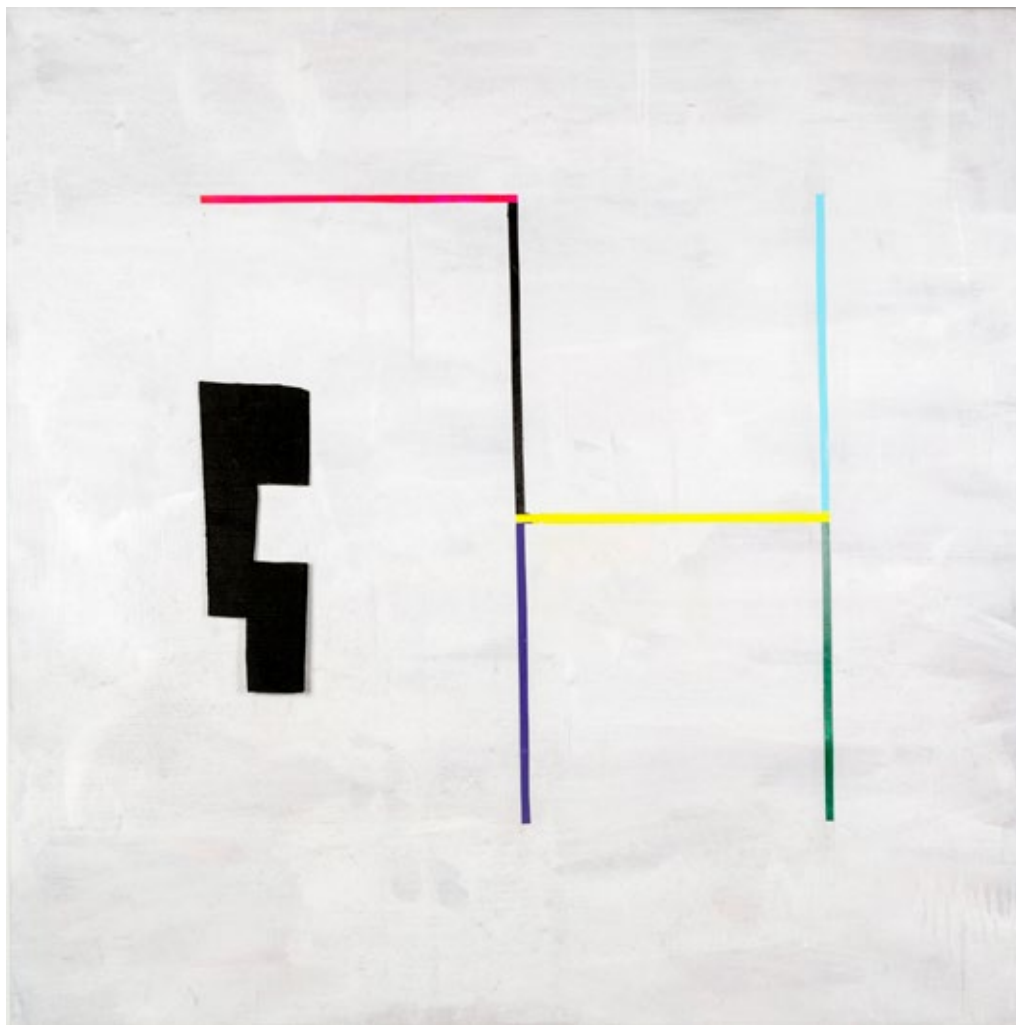




**UNTITLED WITH A CHAIN, 2010**  
Oil base enamel on aluminum  
45 x 79 in (114 x 201 cm)



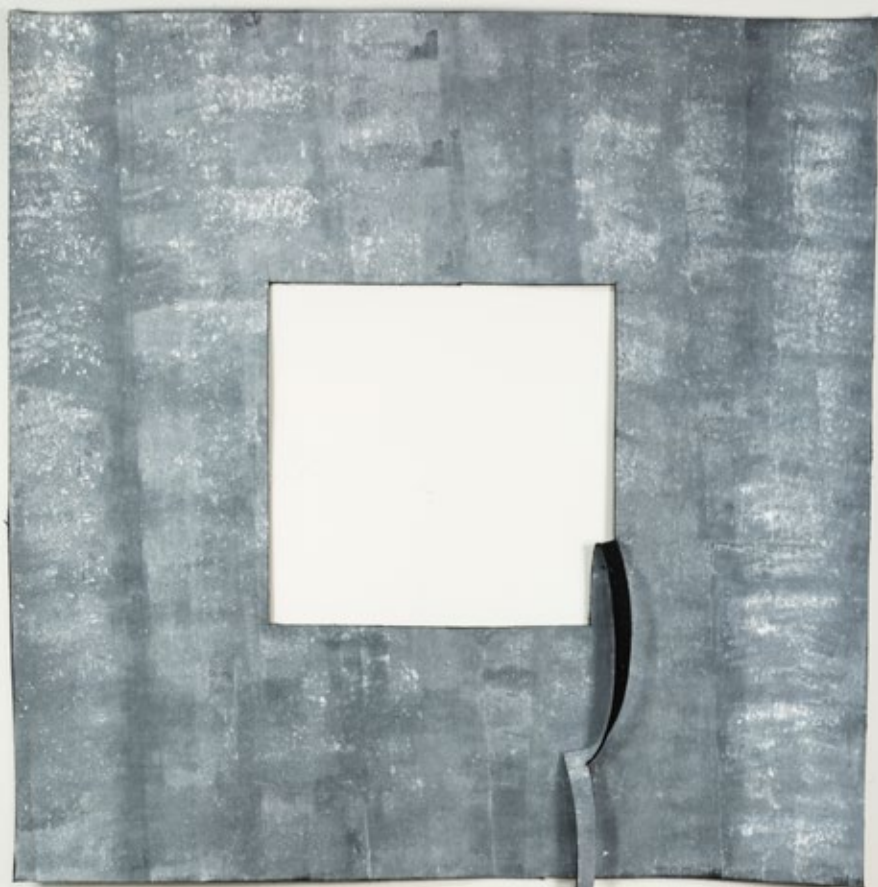
**UNTITLED, 2019**  
Acrylic on canvas  
56 x 56 in (142 x 142 cm)

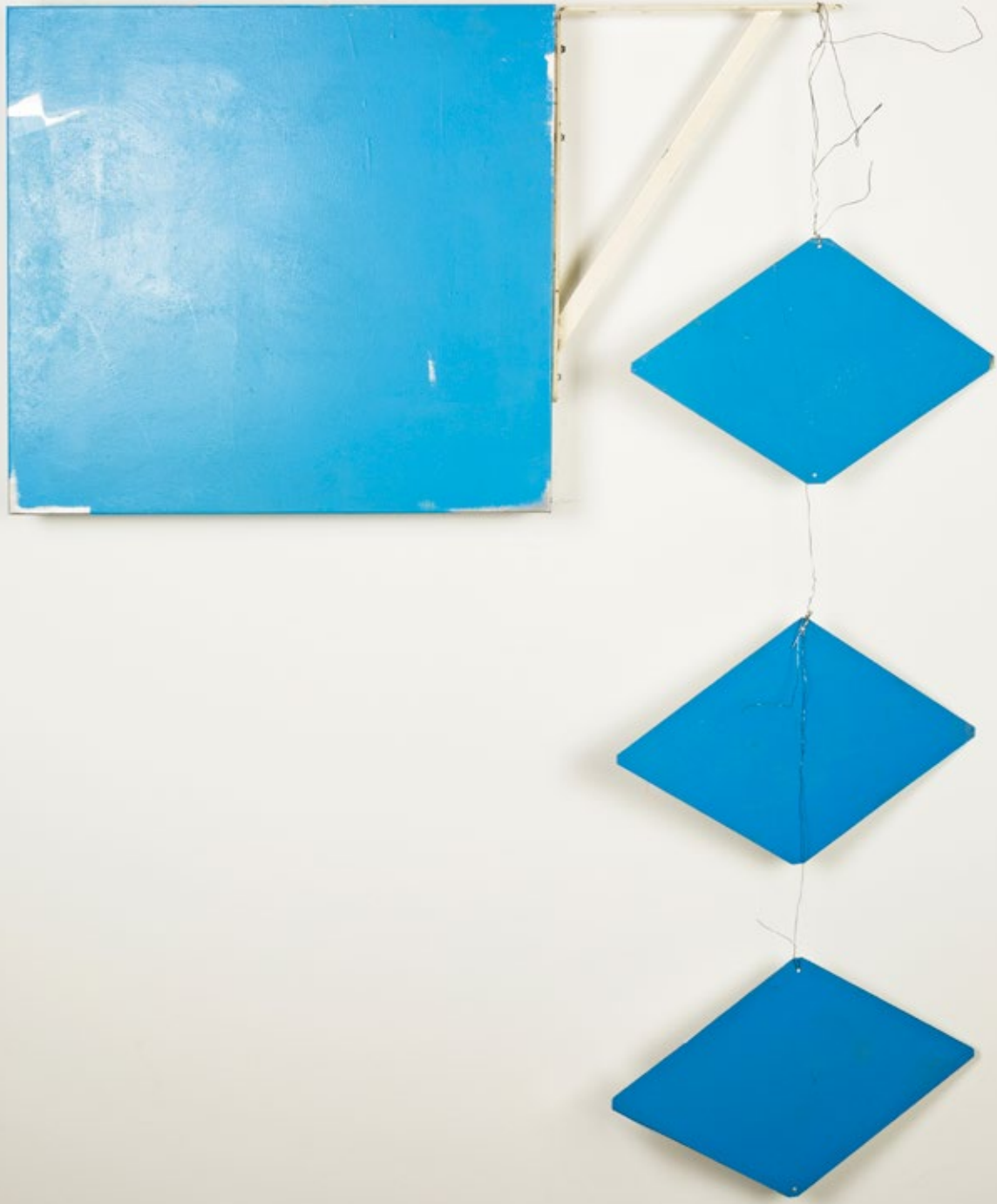


**DOUBT ABOUT COLORS, 2019**  
Acrylic on canvas  
56 x 56 in (142 x 142 cm)



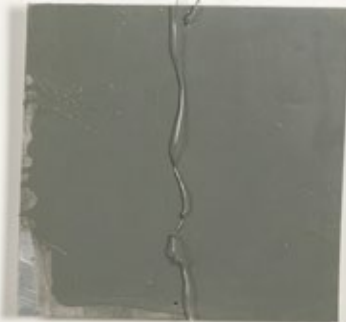
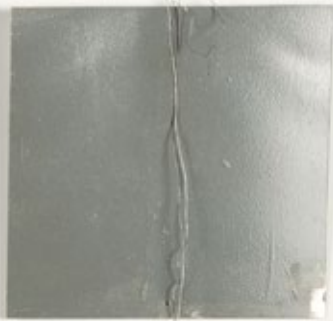






**FACETIOUS, 2015**  
Oil base enamel on aluminum  
34 x 37.75 in (87 x 96 cm)









**FLAVOR, 2015**  
Oil base enamel on aluminum  
20.50 x 35 in (55 x 89 cm)





























neolithic

ΕΡΜΕΥΣΗ

NEOLITHIC, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)



**TWO PRESIDENTS, 2019**  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)



*The State without the People*

THE STATE WITHOUT THE PEOPLE, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)



**GEOLOGICAL DUEL, 2019**  
Mixed media on paper  
27,5 x 19,5 in (70 x 50 cm)



**THE WIFE, 2019**  
Mixed media on paper  
27,5 x 19,5 in (70 x 50 cm)



ULTIMATUM, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)



A NEW COUNTRY, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27,5 x 19,5 in (70 x 50 cm)





A COUP ATTEMPT

2019

A COUP ATTEMPT, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)



NOMENKLATURA

2019

NOMENKLATURA, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)



THE MIND, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
24 x 19 in (60 x 48 cm)

Signature 2019



X PAINTING

E. H. H. H. H.

X PAINTING, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)



X PAINTING

Estimote

X PAINTING, 2019  
Mixed media on paper  
27.5 x 19.5 in (70 x 50 cm)











# EUGENIO ESPINOZA

Julieta Gonzalez

69

A student of Gego at the Instituto de Diseño Neumann-Ince in Caracas in the early seventies, Espinoza's work showed a close affiliation to her work, particularly in his approach to the grid as a central concern in his practice. In 1972, at the age of 22, he had his first solo exhibition at the Museo de Bellas Artes de Caracas, where he presented a series of works that made manifest his spatial investigations around the structure of the grid. That same year, at the Ateneo de Caracas, he presented the *Impenetrable*, which could be considered as a turning point in Venezuelan contemporary art and is emblematic of the shift from geometric abstraction to more conceptual practices.

Eugenio Espinoza's generation reacted against the omnipresent and official kinetic art, which had become a sort of national symbol for Venezuela's oil-fueled utopia of progress and development. His grids, much like Gego's, were not static or rigid and were deployed upon landscapes, people, buildings and other surfaces and supports. According to Luis Perez Oramas<sup>1</sup> "they were impenetrable, modest canvases, that were being inexorably deconstructed, multiplied, folded, rolled..." These grid paintings, torn of their canvases acquired an almost performative nature, as is evidenced by a series of street actions carried out by Espinoza (*Participaciones*, 1973) in which performers walked the streets of Caracas wearing canvas and paper painted with the grids, or his later collaborations with Claudio Perna, where landscapes, both urban and natural, were intervened with the gridded canvas. This deconstruction of the grid and of the painterly surface is fundamental in the work of Espinoza and situates him in a crossroads between minimalism, conceptualism and geometric abstraction.

Espinoza was an active participant in the conceptualist milieu of the seventies in Venezuela, organizing exhibitions and collaborating with artists such as Claudio Perna, Hector Fuenmayor, Sigfredo Chacon, among others. He participated in the 11 *Tipos* exhibitions organized at the Sala Mendoza during that decade that became the main forum for conceptual art at the time. Eugenio Espinoza, along with Claudio Perna, Hector Fuenmayor, Roberto Obregon, Diego Barboza, Pedro Teran, Alfred Wenemoser and Rolando Pena, are the most important figures in Venezuelan conceptualism, and they produced a significant amount of work between the late sixties and early eighties. Aside from Perna, Obregon and Barboza, who are dead, the rest of these artists continue to produce work and have active careers.

In the past decade, Espinoza has been included in a number of contemporary art exhibitions, and particularly projects curated by other artists such as a reconstruction of the *Impenetrable* at Locust Projects in Miami, 2005, and *Conditions of Display* at the Moore Space, Miami, 2007, both organized by Gean Moreno; *Pedacito de Cielo*, a solo exhibition of the work of Alessandro Balteo Yazbeck at the Carpenter Center, Harvard,

2008, and recently another collaboration with Balteo in Adriano Pedrosa's Panorama da Arte Brasileira, at the Museu de Arte Moderna de Sao Paulo, 2009. In this sense he has become a crucial reference for many younger artists, an artist's artist.

Espinoza's *Impenetrable* can be exhibited in a large number of contexts in dialogue with many works in the Tate collection, covering wide range that spans Geometric Abstraction to works of post-minimalist and proto-conceptual affiliations. More specifically, Espinoza's *Impenetrable* could be exhibited in dialogue with works in the collection such as those by Joe Baer, Sol Lewitt, Kenneth Noland, and Richard Tuttle.

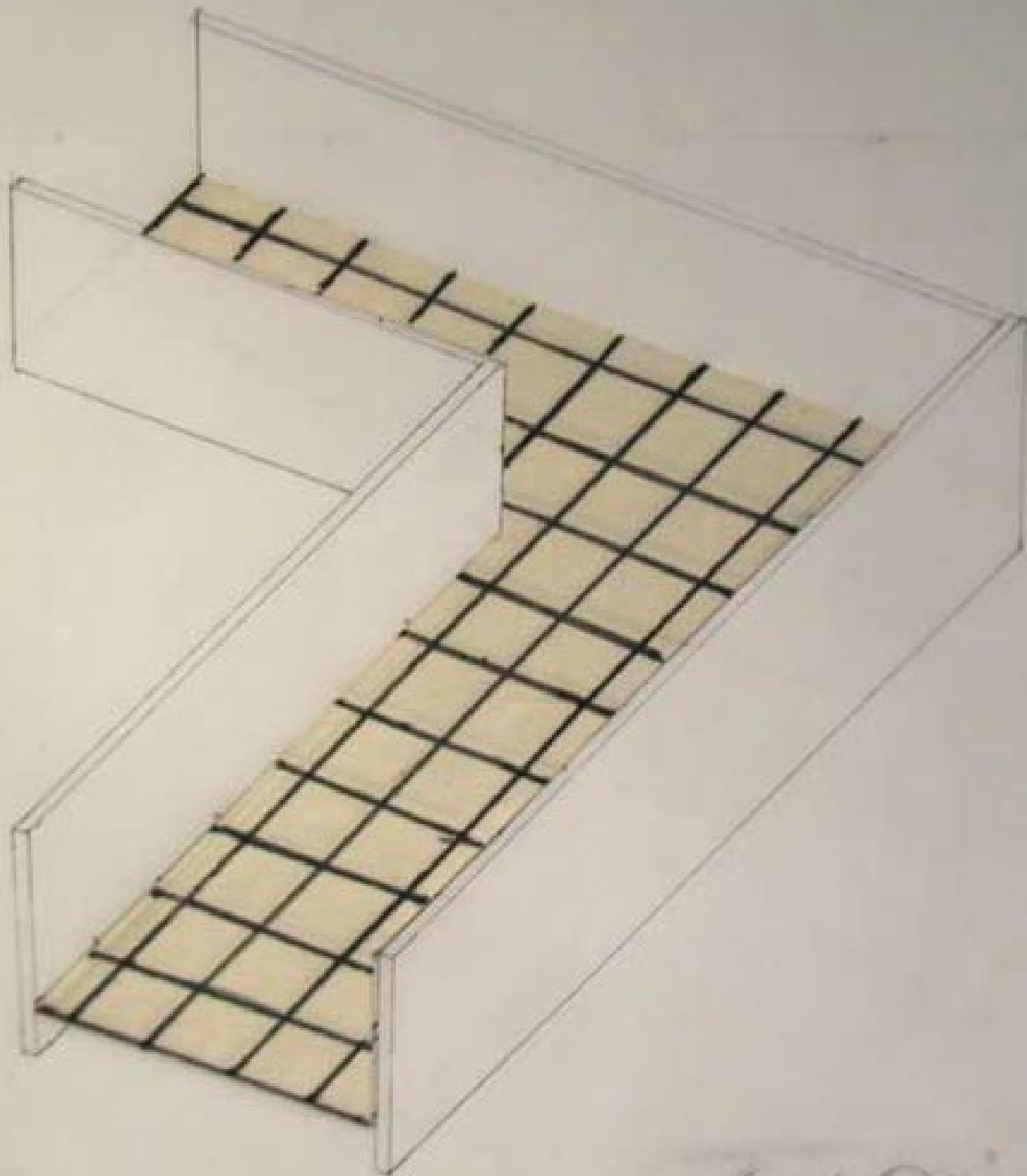
### About the work

As mentioned above, the *Impenetrable* was first exhibited in 1972 at the Ateneo de Caracas. This work is representative of a rupture with the abstract-geometric and kinetic art traditions of the 50s and 60s, and could be considered among one of the first conceptual works in Venezuelan art.

The work consisted of a large painting, a grid painted in black on canvas, that occupied the entire exhibition space preventing the spectator from entering the space and thus inciting a self awareness on behalf of the spectator in regard to conditions of spectatorship, display and the institution itself. It is at this point that the opposition to the modernist canon becomes secondary as the work's special engagement is aimed towards practices more related to institutional critique, and inscribes it into a genealogy that includes Michael Asher, Walter de Maria and Hans Haacke, among others.

Eduardo Costa described Espinoza's *Impenetrable* as "a feat of creative synthesis [through which] the young artist reformulated Gego's structuralist geometry. Soto's and Oiticica's *Penetrables*, and Walter de Maria's *Earth Room*, transforming them into his very own and memorable contribution to painting." The *Impenetrable* is in fact a painting that, like the 1:1 scale map described by Jorge Luis Borges in *El Hacedor*, covers the space that contains it making it inaccessible.

For the reconstruction that Espinoza staged at Locust Projects in 2005, he did not simply reinstall his 1972 work but rather created specific conditions that were perhaps not so evident in the first installation. The artist divided the space in two equal parts, an empty space and another one occupied in its entirety by the *Impenetrable*; only visible from some entry points in the empty space. This spatial division provided the clues to an understanding of the *Impenetrable* from the dialectic between the void space that contained the public, an audience trapped in a space without works, and the space that was completely occupied by a work that could not be entered physically, only partially with the gaze, since the artist created a series of blind spots that made it impossible to see the work in its entirety from a single point of view.



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It would be worthwhile to analyze the context in which works such as Eugenio Espinoza's *Impenetrable* and Gego's *Reticularia* were produced and exhibited. While conceptualism in Venezuela was at best relegated to the margins of museum and gallery practices, and thus not well documented or theorized at its peak, it has been the subject of recent critical revision mostly through international survey books and exhibitions on conceptual practices in Latin America and other peripheries. An exception within many conceptual movements in Latin America, Venezuelan conceptualism was not overtly political, and was not developed in times of dictatorship as was the case in Argentina and Brazil. In fact, the late sixties and seventies in Venezuela were a period of extraordinary economic development due to record-high oil revenues and a somewhat stable democracy.

Geometric abstraction, and Kinetic art were fully co-opted by the government and had come to symbolize Venezuela's entry into modernity and development. Museum and public art programs were almost exclusively devoted to the promotion of Venezuelan kineticism and in the process other art practices were left aside. Thus, one of the strong motivations behind the emergence of conceptual practices in Venezuela was a critique of the dominant art forms (i.e. kineticism and geometric abstraction) in the country at the time, much like the consolidation of geometric abstraction 20 years before had responded almost exclusively to a rupture with the prevalent academicism of the *Escuela de Caracas*.

*May 2010*



## EUGENIO ESPINOZA

Eugenio Espinoza was born in 1950, in San Juan de los Morros, in central Venezuela. From 1966 to 1974, he studied at the Escuela de Artes Plasticas Cristobal Rojas and the Instituto de Diseno Newmann-Ince in Caracas. From 1977 to 1981, he lived in New York where he studied at Pratt Institute, New York University, and the School of Visual Arts. In 1972, Eugenio Espinoza exhibited cut and folded canvases at the Museo de Bellas Artes and his *Impenetrable* at Ateneo de Caracas. His later conceptual works include found objects and photography. In 1985, he represented Venezuela at the Bienal de Sao Paulo. His work is in the permanent collections of Tate Modern, London, U.K.; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; the Fine Arts Museum of Houston, Texas; the Blanton Museum in Austin, Texas; the Perez Art Museum Miami, Florida; Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, California; the Harn Museum, Gainesville, Florida; Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas; Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas; and Museo Alejandro Otero, Caracas; Museo de Arte Contemporaneo in Sao Paulo; Museo de Arte Moderna, in Rio de Janeiro; Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Bogota; Fundacion Gego, Caracas; The Cisneros Collection, New York; the Cisneros-Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, FL; Tanya Capariles De Brillembourg collection, and several other prestigious private and corporate collections. In 2017 Eugenio Espinoza won the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in Fine Arts for the United States and Canada.

## Selected individual exhibitions

- 2019 Good Blue Day, Piero Atchugarry Gallery, Miami, United States  
2017 Unlocking Something, Galleria Umberto Di Marino, Naples, Italy  
2016 Retro/Retrospectiva, 2016-1972, Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, Spain  
2015 Diorama, Blackston, New York, NY  
Eugenio Espinoza: Unruly Supports: (1970 to 1980), March - August, 2015, Perez Art Museum Miami  
Solo exhibition at Galleria Eduardo Leme, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
2013 Out of Focus, Alambrico at Prosjektrom Normanns, Stavanger, Norway  
2013 Going Blind Faith, Blackston, New York, NY  
2012 Numbers, Negativa Moderna, Archer, FL  
2011 X & Y, El Anexo, Caracas, Venezuela  
2009 X: Suspendidos, Sala Mendoza, Caracas, Venezuela  
2008 The Rite of Spring, Periferico, Caracas, Venezuela  
Eugenio Espinoza 1972-2008, INOVA, Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
2007 Three Perspectives CIFO, Miami, Florida  
Negativa Moderna, Sala Mendoza, Caracas, Venezuela  
2004 Tequeños, Museo Cruz-Diez Caracas, Venezuela  
1995 Linea Blanca, Museo de Artes Visuales Alejandro Otero, Caracas, Venezuela  
1992 Orla, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Sofia Imber, Caracas  
1989 Paramount Pictures, Galeria Sotavento, Caracas  
1988 Paintings, Galeria Garces-Velasquez, Bogota, Colombia  
1985 Karakana, Museo de Arte La Rinconada, Caracas, Venezuela  
1974 Photography, Drawings, Prints, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela  
1973 Textiles, Grid, Post Cards, Conkright Gallery, Caracas, Venezuela  
1972 Impenetrable, Ateneo de Caracas 20 Recent Works, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela

## Selected group exhibitions

76

- 2019 Sur Moderno: Journeys of Abstraction, MOMA, New York  
Room For Failure, Piero Atchugarry Gallery, Miami, FL
- 2018 Artissima, Torino, Galleria Umberto Di Marino  
Human Applause, Bortolami, New York
- 2017 Raising the Curtain, Galeria Moises Perez de Albeniz, Madrid, Spain
- 2016 You Are Part of It, Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, FL
- 2014 Artevida, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, curated by Adriano Pedrosa and Rodrigo Moura  
Permission to be Global, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, MA
- 2013 Americana, Perez Art Museum, Miami, FL  
Remembering/Providing/Resisting, Centro Cultural Espanol, Miami, FL
- 2011 Frames and Documents, Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, FL
- 2010 Art Basel Miami Beach, Faria-Fabregas Gallery, Miami Beach, FL  
Embracing Modernity, The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum, Miami, FL
- 2009 Space as Medium, Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL
- 2008 MiArt, Milan, Italy  
Pedacito de Cielo, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
- 2007 Conditions of Display, Locust Projects and The Moore Space, Miami
- 2005 Impenetrable 2005, Locust Projects, Wynwood District, Miami, Florida  
Artissima 12, Newman Popiashvili Gallery, Torino Italia
- 2003 Geometrias, The Cisneros Collection, exhibited in Latin America  
Hump, Casas Riegner Gallery, Miami, Florida
- 2002 Tarde, Temprano y Pronto, Casas Riegner, Miami, Florida  
Motel, The San Juan Motel, Miami, Florida
- 2001 Art Baba Lab6, Miami, Florida
- 2000 Utopolis, Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas
- 1999 Arte Latinoamericano Fin de Milenio, Centro Cultural Cultorgest, Lisbon, Portugal
- 1998 Contemporanea, Adquisiciones 1994-98, Museo Alejandro Otero, Caracas, Venezuela  
La Resurreccion del Cadaver Exquisito, Sala Mendoza, Caracas, Venezuela  
III Bienal del Barro de America, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Sofia Imber, Caracas,
- 1997 La Invencion de la Continuidad, Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela
- 1996 Exposicion Interamericana de Arte, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires  
La Abstraccion en la Coleccion del MBA, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas  
Transatlantic, Museo Alejandro Otero, Caracas, Venezuela
- 1995 Sin Fronteras, Museo Alejandro Otero, Caracas, Venezuela  
Mesotica, Museo de Arte y Diseo Contemporaneo, San Jose, Costa Rica
- 1994 Exhibition, Museo de las Artes, Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico
- 1993 CCS-10/Arte Venezolano Actual, Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas  
Al Sur del Sur, Salas Nacionales de Cultura, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 1991 De Venezuela, 30 Años de Arte Contemporaneo, Pabellon de las Artes, Expo-Spain
- 1990 Nueva Pintura Abstracta, Museo de Arte Moderno Jesus Soto, Venezuela

- 1989 I Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador
- 1985 XVIII Bienal Internacional de Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 1984 Jovenes Creadores, Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas  
Exposición 1984, Universidad Simon Bolivar, Venezuela
- 1983 Autorretratos, Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas  
Alternativaza I, Ateneo de Caracas
- 1982 Proyecto OVSI, Sala Mendoza, Caracas
- 1981 Accion en Margarita, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Francisco Narváez, Venezuela
- 1979 Multimedia Internacional, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
Arte Correo, Sao Paulo, Brazil  
Video Tape Show, New York University, New York
- 1977 Reunion de Artistas y Criticos Latinoamericanos, Sala Mendoza, Caracas
- 1975 Jovenes Dibujantes, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas
- 1973 Grafica Internacional, Galeria Conkright, Caracas  
Happenings in different public spaces with young people using the grid canvas in different situations  
Grid canvas mailed to different people in the United States and Canada: use of the canvas documented and returned to the artist
- 1972 Impenetrable, Ateneo de Caracas, Venezuela  
Espinoza, June 1972, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela  
Colectiva de Dibujos, Ateneo de Caracas  
Series of experiments with Claudio Perna, using photography, films and record tapes.
- 1971 Joven Actualidad Venezolana, Estudio Actual, Caracas  
Salon Arturo Michelena, Valencia, Venezuela  
El Hatillo: placement of grid canvas in different landscapes, documented in photography  
La Trinidad: placement of a line (1 meter wide contact paper) in different landscapes  
Tachon series in wood placed and photographed in different landscapes  
Three Instalations at Casa de la Cultura, Maracy, Venezuela

## Selected Books and Catalogues

- Laseca, Roc. *Retro/Retrospectiva*. Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, Spain (2016)
- Fuenmayor, Jesus. *Unruly Supports (1970-1980)*. Perez Art Museum Miami (2015)
- Fuenmayor, Jesus. *Impulse, Reason, Sense, Conflict. Abstract Art from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection*. Miami (2014)
- Mergel, Jen and Munsell, Liz in consultation with Fuenmayor, Jesus. *Permission to be Global Latin American Art from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection*. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, (2013)
- Johnson-Montenegro, Donald and Bruder, Anne. *Conceptual Geographies/Frames and Documents. Selections from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection*. Miriam and Ira D.Wallach Art Gallery, New York (2013)
- Moreno, Gean. *Eugenio Espinoza Going Blind Faith*, Blackston Gallery, New York (2013)
- Moralels, Rene. *Space as Medium*, Miami Art Museum, Miami (2009)
- Portillo, Zelma. *Eugenio Espinoza. Colección Arte Venezolano*. (2009)
- Frank, Nicholas. *Eugenio Espinoza. INOVA, Wisconsin*. (2008)
- Barlow, Margaret. *3 Perspectives. Cisneros-Fontanals Art Foundation*, Miami (2007)
- Museo de Bellas Artes *Dibujos Colecciones Vol II*, Caracas. (2007)
- Fuenmayor, Jesus. *Arte da America do Sul, Ponto de Viragem*. Serralves Museum, (2006)
- Moreno, Gean. *Eugenio Espinoza. artUS, issue 14 July-September* (2006)
- Moreno, Gean. *Self-Archeology: Eugenio Espinoza Impenetrables*. Art Papers July-August (2006)
- Gonzalez, Julieta. *ArtNexus review*. Miami (2006)
- Costa, Eduardo. *Eugenio Espinoza: Beyond Geometry, Conceptualism and Earth Art. Arte al Dia* (2005)
- Benko, Susana. *Eugenio Espinoza: Tequenos*. Museo Carlos Cruz Diez, Caracas (2004)
- Geo-Metries. Latin American Geometric Abstraction from the Cisneros Collection*, New York (2003)
- NY Arts - International Edition, Vol 8, No 6-8* (2003)
- ArtNexus - Art Miami* (2003) *Geometria como Vanguardia*, Fundacion Banco Mercantil (2002)
- Fin de Mundo*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas (2000)
- Christies, Auction to benefit the Institute of Contemporary Art (1999)
- La Invencion de la Continuidad*, Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas (1997)
- Latin American Art*, Phaidon (1996)
- CCS-10*, Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas (1993)
- Once Tipos*, Juan Carlos Palenzuela (1993)
- Orla*, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Sofia Imber, Caracas (1992)
- Arte de America*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas (1988)
- Eugenio Espinoza, Paez, Pellegrino*, Museo de Arte Moderno Jesus Soto (1987)
- Abstract Art Today*, Venezuelan Art Center, New York (1987)
- Al Filo de la Modernidad*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas (1986)
- Eugenio Espinoza, Venezuela en la XVIII Bienal de Sao Paulo*, Museo de Bellas Artes (1985)
- Karakana*, Museo de Arte La Rinconada, Caracas (1985)
- Blanco, Lurdes, Coincidentes*, Museo de Barquisimeto, (1984)
- Zanini, Walter, *11 Tipos*, Universidade de Sao Paulo, New York University (1976)
- Espinoza*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas (1972)

### **Permanent Collections (partial list)**

Tate Modern, London, U.K.  
 MOMA, New York, NY, USA  
 Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, USA  
 Museum of Fine Arts Boston, MA, USA  
 Fine Arts Museum of Houston, Texas, USA  
 Miami Art Museum, Miami, Florida, USA  
 The Harn, Gainesville, FL, USA  
 Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA, USA  
 Museo de Arte Moderna de Sao Paulo, Brazil  
 Museo de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
 Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela  
 Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela  
 Museo de Artes Visuales Alejandro Otero, Caracas, Venezuela  
 Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Caracas, Venezuela  
 Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Barquisimeto, Venezuela  
 Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Bogota, Colombia  
 Fundacion Gego The Cisneros Collection, New York, NY  
 Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, Florida, USA  
 Tanya Capriles De Brillembourg Collection, Madrid, Spain  
 IdeoBox, Miami, Florida, USA  
 Commerce Bank, Caracas, Venezuela  
 Banco Mercantil, Caracas, Venezuela

### **Honors/Awards**

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, 2017  
 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, 2011  
 III Bienal de Guayana, First Prize - 1992  
 Young Artists Exhibition, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Sofia Imber - 1989



The image shows the exterior of a modern, white, single-story building under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The building has a clean, minimalist design with large windows and recessed lighting fixtures. Two young trees are planted in front of the building on a grassy area, each supported by wooden stakes. The overall scene is bright and clear.

**Atchugarry**  
ART CENTER





## PIERO ATCHUGARRY GALLERY

Piero Atchugarry gallery presents a contemporary art program and modern art survey. The gallery opened to the public in November 2013 with a Post-War Italian art exhibition. By January 2014 the gallery moved to a large stable adapted as an exhibition space in Garzón. In this space the program allowed outdoor and indoor proposal exploration, through the creation of dialogue between architectural features and curatorial practices.





On December 2018, the program expanded to North America with a second location, a 9000 square feet warehouse on 5520 NE 4th Avenue in the Design District neighborhood. The participation of the gallery in what is a boiling art community that connects Europe, Latin America and both coasts of the United States represents the commitment of the program to support and present the work of local and international artists with an institutional approach.



Piero**Atchugarry**  
GALLERY





