ARTIST STATEMENT

Edgar Endress: A Celestial Emporium
January 16 — February 17, 2018

My research and art practice has been centered on five major areas that I have been developing in parallel. My art process is centered in a strong conceptual research frame where material and forms appear as consequences of the mechanism that best serves to deliver the concept, with a strong entanglement with the socio-cultural context where the project take place. My research and art practice has been centered on five major areas that I have been developing in parallel and they influence each other.

Syncretism and “mestizo” baroque in the Andes region: My work began with the body of work that was originally based on the various power structures and influences exercised over the Latino-American social fabric, particularly in response to the dictatorial process of the 70’s and 80’s. As a consequence my research centered on the colonial and post-colonial tensions that religion and militarism historically imposed on the region. The power structure and the forms of resistance in South America have long manifested themselves in the imaginary, being particularly visible in the Andes region. Through research, my practice has integrated the “mestizo” Baroque that is predominantly displayed in churches and convents. Mestizo Baroque is a platform to question notions of representation and forms of dominance and resistance through the mechanism of art making. In my work, I also integrate aspects of contemporary critical discussion about the art practice in South America that re-vindicated traditional manifestations that includes popular culture, carnival, and indigenous. In that context my work re-吸收s popular expressions and materials like embroidery, traditional craftwork, or materials regarded as lower quality. From that perspective I developed of a production platform, ASCHOY (Asociacion Chojcha de la Hoyada), which is a collaborative group based in La Paz, Bolivia. From my interest in popular culture, I expanded into social practice. Work in textile and vernacular painting, carving and generating a dialogue with native groups in the Chaco, Paraguay, and the south of Chile started to become central to my practice.

Displacement in the Caribbean: This research focus began by documenting objects discarded by migrants entering the islands, with the collaboration of Lori Lee, an anthropological archaeologist. This body of work examines immigration to the U.S. Virgin Islands in various forms and through different organizing principles. Multiple projects about displacement in the Caribbean have been developed as part of the broader “Bon Dieu Bon” (Good God Good) project. The concept of Baggage centers on the backpack of a Haitian immigrant and its contents. The research for this project brought me to Haiti where I established a strong bond with the art community. As a consequence, I am developing several projects there.

“Transfer: is a second body of work related to the Caribbean. Migration is, and always has
been, a way of life in the Caribbean. Migrations have been critical for shaping the mental landscapes of the local populations in the past and present. This multifaceted project explores varying degrees of transhumance, including temporary tourists, short-term and long-term migrations, and permanent migrations both legal and illegal. Part of this project has been to research and recompose the imaginary of the islands by exploring the extensive but scattered documentation at the National Archive. These materials are then brought back to the Virgin Islanders and presented on the islands to mitigate colonialism.

Participatory art, collective actions, and community-based projects: In 2007, I created the “Floating Lab Collective”. The core of the collective is a group of metropolitan DC-based artists with a strong emphasis in academic research and social participation. Floating Lab Collective was designed to integrate diverse groups of people in different aspect of the process: students, scholars, community, people with different types of expertise to participate in the research process and working collectively on a complex, creative environment of performances, engagement, and media art production and fabrication, without the restraint of the institutional space. The main idea is to expand the space of art into public space and to enlarge the discourse about contemporary art and the interrelation of art and life. Since its foundation FLC has been a partner/collaborator with Provisions library, a research center for art and social change. The projects created by Floating Lab collective investigate relationships between ethics and aesthetics and develop a social platform outside the normative institution frames. Following its inception, FLC has expanded to incorporate artists, community members, and experts in other regions—nationally and internationally, to focus on social practice in local contexts.

Media art and interactivity: I began my art practice as a media maker. Video art and film production are at my foundation as an artist. As a new media artist I continually integrate new technologies of production. New Media as a cannibalistic medium quickly adapts into the investigation of forms and experiments in interactivity and expanded media. I have elaborated a series of video installation and interactive pieces. I have participated with a contemporary music ensemble and, in general, my media art practice relates to various areas of research incorporating new media and new technologies. I developed a New Media Experimental Lab at George Mason University to create a platform of research and fabrication. It is a place to activate sustainable and creative research with a social frame of the use and integration of old and new technologies.

My interest in developing a larger understanding of material culture and the life of objects as mnemonic markers, translated into a series of ongoing projects that relates to objects, economics, and materials. This research explores our social response to memory and the objects that we discard or we resell as mechanisms of exchange and value. Flea markets, thrift stores, and secondhand stores where the possession, dispossession, and repossess of the object and its transit through different experiences are the central components of this part of my research. In an object biography, an object can transform from an object to be disposed of into a personal treasure or a status signifier. The projects developed here range from repurposing discarded furniture or recomposing tchotchkes into larger pieces reflecting on ecological issues and creating new narratives with found books.