



STRATUM. A geo-aesthetic intervention by Luis Carrera-Maul

Original title in Spanish: *STRATUM. Una intervención geo-estética de Luis Carrera-Maul*

Curator: Peter Krieger

University Museum of Sciences and Art (MUCA), University City Campus, Mexico City

Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte, MUCA Campus, CDMX

July 30 to October 29, 2022

Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

STRATUM is a geo-aesthetic intervention by artist Luis Carrera-Maul, which aims to stimulate critical debates on the non-sustainable management of planet Earth in the present epoch of the Anthropocene. It is an artificial landscape, that reproduces the outlines and volumes of the volcanoes in the Valley of Mexico, covered with industrial waste produced by *Ánfora*, a ceramics company in Pachuca in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico. This geomorphological relief contrasts with the human impact: a layer of industrial disposals is covering the emblematic mountain scenery – an alarming example of the present situation in which the Earth’s techno-mass (all human-made products, such as cities, infrastructures, etc.) weighs more than its bio-mass.

The artist traces the installation on a map of the Mexican basin’s magnetic fields, which is used for the extraction of metals in the subsoil strata. The basin’s natural landscape is a human construct: hyper urbanized, eroded, intoxicated, and exploited; it is a paradigmatic **STRATUM** of the Anthropocene. The layers of constructions as well as garbage cover the soil, and generate the new stratum of the Anthropocene. While the ceramics waste is earth material, the polystyrene seed trays, which the artist placed in the center of the installation, have long cycles of biological decomposition. Yet, in these fractured structures plants grow, generating an autopoietic vegetal propagation, under adverse conditions – a sign of hope, which the artist sows in this museum, converted into a laboratory and greenhouse.

In this installation, different temporalities collide: the short cycles of extraction-production-waste of ceramics, the persistence of polystyrene, and the rapid growth of wild vegetation (permanently irrigated during the exhibition). A three-dimensional image of a geo-landscape emerges, with plastic strength and visual tensions, a landscape with pathways for visitors, for contemplation and provocation of the senses. **STRATUM** is a metamorphic installation, a gigantic, vivid still life (in Spanish *naturaleza muerta / naturaleza viva*), sublime and disquieting. **STRATUM** provides evidence of the complex relation between aesthetics and geology, as conceptualized by Alexander von Humboldt more than two centuries ago: this is the art of Earth in the Anthropocene.

STRATUM offers alternative perspectives on environmental problems. It also stimulates transdisciplinary dialogues between the sciences and the humanities, benefitting from the diverse knowledge production at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). In particular, the exhibition recalls the original experimental mission of the MUCA. This monumental work of art is the product of artistic research carried out at UNAM’s Faculty of Arts and Design, receiving scientific



feedback from various institutes and departments, such as those of Geophysics and Biology, as well as from the University City Ecological Reserve (REPSA), the University's Interdisciplinary Program on Soils (PUEIS) and the Coordination of Research on Sustainability (COUS).

An **ACADEMIC PROGRAM** accompanies this geo-aesthetic intervention: a series of 12 interviews with academics which reflect on this work from different disciplinary perspectives, such as geology, biology, edaphology, and other sciences of sustainability, as well as architecture, urbanism, and aesthetic research / art history.

On September 21st, a colloquium will take place in the MUCA auditorium on the concept and the projects of geo-aesthetics. As a special event, in the forum of the art installation, the architect Hannes Schwertfeger will deliver a workshop on the innovative sustainable technology of constructive botany (*Baubotanik* in German).

THE ARTIST Luis Carrera-Maul, trained as an industrial engineer, philosopher, and painter at the art schools of Barcelona, Nottingham, and Berlin, has exhibited his work in many museums and galleries in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, the UK, and Germany, the highlight being *Metonímias*, an installation at the San Carlos National Museum in Mexico City in 2012. He has been the founding director of LAGOS since 2018, an art center in Mexico City with residencies for international contemporary artists. Since his early career, Carrera-Maul thematizes environmental topics in his work.

Personal homepage: <https://luiscarreramaul.com/>

Homepage LAGOS: <https://www.artelagos.mx/>

THE CURATOR Peter Krieger, Ph.D. in art history (University of Hamburg, Germany, 1996), is Research Professor at the Institute of Aesthetic Research and Professor at the Graduate Programs of Architecture and Art History at the UNAM. In 2016 he held the Aby Warburg Professorship at the Hamburg Warburg Haus. His research and publications deal with the aesthetics, history, theory, and political iconography of cities and landscapes. Since the late 1990s, Krieger has been a pioneer in research on eco-aesthetics. He is an occasional curator of art and photography exhibitions.

Institutional homepage: http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/peter_krieger

Personal homepage: <https://www.peterkrieger-ecoaesthetics.com/>

Information on the exhibition and the academic program (in Spanish): <https://muca.unam.mx/>

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