

Uniwersytet im Magdaleny Abakanowicz w Poznaniu

**A review leading to the conferment of a Doctor of Arts degree in the field of the arts, in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation to Mr. Pablo Ramírez González.**

**Artistic and pedagogical achievements.**

Pablo Ramírez González, born in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1990, is a highly dedicated artist who embodies a conscientious, mature, and exploratory approach to art and education. His diverse achievements encompass solo exhibitions, group collaborations, and significant pedagogical activity.

Pablo Ramírez González has an extensive portfolio of solo exhibitions, including *Plantifictions* (2023) at the Contemporary Museum in Wrocław, Poland; *Zabilar Gardening Light Harvesting Sun* (2023) at Gallery Forma, Oleśnica, Poland; and *LifeLike-Invoking Ghosts* (2023) with Ioanna Turkan at Gallery La Cave, Cluj, Romania. In 2022, he presented *Chinampa Lab* at the Domie Gallery, Poznań, Poland. His previous exhibitions include *Monster Abyss* (2021) at Kunstmatrix ASP, Wrocław, Poland; *Jungleporn* (2020) at Recepcja, Wrocław, Poland; *Alquimia Social* (2019) at University Library Miguel Salinas, Cuernavaca, Mexico; *Barranca Negra* (2018) at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Valencia, Spain; *Ooteca Diorama del Antropoceno* (2018) with the Los Salvajes collective at El Amate, Mexico; *COADNABACED* (2017) at the Museum of Cuernavaca City, Cuernavaca, Mexico; *Garden Anthropologies* (2015) at Galeri7/8, Cuernavaca, Mexico; and *Levantamientos* (2013) at La Chicatana, Cuernavaca, Mexico.

He has also participated in many group exhibitions, such as the Triennale of Young Artists (2023) at the Sculpture Center in Orońsko, Poland, with *Cybershamanic Garden*. At the *In a World That Is No Longer There* (2023) exhibition at Museum ODS, ASP, Wrocław, Poland, he exhibited *Antimatter >> Plantation* and *The No-Time of Cloning*. He also took part in *Change* (2023) at Galeria Geppart, Wrocław, Poland, with *Sampling With Mushrooms*. In 2022, he participated in the *Symposium Sztuki* at Shif, Morawa, Poland; *Acasă: O lume între uitare și persistență* in Romania; *Survival 20* in Wrocław, Poland; *Bodies in Process* at Gallery Neon, ASP, Wrocław, Poland; and *DESIGN: From Concept to Implementation* in Wrocław, Poland.

Collaborating with Aleksandra Kubacka, he created *LAS Przekrój* (2021) at the *Festiwal SC* in Rogalinko, Poland. Other exhibitions include *Asymetria!* at Sztuka na Miejscu Gallery in Wrocław, Poland; *History of Art in Tomatoes* at Entropia Gallery in Wrocław, Poland; and *Lifelike* at the *Symposium Sztuki "Było Jest i Będzie,"* in collaboration with Ioana Turcan, in Morawa, Poland.

In 2018, he joined the *Festival Intramurs* at Galería Rector Pesset in Valencia, Spain; *Mediapolitic 2* at Standard Gallery in Valencia, Spain; *COINCIDIR* at the Cultural Center Amate in Cuernavaca, Mexico; and *Tocate ésta* at La Presidencia Gallery in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

From 2013 to 2017, he exhibited *Palmera Ardiendo* at the University Library Miguel Salinas in Cuernavaca, Mexico; *City Museum of Cuernavaca, Fragmentos* in Cuernavaca, Mexico; *Sobre Paredes* at La Tallera Siqueiros in Cuernavaca, Mexico; *Inmobiliaria* in Cuautla, Mexico; *TRUEQUE* at Galería UCLM in Cuenca, Spain; *Video Compilation* at Fac Artes, UAEM, in Cuernavaca, Mexico; and *Reticular* at the Cultural Center El Amate in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Pablo is also a co-founder of the Los Salvajes collective and the Alquimia Social project. He has received awards from AirWro OverdueTimeOff (2021) and the Symposium of Contemporary Art in Mexico (PAC) (2021). He was also awarded a CoNACYT scholarship from the National Council of Science and Technology (2017-2021).

During his PhD studies at the ASP Doctoral School in Wrocław, Pablo Ramírez González fostered a series of collaborations with his supervisor, Prof. Tomasz Opania. He conducted workshops at Prof. Tomasz Opania's Mediation Studio for master's and undergraduate students. These workshops explored the critical and discursive aspects of art, covering topics such as collaborative art, biopolitics, archival practices, performance in social spaces, ecology, and decoloniality.

In addition to teaching classes and conducting workshops, he also provided tutorials to students. In 2022, he participated in the Symposium of Art Research, organised by the Dean of the Doctoral School, Jakub Jernajczyk. His presentation, 'Decolonizing Art Research,' addressed the importance of fostering diverse ways of thinking critically and engaging with art.

In 2021, he collaborated with Diego Valades on the 'Kuchnia' project, an insightful exploration of alternative didactic and pedagogical practices at ASP in Wrocław.

During the MALTA Festival, he conducted two workshops while simultaneously presenting his solo exhibition, 'Chinampa Lab,' at DOMIE in Poznań, Poland. The workshops, titled 'Webbing with Plants' and 'Unlearning Botantics,' reflect his innovative approach to art education.

Beyond these activities, he was part of the pedagogic team at Museo Jumex, the largest contemporary art collection in Latin America. There, he contributed to the museum's critical perspective on art pedagogy in Mexico City. Additionally, from 2014 to 2015, he was a member of the collective 'Guerrilla Pedagógica' at the Casa Siqueiros Museum in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Pablo Ramírez González is a dedicated and multifaceted artist with a mature artistic practice and valuable educational contributions. His portfolio, featuring numerous solo and group exhibitions across Europe and Latin America, highlights his exploratory and interdisciplinary approach to art. He is deeply involved in collaborative and ecological art practices. His pedagogical contributions, from workshops and tutorials to symposium presentations, reflect his commitment to fostering critical thinking with his interest in decolonisation being of particular note.

**Review of Pablo Ramírez González's doctoral work: MESOAMERICAN MATERIALISMS AS ECOSYSTEMS OF RESISTANCE: Decolonizing Botantics in the Context of Plants from the Global South.**

From the earth heaped on the floor networks of cables emerge like the roots of a rhizome. The cable shoots, interweaving with plants, pass through the various elements of Pablo Ramírez González's installation *PLANTIFUNCTIONS*, inter-connecting them into a bio-electric organism. Plants, ceramic objects, chains, fans, lamps, Arduino boards, synthesisers, and other devices accumulate within the structure of a metal system. On the one hand, the rigid frames correlate with being embedded in a system and the resulting limitations. On the other, their open construction hold the potential for growth and expansion - like a spreading system's tentacle or a growing rhizome. The ambiguity of associations is heightened by a segment of the installation being built into the transition between rooms. A work that while blocking passage, simultaneously becomes it. Similar to the open chains in Ramírez González's work, which seem to perform a conductive rather than restrictive function. The chain links connect with the metal installation and become part of the ceramic objects. The totemic forms in clay resemble ritual vessels. Their undulating, root-like structures relate to the forces of nature and the symbolism of Tlaloc, the Mesoamerican deity revered as the god of rain, water, and fertility, and known for his association with mountains.

Clay, as the author writes, evokes memories of rivers that once flowed in the places of its origin. Aiming to engage in a dialogue with Mesoamerican material traditions, the artist experiments with ancient ceramic firing techniques, while exploring how they can be reflected in his artistic practice. Inspired by the use of clay by the Olmecs from the early pre-classical era, he seeks materials endowed with the capacity to interact, those which can generate and conduct energy. Literally, as thanks to a layer of natural graphite that settles on them during firing, Ramírez González's ceramic objects conduct electricity.

The *PLANTIFUNCTIONS* installation casts a laboratory-like aura with its radiating light, transforming the colour of the viewer's skin. Integral to the installation, the lamps are akin to incubator lighting and emit a subdued purple light. This light not only promotes plant growth but also creates an immersive space for experiencing new scenarios of human-plant integration.

In Ramírez González's work, the vibrant essence of plants, crucial in indigenous mythologies, is interwoven with varied materialities and technologies. The artist constructs devices that enable listening to the plants and the experiments through their sonification. His exhibition, *ZABILAR: GARDENING LIGHT, HARVESTING SOUND*, invites us to listen to Aloe vera – a plant celebrated for its medicinal benefits. Accompanying it are clay objects that themselves resemble succulents. Their forms mimic the robust fleshy leaves of aloe, ending in a sharp spike. The work takes on the structure of a speculative fabulation, where the properties of aloe combine with technology to create sounds and images. Organic-robotic sculptures serve as conductors, and the sounds generated by the plants initiate visualisations.

In the installation titled *ANTI-MATTER PLANTATION AND NO TIME OF CLONING*, the artist focuses on the *Musa Paradisiaca* plant and its cloning processes. The work resembles a diorama, where a banana tree grows out of a sticky clay object. Its delicate stems and juicy green leaves contrast with the black, tentacle-like structure of the clay sculpture. It is unclear whether the sculpture is a vessel from which the plant grows or a spiky capsule that engulfs it. Next to it, like its mutant or amalgam, stands another black object in the form of a climbing structure created from twisted rhizomes. The work addresses the issue of plantations, perceived as simplified ecosystems, threatening the vitality of the planet and serving to increase asset values for future investments.

“Every avocado tree in Michoacán is ghosted by the multi-species of previous forests that were set on fire by the avocado producers, seeking to expand the crops of their fruit industry.” This is a

preview of a narrative that explores the ongoing consequences of the colonial exploitation of plant life, its impact on biodiversity, but also its impact on a cultural heritage. Pablo Ramírez González focuses his research on plants endemic to the Global South regions, such as *Monstera deliciosa*, *Musa paradisiaca* (banana plant), *Aloe vera*, and *Persea americana* (avocado). These plants originate from a Mesoamerica where colonial dynamics —over 500 years post-conquest— still impact the present. Here, traditional indigenous herbalist practices and medicinal plant studies continue alongside Western methods. Typically seen in a Eurocentric context as detached from their colonial and geographic roots, these plants undergo commodification as exotic goods. Ramírez González aims to reveal the intricate histories of their spread and usage in today's global markets, focusing on the necropolitics that threaten their native territories' viability, while also highlighting and reinforcing the indigenous knowledge and associated practices.

For Pablo Ramírez González, art and the ideas that circulate around them are “intermingled processes of craftwork-theory.” His theoretical work is intricately woven into his practice. He weaves specific concepts from Mesoamerican materialist philosophy into his artistic experiments. Incorporating the idea of decolonizing plants from the Global South into his practice, he views these Mesoamerican materialisms as ecosystems of resistance. As Ramírez González points out, “This novel framework rooted in indigenous epistemologies serves as a political world-building practice within and against the ecosystems of Necrocene and Plantationocene, that is to say beyond the colonial ‘ontologies of occupation’.” Here he develops a critical area of research that challenges the hegemonic views on nature and botanical knowledge as seen through a colonial lens, as further evidenced in his stories about plants from the Global South. His investigations also explore multi-species communication, plant kinship, decolonial botany, hauntology, and material agency. Ramírez González’s advocates a space of multi-species companionship and becoming-with plants, with the aim of forging alternative futures through interspecies communication, narrative work, and more-than-human entanglements.

Delving into research on the wisdom of non-human entities, Ramirez Gonzalez points out that many concepts within the new materialisms, such as the vital materiality of Jane Bennett or the agential realism of Karen Barad, are developed without referencing any indigenous theorists, despite significant parallels. Indigenous thinkers have been exploring ideas around non-human agency for millennia, and today they continue to expand that ontological research into contemporary concerns such as the environmental crisis, material agency, and political ecology. In his work, Ramírez

González presents the contributions of indigenous scholars such as Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith who, in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, strongly criticises the historical violence that much research has made on indigenous people, and points out the uselessness of much of that knowledge. These scholars highlight the urgent need to develop alternative methodologies within academia. Ramírez González is particularly drawn to Rivera Cusicanqui's ch'ixi concept, which he uses to describe the mestizo essence of his work, where indigenous knowledge and Western culture blend. Moreover, the concept of “kincentric ecology” detailed by Enrique Salmón and his analysis of the iwigara notion have significantly enriched Ramírez González's research. The work of anthropologist Marisol De La Cadena, particularly her book *Earth Beings*, has also been influential. The artist rejects hierarchical structures that marginalise such knowledge and proposes alternative epistemologies rooted in relations with non-human entities.

Pablo Ramírez González approaches the burdens of colonial heritage with the Donna Haraway concept known as “staying with the trouble”. He embodies a commitment to fully engage with the world's complex and challenging realities, rather than simply seeking quick fixes or ignoring such ecological and social issues altogether. Inspired by Haraway, he champions the idea of forming kinships with the myriad forms of life on Earth, advocating for collaborative efforts across species and environments to foster more sustainable futures. Ramírez González advocates abandoning anthropocentrism in favour of enhancing interspecies entanglements, a key aspect of relational ontologies. He draws on the concept of the Chthulucene —a term coined by Haraway to underscore the significance of storytelling and myth as fundamental components of rational knowledge. Pursuing this pathway, the artist forges new interspecies links, crafts archaeological narratives, and develops science-fiction constructs.

The exhibition *CYBERSHAMANIC GARDEN* is a speculative science-fiction narrative that merges the ancient with the modern by rooting its story in the Mesoamerican myth of Cipactli, while employing contemporary technological media. This fusion not only revitalises an old tale but also prompts reflection on how technology can reinterpret and preserve cultural myths in modern contexts.

The *CHINAMPA LAB* exhibition merges the characteristics of a laboratory with those of a ritual site. It features an intricate network of tangled wires, circuits, electrodes, and monitors, which integrate seamlessly with shamanic vessels and plants. This setup is encased within a tensegrity structure

crafted from branches, evoking the Chinampa —an ancient, multi-species agro-hydrological technology developed by the Mexica (Aztecs). This technology involved creating floating farms on the shallow lake wetlands of Mexico. Echoing the Chinampa ecosystem, where entanglements of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers coexist with human beings, Ramírez González's work weaves together diverse materialities with a flow of bioelectric signals, adding an element that appears to invoke shamanic spirits.

Pablo Ramírez González's work promotes the idea that we need to open up our sense of identity to wider relations and to the multiplicity of other axes and entities. It stands in opposition to the notion of identity as something closed and fully-formed. He constructs installations as living environments that are in an ongoing process, perpetually evolving and becoming, much like a living being whether human or otherwise. The diverse elements —both physical and digital— in his installations mutually permeate, offering themselves to and enriching each other. They facilitate new gestures and transmutations, crossing certain thresholds to create new spaces.

Through the various objects, materials, and media that make up these installations, Ramírez González generates a circulating flow —a movement that is elemental to his practice. Into that flow an unpredictable element is introduced through the participation of the visitor. This participation not only transforms the visitor's experience from passive observation to active engagement, but also makes them an integral part of the whole by weaving them into its evolving nature.

On the one hand, Ramírez González's multi-sensory exhibitions resemble ritualistic spaces where visitors can experience the tactile sensations of clay objects, feel the pulsing of plants, smell the earth, bask in the warmth emitted by grow lights, and be immersed in an ambient soundscape. On the other, the carefully designed arrangements bring to mind archaeological excavations, where each unearthed item is treated with exceptional care, preserved, and meticulously analysed.

Ramírez González, currently residing in Poland, has created several site-specific works in the nearby forests. One notable piece, *LAS PRZEKRÓJ* (in collaboration with Aleksandra Kubacka) is located in the Rogalinko settlement forest and consists of a three-meter cubic structure made from multiple layers of assorted woods. This sculpture resembles a massive tree trunk cross-section, capturing the passage of time. The artists gathered wood from surrounding sawmills with the intention of returning it to its original site, symbolising a restoration of sorts. In a political context, the sculpture gains symbolic significance; it serves as a reminder of the mass tree felling sanctioned

in recent years by Poland's previous administration, and of the precarious state of Polish forests, exacerbated further by climate change. Echoing Maya Lin's *Ghost Forest* —an impactful environmental art installation featuring forty-nine dead Atlantic White Cedar trees from New Jersey's Pine Barrens, a region affected by rising sea levels and saltwater infiltration— *LAS PRZEKRÓJ* stands as a silent monument, a form of disturbance and protest.

In the Morawa forest, the project *MYCELIUM NETWORKS OF STICKY TRANSMISSIONS* demonstrates of interspecies communications. Here Ramírez González examines the interactions between a fallen beech tree and the *Meripilus giganteus* fungi that colonise it. He depicts how the tree's fall initiates a new life and fosters interspecies collaboration, highlighting the continuity and interdependence within nature. His research explores the fungi's role in creating mycorrhizal networks, which connect various plants and are essential for distributing information across the ecosystem. Employing bio-sonification techniques, the artist invites us to listen in depth to the invisible processes of nature, thereby broadening our appreciation and understanding of ecosystems.

Pablo Ramírez González installations are spaces where plants, objects, and technologies form post-nature entanglements, advocating for alternative narratives about the past, present, and future. These provoke contemplation of other possible modes of existence and interaction with our environment, challenging the constraints of traditional Western ontologies.

## **Conclusion**

Pablo Ramírez González works create immersive, synesthetic and intriguing spaces where plants, objects, and technology establish post-natural entanglements in support of alternative narratives about the past, present, and future. By intertwining ancient spiritual practices with contemporary technological methods, his installations function as both living laboratories and ritual sites where new kinships are cultivated and experienced. His work urges us to broaden our sense of identity to encompass relationships with multiple axes and entities. It provokes us to reconsider what we are becoming. His multifaceted approach challenges viewers to reconsider the roles of agency and materiality in ecological and cultural entanglements, emphasising the urgent need to deepen our understanding and respect for non-human beings. Both his theoretical and practical work invite reflections on alternative ways of being and interacting with our environment beyond the constraints imposed by traditional Western ontologies. His knowledge and awareness extend beyond art and into contemporary socio-political contexts, with his reflections and critiques of



colonial politics resonating with current global events. Pablo Ramírez González's work is profoundly relevant today, providing a crucial voice in an era marked by populism, anger, and political violence.

Finally, Pablo Ramírez González approach to his text, his objects and his issues is thoughtful, insightful and inspirational. Academically speaking the thesis is exceptional. It conforms to academic standards of scholarship. The citations, bibliography and formatting are appropriate and proper. The sources illuminating and relevant. The titles for both the practical and theoretical work are appropriate. The text, artwork and methodology, distinctive and exceptional.

Pablo Ramírez González's doctoral dissertation and work titled: *Mesoamerican Materialisms as Ecosystems of Resistance: Decolonizing Botany in the Context of Plants from the Global South* demonstrates in-depth research that combines humanistic reflection with innovative artistic experimentation. After thoroughly reviewing his body of work and dissertation, I affirm that both the theoretical and practical works meet the requirements set forth in the Act on Academic Degrees and Titles and in the field of Art, and constitute an original artistic achievement. Therefore, I fully recommend awarding Mr. Pablo Ramírez González the title of Doctor of Arts in the discipline of Fine Arts and Art Conservation.



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