

Between Bridges
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Juan Pablo Echeverri: *Identidad Perdida*
27 April–29 July 2023

Between Bridges is pleased to present *Juan Pablo Echeverri: Identidad Perdida*, a solo exhibition in two parts organised in collaboration with James Fuentes, New York.

The exhibition commemorates the life and work of Bogotá-born artist Juan Pablo Echeverri (1978–2022) whose prolific oeuvre can be read as an exercise of continual re-invention by means of the self-portrait. Translating to *Lost Identity*, the exhibition's title is lifted from a handwritten note taped to the wall in Echeverri's studio and resonates to his practice of defying a flattened, static, and essentialist reading of identity in order to joyfully celebrate a simultaneity of embodiments.

During his teenage years Echeverri began experimenting with a seemingly infinite multiplicity of identity and gender expressions and, in turn, its documentation. The impulse would soon crystallise as a grand ritual for which he'd take every day a portrait in a photo booth collecting the resulting passport-style portraits over the course of 22 years, each time performing neutrality or even a fearlessness in facing his own image. This series, titled *miss fotojapón* (1998–2022) – a wordplay on the homophone *miss / mis* (Spanish for *my*) and the Colombian photo store Foto Japón – comprises a pool of more than 8.000 portraits which Echeverri has exhibited in manifold variations, dimensions, and site-specific installations, shuffling images of himself across time, representing coded expressions through fashion and various formations of cultural appreciations amplifying the transformative potential of the self. For Between Bridges, three panels have been produced in the dimensions of 1 square meter – one size the artist in recent years was favourably disposed towards the series' presentation – showing more than 400 self- portraits each.

This ritual exercise ran parallel to more than 30 series of photographic and video works that disclose Echeverri's infatuation with the performativity of identity. In this way he is inscribed into lineages of artists who explore the medium of the serial self-portrait to inhabit a site for disidentification, as well as those who are embedded in an aesthetics and politics of visual and linguistic hybridity in order to negotiate majority culture from a position of being neither part nor not-part of it. Echeverri created fantastical personas and employed strategies of exaggeration while exhausting what might be considered good taste. Meticulously mimicking stereotypes of the everyday with a sense of both affectionate and parodic representation, he simultaneously appropriated the repertoire of the norm and the non-norm to sabotage normativity.

The artist's series were formally articulated with a sense of space and place as Echeverri thoroughly shaped the design and construction of his frames. Working for over 15 years with a local framer in Bogotá, Echeverri often took specific inspiration from his field investigations, and in his practice turned the photographic series into unique objects and sculptures.

MUTILady (2003), for this show presented in the medium of an exhibition poster and distributed across Berlin and New York, was a one-day-long performance in nine photographed stages for which a hairdresser

was hired to cut and dye Echeverri's hair again and again until stripped off it all, his torso airbrushed with an anatomical painting of the muscles underneath the skin. While the performance's documentation refers to the significance of hair styles as signifiers of a belonging and affection to subcultures and movements, the title – merging *lady* not just with *motilar* (to crop) and *mutation* but also with *mutilation* – further alludes to the work's political dimension and its production during a time of drastic expositions of violence by paramilitary groups informing Colombia's public horizon.

MascuLady (2006), a mimicry of a barbershop street sign common in the Americas, again looks into politics connected to hairdos, this time through a take on then still popular and barely gender-progressive metrosexual-labelled aesthetics.

In later works, Echeverri dissected the affective dimensions of digital technology and relationality. The 60 pieces *futuroSEXtraños* (2016) series is a melancholic meditation on the anonymising black and white silhouette displayed in the profiles of social media dating apps of those who don't want to or can't reveal their real faces, for a variety of reasons. The honeycomb shaped and hyper colourful *PRES.O.S.* (2017) series – the title is a play on the Spanish word for *prisoners* – takes a sharp look at 37 identities Echeverri culled from his memory of seeing people in public, lost in interaction with their mobile phones.

In the downstairs gallery, a selection of Echeverri's home-made (early 2000s) and self-made music videos created wherever he travelled to, are presented as a reel, the latter all belonging to his video series *Around the World in 80 Gays* (2007–2015). They show him dancing and lip-syncing to top-40 songs of those regions he visited as well as his self-produced Spanish and Gay versions of pop songs, and, most staggeringly in its gestural preciseness, presenting his craftsmanship of impersonating and inventing personas that allowed him to inhabit an endless plurality of positions.

Identidad Perdida is organized by some of the people who miss him: Marcela Echeverri, Federico Martelli, Santiago Monge, Viktor Neumann, Sofia Reyes, and Wolfgang Tillmans. In Berlin, the show is embedded in Between Bridges' current program series THESES ON HOPE, echoing Cuban-American scholar José Esteban Muñoz's (1967–2013) thoughts on minority and disidentifcatory performance in their world-making capacity. The second part of the exhibition will take place at James Fuentes, New York, between 7 June–29 July 2023. A monographic publication, published by James Fuentes Press and designed by Other Means, details the wide-ranging works in both exhibitions and features a foreword by Wolfgang Tillmans, an essay by Inti Guerrero and an interview (2012) with the artist.