

02

Kurtkubin



PRECAÓTICA

Isaac De Reza & Craig Jun Li

PRECAÓTICA

OUR MOST EXQUISITE AND CONFOUNDING ACTIONS ARE NOT FOR OURSELVES, EACH OF US IS BUT A POWERLESS SHADOW PUSHED BY A THOUSAND HANDS, WORN AS A GLOVE TO ENACT HAPPENINGS FOR THE INTEREST AND AMUSEMENT OF HIGHER BEINGS. THE IRONY BEING THAT WE OURSELVES CANNOT DETERMINE WHICH SEQUENCES AND SYNCHRONICITIES PROVE TO BE OF AMUSEMENT AND INTEREST TO THESE IDLE ACTORS; THE GAMES THAT THE OMNISCENTS PLAY ARE INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO US. WE UNDERSTAND BY CATEGORIZING, RENDERING OUR DAILY CONCERNS INTO PARABLES, AND PARABLES INTO PAINTINGS. THEY FIND THE PAINTING BANAL, A MAKESHIFT STAGE FOR THE MAIN ACT, WHEN A FLY LANDS ON ITS SURFACE AND DEFECATES. AND WHILE A FIXATION ON THE MINOR DETAIL OF FLY SHIT ON A PAINTING MIGHT SEEM SUPERFLUOUS AS WE SPEAK OF THE CONCURRENCE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, LIKE A TRANSPARENCY LAID OVER A PRINT, IT IS EXACTLY THESE TRACES OF EXCREMENTAL INTERACTION BETWEEN DIMENSIONS, THESE MOST MINOR DETAILS, THAT MAKE OUR FLITTING SHADOWS WORTHY OF APPLAUSE...

There lived a boy who thought himself clever and celebrated contradictions. He loved to misuse the tools of others in his village. With the shoeshiner's brush, he streaked clean dishes. With the washwoman's soap, he dusted the schoolmaster's hair and collar until he looked diseased. From the supermarket he borrowed the labelmaker, beeping and buzzing as it squeezed out barcodes. He printed false names for rice and rolled the stickers into rigatoni tubes before feeding them through mail slots. He always returned what he borrowed before sunset. And it was during one sunset, as he sprinted home from another day of misuse, that he saw a tremendous orange gleam from between the half-shuttered blinds of the oculist's surgical room. The window was unlocked and his form was backlit by the fading solar rays. The shadow of his hand reached the desired option before he did. The next morning, he began to cut.



Craig Jun Li, studio image, 2025. Courtesy of the artist.

He thought of paper dolls, of shadow puppets. Surely a few figures could be sliced by a device meant to separate cataracts from still-functional tissue. He cut the air around people. He started with his mother, then the schoolmaster, followed by the shoeshiner, then the washwoman. He returned to the oculist and cut the air around both doctor and patient. The air peeled away with the crinkle and shimmer of plastic wrap.

They would have a look of relief. Their skin would glow. Adults would age backwards, crows' feet receding into their eyes and blackened teeth fading to white. Children looked both worldly and innocent. But the most bothersome occurrence was their loss of language. They seemed to understand each other implicitly. They glided through their daily tasks in silence. Everything functioned well. They stopped using words. Their mouths would open, as if about to speak, but their lips never fully reached the shapes necessary for an utterance. They lived beyond language. They used pens as props and sat typing on their keyboards with blank screens and serene expressions. The boy soon had cut the space surrounding every person in the village.

No matter how carefully he sliced, the boy could not cut himself out. He traced the rhythms of their daily lives, extracting the space of the objects and actions of those blissful villagers. He meticulously cut for several days and nights until he had carved the whole village away. Everything the boy knew floated away as a cloud with a final stroke of the knife. He buried the knife then walked half a day to the next village and found work as a blacksmith's apprentice.

iQue nos deleitemos en esta Edad Precaótica!

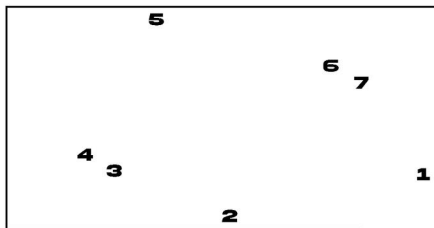
-Layla Fassa



Isaac de Reza, *Seria Tests in the studio (2019)*
Courtesy of the Artist

Isaac De Reza (b. 1996, Mexico City) is a sculpture and performance artist based in Mexico City. He holds a BA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins, London. Isaac's work has been shown in group shows in Lodos Gallery and Proyecto Paralelo Gallery, with performance presentations at Sadie Coles HQ Gallery and Platform Theatre Central Saint Martins.

"CJ" Craig Jun Li (b. 1998, China) is an art worker and artist based in New York. Li's work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions including SYSTEMA, Marseille; François Ghebaly, LA & New York; Taon, Ivey-sur-Seine; ROMANCE, Pittsburgh; Chris Andrews, Montréal; RAINRAIN, New York; September Sessions, Stockholm; hatred 2, New York; Prairie, Chicago; and Canal Projects, New York, among others. Li operates a curatorial project "Benny's Video," currently hosted in a studio sublet in Bushwick.



- 1 Isaac De Reza, "A Section of my Novel Written in Aluminum", 2021
Aluminum sheet engraved with a dremel
17 x 22.8 cm
- 2 Isaac De Reza, *Slave Drone*, 2024
Stainless steel 31.5 x 9 x 9 cm
- 3 Craig Jun Li, "Untitled" (Underwater Above Sea), 2025
SX-70 films, altered SX-70 films, inkjet prints on vintage Kodak photo paper, various mounting tapes, linen mat boards, mounting boards 34 x 31.5 cm each
- 4 Craig Jun Li, "Untitled" (Kyle), 2025
Pigmented silicone, pearlescent pigments, plexiglass, artist's frame 32.1 x 32.1 x 3 cm
- 5 Isaac De Reza, *Discriminati*, 2025
Stainless steel 174 x 21 x 9 cm
- 6 Craig Jun Li, "Untitled" (Bad Clock/Ancient Music), 2025
Silver leaf, vintage water singing bird whistle toys made in Hong Kong, water
7 x 6 x 3 cm each
- 7 Craig Jun Li, "Untitled" (Stereograph), 2025
MDF, polyurethane primer, acrylic paint
152 x 61 x 30 cm