

# PORTFOLIO

2017

[www.pedrogomezegana.net](http://www.pedrogomezegana.net)

## Pedro Gómez-Egaña

My work questions temporality in the intersection between technology and culture. I usually explore this from the perspective of the mechanical, often referring to 19th, and early 20th century industrial progress. I present the powerful and haunting sides structures and mechanisms by making sculptures that move, and that are staged in very specific ways. I device immersive experiences where the audience enters a purpose-built space, or a carefully crafted environment, and I make objects that are transformed through their attention. The question of how the performative aspect of sculpture constructs a sense of time is central to my thinking.

## Aphelion (Sculpture)

Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2016, Kerala, India

Aphelion draws from the history of maritime travel and colonization of the region of Kerala. Citing the writings of Sir Robert Bristow, the engineer responsible for building the harbor of Kochi, and Joseph Conrad's *Mirror of the Sea*, Aphelion includes stories of ships that are found either empty, or carrying dead bodies or disease-ridden pests, as well as myths attributed to optical illusions at sea (*fata morgana*, mirage).



## The Christiania Prime Meridian Monument (Sculpture Performance)

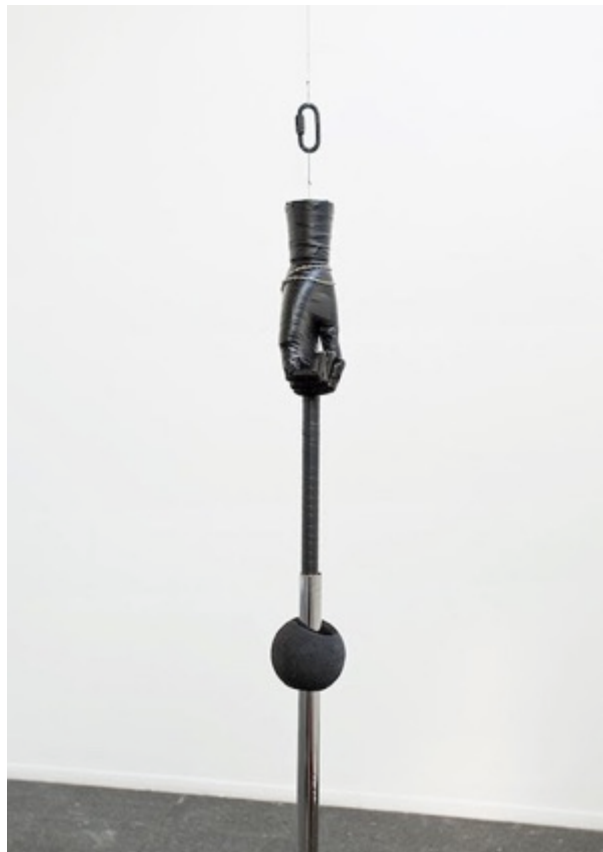
The Autumn Exhibition at Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo, 2016

Transcription of the Inaugural Speech (selected parts) :

“Ladies and Gentlemen, on this day we inaugurate the Christiania Prime Meridian and its monument.

The Prime Meridian is a not just an imaginary line that relentlessly crosses the world from North to South. This is not just an arbitrary division of the world into East and West, and it is not just a marking of the centre of earth, and the mid-point of each and every one of our days. No. This line is the sign of a nation prepared for the relevance and responsibility that centrality confers.

The Prime Meridian represents a very significant human invention. Today its marker lies in the city of London, more exactly in the district of Greenwich. But there was a time when many countries had their own prime meridians: Philadelphia, Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon, Paris, Antwerp, Florence, Kyoto, Mecca, The Great Pyramid of Giza, and Christiania, or Oslo as we now know it. This means that for many years Oslo was the centre of our world, and the centre of our time.”



## The History of Velocity (Sculpture Performance)

Prosjektrom Normanns, Stavanger, 2015 / Hordaland Kunstsenter, Bergen, 2015

In The History of Velocity two mirrored bodies sit amongst an inter-related arrangement of metallic rods, lights and weights. The space seems to fold upon itself as the two figures perpetually motor pieces made out of car hood-ornaments.

We often associate velocity with technology, mechanical power, ceaseless movement and the promise of lines vanishing into the horizon. But velocity can also appear as a paradoxical stillness engendered by two simultaneous and opposing desires: a desire for the etherial glide, evoking the alignment with celestial bodies, and a desire for the feeling of propulsion. In fact velocity, does away with the machine as a whole, and becomes the opposite of motion: a psychological suspense between direction, speed and destruction.



### **Vimana Kiranaavarta Observatory (Sculpture Performance)**

Colomboscope's Shadow Scenes exhibition, Rio Hotel in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2015

The piece refers to Edgar Allan Poe's "A Descent Into the Maelstrom" 1841 and R.L. Brohier's "The Changing Face of Colombo", and a host of historical, botanical and geographical information surrounding the contentious and rich history surrounding Colombo's Komapana Veediya neighborhood. It also refers to the "Vimana Shastra", a text written in the early 20th century by Maharshi Bharadwaaja, that claims to reveal the engineering behind the mystical flying machines of Southern Asia called Vimanas.





## The Great Learning (Sculpture Performance)

Mana Contemporary, 2015

A copper rod stands completely vertical in the exhibition space. It is held in its position by a series of thin microfilament strings that stretch geometrically to several points in the ceiling, and connect to industrial weights that lay on the ground. One of these weights is held down, by a simple attachment, to a rock. When the attachment is manually released, the weights begin to give way and the copper rod falls slowly in diagonal to the architecture of the space. The fall takes approximately 15 minutes, and it is the result of a meticulous balance between the weights on the ground, the weights hanging from the strings at ceiling level, the friction created by the various angles on the string, and the weight of the rod itself.

The Great Learning is the name of one of the main books in Confucianism. It includes reflections on education and a sense of being rooted. In the 1970's the British composer Cornelius Cardew wrote an ensemble piece also called The Great Learning, which was based on the Confucian texts. This work fostered states of collectivity as a means for producing music. In "Paragraph 7", for instance, singers borrow their singing pitch from another singer in the group, generating a slowly evolving gravity towards an un-prescribed unison.



## The Chariot of Greenwich (Sculpture)

Bergen Triennial, Oct. 2013 / Galeria Casas Riegner Oct. 2013

Sculpture based on the Chinese South-pointing chariot, an ancient apparatus attributed to the Yellow Emperor, c. 2,600 BC. The legend tells of a chariot that has the characteristic of always pointing in the same direction, regardless of how it is moved.

Centuries later in England, around the period when the Royal Observatory in Greenwich was established as the location of the prime meridian, the engineer George Lanchester offered his interpretation of the Chinese invention. He proposed that the only way this could ever be possible is by the use of a differential engine, thus marking a parallel between the ancient Chinese mythical machine and British engineering.

The sculpture is a proportionally enlarged, functioning chariot based on Lanchester's interpretation. A stick-and-carrot positioning of a clock pendulum replaces the figure of a South-pointing man ascribed to the original apparatus. A motor concealed in the front of the chariot makes it spin constantly. The movement exhausts the gearing in the chariot, producing a shrieking sound and leaving behind a circular trail of wood residue.

(<http://www.pedrogomezegana.net/#/chariot/>)



## The Kinetoscope of Time (Sculpture Performance)

Knipsu, Bergen, 2011

Kunstneres Hus, Oslo, 2015 – As part of *Oslo Internasjonale Teaterfestival* at Black Box Teater

The audience is invited by a gallery attendant at a given time to enter a dark room with purpose-built seating facing a green velvet curtain. A man enters from the side of the room. He stands in front of the curtain and begins to speak, but he is in fact lip-syncing to a pre-recorded reading of an adaptation from Brander Matthews' *The Kinetoscope of Time*, first published in 1895. (The story is about a man's encounter with a kinetoscope, an early motion picture device. The owner of the kinetoscope offers to show the man his own past, future and death.)

At a given point the performer pulls the curtain, revealing a series of perfectly repeated scenarios of a living room that appears to have been recently, and suddenly, abandoned. The performer then disappears from the 'stage', while the recorded voice continues telling the story of this place, describing, and repeating fragments that allude to a catastrophic reason for the room to have been abandoned. The performer appears once again and closes the curtain. The audience leaves the room. (<http://www.pedrogomezegana.net/kot>)





## The Tristan Chord (Sculpture Performance)

Kunsthall Bergen, 2008 / Blank Projects, Cape Town, 2012 / Casas Riegner, Bogotá, 2013

A paper dinosaur skeleton hangs from the ceiling, as it would in a natural history museum. It is suspended by a system of strings and weights. Every day at a certain time, a gallery attendant enters the room and activates it. A small motor releases the supports according to a predetermined rhythm, making the dinosaur skeleton fall slowly to the ground. When the paper skeleton falls, its fragile body accumulates injuries and decay.

Every time The Tristan Chord is exhibited it is hung differently and thus falls differently – so the hanging translates into a choreography. This choreography is documented through drawings, illustrating how the work is suspended, which are collected in an accompanying archive. Over time, the work will become more abstract as a figure and proportionally grow as an archive. The archive is exhibited with the sculpture, and will be published as a book when the sculpture is destroyed. (<http://www.pedrogomezegana.net/#/tristan/>)



## Domain of Things and Other Histories (Performance)

Oktoberdansen, Bergen, 2010

An audience of 40 people sit in two rows of chairs on either side of the construction making up the physical framework of the piece. On one end of the room is a rack with lights, on the other end a structure comprising a performer lying horizontally underneath a living room scenario when the audience enters.

The positioning of the audience on platforms allows them to see the structure as a cross section: a simultaneous image of an over- and an underground. The construction is supported by a system of metal beams resting on wheels on tracks. The entire mechanism is articulated and interlocked, and the performer moves it forward by slowly moving his body. Eventually the movement of the performer gives way to a series of events: the structure breaks apart in a horizontal movement, a cigarette travels across the space, light passes through windows, and the antenna of a radio begins to circle on its own. At one point the lights on the rack flood the space and reveal a performer climbing the wall behind the lights. The television, which has been showing a looping image of a circular motorway junction throughout, pans over to a blank and flickers. (<http://www.pedrogomezegana.net/domain>)



## The Maelstrom Observatory (Sculpture Performance)

LIAF - Lofoten International Art Festival 2013

An audience of maximum five people enters a small eighteenth-century shed on the island of Svinøya, part of the Lofoten archipelago in northern Norway. They are ushered in by a local woman who instructs them to sit on a wooden bench. The entire area of the floor in front of the bench is covered with a black fabric of a satin-like texture. The door is closed, leaving the inside of the shed completely dark. The pre-recorded sound of a man's voice speaking in English with a thick Norwegian accent starts to play. The text he reads is based on Edgar Allan Poe's 'A Descent into the Maelstrom' (1841). For the first six minutes the piece develops as a radio monologue, listened to in the darkness of the shed. At a certain point the narrator begins to name nearby islands, bays and other geographic landmarks. The list is extensive. Slowly the fabric begins to collect towards the centre of the room as a result of the quiet rotation of a motor with a pole attached to it. The edges of the fabric have been treated so that they make a sound as they slide over the wooden planks. As the fabric moves, the old planks and the gaps between them are revealed. A series of strong lamps have been installed underneath the shed and shoot light up through the cracks. The space is slowly filled with light as the fabric is pulled in. The narrator's voice is heard throughout, concluding with a description of what the audience is to find upon resurfacing from the maelstrom: an apocalyptic scene of devastation, and animals emerging from the ocean to conquer the land. (<http://www.pedrogomezegana.net/maelstrom>)



### **Campo de Fuerzas (performance)**

Torre de los Vientos, Mexico DF 2009 / Marrakech biennial 2009 / Istanbul-Athens-Marrakech biennial exhibition at Palazzo Riso, Palermo 2010

Torre de los Vientos is one of the many monumental sculptures made for Mexico City's first Culture Olympics in 1968. This performance responds to an invitation to take part in a series of interventions that seek to make these historic monuments visible after years of decay and negligence. A paper rocket is slowly dragged in towards the tower while the sound of Lizst's "pensée des morts" is played backwards from inside the sculpture. (<http://youtu.be/6WKfAt3t8hs>)





## Birds (Video-performance)

Brussels Biennial - 2009 / L'appartement 22, Rabat - 2009 / Meneer de Wit, Amsterdam - 2010 / Hordaland Kunstsenter, Bergen - 2010 / Brick and Mortar Video Art Festival, Greenfield, MA - 2010

Rectangular lights of video projections travel across the surface of the walls inside an empty warehouse, while Gustav Holst's *The Planets Suite Op. 32* is playing through speakers into the space. The resulting video, based on the performance, shows the projections as captured by a camera attached to custom-made dollies. Sometimes the constant motion is barely perceptible, at other times the projected light reveals parts of the warehouse, like corners, bricks, or abandoned equipment. At one point the projected light also reveals the artist sitting on a chair playing a thumb harp. Projected text tells a series of anecdotes, stories about people who get lost or fall asleep and are unable to wake up. Drawings of cars illustrate the stories. The anecdotes seem to suggest that the narrator has also been driving and got lost, and ended up in this warehouse in the middle of nowhere. When the accompanying music reaches its climax, the recording camera is detached from the dolly that has carried it and flies out on a wire, gaining perspective and revealing the system that has produced the video: a group of operators pushing the dollies fitted with the camera, video projectors and flashlights. They are moving in circles around the warehouse, following a series of solar-system-like lines painted on the ground. (<http://www.pedrogomezegana.net/birds>)



## Anytime Now (Video)

Brussels Biennial - 2009 / L'appartement 22, Rabat - 2009 / Meneer de Wit, Amsterdam - 2010 / Hordaland Kunstsenter, Bergen - 2010 / Brick and Mortar Video Art Festival, Greenfield, MA – 2010 / BGO1, Bergen - 2010

A series of disasters/accidents are played out with small drawings on a balcony in one of the main streets in Rabat, Morocco. A manifestation is taking place on the same street but -other than at the start of the work- enters the video only as sound. Policemen have lined up to keep the protesters from reaching a government building some meters ahead. As the action with the drawings continues the manifestation grows and the police begin to attack people with batons. The action with the drawings then stops as the performer contemplates the nearby escalating violence and unrest that is still only audible. (<https://vimeo.com/41696052>)



### The Pedro Gómez-Egaña Dublett (Publication and Performance)

The *Pedro Gómez-Egaña Dublett* includes two books: one is an anthology with texts by Elie During, Octavio Zaya, Jacob Wren, and Knut Ove Arntzen, an interview with Bojana Bauer, and an overview of recent works.

The second is the artist book *Mitre Marrows* that includes a series of stories and drawings amounting to a fiction on automata, desire and family. Published by Hordaland Art Centre.

The Mitre Marrows project includes a performance in a lecture format that talks about how two automata possess the artist to write a story about desire, reincarnation and five iconic architectural sites.

(<http://www.pedrogomezegana.net/#/http/www.wielsorg/en/events/664/dublett-bookpresentation/>)



From Mitre Marrows MOMA PS1, New York Art Book Fair, Sept 26, 2014