

PEDRO GÓMEZ-EGAÑA

THE CASPIAN OBSERVATORY

YARAT Contemporary Art Centre, Baku, Azerbaijan

November 9, 2018 – February 10, 2019 (preview November 8)



Pedro Gómez-Egaña, *Kinetoscope of Time* (2015). Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo International Theatre Festival, Black Box Theater, Oslo, Norway, courtesy of the artist

YARAT Contemporary Art Space announces a solo exhibition from Colombian-born, Norway-based artist **Pedro Gómez-Egaña**, opening on 9 November 2018. Showcasing a major new artwork as part of his ongoing 'Observatory' series, Gómez-Egaña creates a multi-sensory, immersive experience, building a large-scale pavilion structure within YARAT's gallery walls. Taking inspiration from the Caspian region, the exhibition coincides with YARAT's *M.A.P. festival* - a multidisciplinary theatre and performance festival taking place across Baku.

Interested in ritualising audiences' experience of space, the pavilion-like structure removes the viewer from their familiar surroundings. Built as a space within a space, mechanical components inside the observatory form independent pod-like segments where viewers experience a haunted, ever changing environment. Uniting characteristic elements of the artist's wider practice - such as choreography and the manipulation of light - Gomez-Egaña modulates the viewers experience of time and narrative, whilst controlling navigation through his purpose-built spaces.

Titled *The Caspian Observatory*, the work takes inspiration from the Norwegian adventurer Thor Heyerdahl's widely contested hypothesis *The Search for Odin*. Through Heyerdahl's numerous visits to Azerbaijan, he observed that the artistic style of rock carvings there resembled those previously found in Norway. He concluded that Azerbaijan was a site of advanced civilisation, with

YARAT

Azeri people migrating north to Scandinavia; he therefore hypothesized that Vikings had their origins in the ancient Caspian region.

For his installation, Gómez-Egaña also incorporates a musical sound element, performed by singers who create a ghostly presence within the space. Combining traditional Norwegian music with Azeri folk music, the installation reflects upon Heyerdahl's debunked theory. Interested in the historical, and geopolitical characteristics of Azerbaijan, Gómez-Egaña says his works '*take a critical look at current and historical technologies and explore how they define our experience and understanding of time*'.

Gómez-Egaña's installation will be presented as part of YARAT's M.A.P. festival which takes place from 6-11 November 2018.

This exhibition is curated by Suad Garayeva Maleki

About the Artist

Pedro Gómez-Egaña was born in Colombia and lives and works between Copenhagen, Denmark and Bergen, Norway. Gómez-Egaña studied music composition, performance, and visual arts at Goldsmiths College, the Bergen National Academy of Arts, and completed his doctoral project in visual arts at the Norwegian Research Fellowship Programme in 2012. Gómez-Egaña's work has exhibited around the world including: the Istanbul Biennial; Brussels Biennial; ICA, London; Kunstnerens Hus, Oslo; La Kunsthalle, Mulhouse; and Colomboscope, Colombo amongst others.

Pedro Gómez-Egaña is currently a professor and researcher at the Faculty of Arts of Bergen University, Norway.

Notes to editors:

Exhibition: Pedro Gómez-Egaña: The Caspian Observatory

Location: YARAT Contemporary Art Centre, (Near National Flag Square), Bayil, AZ1003

Dates: November 9, 2018 - February 10, 2019

Preview: November 8, 2018

Exhibition opens: Tuesday through Sunday, from 12:00 - 20:00

Admission is free

About YARAT

YARAT is an artist-founded, not-for-profit art organisation based in Baku, Azerbaijan, established by Aida Mahmudova in 2011. YARAT (which means 'create' in Azerbaijani) is dedicated to contemporary art with a long-term commitment to creating a hub for artistic practice, research, thinking and education in the Caucasus, Central Asia and surrounding region.

YARAT

YARAT comprises YARAT Art Centre, ARTIM Project Space, YARAT Studios, YAY Gallery and an extended educational and public programme. YARAT Art Centre, a 2000m² converted Soviet-era naval building, opened in March 2015 and is the organisation's main exhibition space. The exhibition programme features new commissions by artists responding to the region. It supports and provides access to artists from the region, while engaging and introducing established, international artists.

In October 2015, YARAT opened ARTIM, a central, accessible and dynamic space in Baku's Old City. ARTIM (meaning 'progress' in Azerbaijani) shows experimental practices and new work by emerging Azeri art professionals (selected through open call) and the international artists from the residency programme. It features multiple small-scale projects each year and hosts ARTIM LAB, a programme enabling young artists to engage in workshops and daily studio practice to generate new ideas and works.

In 2016 YARAT launched a renewed residency programme. Aimed at developing young Azerbaijani voices and emerging international artists, the focus is on new, innovative practices and artists with an interest in the region. The residency programme hosts 6 international and 4 local artists a year at YARAT Studios' spaces.

Education has been at the heart of YARAT's activities since its creation. With a dedicated public programme that includes courses, workshops, lectures, screenings, festivals, literature and theatre clubs and family weekends, YARAT aims to give access to broad audiences of all ages. The public programme invests proactively in building communities and nurturing a wider understanding of, and participation in, contemporary art.

About M.A.P. festival November 6 – 11, 2018

YARAT hosts M.A.P., a multidisciplinary performance festival featuring drama, dance, opera, and street and puppet performances. Founded in 2017, M.A.P. takes place annually in major theatre venues across Baku during one week. The second edition is curated by Kamran Shahmardan, a theatre director and the founder of 'Black and White Theatre Festival' in Imatra, Finland. Entitled "Theatre without Borders", this year's ambitious programme includes diverse performances from theatre companies across Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Great Britain, Germany, Estonia, Russia, Iran and Japan. Bringing a vibrant atmosphere to the city, the festival opens with "Aria", a production featuring music, singing, costume and dance by the Italian collective No Gravity. Other events include a poem performed with acrobats by acclaimed Swiss director and choreographer Daniele Finzi Pasca, and a modern version of Austrian composer Joseph Haydn's opera "The Desert Island" by the Mariinsky Theatre, Russia.

For media and image inquiries please contact:

Milly Carter Hepplewhite and Lisa Hopf at Pelham Communications

Telephone: +44 2089693959

Email: milly@pelhamcommunications.com and lisa@pelhamcommunications.com