

Fixing the Baroque

Carlos Salazar-Lermont

Curated by Inés Arango-Guingue

ACRE Projects
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Fixing the Baroque brings together the two main bodies of work Carlos Salazar-Lermont has developed since 2016, the year he migrated to the United States. Here, these two research lines intertwine, and their intersections become apparent.

The first body of work reflects on migration, particularly the Venezuelan diaspora, insisting on the use of the arepa and of mylar emergency blankets as symbolic and expressive materials of displacement and exile. The second, rooted in performance, examines the enduring influence of Catholic values in Latin American societies, often through the reimagining of Baroque religious iconography.

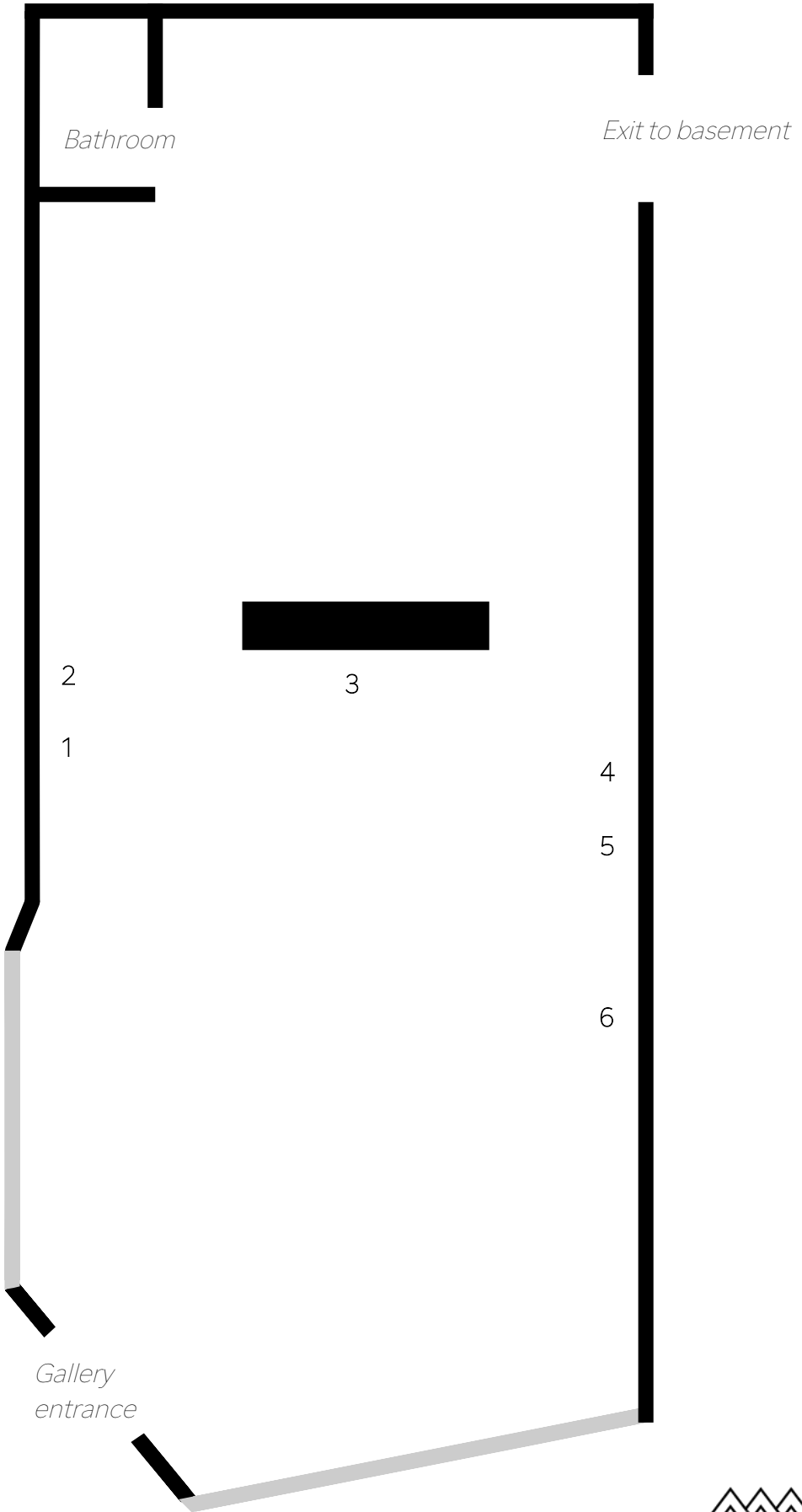
The works in *Fixing the Baroque*—spanning performance and video installation—highlight the unsuspected parallels between the Baroque's preoccupation with chiaroscuro, drama, and mortality, and the contemporary realities of migration in the United States.

About the Artist

Carlos Salazar-Lermont (Caracas, 1987) is a Venezuelan artist whose practice, focused on performativity and socially engaged art, examines Latin America's historical circumstances by deconstructing the social, political, and economic structures that have shaped its identity. In 2016, he moved to the United States from Venezuela due to a massive migration wave caused by the humanitarian crisis in his country of origin. He received his MFA in Visual Arts from the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis through the Danforth Scholarship (2022); and a Dual MA in Arts Administration & Policy and Modern and Contemporary Art History in the School of the Art Institute (SAIC), with the support of the New Artists Society Full Tuition scholarship. Salazar-Lermont's work has been featured in many museums, institutions, and galleries in over a dozen countries in the Americas and Europe. He lives and works in Chicago, IL.

About the Curator

Inés Arango-Guingue is a Colombian curator, writer, and editor whose work centers on artists from Latin America and its diasporas. In recent years, her research has focused on Caribbean and South American art and philosophy that acknowledges the social power of the unknown, the opaque, and the illegible. She is a Curatorial Fellow at ACRE (2025-2027) and a Research Fellow for Independent Curator's International (ICI) Mississippi River Basin Initiative. She was a 2023 Art Table fellow and a 2022 Abakanowicz fellow at SAIC's Institute for Curatorial Research and Practice. She was co-curator of Learning Together: Art Education and Community at The University of Illinois at Chicago's Gallery 400, a major exhibition centering the progressive pedagogy of Chicago artist educators from the mid-1960s through the 2010s. She currently holds the position of Junior Curator at Bogotá Modern Art Museum-MAMBO.



1. *Habitus I*
2025
Digital photograph, durational performance documentation
36 x 36 inches
Edition of 8, 2 AP
2. *Habitus: Daily Selfies*
2025
Full HD Video
1 minute
Edition of 8, 2 AP

In the durational performance *Habitus*, Salazar-Lermont wore a tonsure—the Catholic monks’ distinctive haircut—since the day he got the haircut, until the day his hair grew to a point in which the tonsure was not recognizable anymore. The performance lasted from June 29th until August 1st, for a total of thirty-four days. As part of the project, the artist took a daily self-portrait to document the hair growth. This piece is a reflection on social norms and how appearance becomes a fundamental factor in determining identity, social interactions, and public image. Our presentation in society is an investment that seeks to construct an ego, which relates to our desires: who we want to be, how we want to be seen, and what we want from life. However, it also comes with opportunity costs, where we cannot obtain what is incompatible with the choices we have made. In other words, appearances are more than just looks; they are an expression of commitment.

3. *Sanctuary* (Central piece of a triptych)
2022
Mylar emergency blanket, gold leaf, Venezuelan arepa corn flour package plastic on wood, LCD TV, acrylic, marker
53 minute loop

Sanctuary is a three-channel video installation composed of a room painted in deep blue, where three wall sculptures hang on adjoining walls. Each incorporates a vertically mounted video monitor, framed by an assemblage that evokes Baroque architectural elements found in Catholic churches in the artist’s hometown, Caracas, Venezuela. The three channels show Venezuelan immigrants living in Missouri preparing arepas.

Due to its colonial legacy, the Baroque remains a pervasive cultural imprint across Latin America, in contrast to its relative absence in the United States. At the same time, religion—often associated with this architecture—has played a decisive role in shaping Latin American identity, influencing both politics and the formation of communities within and beyond our countries of origin. From a secular standpoint, he confronts the complexity of the political reality of the diaspora and the contradictions of our hybrid culture within the broader context of social struggle tied to migration. This work emerges as an attempt to unravel the challenge of connecting and mobilizing a population in a state of vulnerability.

Within this frame—both literal and figurative—Salazar-Lermont presents Venezuelan immigrants engaged in an act that symbolically unites us: the making of arepas, the national dish of Venezuela. The artist aims for this action to evoke associations with the Catholic host and its meaning, as a strategy to elicit empathy toward the community. The notion of sanctuary is particularly relevant in the context of immigration law, and he draw on its metaphorical qualities to imbue the work with greater conceptual strength.

4. *San Pascual Baylón III*
2023-2024
Digital photograph, performance documentation
50 x 38 inches
Edition of 8, 2 AP

5. *San Pascual Baylón I*
2023-2024
Digital photograph, performance documentation
50 x 34 inches
Edition of 8, 2 AP

In the *San Pascual Baylón* series, Salazar-Lermont portrays himself as a kitchen worker, a job he did right after graduating from his MFA in 2022. These were the first jobs he had outside the art world, as his visa status changed from F1—also known as student visa—to Temporary Protection Status. Students are only allowed to work on areas related to their field of study, thus, the big step that working in the restaurant industry meant to him.

Sometimes associated with the stereotype of immigrant workers, restaurant industry jobs are some sort of initiation into the productive force for many Americans, too. As many citizens take these as their first jobs while they are students or stay in the industry for life, restaurant jobs are essential for the American labor culture. Because of this, kitchen jobs symbolized integration into the American economy, becoming a meaningful stage in his immigration process.

In this series, Salazar-Lermont uses Tenebrist aesthetic codes borrowed from the Counter Reformist Baroque. By using this approach, he seeks to elevate the figure of kitchen workers to that of saints, in this case, Saint Paschal Baylón, patron of cooks and kitchens. This decision complicates the series, as it refers to an artistic tradition that was not as common in what today is the United States, but was in the colonial times in Latin America. Through this tactic, the artist seeks to question the ruptures and continuities of the Anglo and Latin Americas' histories.

6. *Esperando A Dios (EAD) v.01*
2022 - 2023
3-channel video
3 minutes 47 seconds
Edition of 5, 2 AP

Esperando A Dios (EAD) v.01 is a sardonic view on the marginalization that immigrants experience in the United States. The piece was filmed when Salazar-Lermont was expecting his delayed Employment Authorization Document. At the time, the American economy was rebounding from the COVID-19 crisis. This effervescence was reflected in a sudden and unexpected surge of jobs in the United States. Unable to work legally, he filmed himself standing in front of multiple fast-food businesses' "now hiring" signs in St. Louis, MO, doing all that he could do about it: nothing. The images in the video move to the rhythm and melody of an electronic version of *El Norte es una Quimera*, a traditional merengue caraqueño song from the 1920's that speaks about the hardships of immigrating to the US. The cover of this centennial song was conceived and produced specifically for this project by the artist and performed by Venezuelan electronic musician Andrea Ludovic.