

Introduction to an Art Book called *Only Traces*
co-created with Samuel Stevens, Mexico City 2019

This book grew out of five street sessions conducted in Mexico City in February 2019, the results of a temporary art residency, Residencias Artísticas para Intercambio (R.A.T.) The results, a collection of outlines, became a book of coherent drawings. By constructing a “puesto conceptual” - a stand for shared histories captured in carried items, we were interacting with people met in five chosen places around one neighbourhood: Colonia Juarez.

We asked each person for a personal object. Everything from “recuerdo”, “amuleto” to things commonly known as trash. Many people were waiting for this encounter with strangers. They wanted to talk. To show us not only what they keep inside their bags, but also what is hidden inside themselves. A long-haired girl searches for her parents, Antonia Lucia’s life started at 72 years old, while Victor inspired by Braveheart made chain mail for Barbi.

Objects are vessels for stories. They are parts of the social landscape, connecting us with a place. They are like specimens on the streets corner, geological or anthropological. And this is how we experience a tiny part of this huge city.

We were projecting our subjective experience back to the borrowed objects, by tracing them and asking questions. Showing the roughness of personal items picked by their owners. Drawing replicas of each of them accompanied by basic information. Who? How? What? A fragment of a person we got to know. A brief note. A short encounter that left us with an outline of something important that turned into a book of patterns. MICRO(or)pocket MUSEUM of social interactions - registered on paper through linescapes. Territories of our encounters, limited by the frontier of the page. A book of simple symbols where an object becomes a cartographic mark.

As humans we like to detect patterns. Our brains are constantly searching for meaning. Quite frequently we see things that do not exist. Imagining and conceiving. But to trace means to find. Discover by investigation. Copy a three dimensional item with a personal touch. Draw it as a pattern, representation.

Those are the meaningful patterns of existing memories in the random noise of space. Legends and cartographic symbols drawn in 1:1 scale.