



Chisme, Installation View, 2022  
Oil, acrylic and graphite on board,  
Variable dimensions  
Studio Lenca & WeCount!



Workshop images from the production of 'Chisme', 2022  
Studio Lenca in collaboration with WeCount

# STUDIO LENCA

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Jose Campos (aka Studio Lenca) is an artist that doesn't belong anywhere apart from the world he paints.

The artist spent his early years in a corrugated metal shelter in Santiago Nonualco, El Salvador. Unsure of his official date of birth or family history. Later he travelled illegally overland with his mother to the USA. The aim was to join his father who was later incarcerated and consequently absent during his entire life. The family lived as 'illegal aliens', cleaning houses and with no fixed address.

Displaced as a consequence of El Salvador's violent civil war. Jose was one of the first wave of child migrants moving to the USA. The artist is part of a Latinx generation that is finally being heard.

Jose Campos now goes by the name Studio Lenca. 'Studio' refers to a space for experimentation, a laboratory for praxis; 'Lenca' links the artist to the Mesoamerican indigenous people of eastern El Salvador. The artist has been told his mother has Lenca heritage but family trees and formal records are the reserve of the privileged in El Salvador.

Monumental figures stare out from the canvas, holding our gaze. Sharply dressed in canary yellow, tangerine or neon pink, frozen in movement they confidently take up space. It's unclear if these figures are dancing or running, in the formative years of Studio Lenca these were one and the same thing. Being illegal in the USA requires all the dexterity, razor sharp reflexes and timing of a corps de ballet dancer. Studio Lenca's been both. The young artist attended free ballet classes where he learnt to escape his circumstances. The men in his paintings could easily be enthralled with the sounds of Selena Quintanilla, moving balletically through elaborate bureaucratic processes or dodging the glare of homeland security.

Studio Lenca paintings are self-assured, proud, courageous and visible. All the things that a young Studio Lenca couldn't be. Poor, queer, displaced and 'illegal'. His story is one of being a perpetual guest. A consequence of geopolitics entangled with a legacy of colonial violence meant his father was of light skinned Chalatenango origin. Not quite brown or white enough to fit into any of the usual categories.

Studio Lenca paints through the problems of his own sense of belonging to defy the narrative surrounding his Latinx community. The artist manipulates visibly Latinx cues which he recalibrates, creating a joyful world for an imagined flourishing. Collaged sopesa wrappers, colones, cargo sacks and indigo paste are used as triggers for collective re-imagining. Studio Lenca crafts a world where Latinx figures have dignity. Crowned with extravagant hats and bold colours, an altogether different sensibility to a childhood of forced assimilation and secrecy.

Studio Lenca is unapologetically honest, paints out of proportion and plays by his own rules. His technique sitting slightly astray from any 'western' canon. We witness the artist exploring an estranged cultural heritage. Through engaging with his work, we are invited on a journey to transgress the immigrant label. Alongside the figures in his paintings, Studio Lenca creates a world where Latinx people are empowered to take up space and tell their own stories.

## **Studio Lenca**

B.1986 La Paz ,El Salvador  
Lives and works in the UK

### **Collections:**

Studio Lenca is part of the collection at the MER Foundation

### **Education:**

MA Arts & Learning 2019 Goldsmiths University of London

Art & Design PGCE 2015 Goldsmiths University of London

MA Contemporary Dance 2013 London Contemporary Dance School

## **2022**

### **Solo Exhibitions:**

Ni de aquí, ni de allá, Untitled Art Fair, Miami

A Losing Game, Soho Revue, London

The Journey Becomes You, Artual Gallery, Beirut

I'm working on leaving, Tang Contemporary, Seoul

When Home Won't Let You Stay, Berlin Art Weekend, Berlin

The Dreamers, Foundry, Dubai

The Invisibles , Sierra Metro , Edinburgh Art Festival, Edinburgh

Ninos, Artistellar, London

Studio Jadaf, Dubai

Group Exhibitions:

Like there is hope and I can dream of another world, Hospital Rooms X Hauser & Wirth, Hauser & Wirth, London

Hometown Sessions 1, Edji Gallery, Paris

FreshPaint London, Noho Showroom, London

Orsini Palace, Studio 11, Rome

Adult by Nature, Quench Gallery, Margate

A Shadow Across A Line, Hatch Art Project, Singapore

Como la flor , Y.E.S Contemporary, Museum of Art, El Salvador

Polychromy, Artual Gallery, Beirut

Summer exhibition, Gallery Red, Palma

Pavilions , M.A.H Gallery, London

POW festival , Turner Contemporary, Margate

URVANITY, Arniches Gallery, Prize Winner (Fundacion MER), Madrid

Identity , Artistellar, London

## **2021**

Arniches 26 Gallery , Madrid

Turner Open , Turner Contemporary, Margate

MAH , London Design Festival , London

Convergent acts , Bubble and Squeak, Brussels

Ni de aqui ni de alla Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles

The Pattern of patience at Marc Straus Gallery, New York

Los Historiantes, Nominated for Prix Pictet

## **2020**

SWAB BARCELONA , Solo Exhibition , La Unica Galeria, El Salvador

Los Historiantes , Winner of the Open Solo exhibition Photofringe, Brighton

Unknown Learning , Northdown Studios, Margate

Peckham Pride Mural Culture Seeds, London

Queer'ing the art curriculum lecture University of Arts London

**2019**

Mile of String , Horniman Museum, London

Los Historiantes , 'La Horchata' Publication,  
Washington DC

Los Historiantes , VIA Arts Prize Embassy of El  
Salvador, London

Peoples Voices for Tony Cokes Goldsmiths  
Centre for Contemporary Art, London

Los Historiantes, Margate NOW Festival,  
Margate

Doing and Undoing St James Gallery,  
Goldsmiths University, London

**2018**

Critical Pedagogy in Contested Spaces, Tate  
Modern, London

The Artist Teacher, 288 New Cross Rd, London

2017

Rural Painting School, La Paz, El Salvador

2016

Artist in Residence Under the Same Sun, South  
London Gallery, London

**2015**

Kill Kill Kill Parasol Unit Gallery, London

**2014**

Navigating dance with my fat body, 288 New  
Cross, London

Passport Please, 310 Gallery, London

**2013**

The Wave, Trinity Laban, London

The Wave, National Portrait Gallery, London

**2012**

Local Group Resolutions !, The  
Place, London

**2011**

Choreographic Scores at Trisha  
Brown Barbican Art Gallery, London

**Visiting Lecturer**

Goldsmiths CCA Assistant curator

Freelands Foundation

Unknown Learning Northdown studios

University of the Arts London

Embassy of El Salvador

VIA Arts Prize

University College London

University of Leeds

Trinity Laban

Chisme, 2022  
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Chisme is an installation of 15 figures by Studio Lenca in collaboration with WeCount!, a member led organisation of low wage workers. The works comprise of hand painted wooden cut outs 'taking up space' within the Parrish Art Museum.

The installation shows a moment a group of Latinx figures walk into the gallery.

One can imagine the group loudly chatting, joyously having a conversation amongst themselves, defying the usual tacit knowledge expected in a museum or gallery space. The work comes from the artist's experiences of transgressing boundaries and invites viewers who feel they don't belong into the space to do the same. It's about breaking the unwritten rules and refusing to assimilate.

Studio Lenca grew up undocumented in a low income household. The installation is called 'Chisme' which is Spanish slang for gossip. This work gives a voice to those that are silenced by the US immigration system and addresses the prejudiced 'gossip' of the common narrative around immigration.

One side of the cut outs are painted in the artists characteristic vibrant, bold style. These are proud charismatic Latinx immigrants, proudly wearing hats echoing nobility. The other side of the installation shows the raw wooden construction of the figures with drawings of plants, trees and seeds from low wage immigrant workers. This illustrates the banner slogan 'They tried to bury us, they didn't know we were seeds' popularised during the 2018 protests against the Trump administration family separation policies. These defiant drawings cover the back of the work, further exploring the invisibility of these workers in American society.

# THUMBNAIL IMAGES OF WORKS



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

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## DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL WOKS

Each work has variable dimensions detailed on the following pages.  
Each work is attached to a stand with the following dimensions 24 x 48 x 4 inches





Figure 1: 88 x 34 x 2 inches



Figure 2: 80 x 38 x 2 inches



Figure 3: 85 x 41 x 2 inches



Figure 4: 88 x 34 x 2 inches

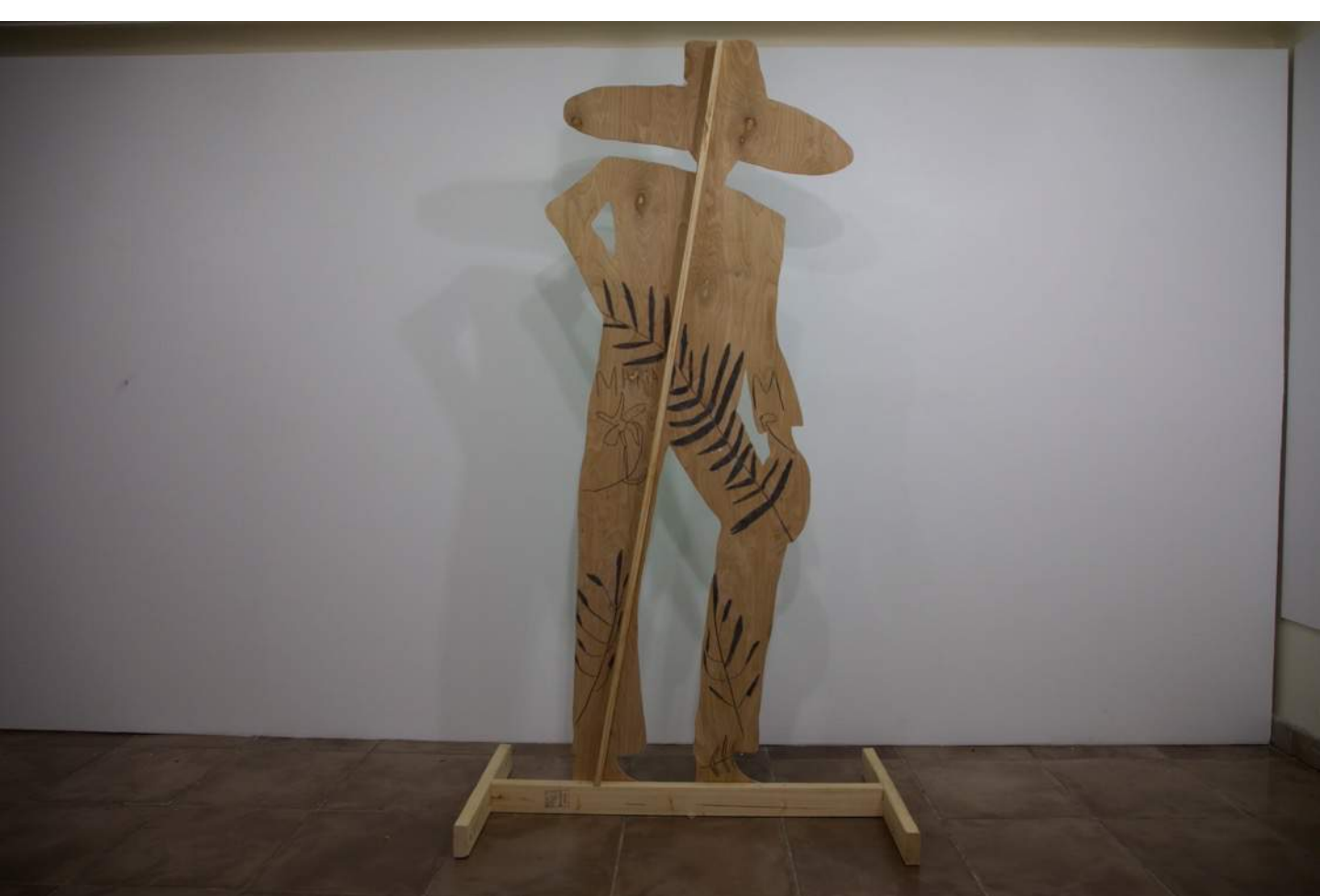


Figure 5: 88 x 34 x 2 inches



Figure 6: 85 x 37 x 2 inches



Figure 7: 79 x 48 x 2 inches



Figure 8: 86 x 40 x 2 inches





Figure 9: 86 x 40 x 2 inches



Figure 10: 88 x 34 x 2 inches



Figure 11: 79 x 48 x 2 inches



Figure 12: 79 x 48 x 2 inches



Figure 13: 81 x 48 x 2 inches



Figure 14: 79 x 48 x 2 inches



Figure 15: 77 x 47 x 2 inches