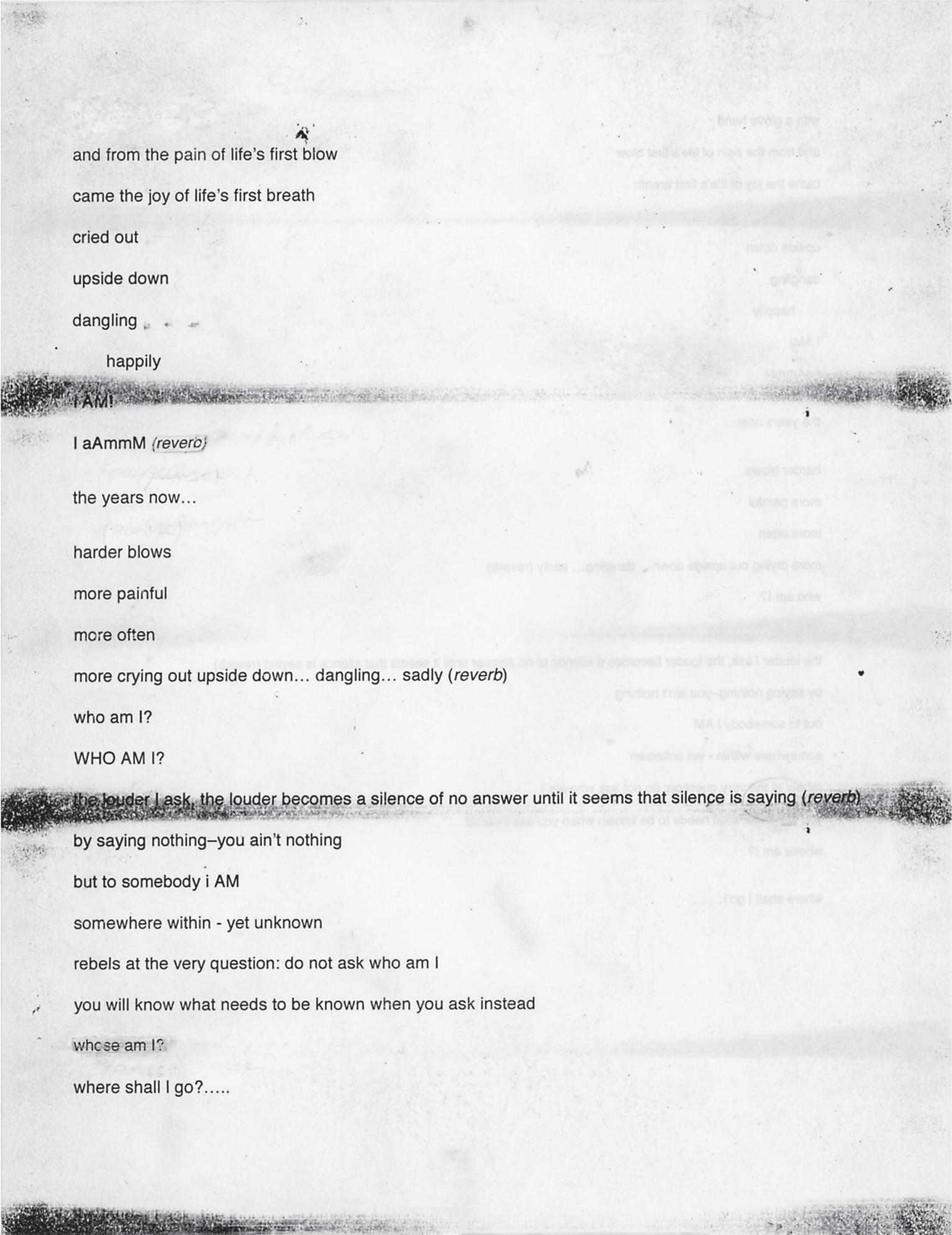


Harold Mendez



and from the pain of life's first blow
came the joy of life's first breath
cried out
upside down
dangling
happily

I AM!

I aAmmM (*reverb*)

the years now...

harder blows

more painful

more often

more crying out upside down... dangling... sadly (*reverb*)

who am I?

WHO AM I?

the louder I ask, the louder becomes a silence of no answer until it seems that silence is saying (*reverb*)

by saying nothing—you ain't nothing

but to somebody i AM

somewhere within - yet unknown

rebels at the very question: do not ask who am I

you will know what needs to be known when you ask instead

whose am I?

where shall I go?.....

The years now



THE YEARS

About the Artist

Harold Mendez (b. 1977, Chicago) has taken part in numerous exhibitions such as *Being: New Photography* (2018) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Whitney Biennial (2017), New York. In addition, his work has been shown at the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Bass Museum, Miami; LAXART, Los Angeles; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; MoMA PS1, New York; Renaissance Society, Chicago; Project Row Houses, Houston; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, among others. His work has been reviewed in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *Artforum*, and *frieze*. He has been an artist in residence at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation; Core Program, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture; Headlands Center for the Arts; and the Tamarind Institute, and is a recipient of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant; the Illinois Arts Council Agency Artist Fellowship; the Efroymsen Contemporary Arts Fellowship; and the 3Arts Award. Mendez studied at Columbia College Chicago; the University of Science and Technology, School of Art, Ghana, West Africa; and the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is currently based in Los Angeles.



Logan Center Gallery
Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts
915 E 60th St
Chicago IL 60637

Tues - Sat
9am - 9pm
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11am - 9pm
Mon
Closed

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Image Credits

1
Consent not to be a single being
2018
Courtesy of the artist and PATRON Gallery, photo by Aron Gent

2
Chimú pot, date unknown © The Field Museum, Image No. CL0048_170032_FrontAngle, Cat. No 170032, Photographer Sarah Rivers

3
but I sound better since you cut my throat
2017
Courtesy of the artist

4
At night we walk in circles
2017
Courtesy of the artist

Verso image

The years now
2019-2020
Courtesy of the artist

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Harold Mendez — The years now



The years now

Harold Mendez's solo exhibition at the Logan Center Gallery, *The years now*, is a newly commissioned installation of image, sculpture, and sound. Taking as a point of departure funerary artifacts and rituals connected to sites across Cuba, Peru, and the United States, the artist brings together ancient ceramics, a voice, a fiberglass grid, and carnation petals, all of which function as signifiers for and extensions of the human body. Using a variety of surface treatments, as well as digital scanning, 3D printing, and sonic amplifications, Mendez transforms his chosen materials and assembles them in new configurations to create a haunting landscape of remembrance and loss that makes poetic connections between material matter, site, and memory.

The years now is anchored by a large silver-coated fiberglass grid out of which emerges a small treelike sculpture, its twisting limbs stretching out from a central trunk. White carnation petals, continuously replenished throughout the run of the show, are scattered across the field. In close proximity is a small 3D-printed sculpture covered in a mixture of pigments and modeled after a Chimú pot from the Moche Valley in Peru that Mendez encountered during his research at the Field Museum in Chicago. The playfully ornate pot features a relief of a small monkey scaling its spout, and its oblong chamber takes the shape of a fruit that has split open to reveal spherical reliefs in the shape of seeds. At once decorative and utilitarian, the object also suggests a ritual significance, as such vessels often accompanied a deceased person into the afterlife. Moving through and around the exhibition, at times emerging from the objects themselves, is the sound of a voice. Apprehended together, these carefully arranged elements—all new works created for the exhibition—evoke a memorial site to a body that remains missing.

The ways in which a landscape contains material evidence of no-longer-visible past events, lives, and memories is reiterated in two works, a photograph and a sculpture, in the smaller, adjoining gallery. *Consent not to be a single being* depicts a rocky terrain in Cuba marked by a series of concentric

circles on which spots of blood and other organic materials adhere, suggesting a ritual, a sacrifice, perhaps the ending of one life to honor another. Across from this image is *but I sound better since you cut my throat*, a large sculpture consisting of a galvanized steel rod around which has grown a twisting, gnarled tree branch, cut cleanly on either side to free it from the thicket. The timber is a formal nod to the gridded field in the main gallery and a poignant gesture to the interplay between the natural and the human-made, growth and entropy, death and renewal.

Bodily absence is reinforced through the voice—taken from a found recording and abstracted by the artist—of an unseen speaker who ruminates about a crisis of identity. The philosopher Mladen Dolar, acknowledging that the separation of voice from body has been normalized by modern technology, nevertheless contends that a voice produced by an invisible source retains an uncanny quality, as it will remain “a voice in search of an origin, in search of a body.” As if to suggest that this voice is also searching, it refuses to remain in one place, moving around and through the works in peripatetic fashion. Beginning in a steadfast cadence, a measure of self-doubt creeps into the narrator’s speech. “Who am I?” he asks, answering himself moments later, “The louder I ask, the louder becomes the silence of no answer, until it seems the silence is saying, by saying nothing, you ain’t nothing.” For the speaker, the search leads to the sound of silence, reflecting an emptiness that he begins to attach to his own identity.

Much of Mendez’s work manages to evoke something or someone that remains out of view, just outside the frame of visibility—as in *Consent not to be a single being*, which depicts the residue of an event that has occurred, leaving the viewer to imagine what happened before—and thereby radiates an uncanny quality. This effect is also achieved by rendering the familiar strange, as when the artist treats, transforms, rearranges, and restages his chosen materials. The Chimú pot, for instance, has been modeled through 3D imaging, which effectively translated the surface of the original into digital data and back into a physical material. The original ceramic pot, collected in the early 20th century, currently functions as an archeological object that is staged, valorized, and preserved for study. Mendez’s sculpture, rather than trying to exactly reconstruct the Chimú pot or even reenact its original use (an impossible task given what we currently know), imagines another kind of life for it by surrounding and at times occupying it with the sound of a voice. Produced from within a body but now existing outside of it, the voice occupies

an interstitial space that gestures to presence and absence at the same time. While the sound animates the sculptures, the narrative it injects is one of doubt and loss, as if to gesture to past lives and memories—of the object, of the narrator—that are no longer visible.

In *The years now*, the searching voice inhabits and surrounds a memorial field to evoke the body’s presence through its absence. In bringing together works with connections across time and space, Mendez’s installation proposes that objects are more than their material appearances suggest. They are haunted by multiple histories, narratives, and resonances, some more visible than others.

— Katja Rivera
Assistant Curator, Logan Center Exhibitions



Opening Reception & Artist Tour

Friday January 24 6:00 pm

Logan Center Gallery

RELATED PROGRAMMING

Opening Reception & Artist Tour

Friday January 24 6:00 pm

Logan Center Gallery

Please join us for a reception to celebrate the opening of *Harold Mendez: The years now*. The artist will give a tour of the exhibition at 6:30 pm.

Gallery Talk with Risa Puleo

Thursday February 6 6:00 pm

Logan Center Gallery

Critic and curator Risa Puleo will lead a tour to discuss the themes of *Harold Mendez: The years now*.

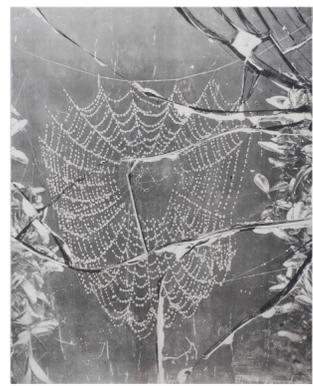
In Conversation: *The years now*

Wednesday March 4 6:00 pm

Logan Center Terrace Seminar Room

Please join curator and writer Candice Hopkins, Neubauer Family Assistant Professor Edgar Garcia, and artist Harold Mendez for a discussion of Mendez’s project *The years now*.

All events are free and open to the public.



now