



# Chiquita Room

## **PARABOLIC STRUCTURES**

Una exposición de | Una exposició de | An exhibition by  
Phillip Maisel, 15.09 - 29.10.2022

Phillip Maisel (Chicago, 1981) se licenció en Bellas Artes en el California College of the Arts de San Francisco y en Psicología en la Universidad McGill de Montreal. Ha expuesto en Gregory Lind Gallery (San Francisco), Shulamit Nazarian (Los Ángeles) y Document (Chicago). Su obra también se ha expuesto en el Museo William Benton (Connecticut), la Universidad de Nuevo México (Taos) y el Museo DeCordova (Massachusetts). En 2020 fue artista en residencia en Hangar (Barcelona) y su libro de artista *Two Concrete Things*, publicado con Chiquita Ediciones, recibió el Premio Arts Libris 2021. Maisel vive y trabaja entre San Francisco y Barcelona.

Phillip Maisel (Chicago, 1981) es va llicenciar en Belles arts al Califòrnia College of the Arts de San Francisco i en Psicologia en la Universitat McGill de Mont-real. Ha exposat a la Gregory Lind Gallery (San Francisco), Shulamit Nazarian (Los Ángeles) i Document (Chicago). La seva obra s'ha exposat igualment al Museu William Benton (Connecticut), la Universitat de Nou Mèxic (Taos) i el Museu DeCordova (Massachusetts). En 2020 va ser artista en residència a Hangar (Barcelona) i el seu llibre d'artista *Two Concrete Things*, publicat amb Chiquita Ediciones, va rebre el Premi Arts Libris 2021. Maisel viu i treballa entre San Francisco i Barcelona.

Phillip Maisel (Chicago, 1981) received his MFA from California College of the Arts in San Francisco, and his Bachelors of Science in Psychology from McGill University in Montreal. Solo exhibitions include Gregory Lind Gallery in San Francisco, Shulamit Nazarian in Los Angeles, and Document in Chicago. His work has also been exhibited at the William Benton Museum in Connecticut; The University of New Mexico in Taos; and DeCordova Museum in Massachusetts. He completed the Short-Term Residency at Hangar in Barcelona in 2020. His book *Two Concrete Things* published with Chiquita Ediciones received the Arts Libris 2021 Award. Maisel lives and works between San Francisco and Barcelona.

*Parabolic Structures*, by Phillip Maisel, is a project that materializes in images, collages, and sculptural groupings, a series of the artist's personal questions that transcend his own experience by connecting to collective themes through the rethinking of the photographic medium. In the exhibition, Maisel addresses family histories and broader notions of displacement, belonging, and what remains in our absences.

Through an intertwining of personal experiences and historical events, Maisel became interested in the former Jewish cemetery of Montjuïc and the tombstones that were later used as building material in Barcelona (especially in some areas of the Gothic Quarter), photographing and making *frottage in situ*. In the same area of Montjuïc, the artist encountered two sound structures – acoustic mirrors – that the artist utilizes in his pieces, both formally and metaphorically, to think about the possible connection between space-time distances. These distances – geographical, temporal, or psychological – are present in family contexts, whether imposed or as strategies of coexistence. They are distances that separate us but, paradoxically, also unite us.

One of the fundamental materials in Maisel's work is archival photographs (family and found) with which he revels in focusing on details, possible histories, and suspended time. In particular, those images included in *Parabolic Structures* relate to the artist's double lineage. Found photographs allow him to speculate on Jewish ancestry (from his paternal family and also from other families), while those from his own family archive point to the Chinese origin of his maternal branch. From these family images, he extracts a common element: food and sitting (and being photographed) around a table. Large circular tables become simple elliptical shapes, abstracted from context but loaded with symbolic meaning. When turned on their side, the circular shape of the tables resembles that of the acoustic mirrors of Montjuïc, and that idea of connection across space and through time also resonates conceptually. The relationship between past and present is part of cultural traditions, often revolving around food. For the poet Rainer Maria Rilke "...those beings of the past live in us, in the depths of our inclinations, in the beating of our blood. They weigh on our destiny. They are that gesture that goes back from the depths of time"<sup>1</sup>.

Maisel's working process goes through different stages, beginning with collecting and combining materials, which include his own and archival photographs, *frottage*, drawing, paper, and fragments of watercolors. Subsequently, he uses photographic techniques (photography, rephotography, retouching) and collage creating compositions that work on their own or are part of other compositions. The treatment he applies to the image serves to question its

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<sup>1</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*.



condition, its materiality, its temporality, and the methodology he employs is meticulous and multi-layered, generating multiple possibilities. In *Parabolic Structures*, Maisel also explores the combination of several pieces in sculptural ensembles, articulated in the gallery space, which function as small scenes that cross different planes.

Combination, variation, and repetition are at the foundation of the artist's work, in which the play of difference and reiteration becomes evident. Intertwined with the concepts of repetition and difference is precisely that of identity, and here Maisel finds himself present at the crossroads of his lineages. He shows us that there are many possible paths from this point, but remembering that "the present is woven of multiple pasts"<sup>2</sup>. Through photographs and the trace, the past becomes visible, as in the gesture - artistic and conceptual - that Maisel carries out through frottage of the tombstones of Montjuïc. In the words of Georges Didi-Huberman, it could be said that in his work we find "imprints with movements, latencies with crises, plastic processes with non-plastic processes, forgetfulness with reminiscences, repetitions with setbacks"<sup>3</sup>. This repetition, with variation, is at the base of our genetics and way of understanding the world:

We use the repetition of structured and regulated gestures to bring order to the chaotic flow of reality, and to give us reference points on which we can anchor our perception and our being in the world.<sup>4</sup>

The repetition of textures, shapes, colors, photographs allows the artist a variety of combinations, like a kaleidoscope that bridges the past and the present. Maisel shuffles various times into materiality to present a fragmented visual world through a non-hierarchical associative stream, where many readings are possible, where memory flows between the personal and the collective.

**Pedro Torres**  
Artist and curator

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<sup>2</sup> Georges Didi-Huberman, *La imagen superviviente: Historia del arte y tiempo de los fantasmas según Aby Warburg*, Abada Ediciones, Madrid, 2018, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo Rovelli, *There Are Places in the World Where Rules Are Less Important Than Kindness*, Penguin Books, 2020, p. 216.

## ACTIVITIES\*

Thursday, September 15, 1:00-3:00 pm

### **Matzo Ball Soup with Sue Lo**

Preparation and tasting of the traditional Jewish dish with the artist and his mother.

Thursday, September 15, 6:00-8:00 pm

### **Opening of the Exhibition**

Sunday, September 18, 6:00-8:00 pm

### **Walk from Montjuïc to Chiquita Room**

Excursion, from the location of the former Jewish cemetery in Montjuïc to the gallery, that will include several stops along the way for short readings.

Meeting point: Plaza de Dante (Joan Brossa Gardens, Montjuïc)

Thursday, October 6, 7:00 - 8:30 pm

### **Artist Talk: Chance Encounters and the Double Image**

Conversation with the artist about his work process and influences.

Saturday, October 22, 12:00 - 2:00 pm

### **Imprints with Movements**

Collective practice of *frottage* on old Jewish tombstones that served as construction material in buildings of the Gothic Quarter.

Meeting point: Plaza del Rey

Saturday, October 29, 12:00 - 2:00 pm

### **Closing of the Exhibition and Dim Sum Tasting.**

Farewell with an aperitif based on typical small dishes of Chinese cuisine, served with tea.

*\*The activities will be conducted in English and require prior registration at [hola@chiquitaroom.com](mailto:hola@chiquitaroom.com).*



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