



Alejandro Cartagena

Photobook Maquette Archive, 2011-2021

60 maquettes and related objects from 18 publications

The Alejandro Cartagena photobook maquette archive includes over 60 maquettes and related objects to the development of 18 publications, ranging from his first photobook, *Suburbia Mexicana*, published by Daylight and Photolucida in 2011, to his most recent, forthcoming project, *Suburban Bus*, which will be published in spring of 2021. Often regarded as one of the most prolific self-publishers working in the photobook space today, this archive illustrates the evolution of the conceptual, aesthetic, and formal development of each project as well as of Cartagena's overarching practice. Additionally, the archive illustrates the shift over time of publishing models during the height of the digital publishing revolution to now. Cartagena's publications have been shortlisted or won numerous awards, including the Rencontres d'Arles Book Award, the Best Photography Book Award at PHoto ESPAÑA, and the KASSEL PHOTOBOOK AWARD. Most recently in 2021, Cartagena was shortlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize.

The Photobook Maquette Archive includes maquettes and related objects for the following titles, described in detail in the document below:

Suburbia Mexicana, 2011

Carpoolers, 1st Edition, 2014

Carpoolers Poster, 2014

Headshots, 2015

Before the War, 2015

Carpoolers, 2nd Edition, 2016

Rivers of Power, 2016

Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US, 2016

A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption, 2017

Santa Barbara Shame on US, 2017

A Small Make Believe Neighborhood, 2017

Los Sumergidos, 2018

Carpoolers, 3rd Edition, 2019

We Love Our Employees, 2019

Santa Barbara Save US, 2020

El Casting, 2020

Insurrection Nation, 2021

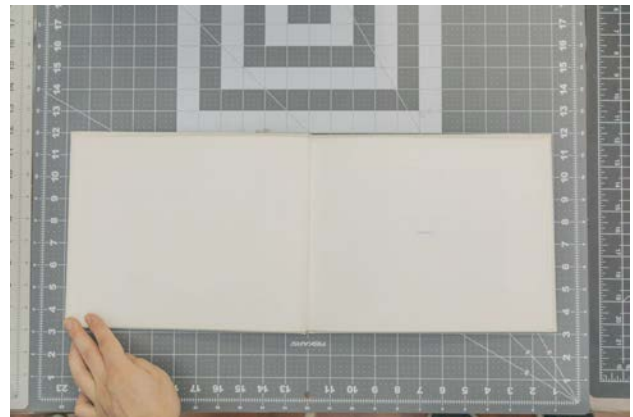
Suburban Bus, 2021



***Suburbia Mexicana* (2011)**

In his first published body of work, *Suburbia Mexicana*, Cartagena photographs the particularities of the suburbs of Monterrey, Mexico which are relatively new and often hastily built, reflecting a general disregard for planning. Over the years, various governmental policies resulted in new, decentralized cities with limited infrastructures where the pursuit of immediate financial gain trumped any interest in sustainability. Cartagena captures both the destruction that rapid urbanization has imposed on the landscape and the phenomenon of densely packed housing. He takes pictures of dried-up river beds that attest to the water misallocation and depletion brought about by the construction, and he depicts perpetual rows of tiny houses slicing directly into the foothills of the picturesque mountains that surround Monterrey. This project, which originally began as a boxed set of five books and became a single photobook, published by Daylight Books and Photolucida in 2011, ultimately sets the stage for the work that will continue to define his practice, up to the current day.

***Suburbia Mexicana*, Maquette 1**





Suburbia Mexicana, Maquette 2 (Blurb Book)



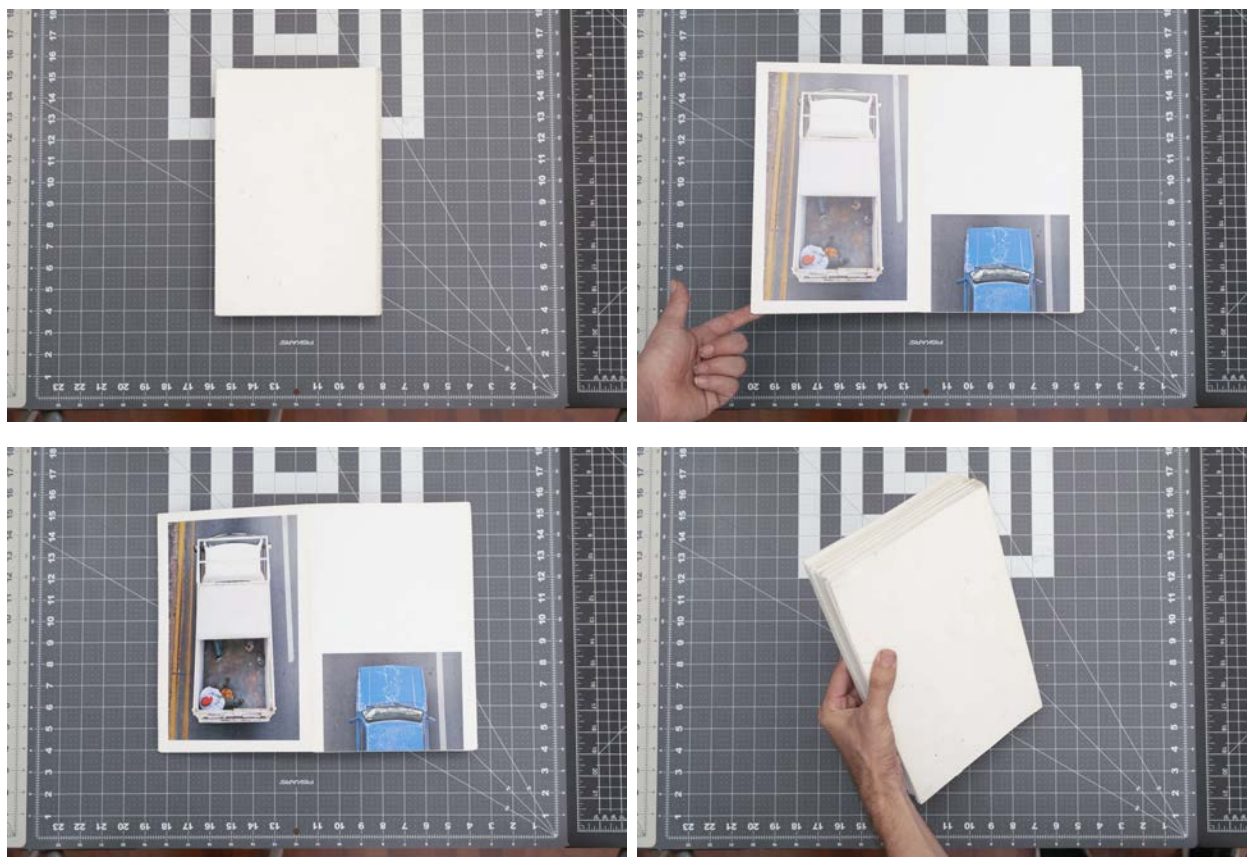


***Carpoolers* (2014)**

Offering a different take on 'carpooling,' Cartagena's second published photobook continues his pointed investigation of the multiple and complex issues relating to unhampered suburban expansion. An acute observation to overgrowth issues in Mexico, where suburbs are being built in far away areas with no proper public transportation to the urban centers, causing greater commutes and consumption of gas. This project, like his earlier project, *Suburbia Mexicana*, comes from a deeply committed practice and desire to tell the story of the dramatic changes (environmental, demographic, economic) he is witnessing play out in his home city of Monterrey. Often considered one of his landmark projects, and a project that launched his international career, it has been republished in two subsequent editions: the second edition in 2016, and the third in 2019, each with different edits and conceptual approaches.

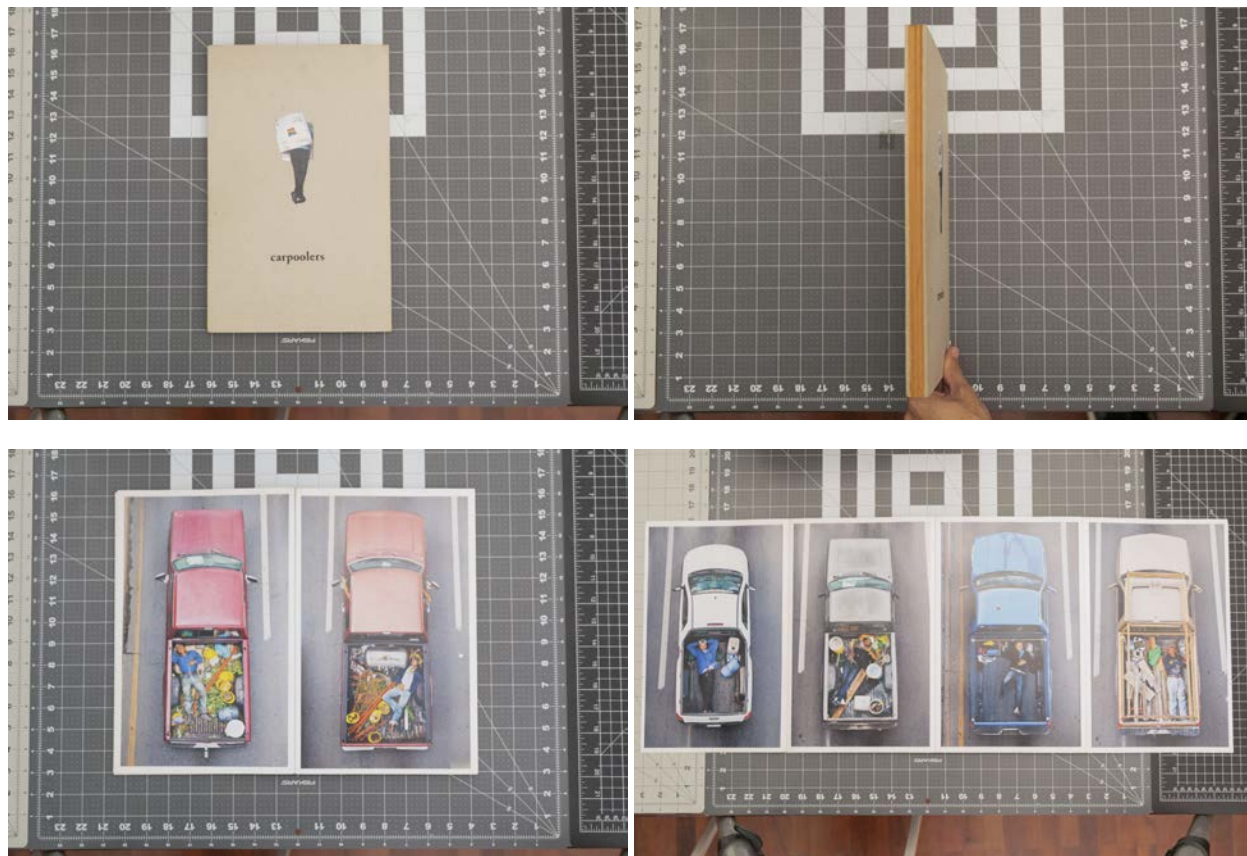
The first edition (published in 2014) was created over four unique handmade maquettes, each bound with glue and tape with the photographs taped onto the pages. Also included is a poster produced alongside the first edition.

***Carpoolers*, First Edition, Maquette 1**





Carpoolers, First Edition, Maquette 2



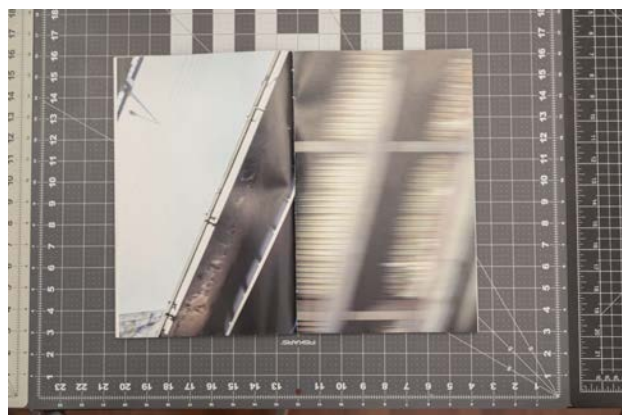
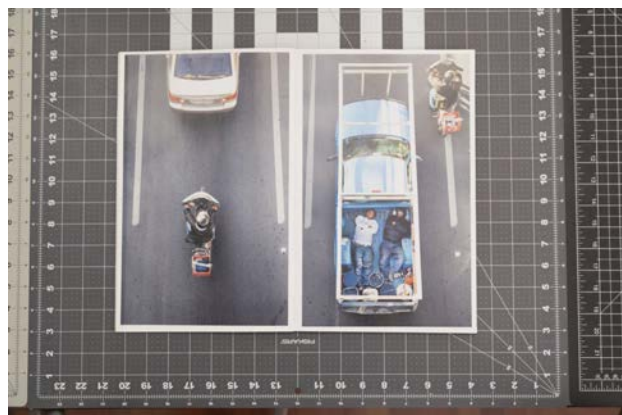


***Carpoolers*, First Edition, Maquette 3**





Carpoolers, First Edition, Maquette 4



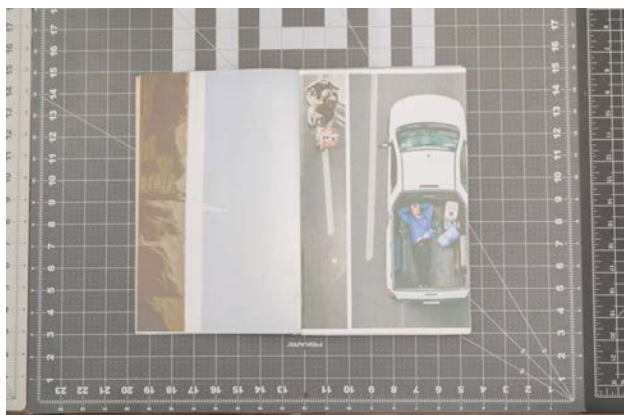
Carpoolers, First Edition, Poster





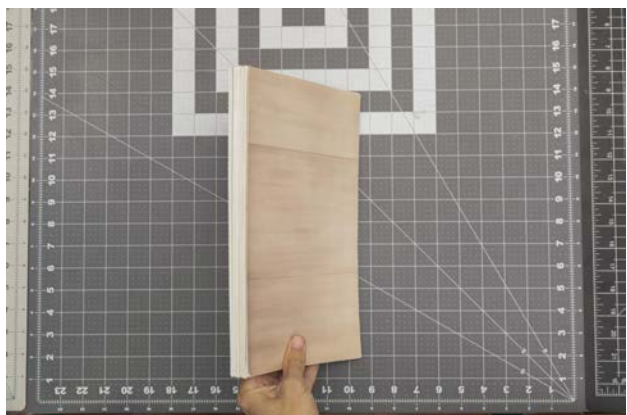
The second edition (published in 2016) includes three handmade maquettes, once again assembled with images printed, cut, and taped by the artist.

***Carpoolers*, Second Edition, Maquette 1**





Carpoolers, Second Edition, Maquette 2



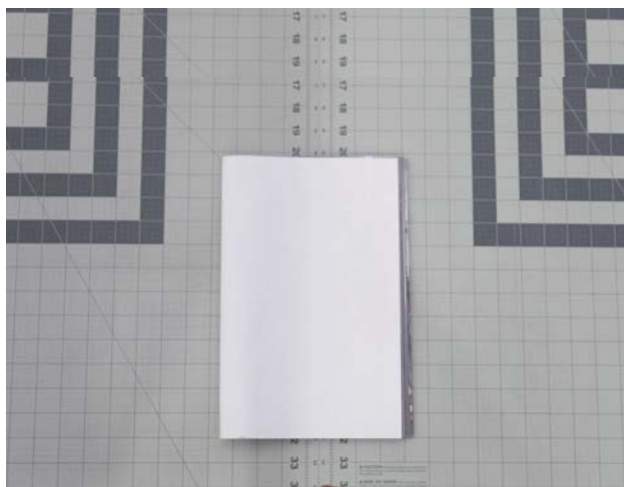
Carpoolers, Second Edition, Maquette 3





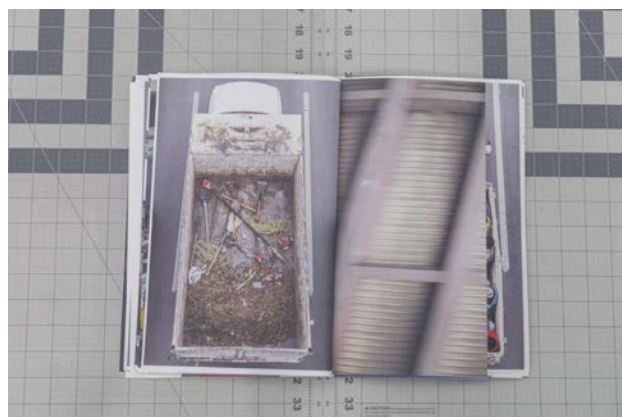
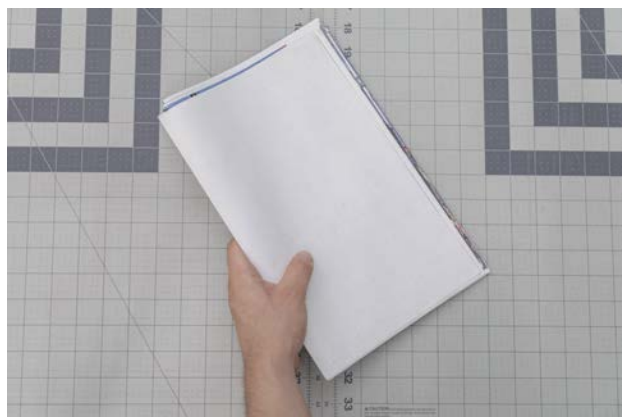
The most recent edition (published in 2019) includes two posters and two digitally-created maquettes, handbound with a rubber band.

***Carpoolers*, Third Edition, Maquette 1**





Carpoolers, Third Edition, Maquette 2



Carpoolers, Third Edition, Posters 1 & 2





Headshots (2015)

In *Headshots*, Cartagena mimics the idea of Hollywood actors trying to secure a casting through their set of headshots. Here, the then-President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, is presenting himself for the first time as the official candidate for the PRI party at the International Book Fair of Guadalajara. To say the least, his “performance” was a poor one. He tries to win over the crowd with his looks and best poses but his lack of knowledge of his favorite books surpassed any gain his acting could give. In the back of the twenty-eight prints you can find some of Peña Nieto’s promises of how he was going to change Mexico. The poster child for the new PRI, ended up leading the country into more chaos and social unrest.

This handmade maquette includes unbound pages printed out for editing and sequencing of the final published book.





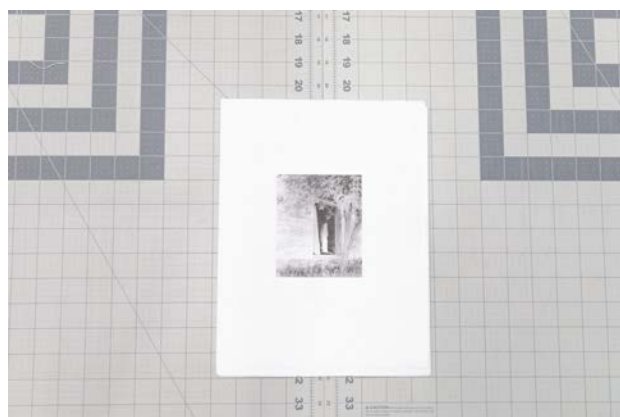
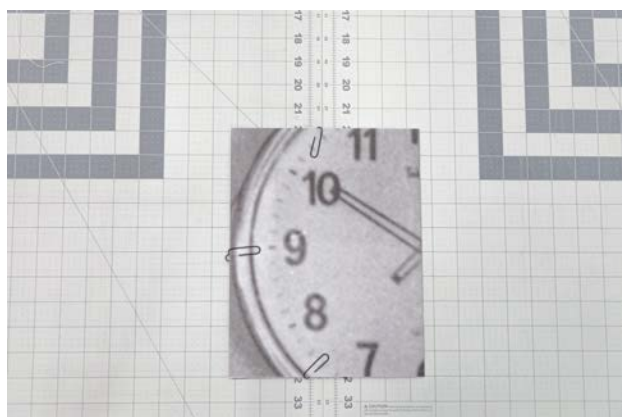
Before the War (2015)

In 2008, the war against the drug cartels erupted in Mexico. The state of Nuevo León in northeastern Mexico became an increasingly violent place. This book is a compilation of images and texts that obsessively revisit places where the war was eventually fought and look for signs of an evil that lay underneath but was invisible to everyone's eyes at the moment these images were shot. This maquette includes the original, handmade, spray-painted cover "folder", twelve inkjet prints, one handmade assemblage that would become the final poster, one postcard, a final proof from the printer of the cover "folder" and the many unbound pages that would ultimately make up the final project.



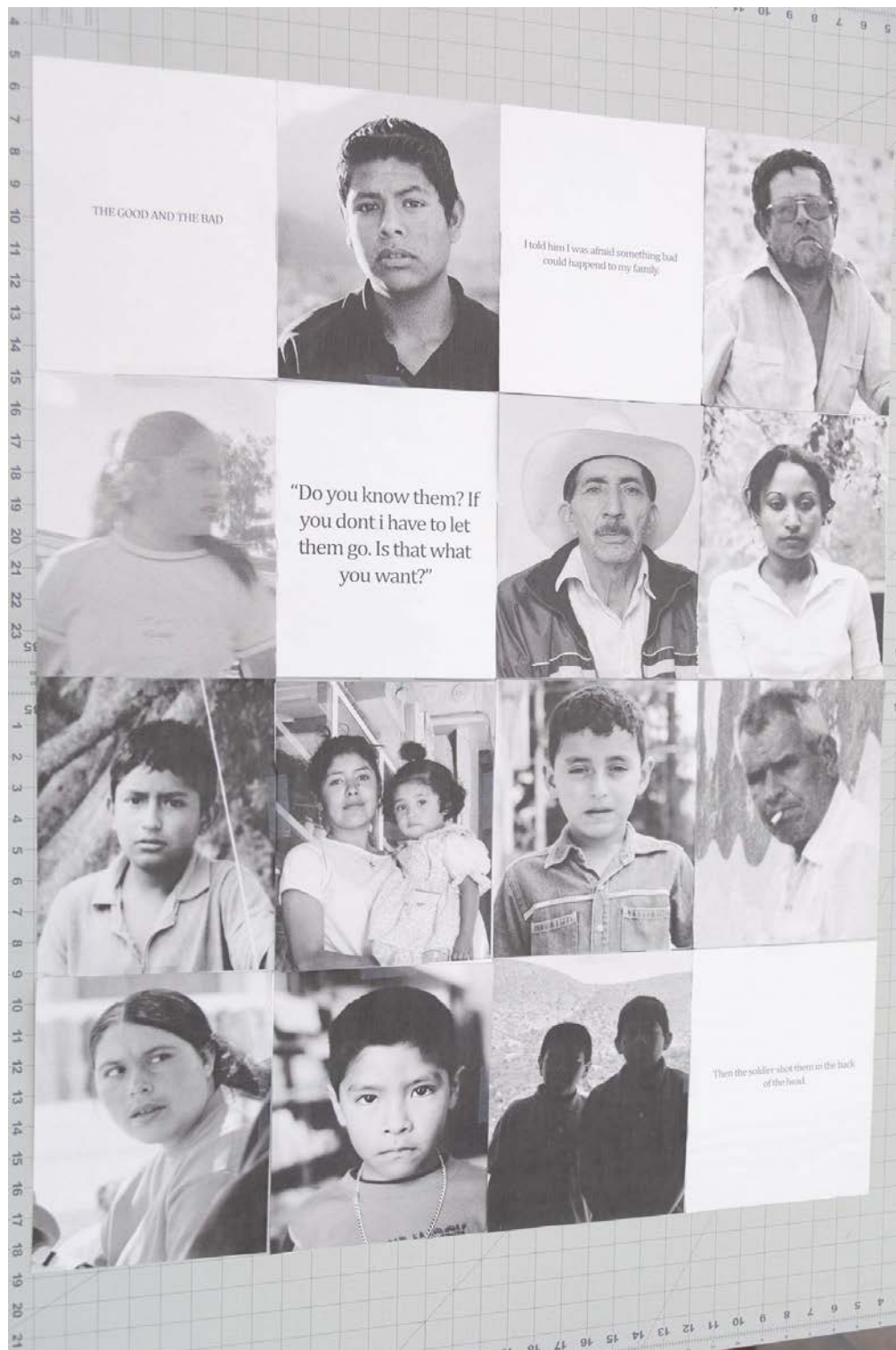


Before the War (2015), cont'd





Before the War (2015), poster maquette

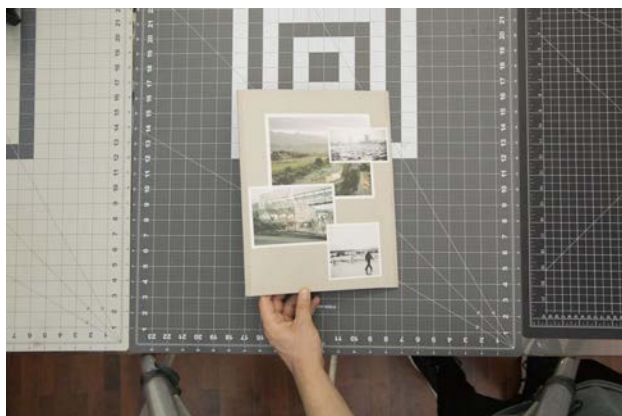




***Rivers of Power* (2016)**

Rivers of Power explores the tragic relationship between two bodies: the long and failed relationship between a society and a river. Although today it is a long and winding sarcophagus, in the past the city depended on the abundance of its stream. Centuries later, with Monterrey transformed into a regional industrial enclave, the Santa Catarina River served as a border between social classes: the employers on the north side, the laborers on the south. Since then, the river has been serving a sentence, receiving the treatment of a beast, with its future in peril. This project traces the river's evolution over time and pictures it in present day as a marker of the political ideologies of the current institution. There are three handmade maquettes as part of this project, along with two, digitally-printed maquettes that show the evolution of the conceptual approach to the final book.

***Rivers of Power*, Maquette 1**





Assembly

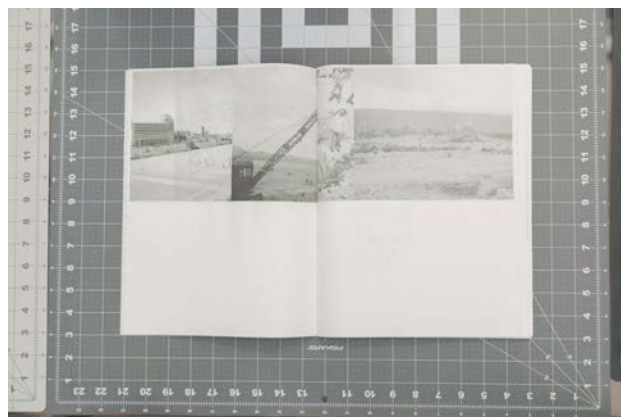
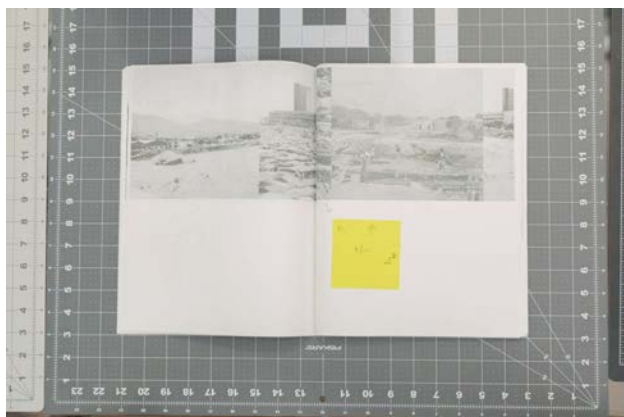
Rivers of Power, Maquette 2





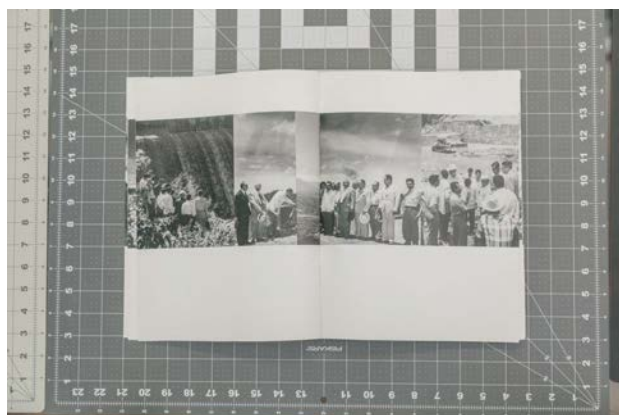
Assembly

Rivers of Power, Maquette 3





Rivers of Power, Maquette 4





Rivers of Power, Maquette 5





Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US (2016)

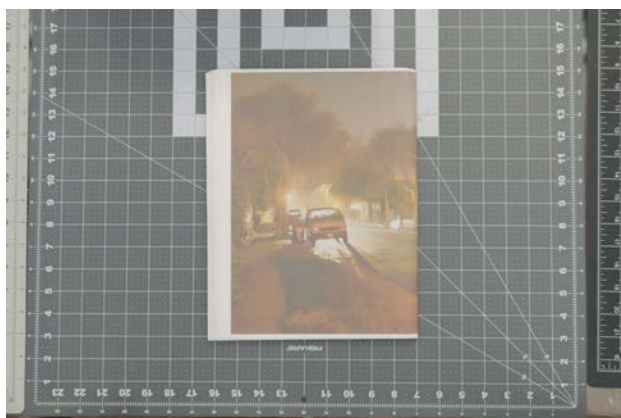
The surface of a city can lure us into its immediate beauty. It is through walking and getting lost that the surface seems to peel away and present new impressions. During a residency in Santa Barbara, California, Cartagena took to the streets and to the World Wide Web to explore the idea of what this place could be. He was interested in how it had been previously constructed in the mind of the outsider; was it a college town? The home of Oprah Winfrey and other Hollywood stars? The Soap Opera of the 90's? The site of school shootings? Though on the exterior this small tourist town seemed the picture-perfect American-Mediterranean escape, just under the façade seemed to lay something uneasy. *Santa Barbara* is Cartagena's exploration of a narrative that can only be felt from the outside. It is a book about perceptions of a place. It suggests that nothing is immovable and no one is safe. This project consists of five maquettes, including the first experimental maquette version, three digitally-printed maquettes, and a final experiment with image placement.

Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US, Maquette 1



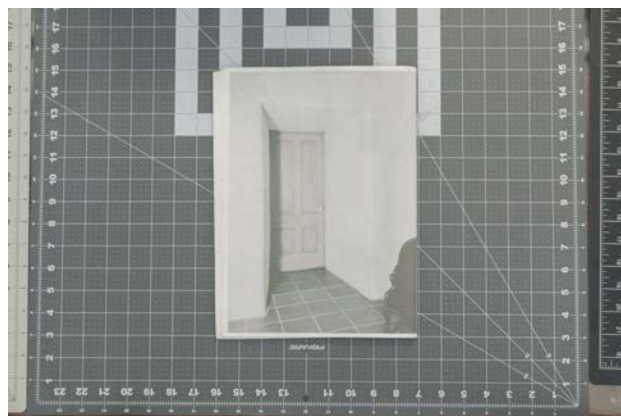
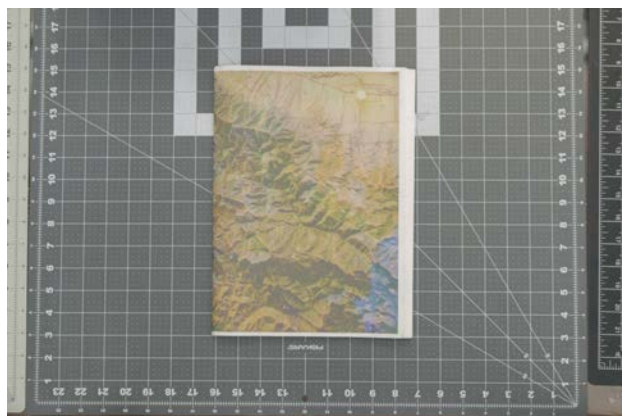


Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US, Maquette 2



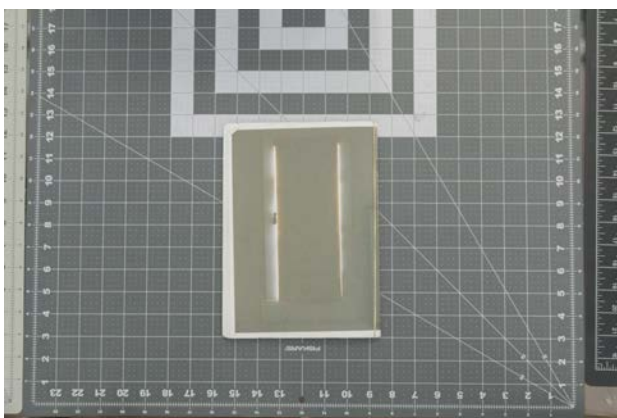
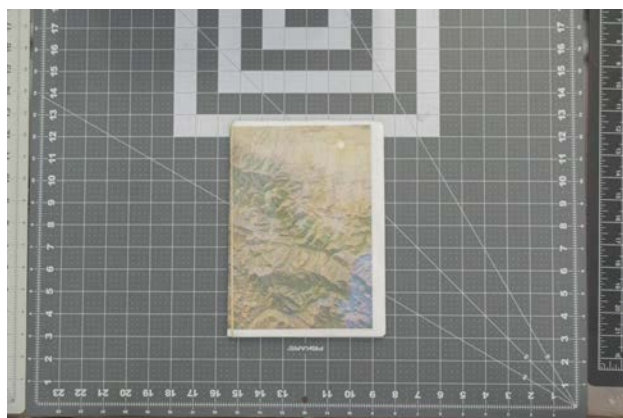


Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US, Maquette 3





Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US, Maquette 4

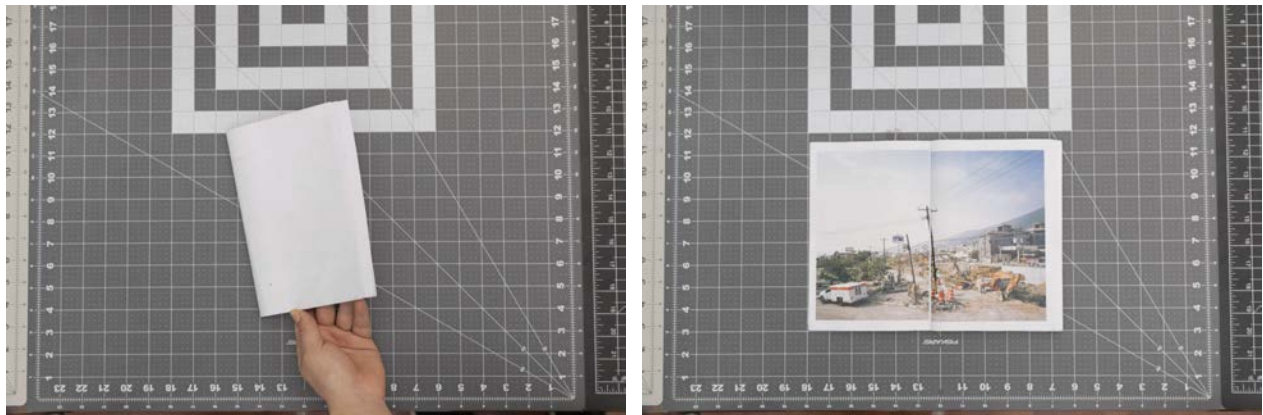




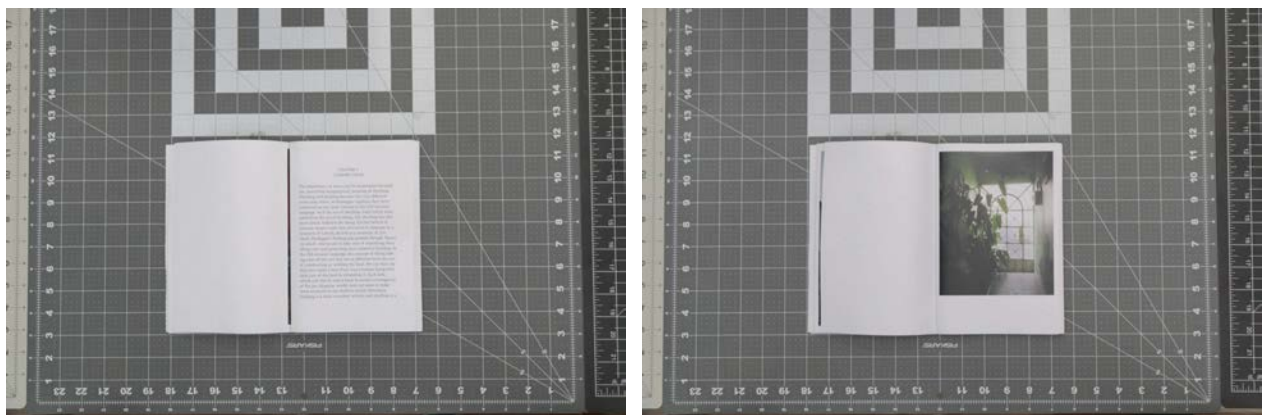
A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption (2017)

A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption explores how urban infrastructure is a gear of political power. Its aim is to conquer the territory of the city and hold dominion over certain city relationships. Public space is more than just a polygon delineated by coordinates, it is a factory of social realities. There would be nothing problematic about this power if it weren't exclusive. Those who build the city exercise a regulatory power over our mindset and our everyday experience. The rhythms that regulate our hours, "our place" in society and the type of roads we take on our daily commute are manifestations of this control. This group of maquettes includes two digitally-printed maquettes as well as two handmade versions of the epilogue.

A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption, Maquette 1

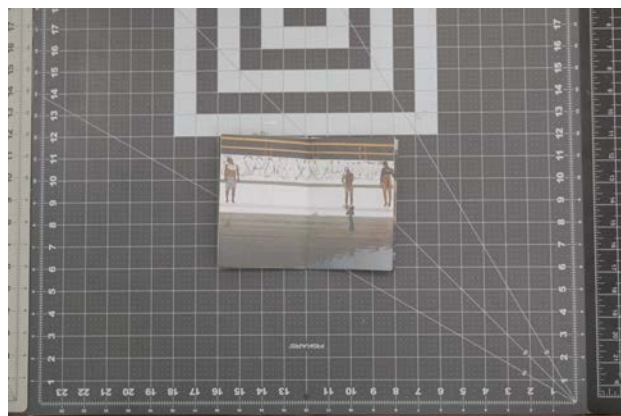
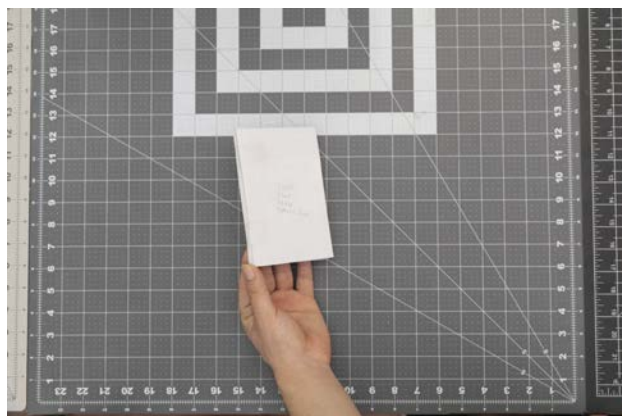


A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption, Maquette 2

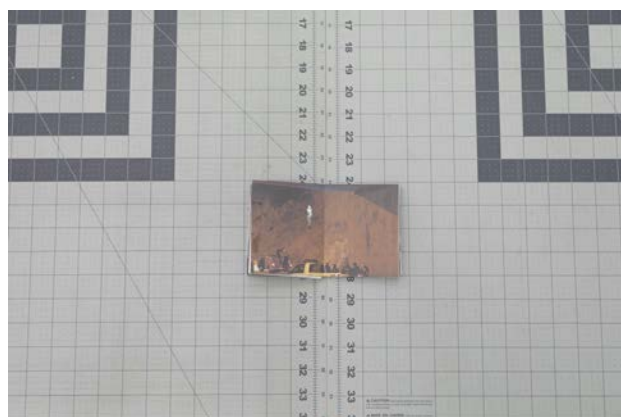
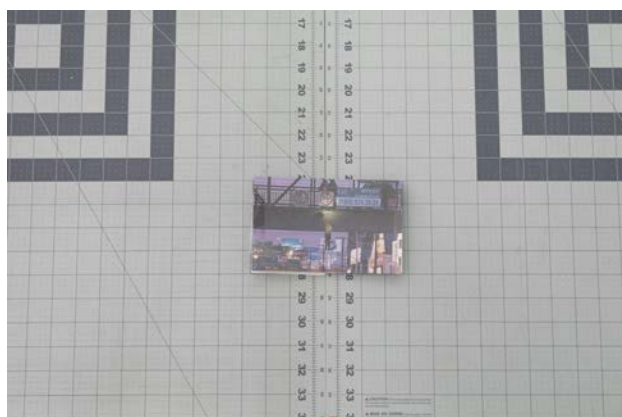




A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption, Epilogue 1



A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption, Epilogue 12





Santa Barbara Shame On US (2017)

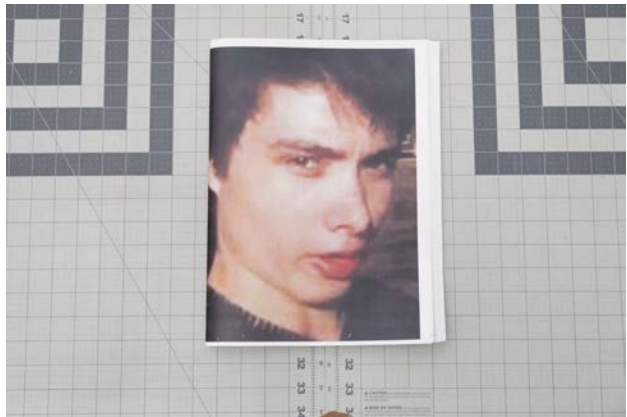
After *Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US*, the second chapter on the US is a more tragically constructed visual landscape. The current state of affairs in 'America' has created a greater divide and contrast socially and especially politically. As such, the book carefully suggests and addresses these issues that need no literal explanation but an almost theatrical approach to feel the surface and see the inside of the decline of an empire. This project includes four maquettes, all digitally-printed, and handbound with rubber bands that show the evolution of the edit, sequence, and ultimate project.

Santa Barbara Shame On US, Maquette 1





Santa Barbara Shame On US, Maquette 2





Santa Barbara Shame On US, Maquette 3





Santa Barbara Shame On US, Maquette 4





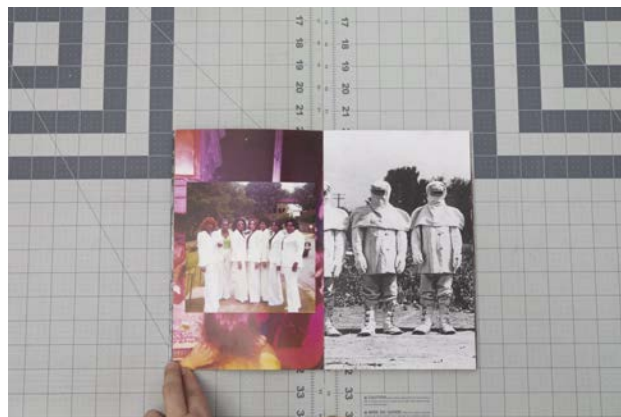
A Small Make Believe Neighborhood (2017)

In *A Small Make Believe Neighborhood*, Cartagena shows us his mastery of creating thoughtful, poetic narratives through photographic archives. This project, which grew out of his residency at the Visual Studies Workshop explores his thoughts on the throngs of people in the US voting for the idea of building a border wall between our countries. His generous and pointed response, *A Small Make Believe Neighborhood*, is a multi-generational story with a child's sense of wonder and acceptance of all kinds of people and ideas. It makes a direct invitation to the reader to join in the colorful, playful, endlessly diverse neighborhood of the world. This project includes two digitally-printed maquettes that are handbound.

A Small Make Believe Neighborhood, Maquette 1



A Small Make Believe Neighborhood, Maquette 2





Los Sumergidos (2018)

Los Sumergidos is Cartagena's collaboration with Carlos Loret de Mola, Juan Madrid, Freddy Martinez, and Fernando Gallegos, each who construct the life of Teresa (1991-2063) and her disappearance in the Catskills of New York through a series of images, texts, and interviews. The book asks us to question how stories can be constructed through a "documentary" style of images and texts. In the end, the book is a reflection of a need to think of photographs as constructions, not as documents. This project includes seven digitally-printed maquettes.

Los Sumergidos, Selected maquettes pictured chronologically below

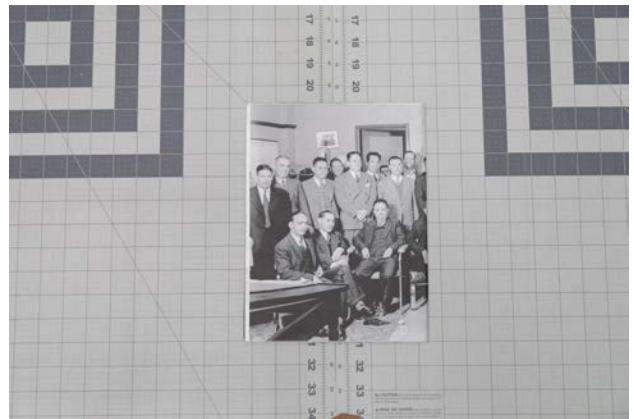




We Love Our Employees (2019)

One of Mexico's biggest beer companies at the beginning of the 20th century was worried about the newly constitutional rights offered to workers to unionize. This created a concern of strikes and trouble in the company. For years they threw parties in which spies were placed to hear out the employees' conversations in order to spot trouble-makers. This book contains the pictures of many of those parties. There are two maquettes for this project – one spiral bound, and another saddle-stitched.

We Love Our Employees, Maquette 1 (Top Row) and Maquette 2 (Bottom Row)





Santa Barbara Save US (2020)

Santa Barbara Save US is the last chapter in the *Santa Barbara* trilogy that has followed the cultural turmoil that the US has experienced in the last four years. The third volume continues to paint an uncertain present and future. This project includes four digitally-printed maquettes, handbound with rubber bands.

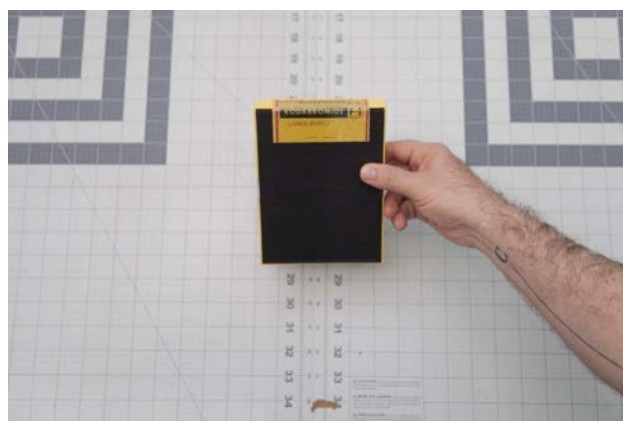
Santa Barbara Save US, Selected maquettes pictured chronologically below





El Casting (2020)

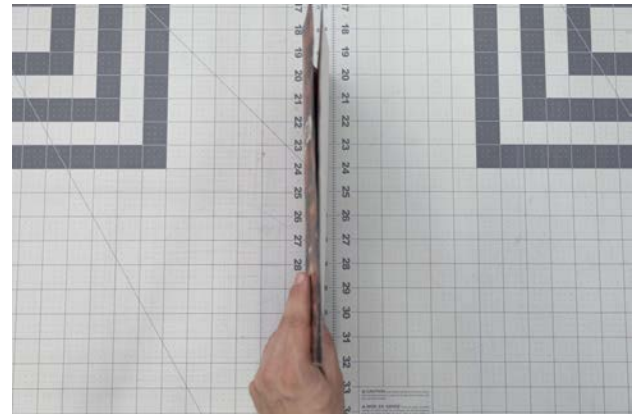
This unique photobook object comes housed in a vintage Kodak box and once opened, contains film transparencies, prints, a movie poster, and a booklet exploring a scene from the 1955 film, *La fuerza del deseo*, one of several Mexican films of the era to exhibit female nudity as a high art, a practice that would eventually gain traction. The maquette includes a box, text booklet, and unbound positive and negative transparencies.





Insurrection Nation (2021)

This handmade edition includes 1440 color portraits of the individuals who took part in the attack on the United States Capital on January 6, 2021. The maquette is laser printed and saddle-stitched.





Suburban Bus (forthcoming spring 2021)

In how many ways are we our city? In how many ways does traveling every day in these buses from the suburban municipality of Juárez to the center of Monterrey impact us? What philosophies, what democracies, what senses of community emerge from among these passengers? These are just a few of the questions that Cartagena poses in this new book, which documents the workers who travel on unregulated, often extremely unsafe buses every day for work. This project includes five, digitally-printed maquettes that are bound with a rubber band, showing the evolution of the project.

