

OBJECT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT Hirsch Library

CLASSIFICATION BOOKS & MANUSCRIPTS

ARTIST Alejandro Cartagena, Mexican, born Dominican Republic, 1977

TITLE Photobook Maquette

DATE 2011 - 2021

MEDIUM 87 maquettes and 8 posters from 25 book projects

DIMENSIONS Variable dimensions

CREDIT LINE Museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund, Photography Book Collection

SELLER Alejandro Cartagena

General Juan Cano 68

San Miguel Chapultepec

Mexico

INSURANCE VALUE \$ 85,000

This work has no additional expenses.

PURCHASE PRICE \$ 85,000

ADDITIONAL COSTS

FUNDING SOURCE Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund, Photography Book Collection

DATE OF COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

10/11/2021

DATE

DATE ENDORSED BY SUBCOMMITTEE:

10/6/2021

DATE

SUBMISSION

Jon Evans, Chief Librarian and Archivist, Hirsch Library

DATE

APPROVAL

Gary Tinterow, Director, The Margaret Alkek Williams Chair
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

DATE

Frank J. Hevrdejs, Chair, Collections Committee

DATE

Richard D. Kinder, Chairman of the Board

DATE



I. THE WORK OF ART

- A IMPORTANCE** State the importance of the work in relation to the existing MFAH collections, being candid about its strengths and weaknesses, its rarity of quality, technique, type, etc.

Since the early 1990s Mexican photographer Alejandro Cartagena has developed a dynamic body of work exploring social, urban, and environmental issues, largely through the lens of his contemporary Mexican experience. Today, he is widely recognized not only as an astute and thoughtful photographer, but also as one of the most prolific self-publishers working in the photobook space today. Each of his bodies of works are envisioned as book projects from the outset. For Cartagena, printing, typography, graphic design, sequencing, and binding are all essential elements of his artistic production, whether incorporating photographs of his own or those that he has mined from personal or institutional archives.

Over the course of the past decade Cartagena has addressed many of the most pressing issues in his home city of Monterrey, Mexico—issues that are echoed in communities across North America. Each of these projects has culminated in a self-published photobook addressing subjects as diverse and complex as the impact of suburban development and sprawl (*Suburbia Mexicana*, 2011), economic structures and labor migration (*Carpoolers*, 2014), the war on drugs (*Before the War*, 2015), the environmental impact of development on rivers (*Rivers of Power*, 2016), the social and political landscape in America (*Santa Barbara Shame on US*, 2017), the construction of reality through photography (*Los Sumergidos*, 2018), the marketing of politicians in the age of social media (*Enrique*, 2018), and the challenges inherent in public transportation systems (*Suburban Bus*, 2021).

On offer here is the photographer's complete inventory of 87 maquettes and 8 posters for his 25 photographic book projects during the period from 2011-2021. Maquettes, also known as models or dummies, are preliminary works that capture the development of a book at a particular stage before reaching its final published form. Cartagena's practice for book design often involves multiple stages of development, yielding a rich array of documentary evidence about his practices and processes. These maquettes document not only physical alterations that take place over the course of each production such as changes in graphic design, typography, paper selection, color balance, image density, and binding type, but they also capture critical shifts in concept, narrative, sequence, and rhythm that can radically alter a project. More importantly, they provide us with the rare opportunity to peer into the mind of an artist and gain insight into the creative process as ideas shift and fluctuate before becoming fully realized in their final form.

This grouping of maquettes illustrates the evolution of the conceptual, aesthetic, and formal development of each project as well as of Cartagena's overarching practice. Additionally, they underscore the shifts in publishing models and the publishing industry during the height of the digital publishing revolution until now.

Born in 1977 (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic), Cartagena lives and works in Monterrey, Mexico. His work has been exhibited internationally in more than 50 group and individual exhibitions and is in the collections of numerous museums including the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, San Francisco MOMA, The J. Paul Getty Museum, the George Eastman Museum, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, The Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, and the Portland Museum of Art among others.

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 PHOTOBOK

AWARD. Most recently, Cartagena was shortlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize in 2021.

Cartagena has received several awards including the international Photolucida Critical Mass Book Award, the Street Photography Award in London Photo Festival, the Lente Latino Award in Chile, the Premio IILA-FotoGrafia Award in Rome and the Salon de la Fotografia of Fototeca de Nuevo Leon in Mexico among others. He has been named an International Discoveries of the FotoFest festival, a FOAM magazine TALENT and an Emerging photographer of PDN magazine. He has also been a finalist for the Aperture Portfolio Award and has been nominated for the Santa Fe Photography Prize, the Prix Pictet Prize, the Photoespaña Descubrimientos Award and the FOAM Paul Huff Award. His work has been published internationally in magazines and newspapers such as Newsweek, Nowness, Domus, the Financial Times, The New York Times, Le Monde, Stern, PDN, The New Yorker, and Wallpaper among others.

B. DESCRIPTION **Provide a complete description of the object and mention any added attachments, missing parts, etc.**

All 87 maquettes and 8 posters from the 25 book projects listed below constitute the complete pre-publication output by the photographer.

Suburbia Mexicana, 2011 (2 maquettes)
Carpoolers, 1st Edition, 2014 (4 maquettes)
Carpoolers Poster, 2014 (1 poster)
Headshots, 2015 (1 maquette)
Before the War, 2015 (1 maquette; 1 poster)
Carpoolers, 2nd Edition, 2016 (3 maquettes)
What We Fight For, 2016 (4 groupings of unbound pages; 4 posters)
Rivers of Power, 2016 (5 maquettes)
Santa Barbara Return Jobs Back to US, 2016 (4 maquettes)
A Guide to Infrastructure and Corruption, 2017 (2 maquettes; 2 epilogues)
Santa Barbara Shame on US, 2017 (4 maquettes)
A Small Make Believe Neighborhood, 2017 (2 maquettes)
Enrique, 2018 (1 maquette)
Los Sumergidos, 2018 (7 maquettes)
Carpoolers, 3rd Edition, 2019 (2 maquettes; 2 posters)
We Love Our Employees, 2019 (2 maquettes)
Santa Barbara Save US, 2020 (4 maquettes)
El Casting, 2020 (1 maquette)
A Small Guide to Homeownership, 2020 (1 grouping of loose unbound pages)
Insurrection Nation, 2021 (1 maquette)
Suburban Bus, 2021 (5 maquettes)
Car Show, 2021 (4 maquettes)
Fossiles, 2021 (10 maquettes)
Lost Rivers, 2021 (2 maquettes)
Love and Politics, 2021 (8 maquettes)
Roma Roma, 2021 (7 maquettes)

More fulsome details on each of the maquettes are included in the attachments. Additionally, an expanded set of images for each book project is available on the [artist's website](#).

INSCRIPTIONS **Transcribe any inscriptions.**

MARKS **Describe any marks.**

C. STYLE **Describe the style of the work and relate it to the appropriate artist, school, period, etc.**

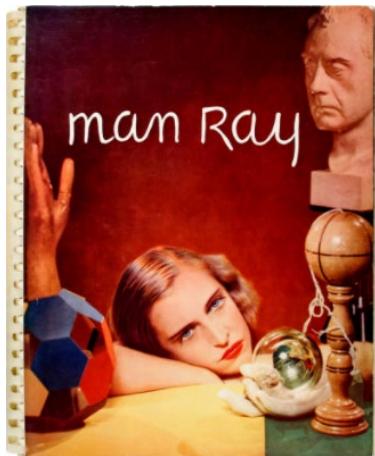
D. ICONOGRAPHIC TREATMENT **Does the iconographic treatment follow an established program or is it unusual?**
TREATMENT

E. FUNCTION **State the function of the work. Was it part of a greater whole or an independent work?**

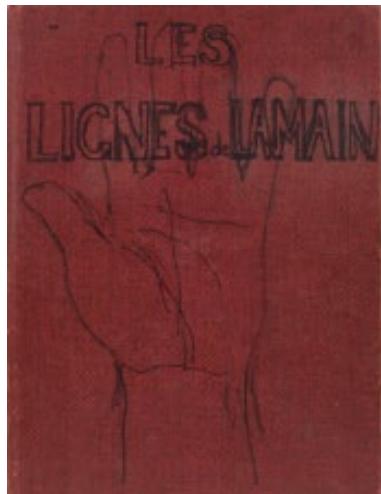
This constitutes the complete inventory of the artist's pre-publication output and serves to document his changing vision as each project develops.

F. COMPARABLE WORKS **Discuss and illustrate two or three works of art that make the best comparisons with the recommended purchase. Indicate what distinctive qualities the recommended purchase has in relation to these comparative works in terms of style, technique, condition, documentation, etc.**

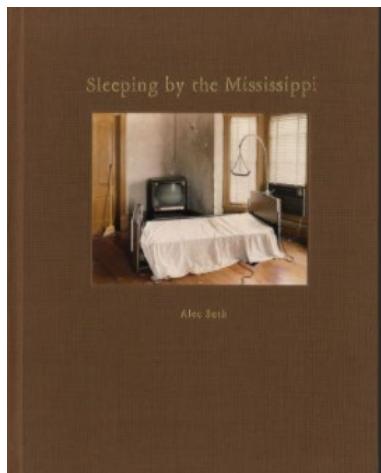
The Museum owns a number of significant photographic maquettes that reflect this institution's prior commitment to this area of collecting. Among the most significant are those produced by Man Ray, Robert Frank, and Alec Soth—each among the most respected photographers and bookmakers of his generation. The group of maquettes by Cartagena would complement these works.



Photographs by Man Ray: 1920, Paris, 1934 [proof collection] Hartford, CT: James Thrall Soby, 1933–34. Vol. 1, text proof 1920–33; vol. 2, text proof 1920–34; vol. 3, final proof 1920–34. Book maquette. The Manfred Heiting Book Collection, museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund, LIB.124



Robert Frank. *Les Lignes de la Main (The Lines of My Hand)* [Maquette], 1971. Book maquette. Museum purchase funded by Gay Block, 89.118



Alex Soth. *Sleeping by the Mississippi* [sic] [S.I.]: A. Soth, 2003. Book maquette. Hirsch Library, LIB.130

Additionally, the Museum owns 3 works by Cartagena:



Alejandro Cartagena. *Carpoolers #3*, 2012, inkjet print. Museum purchase funded by Judy Nyquist in honor of Scott Nyquist, 2013.52



Alejandro Cartagena. *Carpoolers #21*, 2012, inkjet print. Museum purchase funded by Joan Morgenstern, 2013.53



Alejandro Cartagena. *We are #17*, 2020, Gelatin silver print. Museum purchase funded by the Photography Subcommittee, 2020.162

- G. EXHIBITION AND HOUSING **Present plans for exhibiting and housing the object. Will this object require any special storage or crating needs?**

No immediate plans, though the materials are excellent candidates for future installations in the Kinder Building photography galleries or the Hirsch Library.
- H. PUBLISHING PLANS **Present plans for publishing the object, in print and/or online:**
- II. CONDITION **State any issues of condition that should be taken into account prior to the work's acquisition. A conservator's detailed analysis and results of technical investigation should be appended to this form. Where appropriate, conservators must comment on evidence of burial.**

III. PROVENANCE

- A. **Give the history of the object, all that is known of its provenance with documentation. Include any hearsay evidence or traditional provenance, with source, and attach all relevant correspondence with the dealer or previous owners.**

All materials come direct from the artist's studio.

- B. ANCIENT
BURIED This work is **NOT** considered "ancient" in the field
This is **NOT** the type of work likely to have been buried or discovered at an archaeological site.

IV. REFERENCES

- A. **List all published references and emphasize those of the most relevance.**

- B. EXPERT ADVICE **Note any expert advice sought or volunteered from outside the MFAH.**

- C. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- D. CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

- E. EXHIBITION HISTORY

V. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. PRICE **Price (in local currency and approximate conversion as of date of this report):**

\$85,000

- B. NEGOTIATIONS **Tell how long you have known of the work and give a history of negotiations.**

Discussions with the artist and his gallery have been underway since March 2021 when they reached out to gather information about a potential price for the grouping. We expressed interest at that time.

- C. RESTRICTIONS AND BARGAINING **State any conditions attached to the purchase and chances for bargaining.**

- D. MARKET PRICES **Give recent market prices for comparable works of art.**

There are no comparables for a grouping such as this.

- E. EXCHANGE **If the object is to be acquired by an exchange, specify MFAH object(s) involved, including accession number(s), valuation and status of deaccessioning.**

- F. ADDITIONAL EXPENSES **Detail of additional expenses. Specify anticipated additional expenses (transportation, insurance, import fees, storage, other). Include the estimated amount if MFAH is to pay.**
N/A
- G. FABRICATION EXPENSES **If this artwork requires any additional exceptional fabrication for display, itemize all anticipated equipment and labor costs. How would these costs be underwritten?**
- H. FUNDING SOURCES **Detail of funding sources. State the name of the fund(s), gift(s), and/or pledges to be applied if you recommend that such sources be used.**

We propose using funds from the Heiting insurance claim (to be paid using Heiting Insurance Funds)