

nara roesler



**jose dávila**

a pirate, a poet,  
a pawn and a king

nara roesler são paulo

**opening**

november 11, 11am–5pm

**exhibition**

nov 11, 2023 – feb 10, 2024

## a pirate, a poet, a pawn and a king

Nara Roesler is pleased to present *A pirate, a poet, a pawn and a king*, the first solo exhibition by Mexican artist Jose Dávila (Guadalajara, 1974) in Brazil. Marking the beginning of the gallery's representation of the artist, the show brings together recent works by Dávila, with around 20 pieces, including installations, sculptures, paintings, and drawings. Accompanied by a text by Julieta González, the exhibition reveals intrinsic aspects of the artist's practice, marked by an approach to language and the sculptural tradition from a perspective centered on the articulation between the 'constructive will' and the physical principles that govern nature.

The title of the exhibition alludes to the idea of transformation and mutation present in Dávila's work and refers to the way he deals with materials, based on a poetic approach to the Frank Sinatra song *That's Life*. According to Dávila: 'A person can be a pirate, then a poet, also a pawn and end up being a king... the same person. [...] I'm very interested in the notion that all things evolve and transmute over time: us as people, things as objects and materials, symbolic meaning. This constant evolution is fertile ground for new meanings to emerge, for changes to be accepted and for new beginnings to take place. This is an essential quality and characteristic of the nature of art, the capacity for transformation.'

Although the central element of his poetics is the field of sculpture, he is not interested in the stability, or often 'solid,' character of this type of language; his attention is much more directed towards impermanence and instability. 'The way I approach materials, why I choose them and how I use them afterwards, is related to these concepts, summarized in the title of the exhibition, from a poetic approach,' the artist adds. This can be seen in works such as *Joint Effort* (2015), in which Dávila, using a ratchet handle, joins two unilateral mirrors at an oblique angle. The material responsible for pulling the handle down and preventing the mirrors from falling is a set of stones. In this way, the artist creates a composition using completely different and even opposing materials, which gives it a latent sense of fragility and imminent collapse. The effort put into each part, however, is what holds the elements together. A similar principle occurs in the work *Trophic Chain* (2023), whose title refers to the process of transferring matter and energy within an ecosystem. In this ensemble, a mirror stands obliquely and imposingly at the expense of a concrete block and a set of stones.

Dávila's keen eye for space and the analysis of physical forces such as mass, balance, and materiality are constantly present in his work. The elements of

his poetics are explored through the most diverse media and languages, working with sculpture and installation, in which he uses rigid materials such as stones, glass, and concrete, to flexible materials such as wire, cardboard, ribbons, and straps, to pictorial elements. A recurring procedure in his work is the re-readings he makes of the productions of well-known figures in art history, such as Donald Judd and Roy Lichtenstein. The exhibition includes works from the Homage to Square series, in which Dávila transforms Josef Albers' eponymous series of paintings into kinetic mobiles.

Painting also enters the artist's poetic radar, equally based on the search for impermanent or tense situations. In the series *The fact of constantly returning to the same point or situation*, Dávila creates a set of circles with different colors and consistencies. Almost always incomplete, or framed in such a way that they cannot be seen as a whole, they end up provoking sensations of incompleteness and disorientation in the viewer. *Orden Discontinuo*, a series of prints made on different types of paper, brings similar compositions and evokes similar sensations, but also incorporates the qualities of the supports in which they are inserted, such as folds/tears and textures



Personal diary, 2023  
metal, wood, boulder, plaster,  
concrete, shovel, glass, and bricks  
262 x 325 x 25 cm  
103.1 x 128 x 9.8 in





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*Joint effort*, 2023  
one way mirror, boulders  
and ratchet strap  
185 x 132 x 130 cm  
72.8 x 52 x 51.2 in





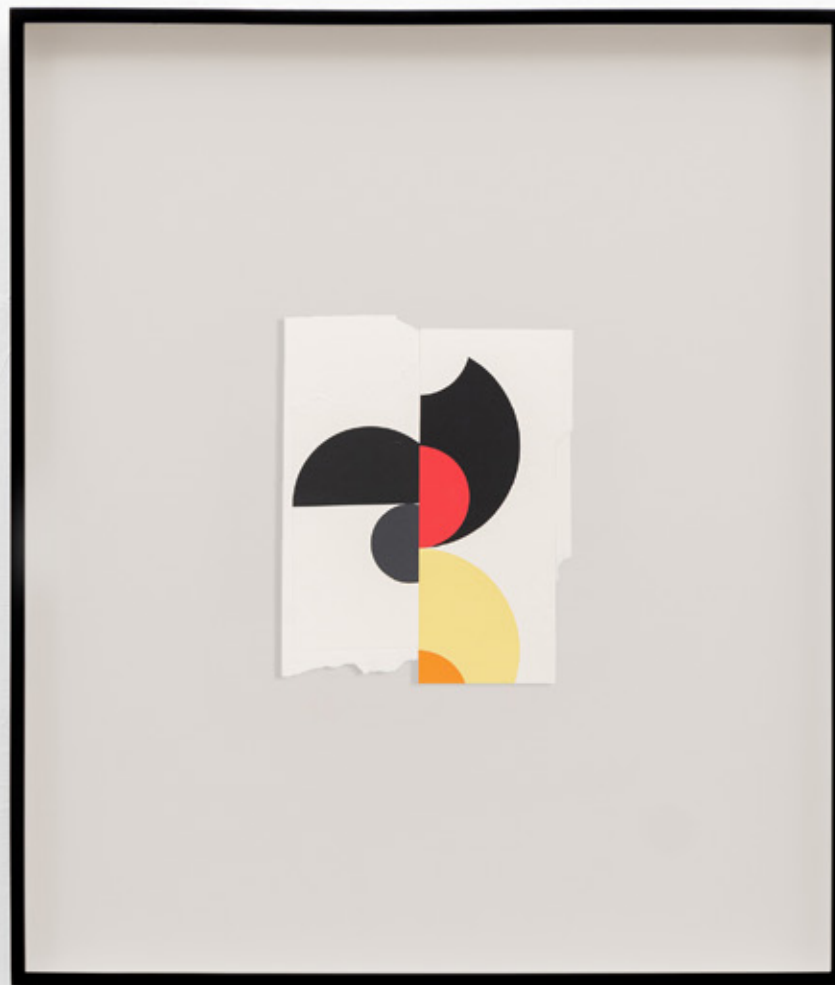


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*Untitled, 2023*  
concrete and boulder  
160,5 x 50 x 110,5 cm  
63.2 x 19.7 x 43.5 in

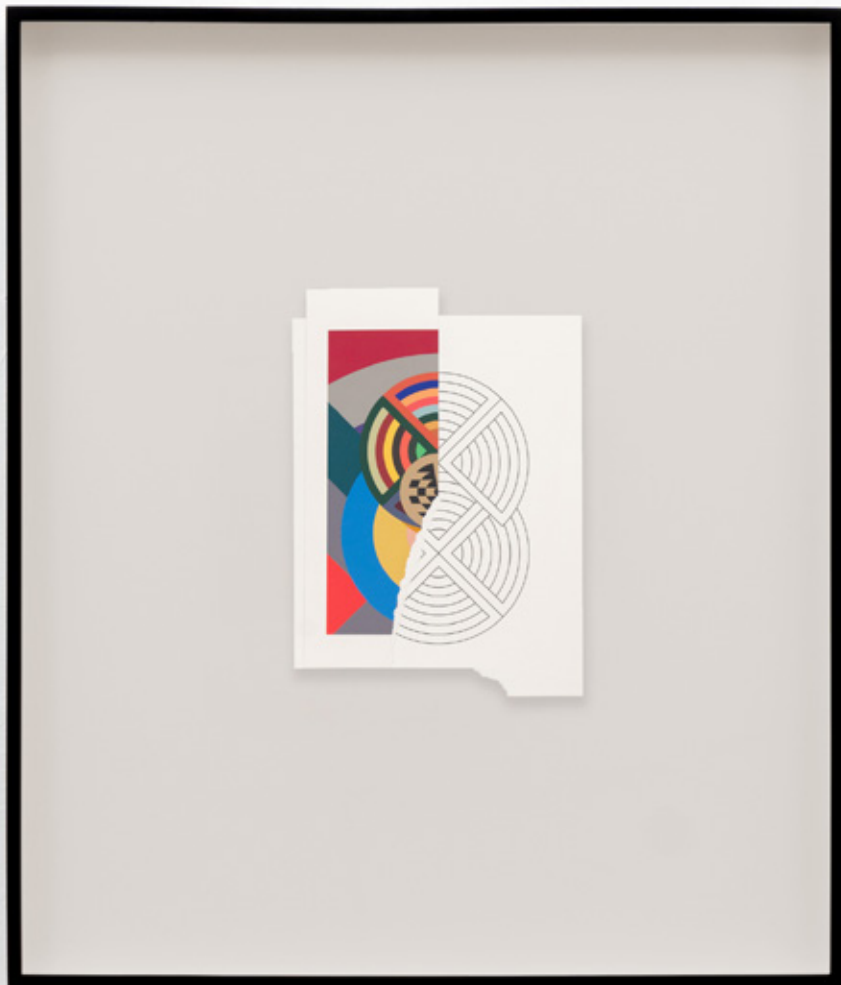






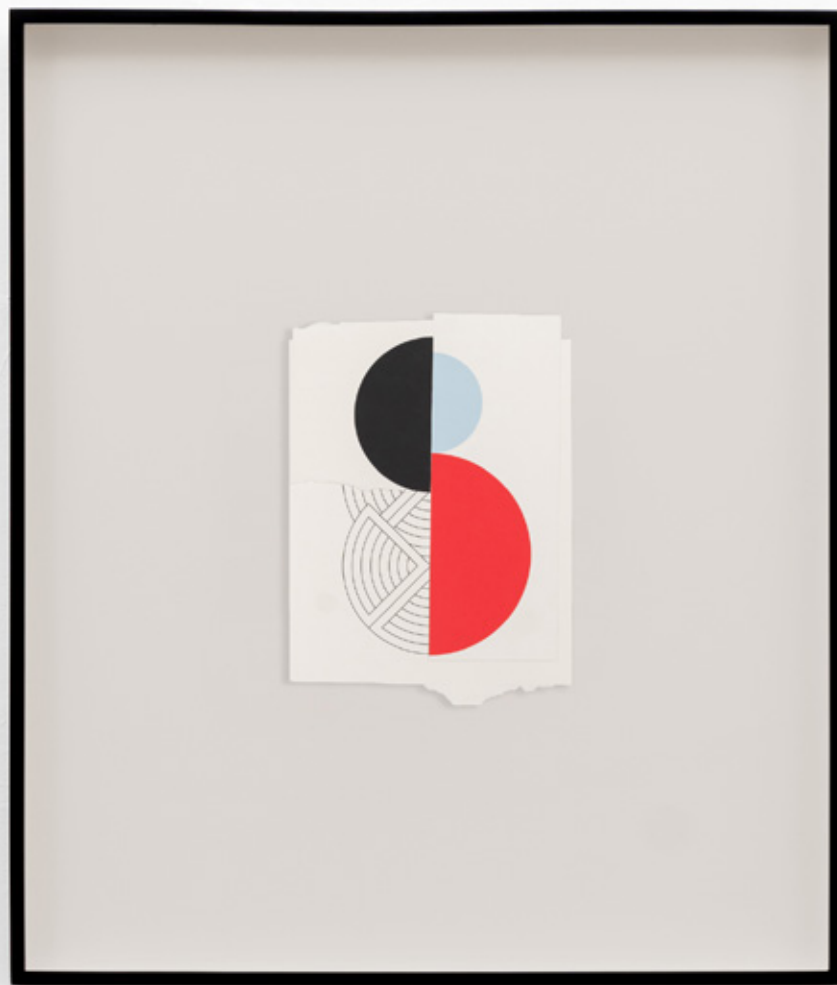
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*Orden Discontinuo*, 2023  
archival pigment print  
74 x 63,6 x 4,5 cm  
29.1 x 25 x 1.8 in



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*Orden Discontinuo*, 2023  
archival pigment print  
74 x 63,6 x 4,5 cm  
29.1 x 25 x 1.8 in



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*Orden Discontinuo*, 2023  
archival pigment print  
74 x 63,6 x 4,5 cm  
29.1 x 25 x 1.8 in



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*Orden Discontinuo*, 2020  
silkscreen print on cardboard  
74 x 63,6 x 4,5 cm  
29.1 x 25 x 1.8 in



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*Orden Discontinuo*, 2020  
silkscreen print on cardboard  
74 x 63,6 x 4,5 cm  
29.1 x 25 x 1.8 in



**Secret Desire, 2023**  
metal, epoxy paint, boulders, and wire  
296 x 140 x 93,5 cm  
116.5 x 55.1 x 36.8 in





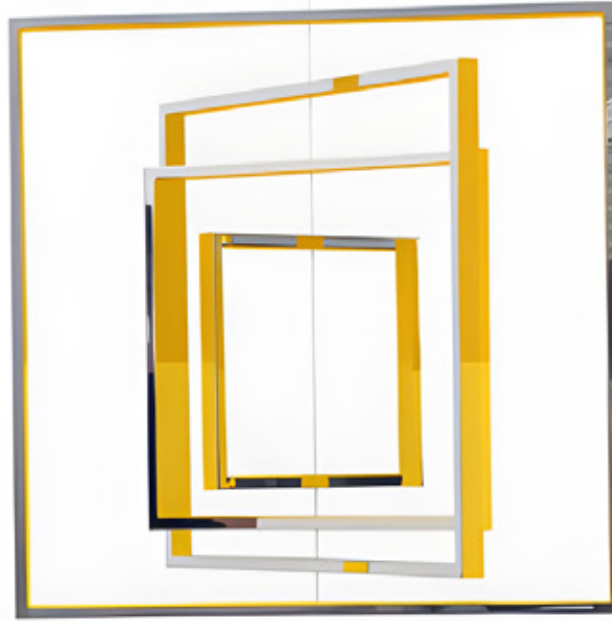




*Trophic Chain*, 2023  
concrete, boulders, wood, metal,  
epoxy paint, one way mirror, and strap  
183,5 x 374 x 280 cm  
72.2 x 147.2 x 110.2 in

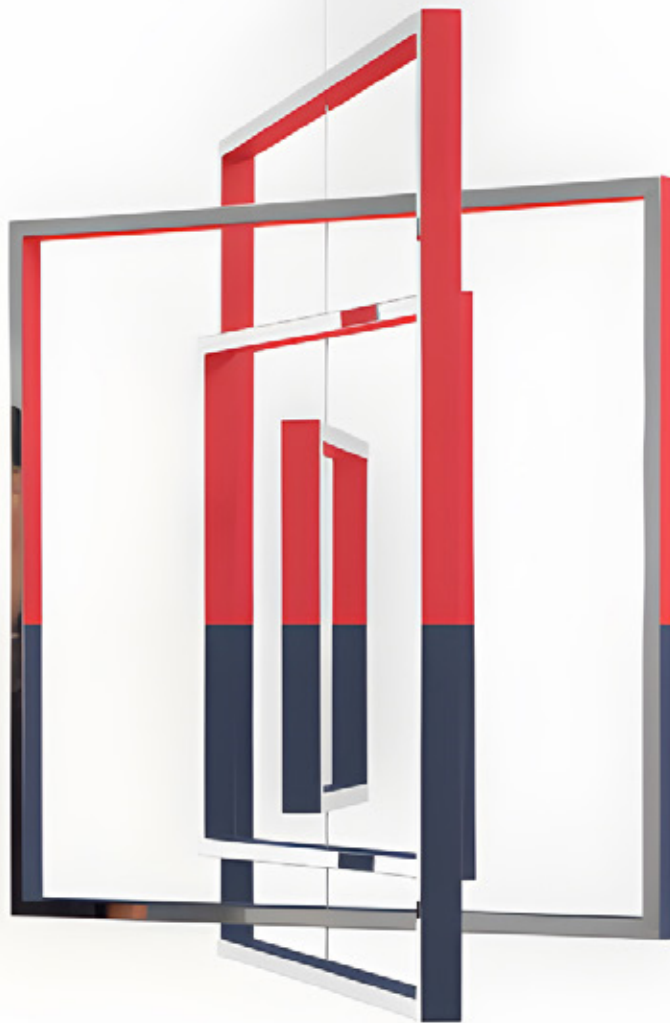






*Homage to the Square, 2023*  
polished stainless steel and epoxy paint  
90 x 90 x 90 cm  
35.4 x 35.4 x 35.4 in

*Homage to the Square*, 2023  
polished stainless steel and epoxy paint  
120 x 120 x 120 cm  
47.2 x 47.2 x 47.2 in



*The fact of constantly  
returning to the same  
point or situation, 2022*  
silkscreen print and vinyl paint  
on loomstate linen  
140 x 113,2 x 6 cm  
55.1 x 44.6 x 2.4 in







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*The fact of constantly returning  
to the same point or situation, 2023*  
silkscreen print and vinyl paint  
on loomstate linen  
210 x 170 x 6 cm  
82.7 x 66.9 x 2.4 in





*The fact of constantly  
returning to the same  
point or situation*, 2023  
silkscreen print and vinyl paint  
on loomstate linen  
210 x 344 x 6 cm  
82.7 x 135.4 x 2.4 in







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*The fact of constantly returning  
to the same point or situation, 2022*  
silkscreen print and vinyl paint  
on loomstate linen  
35 x 28,3 x 3 cm  
13.8 x 11.1 x 1.2 in

*The fact of constantly returning  
to the same point or situation, 2023*  
silkscreen print and vinyl paint  
on loomstate linen  
170 x 210 x 6 cm  
66.9 x 82.7 x 2.4 in





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*The fact of constantly returning  
to the same point or situation, 2021*  
silkscreen print and vinyl paint  
on loomstate linen  
35 x 28,3 x 3 cm  
13.8 x 11.1 x 1.2 in

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## jose dávila

b. 1974, Guadalajara, Mexico, where he lives and works

For more than two decades, Jose Dávila has been working mainly in the sculptural field, creating works that bring together materials in precarious compositions. Davila's works, also unfold as images in different media such as drawing, painting and printing. By studying and understanding how gravitational energy works, the artist plays with balance. That is one of his most important compositional methods, as well as seriality and stacking, which he employs to create not only visual but physical tensions. The apparent instability of his pieces claims the public's attention, demanding a deep perception of space and spatiality. Dávila challenges the viewer to face the elements and construction of the work from different perspectives, observing how they are capable of making rawness and fragility coexist, as well as organic and artificial form, system and chaos, danger, and peace.

Jose Dávila's practice is based on an original approach to the fundamental properties of the sculptural medium, such as weight, density, shape, volume, and mass. These aspects, in interaction with the characteristics of each material, often used in their raw state, such as rocks, or after having gone through industrial processes, such as metal, concrete, and glass structures, lead us to see his works as an expressive manifestation of human constructive will. Frequently, the artist brings together different forms and objects using ropes and wires, or leaning on each other, giving protagonism to physical forces, made explicit by the co-dependent relationship between the work's internal forms, emphasizing the different rhythms created by internal dynamics and tensions in their configuration.

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### selected solo exhibitions

- *Las piedras saben esperar*, Centro Internazionale di Scultura, Peccia, Switzerland (2021)
- *Directional Energies*, Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, USA (2020)
- *Pensar como una montaña*, Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2019)
- *Non tutti quelli che vagano sono persi*, Museo del Novecento, Florence, Italy (2018)
- *Die Feder und der Elefant*, Kunsthalle Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany (2017)
- *Jose Dávila: The Object and the Environment*, Jumex Museum, Mexico City, Mexico (2016)

### selected group exhibitions

- 16<sup>th</sup> Bienal de Lyon, France (2022)
- 22<sup>th</sup> Bienal de Sidney, Australia (2020)
- 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Bienal de Havana, Cuba (2019 and 2017)
- *Walking Through Walls*, Gropius Bau, Berlin, Germany (2019)
- *Cher(es) ami(e)s*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (2016)
- *Panorama. Foreigners everywhere*, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP), São Paulo, Brazil (2009)
- *Eco. Mexican Contemporary Art*, Museo Nacional Centro de Artes Reina Sofia (MNCARS), Madrid, Spain (2005)

### selected collections

- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- Pérez Art Museum, Miami, USA
- Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS), Madrid, Spain
- Instituto de Arte Contemporânea de Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil
- Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany

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**são paulo**

avenida europa 655  
jardim europa, 01449-001  
são paulo, sp, brasil  
t 55 (11) 2039 5454

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**rio de janeiro**

rua redentor 241  
ipanema, 22421-030  
rio de janeiro, rj, brasil  
t 55 (21) 3591 0052

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**new york**

511 west 21<sup>st</sup> street  
new york, 10011 ny  
usa  
t 1 (212) 794 5038

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[info@nararoesler.art](mailto:info@nararoesler.art)

[www.nararoesler.art](http://www.nararoesler.art)