

## antonio caro

### *achiote*, 2002

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sonora 128  
*achiote*, 2002  
 antonio caro  
 june 1 - august 31, 2016

events:  
**conversation with antonio caro**  
 saturday, june 18 | 12 pm  
 gob. rafael rebollar 94  
 col. san miguel chapultepec

flash mob - antonio caro  
 wednesday june 22 | 2 pm  
 parque españa  
 condesa, ciudad de méxico

upcoming:  
 daido moriyama  
 & nobuyoshi araki

avenida sonora 128  
 col. hipódromo condesa  
 mexico city

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For the second edition of sonora 128, artist **Antonio Caro** (Bogotá, 1950) presents *Achiote* (2001) a piece that began when the artist received a large sheet of Mexican *amate* paper (an indigenous variety of bark paper) in 1990. Two years later, during *Proyecto 500* (1987-1992), a series of presentations organized to reflect upon the identity in the Americas five hundred years after Cristobal Colon's arrival, Caro pondered how to materialize the conferences and exchanges of this historical event through his artistic practice. The phrase "Indians painted themselves with *achiote*," a dictum learnt in school as a child in Colombia, inspired the artist to draw on the blank *amate* paper with *achiote*, the orange-red pigment of a plant native to the American tropic.

Through his action painting with *achiote*, Caro recovers one of the most traditional indigenous means of expression. His experiments with this natural colorant have since ranged from drawing to performance, to the point where the *achiote* pigment itself has become the work of art. A prior example manifested itself in 2014, when Caro took part in *89plus Americas Marathon* at Museo Jumex in Mexico City, where he painted participants with annatto (a gesture which was enacted again on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 in front of sonora 128).

Caro later revealed a connection between *achiote*, and *chicozapote* (sapodilla), another tree native to the tropical area of the continent and rich in the white, gummy latex used to make chewing gum. For many years chewing gum was exclusively available in most of the Americas in one format, *Chiclets*, the first and only brand of gum in the market. This commercial monopoly became almost synonymous with the gum plant itself.

For its largest iteration yet to date, *Achiote* (2001) takes the form of an advertising billboard on sonora 128. Using the strategies of a conceptual revisionist guerilla, Caro appropriates the typography of the Chiclets logo, calling authority into question. The appropriation of a multinational commercial typography in combination with the use of indigenous mediums and techniques has previously existed

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in Caro's work, often as a way to bring to light the idea of a cultural establishment as a media culture, and the construction of a the sense of a national community. In this instance, the space of sonora 128 acts as catalyst for the piece, completing it precisely because it appropriates the same language it seeks to condemn. In the artist's words: "With sonora 128 I arrive to the place I am coming from."

Sonora 128 is a billboard exhibition space organized by kurimanzutto and programmed by Bree Zucker. A one-wall gallery project in the spirit of public art trailblazers, it aims to instigate a conversation with a broad audience by exhibiting major artworks publicly. Occupying a billboard space previously reserved for publicity and commercial use, sonora 128 continues the gallery's original pioneering and experimental energy. Since its inception in 1999, kurimanzutto has consistently promoted projects and exhibitions outside of a traditional white cube space to stimulate cultural dialogue within a cosmopolitan milieu. Previous such projects have involved showcasing art in local markets, parking lots and airports. Now centering its focus on a group of artists whose work takes an insightful and original pulse of our times, over the course of the next two years, from March 2016 to 2018, kurimanzutto will invite eight artists to exhibit a site-specific large-scale work for a period of three months each. These artists will be selected from a wide array of disciplines, including literature, music and visual art. Located above the corner of Avenida Sonora and Nuevo León in Mexico City, sonora 128 will be open 24/7, 365 days a year.

**Antonio Caro** (Bogota, 1950). Since 1970, Caro's work has urged looking with a critical eye at his country's social and political conditions, in order to subvert the generalized and unquestioned understanding of history. Caro employs techniques and mediums that escape traditional artistic practice, including photocopies, public installations, conferences, posters and organic materials such as salt or achiote, which convey strong cultural indigenous connotations. The vast majority of his work uses text as a tool to communicate strong messages, acquiring the paradoxical nuances of a political nature as a means of production and dissemination. In 1998, Caro received the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship. Some of his important works include: *Sal* (1971), *Imperialism is a paper tiger* (1972), *aquinocabeelarte* (art does not fit here) (1972), *There is no case* (1974), *Colombia-Marlboro* (1975), *Colombia-Coca Cola* (1977), *Defend your talent* (1977), *Todo está muy Caro* (Everything is too expensive) (1978), *Homage to Manuel Quintin Lame* (1979), and *Project 500* (1987) among others.