

N E S

T  R

S I R É

[P O R T F O L I O // 2 0 2 2]

Combos de Video

[Informal Archive]

[#cubacreativa]

2014-2020

Combos de Video (Video Combos) (2014-2019) is a research on social creativeness, living heritage, tradition, popular culture and culture of survival under the circumstances, in the first place, of a depressed economy, and secondly, in the alternative conditions in which the creative practices of the disenfranchised of any society usually occur or emerge.

The project started as a proposal on social creativeness and the informal market in the Cuban context in 2014 through the creation of Combos de Video. This project has succeeded in expanding at present, based on its possibilities of interaction with other contexts or cities. It resulted in the creation of #cubacreativa and using the Instagram social network, achieving numerous connections and a range of new thematic possibilities determined by the circumstances and dynamics of each locality.

This project underlines the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the researched contexts, and articulates these phenomena of social creativeness with the circulation process or methodology implemented in each case from the field of art. The purpose is to reconnect in a organic way with the context where these practices will be documented through the use of the distribution forms and informal media found in the context itself. The project intervenes the informal networks derived from each one of the contexts as circulation platform and access for its work. In this regard it also has a utilitarian function because it comprises a collection of solutions for daily life: a sort of do it yourself or free circulation tutorials created in the social practice, where each user will have access to information in the archive with a horizontal perspective of shared authorship.



12 Havana Biennial, Ludwig Foundation, Havana, Cuba

ANTENA WIFI // 6.22 min [2015]

Process to increase the range and signal strength of Wifi USB antennas. Using the Biquad design and recycle materials such as old USB, deodorants, metal cans, copper cables and plastic tubes.

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/BmMz-MeonCP3/?igshid=1qls4yd6zk2ym>



When distributing the artistic projects in the circulation space, these works will become public, meaning that they may be edited, modified, reconfigured and reproduced with an approximate receiver scope of ten million people along the entire Island.

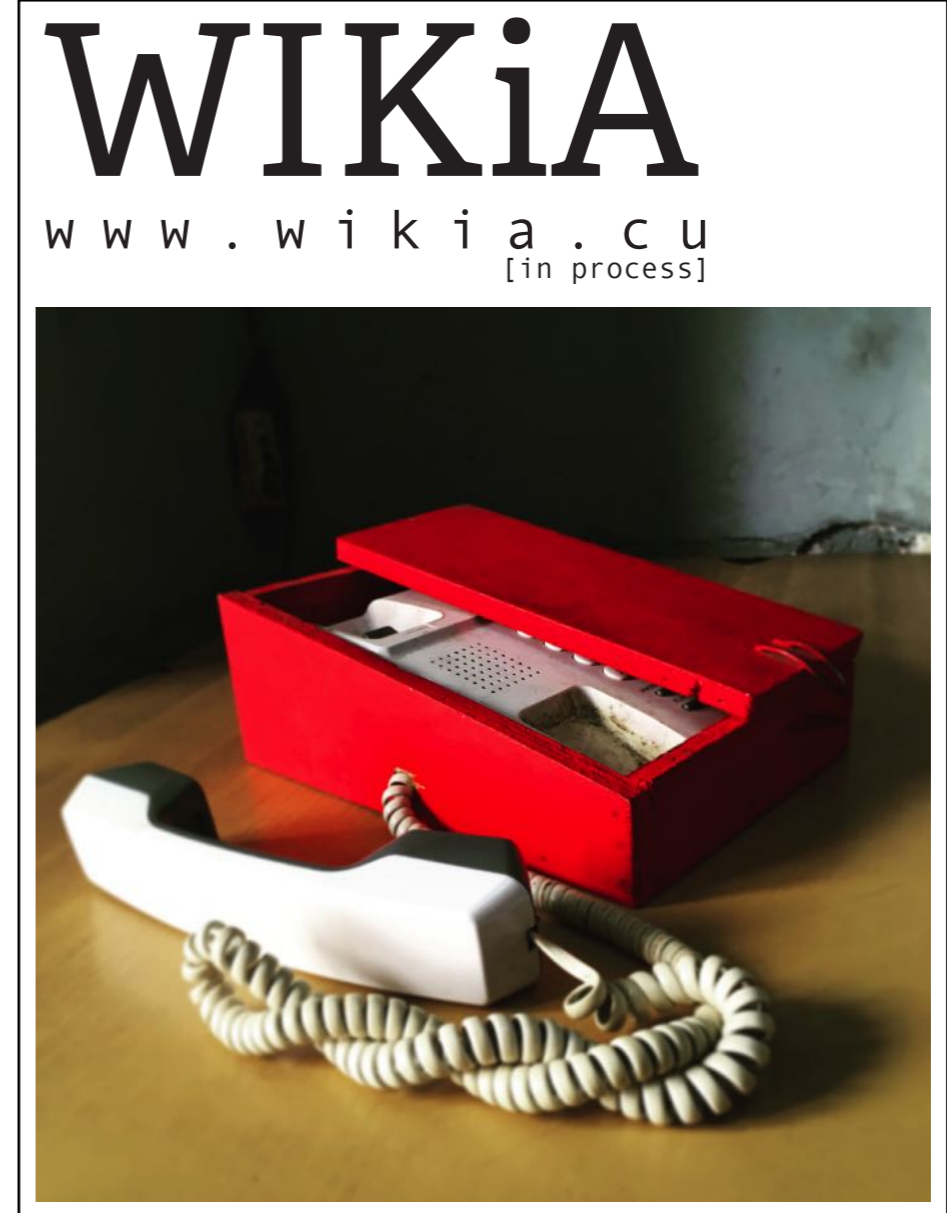


Informal Artchive [iA]

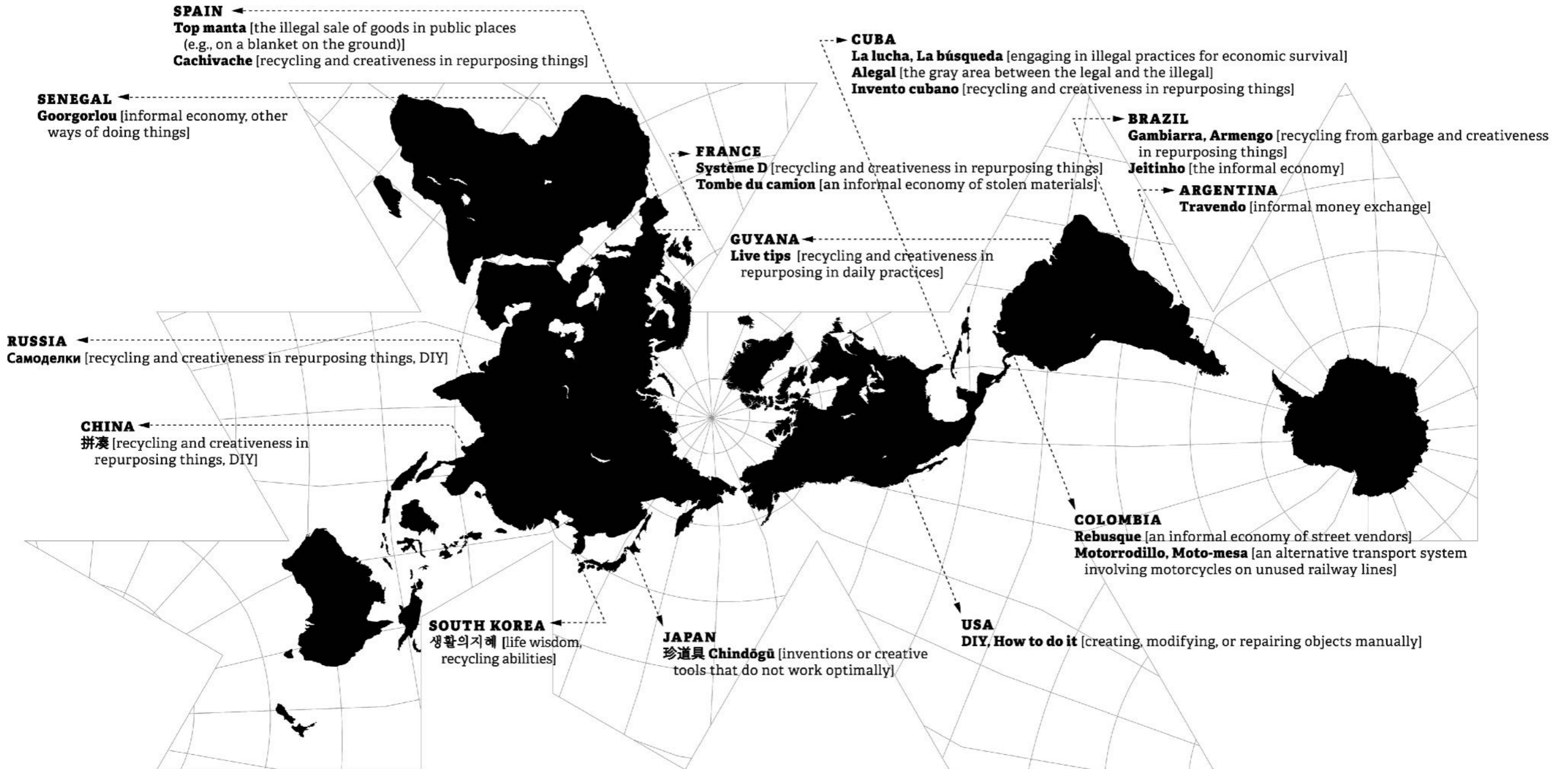
Still in the stage of development is the platform *Informal Artchive (iA)*, which will become an archive directly connected to the daily life of each context in which the project has been developed. *iA* would facilitate a discussion on the relation between the informal practices (non-institutional) and the curatorial strategies in the creation of archives. Using the Wiki format, *iA* will have the potential to expand through the interaction of users who collaborate by sharing and editing information in the web project and through discussions in the online public forum.

The establishment of *iA* as virtual space will unite the participating informal communities with the artistic sphere. *iA* will serve as a space that presents less visible practices and local phenomena. *iA* will maintain regular communication with the participating communities in order to develop common strategies, share local information of interest, and create future collaborations. From the perspectives of the Archive, this work addresses different production, circulation and consumption models. It also offers possibilities to critique the changes in the realm of art production. Consequently, *iA* in its structure, offers the knowledge of these new possibilities through the connections and similarities established on a global level, championing creative individuals and groups practicing beyond the artistic sphere. The links established in different contexts could be structured based on selective criteria such as informal economy, recycling, collaboration networks, technological adaptations, etc. that share nodes in their respective fields (design, distribution, promotion, management...) and offer opportunities to each user as in a participatory network.

The exploration starts with the search for adequate terms that represent each language and culture in relation to the definition of a new term pertaining to artistic and creative practices within the binary of legal - illegal (*a-legal*).



SOCIAL CREATIVITY TERMS AND CONCEPT ON A GLOBAL LEVEL





nestorsire Distribución informal de materiales audiovisuales piratas. #rebusque - #cubacreativa [COLOMBIA]



nestorsire Pomo plástico de soda adaptado como tanque de gasolina de motocicleta, válvula de bicicleta como reductor de líquido en la tapa del pomo. #cubacreativa



nestorsire Snowcone "EMBASSADOR" Bomba de agua, motor Honda GX 160, pila con tapa adaptada para triturar hielo. #cubacreativa [GUYANA] - #underhandbusiness -



nestorsire Negocio #alegal en NY donde se utilizan las tomas de agua publicas para fregar autos. #cubacreativa



nestorsire El Riquinvili, auto armado de muchas piezas de otros autos que es comúnmente usado para recorridos cortos dentro de zonas rurales. Timón de auto moderno, encendedor de buss y cuenta millas de camion. #cubacreativa -



nestorsire Arado de arroz mecanico, construido con piezas de tractores y ruedas en forma de palas para mover sobre el lodo. #cubacreativa [VIETNAM] -



nestorsire Casas móviles en @binaldecuitiba #cubacreativa [BRASIL]

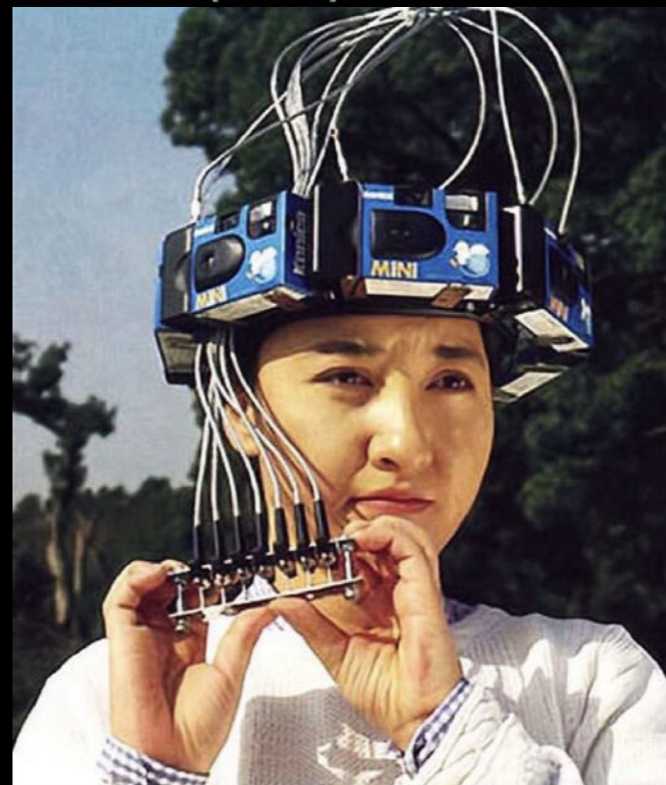


nestorsire Más de 40 celulares en streaming para vender ropa. Pomos plásticos usados como trípode. #cubacreativa [CHINA]

nestorsire Motores adaptados para transportación. #creatividadsocialcubana con colaboración de @chuliherrera #cubacreativa



nestorsire Breaker Eléctrico adaptado en auto como seguridad. #cubacreativa [CHINA]



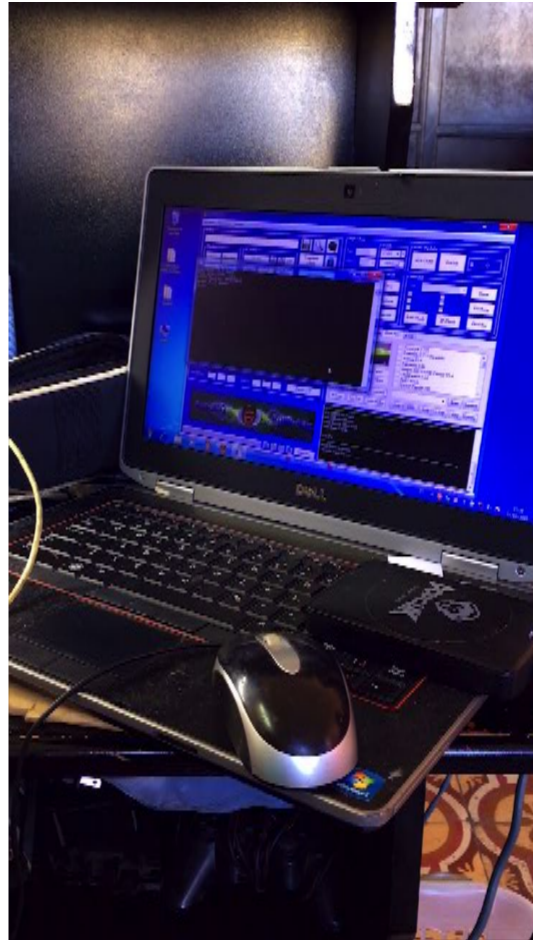
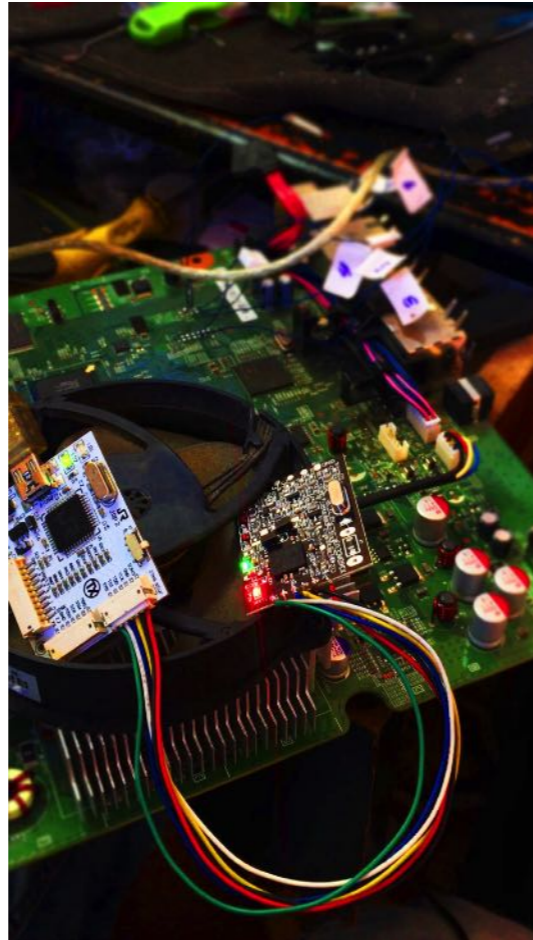
nestorsire 珍道具 Chindōgū es un concepto japonés que se atribuye a los inventos creados en el entorno cotidiano social que no siempre tienen que ser útiles en términos de reproducción industrial. #cubacreativa [JAPON]




nestorsire Mecanismo para alejar insectos. Motor readaptado con T de metal y tiras de nailon amarillo en los dos extremos. #cubacreativa [COREA] #생활의 지혜



nestorsire Máquina de hacer croquetas. Motor eléctrico, llanta de bicicleta y máquina de moler carne. #cubacreativa



↑
CHIP PIRATA // 9.20 min [2018]
Documentation of the process of pirating X-BOX and PlayStation games and video game consoles using pirate chips in a legal business in Camagüey, Cuba.

 <https://www.instagram.com/tv/B3YA3AQBEDy/?igshid=jr5qj6f54fks>

Process

07

GUARAPERA

[#cubacreativa]

2020

TRAPICHE is a machine that extracts the juice from the sugar cane. There are those in small format called GUARAPERAS that replicate, the system of operation to the sugar plants. In the last decades its use has become popular and the process has been adapted to the trade and needs of informal cuban entrepreneurs. These small TRAPICHE are designed and built in a traditional way where recycling and adaptation play a key role as a result of material shortages and a lack of both technical and hygienic control.

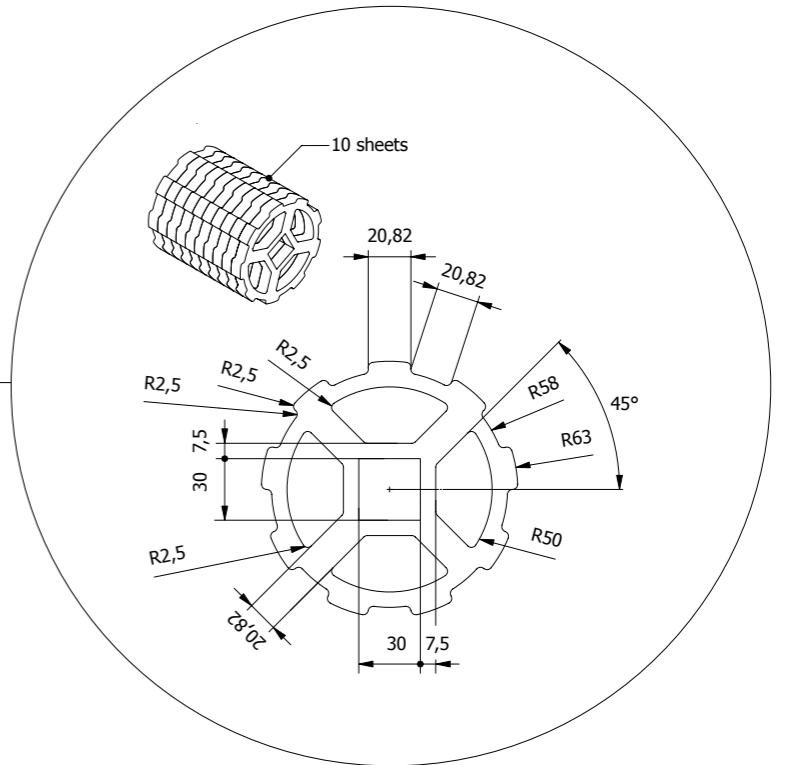
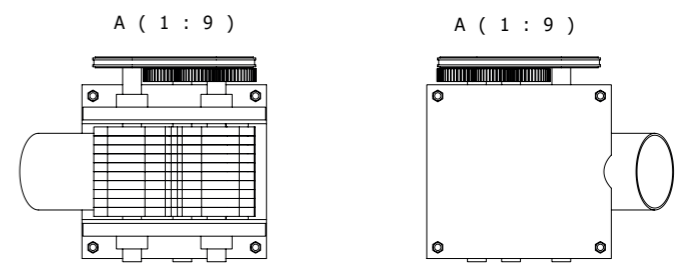
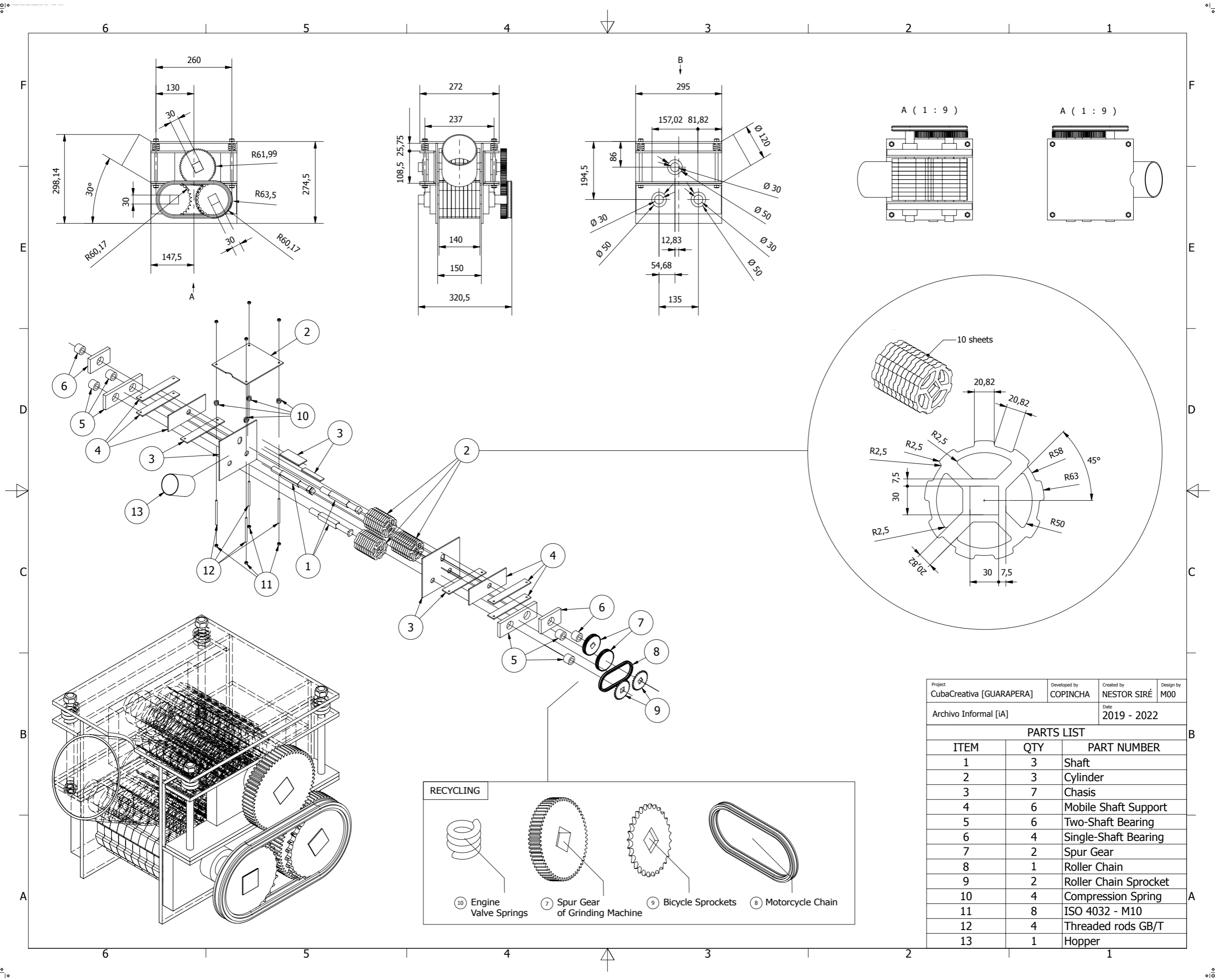
The objective of this project was to create the technical manual for the construction of the optimal TRAPICHE, starting from the traditional operating bases, with a real connection to the type of materials and equipment more easily accessible in Cuba.

This free manual is created for sharing within the public domain. It contains details of the machine's design, list of required materials, step-by-step building instruction, as well information on how to adapt it to different levels of production. It also presents models created with a minimum of effort and investment, as well as versions with built-in hardware and software functions that boost production. It will also include an analysis of alternative energy models and possible uses of waste from the production of guarapo.

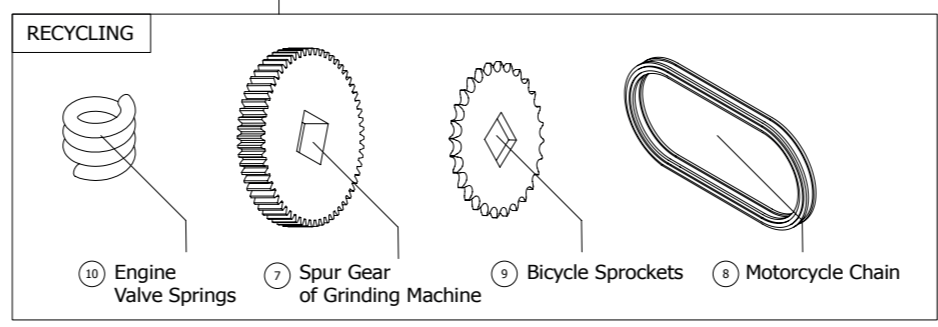
This project, still in the development stage, is created in collaboration with the first co-working space [COPINCHA](#). A vernacular and popular environment of collaborative and open creation that develops more stable relations and practices of social betterment, oriented to local development. This community integrates knowledge and technological practices in harmony and coherence with the concrete Cuban reality and its history in order to build a socio-technical reality alternative to the unsustainable traditional models.



↑
Guaraperas in different cities of Cuba



Project	CubaCreativa [GUARAPERA]	Developed by	COPINCHA	Created by	NESTOR SIRÉ	Design by	M00
Archive	Informal [IA]		Date	2019 - 2022			
PARTS LIST							
ITEM	QTY	PART NUMBER					
1	3	Shaft					
2	3	Cylinder					
3	7	Chasis					
4	6	Mobile Shaft Support					
5	6	Two-Shaft Bearing					
6	4	Single-Shaft Bearing					
7	2	Spur Gear					
8	1	Roller Chain					
9	2	Roller Chain Sprocket					
10	4	Compression Spring					
11	8	ISO 4032 - M10					
12	4	Threaded rods GB/T					
13	1	Hopper					



Paquete Semanal

The Weekly Package (*Paquete Semanal*) is a one-byte media collection put together weekly in Cuba and distributed throughout the country hand-to-hand or in files. It is an independent alternative that has developed with the silent accomplice of the Cuban society. Mainly based on piracy, it contains some 15,000-18,000 files, depending on the week and distributor, and covers a wide variety of contents that include software, sports, soap operas, web shows, animation, mangas, films, TV programs, videogames, music, music videos, music shows, comedy shows, virus updating, applications, as well as advertising of various national services. It is updated weekly throughout the country at a price equivalent to two dollars, and has an underground circulation. Because its price is not exactly low, several people usually come together and contribute to its purchase..

The Package is often described as a solution in the face of the general lack of internet or rapid or accessible connections in Cuba, but the phenomenon should be examined as part of a historical process that began several decades ago. In the early 1970s, some ten years after the start of the Cuban Revolution and nationalization of all mass media, when an illicit economy that escaped the State regulations began to develop in the Island, based on the rental of entertainment materials. Romantic or Western mini-novels by authors like Corín Tellado were the first materials that the entrepreneurs circulated underground. The purchase of books was a constant challenge, and these businesses showed that working with similar entrepreneurs in other cities was the best alternative to obtain new copies. This was the beginning of a national clandestine market network for the exchange and purchase-sale of entertainment materials. In the same measure that the format of the available media evolved, first to magazines, than to VHS and Betacam videotapes, and finally to CDs, VCDs, and DVDs. This network enabled access to the circulation media beyond governmental control. Thus, the Weekly Package is the result of said networks and of the already established illicit trade of entertainment materials thriving for more than four decades.

With its positive and negative aspects, one finds products of very different quality in this medium: trivial and commercial contents, but also daring ones, those that cast a glance at unknown worlds and innovative television trends. Their diversity is as wide as the consumption range they aim to satisfy. The structure of contents of the Package shows a kind of curatorial



intelligence that follows certain contextual events. More than being a channel for others' contents, the Package "produces" its own contents (...) Through such contents one has access to another countries, one that operates under the demands of creativeness and imagination.

The copyright issue, even though it has produced frictions in Cuba, is still not in the center of public debate. Piracy is legal, accepted and practiced by the State itself. It is the feasible alternative to obtaining information in a country that suffers and benefits from the margins impacted by the economic and commercial blockade of the Island. It could be stated that this phenomenon is the outcome of decades of ingeniousness and organization of the informal networks; it is the most significant popular cultural phenomenon of the contemporary Cuban context.

NO DAR GOLPES
NO GUARDAR CON
EL CABLE PUESTO
NO DESCONECTAR
SIN ANTES EMPUSAR
GRACIAS!

SR
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TEL: 70-9-39
seriesroly.com

545831E
SmartPower

SUEÑO
DIGITAL

NO CONECTAR POR
LOS USB FRONTA
100%
GARANTIZADO
ENTRENAMIENTO

PAQUETE SEMANAL
1 Tb
a Domicilio
Envío
Plaza Centro, Playa
Cto: 70 cup
In: 847-1435



!!!Sección A R T E

[!!!ART Section]

2015-2020

This research examines in depth the informal ways for the circulation of information, digital piracy, alternative networks, the art-society relationship, and the limits of net art and new media - off line art, as well as their social interaction within the spaces of mass culture. **!!!Sección A R T E** is the result of several years of research and actions focused around one of the phenomena with the greatest scope emerged from precariousness and social creativeness within the alternative digital context in Cuba. The *Paquete Semanal* or Weekly Package is a means of informal circulation of digital materials focused on entertainment. It is also a physical digital archive with a capacity of up to one terabyte, distributed nationally through a weekly subscription service through a popular network organized on a person-to-person circulation of hard copy at a price equivalent to two dollars. This project repeats the concept of the *Paquete*: both are based on a directory of files without an internet connection and are destined to be experienced off line, as a package of digital information. More subtle similarities are also detected, like the use of multiple windows and the digital aesthetics that go from the denomination of the archives to the architecture of directories through the use of files.

Since 2015, artists, writers, designers, filmmakers, and curators like; Lázaro Saavedra, Franco & Eva Matters, Anri Sala, Jan Robert Leegte, Paul Soulellis, Aram Bartholl, Michael Connor, Aria Dean, Magaly Espinosa, Jonathan Horowitz, Bill Burns, Michael M. Thoss, Amy Zion, Anri Sala and Brian Mackern among others, were presented in the section.

When distributing the artistic projects in the circulation space, these works will become public, meaning that they may be edited, modified, reconfigured and reproduced with an approximate receiver scope of ten million people living within the entire country.



↑
Folders structure of **!!!Sección A R T E**

→
Words to the Manifesto *MESSAGE TO THE CONSUMER*

AVISO AL CONSUMIDOR.pdf Abrir con Vista Previa

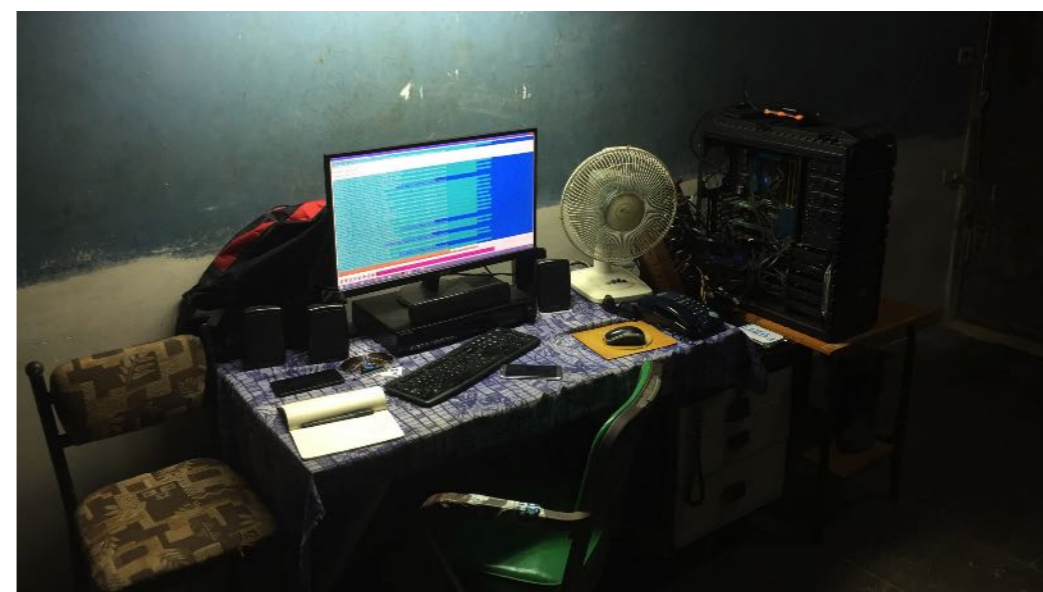


MESSAGE TO THE CONSUMER

The ART folder is designed for the artistic community and consumers of *El Paquete*.
 It will be updated once a month.
 All of the information is real.
 The title could've been Paquetarte, but that's too corny.
 The ART folder is 5 gigabytes in size.
 A new artist will be presented every month.
 We believe that this context needs the ART folder and that the ART folder needs this context.
 We don't select artworks for the ART folder, we find artists as we go.
 The artists can be Cuban or foreigners.
 The artists are not to use ART folder for self-promotion.
 The works will be interventions for both the ART folder and *El Paquete Semanal*.
 It doesn't matter if you don't understand the work of the month, take a look at the documentaries.
 The ART Folder is a kind of virtual gallery with no connection to the internet.
 Works exhibited in the ART folder will be in the public domain.
 Works exhibited in the ART folder are not for sale.
 If you want the ART folder, either buy *El Paquete* or ask your neighbor for it.
 The ART folder has no limits.
 The ART folder is a multiple and is scalable.
 The ART folder follows the rules of *El Paquete*.
 Advertisements for openings are free in the ART folder.
 Those who gather information for the ART folder do it for the love of art.
 The ART folder believes that sharing and circulating information is an essential part of development.
 The ART folder is not in favor of, nor against, piracy. Just the opposite.
 Is the ART folder useful art or does it make art useful?
 The ART folder exercises criticism and self-criticism.
 The ART folder proposes a horizontal dialogue.
 The ART folder didn't discover warm water, but it certainly helps warm water to flow faster and farther.
 The ART folder, being young, believes in art.

The ART folder has a mailbox for COMPLAINTS and SUGGESTIONS.

Mail: prohibicionesprod@gmail.com



↑
 Matriz of *Paquete Semanal*: BABALAWO in Holguin, Cuba [2016]

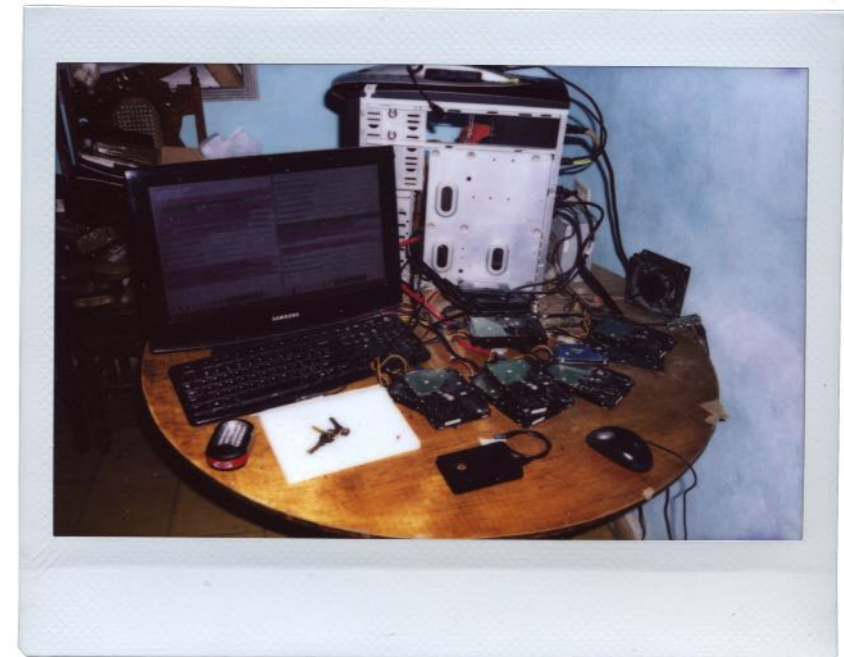
WeistSiré PC

2016-2019

American artist Julia Weist and Cuban artist Nestor Siré explore creative social strategies surrounding connectivity in Cuba, where a majority of the population has little to no internet access. Their projects capture and contextualizes the most significant of these phenomena, the *Paquete Semanal* or the Weekly Package, a one-terabyte digital media collection newly aggregated every week and circulated across the country via in-person file sharing. The distribution of this offline content—largely entertainment material, strictly excluding pornography and politics—has roots in Cuba’s underground systems that date to the 1970s. Since the late 2000s it has developed into a full-blown industry that reaches nearly every Cuban national.

Weist, trained in information science with special interests in systems of knowledge and circulation, and Siré, creator of the monthly Paquete folder *!!!Sección A R T E*, with close familial connections to Cuba’s earlier media distribution systems, have mined and married their respective contexts and viewpoints to create a series of works that are both for and about the Paquete industry. Their ambitious collaboration was forged within the often ad-hoc societal structures of Cuba, and the changing legal and logistical restrictions on US-Cuba relations.

Weist and Siré present an unprecedented, expansive image of El Paquete Semanal’s formative conditions and its impact on Cuban society and culture today. The project simultaneously illuminates the forces that shape our own perspectives, as it weaves through U.S. and Cuba’s contrasting political, geographic, economic, technological, and cultural circuits.



Matriz of *Paquete Semanal*: Imberto in Santa Clara ↑

Collaborations_

- *Queens Museum*, 2017 // [Julia Weist](#) [co-authorship]
- // OMEGA [Matriz *Paquete Semanal*]
- // ETRES [First advertising agency in the *Paquete Semanal*]

**Julia Weist with
Nestor Siré
17.(SEPT)
[By WeistSiréPC]™**



American artist Julia Weist and Cuban artist Nestor Siré explore creative social strategies surrounding connectivity in Cuba, where a majority of the population has little to no internet access. The project captures and contextualizes the most significant of these phenomena, El Paquete or "the weekly package," a one-terabyte digital media collection newly aggregated every week and circulated across the country via in-person file sharing. The distribution of this offline content—largely entertainment material, strictly excluding pornography and politics—has roots in Cuba's underground systems that date to the 1970s. Since the late 2000s it has developed into a full-blown industry that reaches nearly every Cuban national.

Weist, trained in information science with special interests in systems of knowledge and circulation, and Siré, creator of the monthly Paquete folder (Sección ARTE (ART Section)) with close familial connections to Cuba's earlier media distribution systems, have mined and married their respective contexts and viewpoints to create a series of works that are both for and about the Paquete industry. Their ambitious collaboration

was forged within the often ad-hoc societal structures of Cuba, and the changing legal and logistical restrictions on US-Cuba relations over the last year.

One of the outcomes of Weist and Siré's partnership is a fifty-two week archive of El Paquete, a singular collection of the otherwise ephemeral Paquete data. The artists have made media from this archive available to visitors in multiple ways: in a fully accessible database for use within the gallery; at a Paquete copy station outside the Museum shop where visitors can take home the content from one week of the archive (which the artists have secured the rights to legally distribute in the U.S.); and in video compilations that integrate this Paquete content with history, interaction with members of the network around Cuba, and the artists' conceptual insertions into the Paquete system. These insertions comprise another main component of the project, and range from the artists' circulation of original content filmed in the U.S. and Cuba, to their development of the brand, WeistSiréPC, with ETRES, the first ad agency in the country since the Cuban Revolution in 1959. This visual identity

is inspired by the aesthetics of the Paquete industry, yet also incorporates design applications standard in the U.S. which would not have a use in Cuba. 17.(SEPT) [By WeistSiréPC]™ presents an unprecedented, expansive image of El Paquete's formative conditions and its impact on Cuban society and culture today. The project simultaneously illuminates the forces that shape our own perspectives, as it weaves through U.S. and Cuba's contrasting political, geographic, economic, technological, and cultural circuits.

Julia Weist with Nestor Siré: 17.(SEPT) [By WeistSiréPC]™ is made possible by the Jerome Foundation.

Exhibitions at the Queens Museum receive significant support from Ford Foundation and the Charles Endowment Fund. Major funding for the Queens Museum is generously provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, Landmark Foundation, South Park Foundation, the Jay Foundation Foundation, Inc., and the Louis M. Tisch Foundation Fund.

@QueensMuseum #JuliaWeist #NestorSiré



ARCA [2016-2017]

Mixed media installation including two-channel digital projection, interactive digital operating system with custom software configuration and 64TB network attached storage device.

A three-channel digital video with sound, 46:30, 26:42, and 35:45 minutes, and magazines.

ARCA presents the *Paquete Semanal* in its current form and within the lineage of Cuban media circulation. Its centerpiece is an interactive archive of 52 weeks of the *Paquete* –the only existing record of this ephemeral phenomenon.

Three monitors show the artists' process in developing this archive and embedding themselves into the *Paquete* system. These range from documentation of the trafficking of *Paquete* hard drives and a wide variety of content created especially for the platform, to the artists' own video filmed with the actor Mark Ruffalo (part of an ongoing series) for the *Paquete* folder, *!!!Sección A R T E* and responses from users. The video was first distributed as an exclusive feature in the *OMEGA* matriz, whose organizers edited the work slightly to ensure Ruffalo's statements could be considered devoid of political content.





WEEKLY PACKAGE
...for all

WeistSiré PC
PAQUETE SEMANAL

ARCA [ARCHIVE]

52TB hard drive containing a digital archive of files 13.85" x 10" x 6".

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Unlike previous iterations of the *paquete* archive, *ARCA [archive]* enables artists and researchers to spend extended periods of time (on their own computers) browsing and analyzing the contents of the *Paquete Semanal* to develop related work. *ARCA [archive]* maintains the exact folder structure used by the *OMEGA paquete* and contains 52 terabytes of media aggregated between August 1, 2016, and August 21, 2017. In addition, *ARCA [archive]* includes a supplemental folder, *!!!Extra*, with collections created by the artists during their research and covering the following categories:

- Original content: a complete collection of original content created in Cuba for the *paquete*, including digital magazines, advertisements, and shows devoted to entertainment bulletins, celebrity gossip, and topical banter.
- Matrices: an archive of the promotional logos of Cuban distributors, or matrices, ranging from 1980s VHS rentals to DVD vendors to the *el Paquete Semanal* studios.
- *!!!Sección A R T E*: a complete archive of the artist projects presented in *!!!Sección A R T E*, a project by Siré to circulate contemporary art in an eponymous folder as part of the *paquete*.
- *Paquete Semanal* (national archive): a collection of content and screenshots that documents the architecture of folders of every sub-matriz, or regional distributor, in Cuba.
- Selection of photos: a collection of high-quality images related to *el Paquete Semanal*, including photos of the PCs used by matrices and of boxes that are built by hand to transport hard drives from one city to another.




ARCA [archive], Triple Canopy, NYC

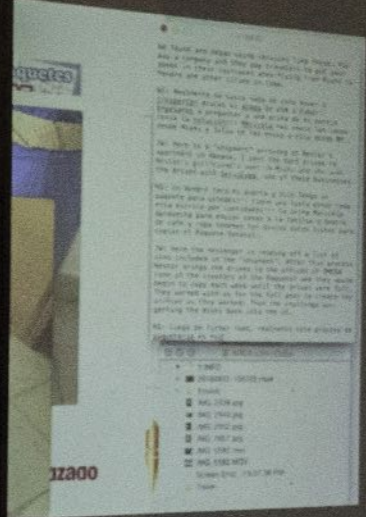
– Triple Canopy, 2018






WeistSiré PC
 PAQUETE SEMANAL

Entradas a domicilio


12300


A person is seated at a white desk with a computer monitor and keyboard, looking towards the yellow cube.



PakeTown

In collaboration with Steffen Köhn.

2020

A video game about the history and development of the Paquete Semanal // Buy, trade and copy digital data and build your own media empire!

Our artist video game *PakeTown* simulates the historical development of the *Paquete Semanal*, the famous alternative offline data distribution network that every week supplies all of Cuba with new Netflix series, Hollywood movies, music albums or computer games. It documents all aspects of this phenomenon, from its origins to the present. It allows players to understand how digital media are organized, distributed and consumed on the island, and conveys its political, economic and social context, thus illustrating the social impact of the democratization of digital technologies. Users will experience the changes in the means of distribution and reception that have shaped the Cuban media sphere since the 1970s.

Aesthetically and conceptually, our project draws on the genre of business simulation or tycoon games, a very popular video game genre, in which players slip into the role of entrepreneurs. In Cuba, where the private sector is still very limited, simulation games like *Pizza Syndicate* (where you run a chain of pizzerias), *FarmVille 2: Rural Escape* (where you manage a farm) or *Resort Tycoon* (where you can develop your own holiday resort) are very popular and a much consumed content in the *Paquete*.

PakeTown is the result of an artistic research process. The game has a strong documentary character and its goal is to playfully bring the history and development of the current Cuban media reality closer to its users. We want to distribute the game in Cuba free of charge through the *Paquete*, in the very medium that it analyses. At the same time, *PakeTown* will also be shown as an art project in exhibitions, together with a multimedia installation that documents the research, development and pro-



duction of the game. This installation will also present user statistics we collected and discuss visions for the future of Cuba's digital media ecology.

Collaborations_
// [CONWIRO](#) [independent video game studio]



12/24

4/24

8/24

2014-ACT.

NIV. 9



1244957



Basic Necessities

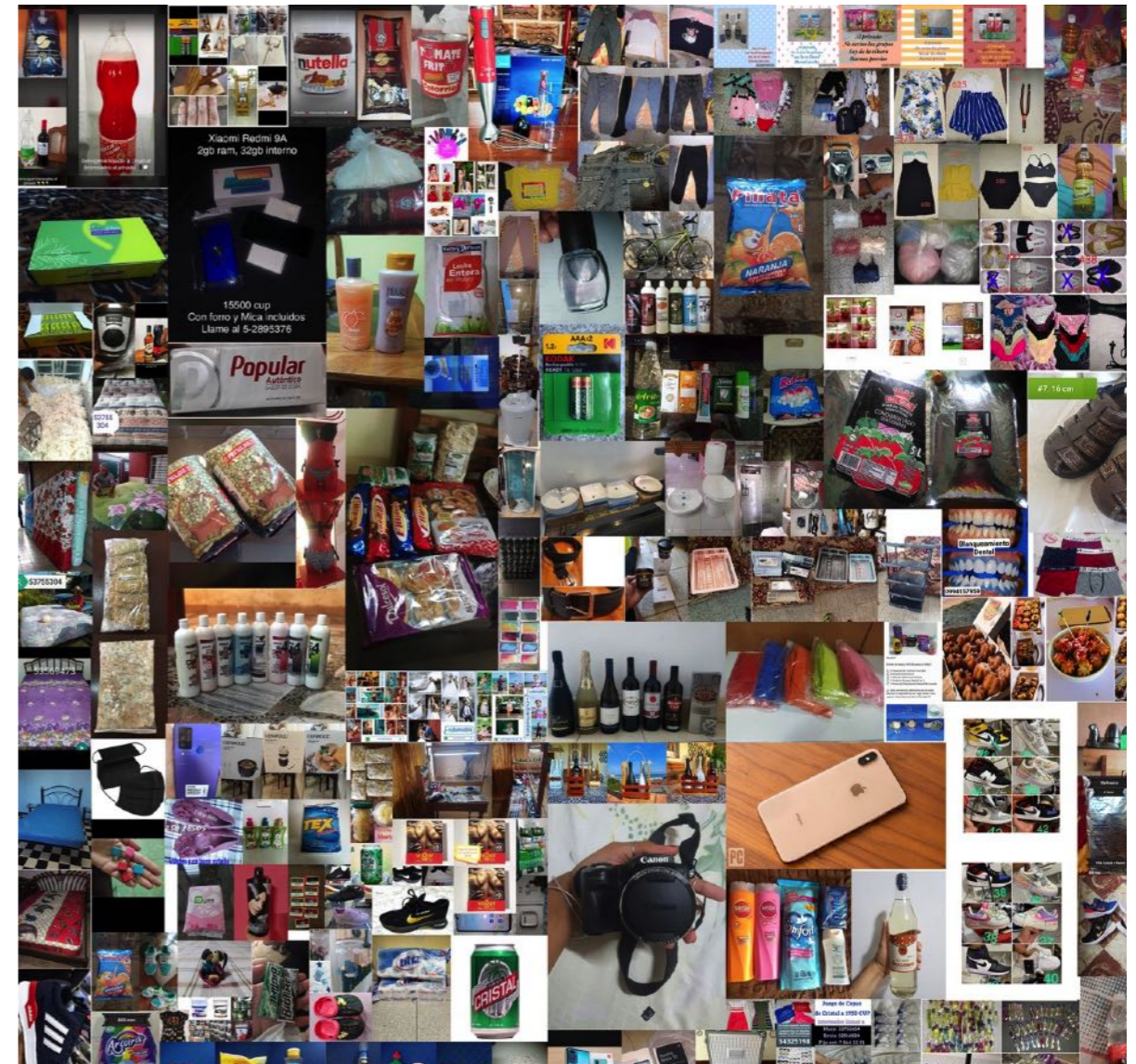
In coloboration whit Steffen Köhn.

2021

Basic Necessities portraits the dynamics of the informal economy in Cuba as it unfolds in Telegram groups and analyses the eclectic and creative uses of product photography within this digital context.

When the COVID-19 pandemic led to scarcities in the government-run shops, the inhabitants of Cuba's capital Havana begun to use semi-public chat groups on messaging applications such as Telegram or WhatsApp for accessing food, hygiene products, medication and other basic necessities. During the period of isolation and the government's #quedateencasa (stay at home) campaign, these groups created digital spaces where people shared information about the availability of products in the state-owned shops, creative entrepreneurs created online delivery services, and black-market vendors offered scarce goods for sale. Some of them quickly garnered member numbers in the ten thousand and became an inescapable necessity for many Habaneros seeking to fulfill their daily basic needs.

First WhatsApp and then increasingly Telegram replaced the traditional black market that had always existed in Cuba, stepping in when state delivery systems failed to deliver. Instead of relying on a few trusted contacts in their neighborhood, people now turn to chat groups because they have a much wider reach and are perfectly organized. Despite persisting internet scarcity, digital black markets are nothing new in the Cuban context. Since 2007, the online classifieds website Revolico has



facilitated the buying and sale of foreign consumer products such as smartphones, computers, or clothes by international brands that are brought into the country by importers (so-called mulas). It is also used to be (and still is) distributed as an offline archive file through Cuba's offline distribution network the Paquete Semanal. Yet the recent expansion of internet access has created new opportunities for illicit e-commerce. The rapid success of chat groups as online market spaces became possible only when the government introduced a 3G network in December 2018 (and upgraded it to LTE in summer 2019) and smartphone owners were finally able to enjoy 24/7 internet connection, a prerequisite for participation within these groups.

vBased on long-term artistic/ethnographic research into these practices, Basic Necessities presents a real-time documentation of the fascinating social dynamics within these groups and the current day-to-day economic situation in Havana: What products are currently in high demand? What is available through state distribution channels? What is impossible to obtain? What is the current price of a kilogram of chicken meat? This video installation for the Media Wall offers a visual record of the functioning and aesthetics of this digital black-market via four of the most active Telegram groups and documents the interactions of some 300 thousand users. Further, it provides an investigation into the everyday visual genre of prod-

uct photography, into the peculiar ways in which black market sellers present their products.

For the online version of Basic Necessities, we developed a meta search engine that allows users to access hundreds of Telegram groups at the same time. Our server will be connected to the API of TgCuba, an online platform created by Rafael Rodríguez dedicated to the search of information in Cuban Telegram groups. This platform updates its database in real time and has about 476 groups with about 707,000 users and approximately 17.8 million posts. At the end of the exhibition, our server will contain a database formed by the searches made by users during its duration.



Commission by The Photographers' Gallery digital programmes, as part of the Imagin(in)g Networks programme.

BASIC NECESSITIES

[Nestor Siré & Steffen Köhn]

buscador conectado a [TgCuba](#), un repositorio de grupos de TELEGRAM cubanos

482  707.7K  647  19M 

tags

+pollo +aceite +papel sanitario +café +arroz +champú +íntimas +leche
+jabón +detergente +azúcar +pasta dental +desodorante +perro caliente
+vino seco +crema de piel +dipirona +picadillo +puré de tomate +sal
+espaguetis +yogurt

A grid of social media posts, likely from Facebook Marketplace, featuring various items for sale or exchange. The items include household goods, food, electronics, and services. Each post includes a small image of the item, a title, and a brief description. The posts are arranged in a dense, grid-like pattern across the entire image.

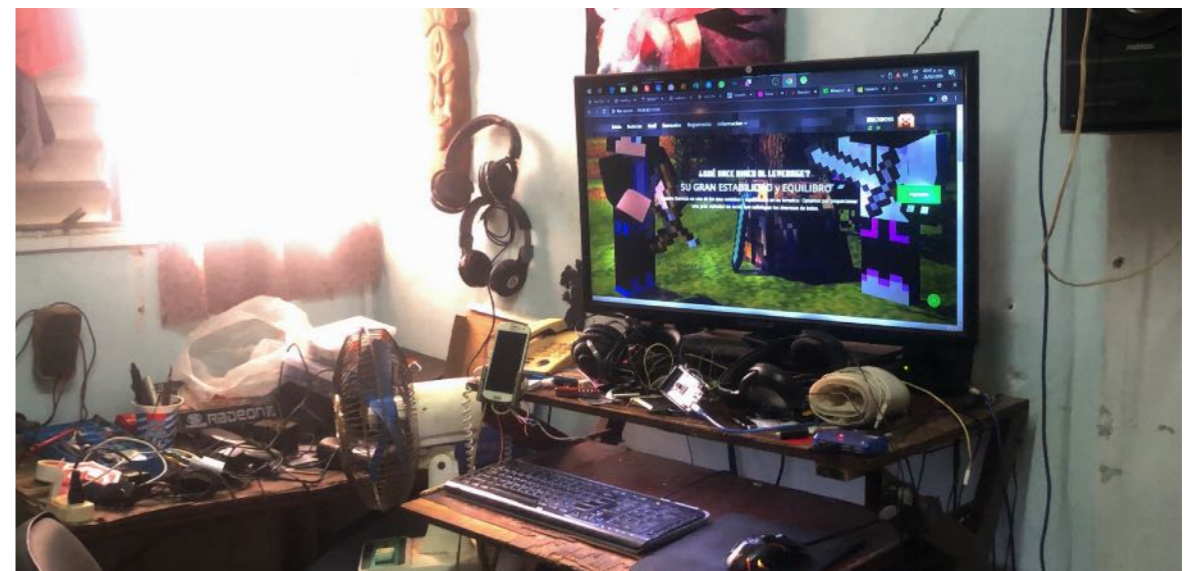
Fragile Connections

In collaboration with Steffen Köhn.

2022

Fragile Connections is an artistic research project conducted by Nestor Siré and Steffen Köhn about SNET (Street Network), a vast grassroots computer network connecting tens of thousands of users across Cuba's capital Havana. This vernacular infrastructure not only compensates for the lack of internet access but has also generated new relations between people and fostered new forms of community. SNET allows users to play multiplayer video games, chat, send messages, debate in forums, share files, or host websites. It relies on a network of thousands of participants who collaboratively create, operate, and maintain its hardware and software infrastructure, making it a unique local alternative to the global internet. The network's material base consists of miles of ethernet cable running across streets or balconies, Wi-Fi antennas mounted on poles on rooftops, and servers and network switches operated by an army of volunteer node administrators. As the software interface through which the network is accessed, SNET makers have repurposed TeamSpeak a voice conferencing software that allows users to communicate with each other via voice and text over the Internet or a LAN. While TeamSpeak is firmly rooted in gaming culture (being designed for gamers who can use the software to communicate with other players in the same team in a multiplayer video game), it is employed in SNET as a central organization tool for its many features, customizability, and low system requirements.

Based on this research, we created a series of projects that explore the particular digital practices, social dynamics, and human infrastructures within SNET. The exhibition consists of various elements: An interactive installation that replicates the technological set-up of an SNET node and thus constitutes a fully functioning local area network (SNET actually developed out of private LAN parties in which Cuban video gamers first experimented with network technology). This LAN not only hosts the three most popular SNET games but also runs a TeamSpeak server in which segments of interviews we conducted with SNET members are arranged as a real-time VoIP conversation across the three



levels of its hierarchical structure: users, support, and administration. Audiences can connect to this network via their WIFI enabled devices and thus create user IDs and interact with each other in public TS channels, creating a temporary offline community, which will remain as a documentation of the exhibition. The exhibition further presents a series of photographs, videos, and objects that represent the network's distinctive infrastructure and the creative modifications users engage in, as well as an infographic that details the power dynamics and hierarchies within the network (conceived in collaboration with Cuban sociologist Adrián Olivares and designer Mauricio Vega). A set of stickers with icons and symbols SNET members use to create their digital identities allows visitors to performatively take on an SNET personality themselves.



S N E T _ S T R U C T U

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Resource
[Digital and tech

0 1 //
ADMINISTRATOR: The highest status level in the network structure (makes general decisions)

0 2 //
SUPPORT [user service]: User who due to his social capital was granted a higher status in the network structure (per decision of the administrators)

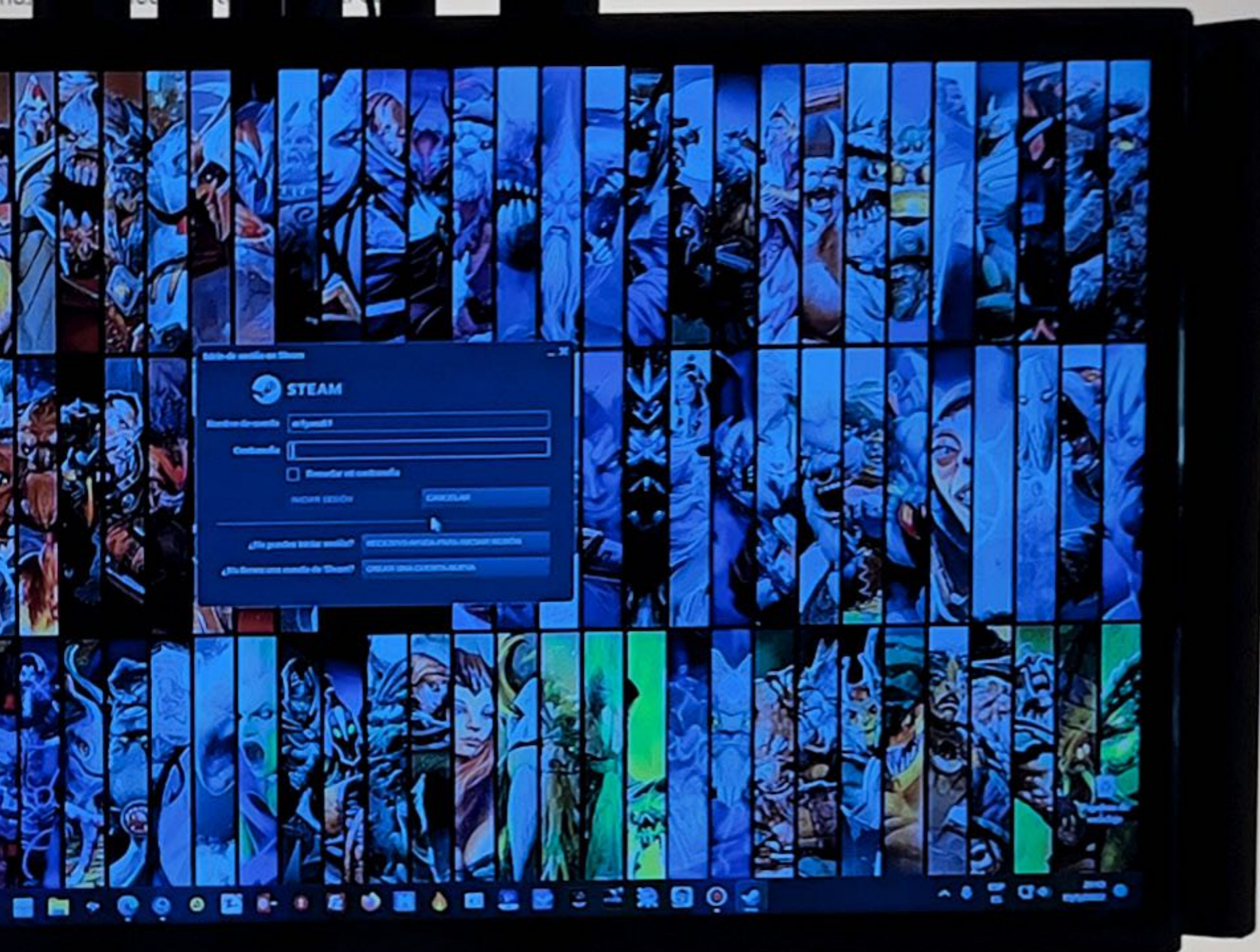
Activist [User Service]: User who thanks to his standing in the community reaches a status in some specific areas (per decision of the community)

0 3 //
USER [network members]: User who thanks to his social relations and economic investment is connected to the network

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P R O C E S S



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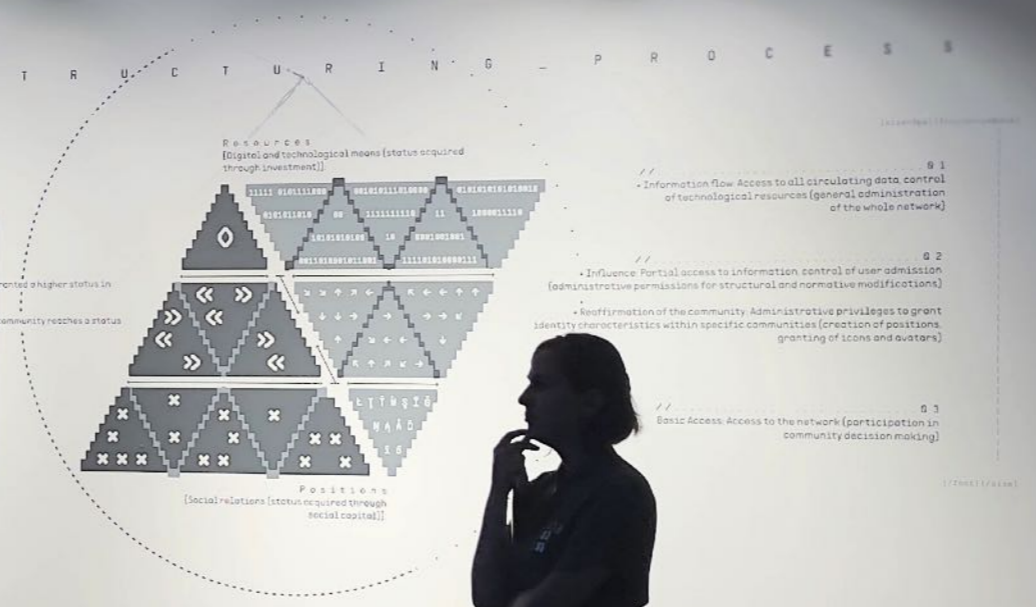
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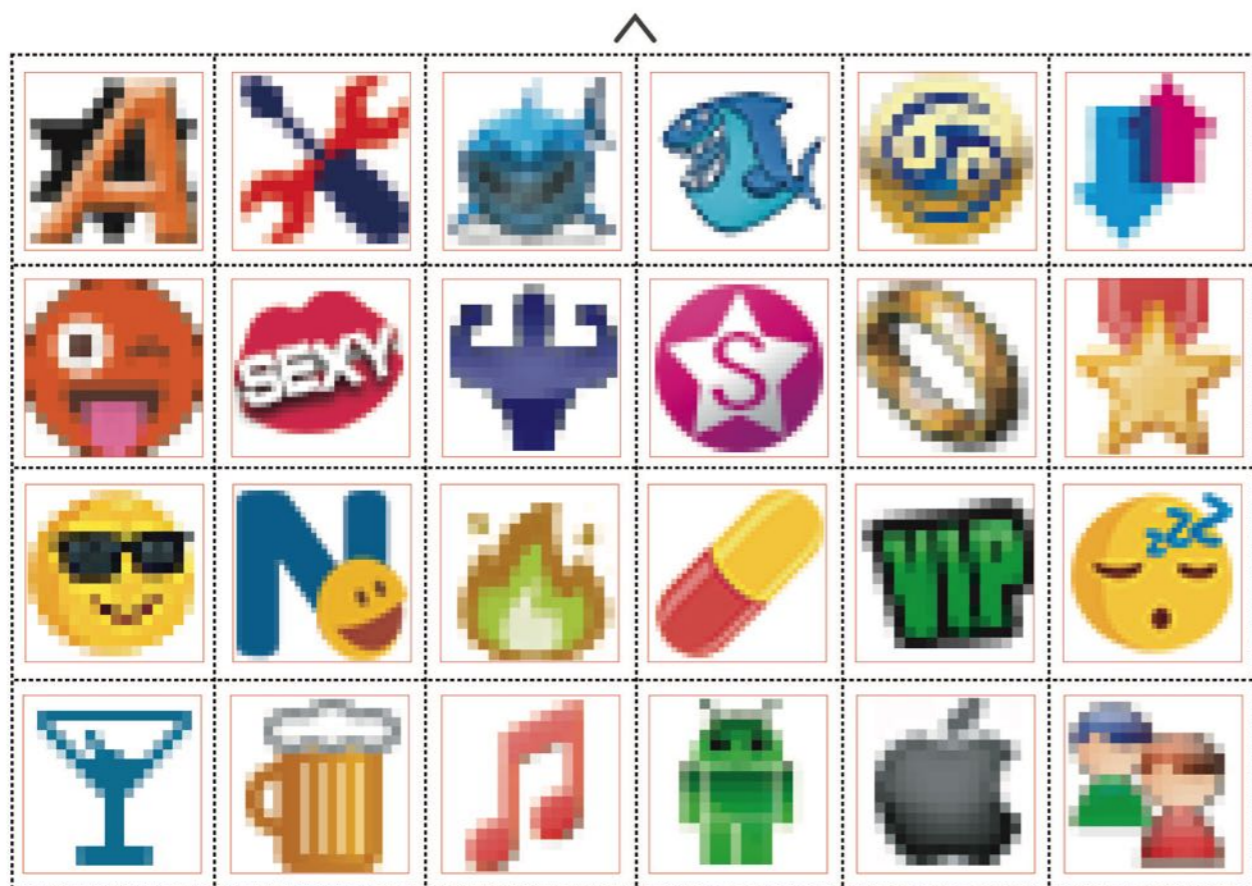
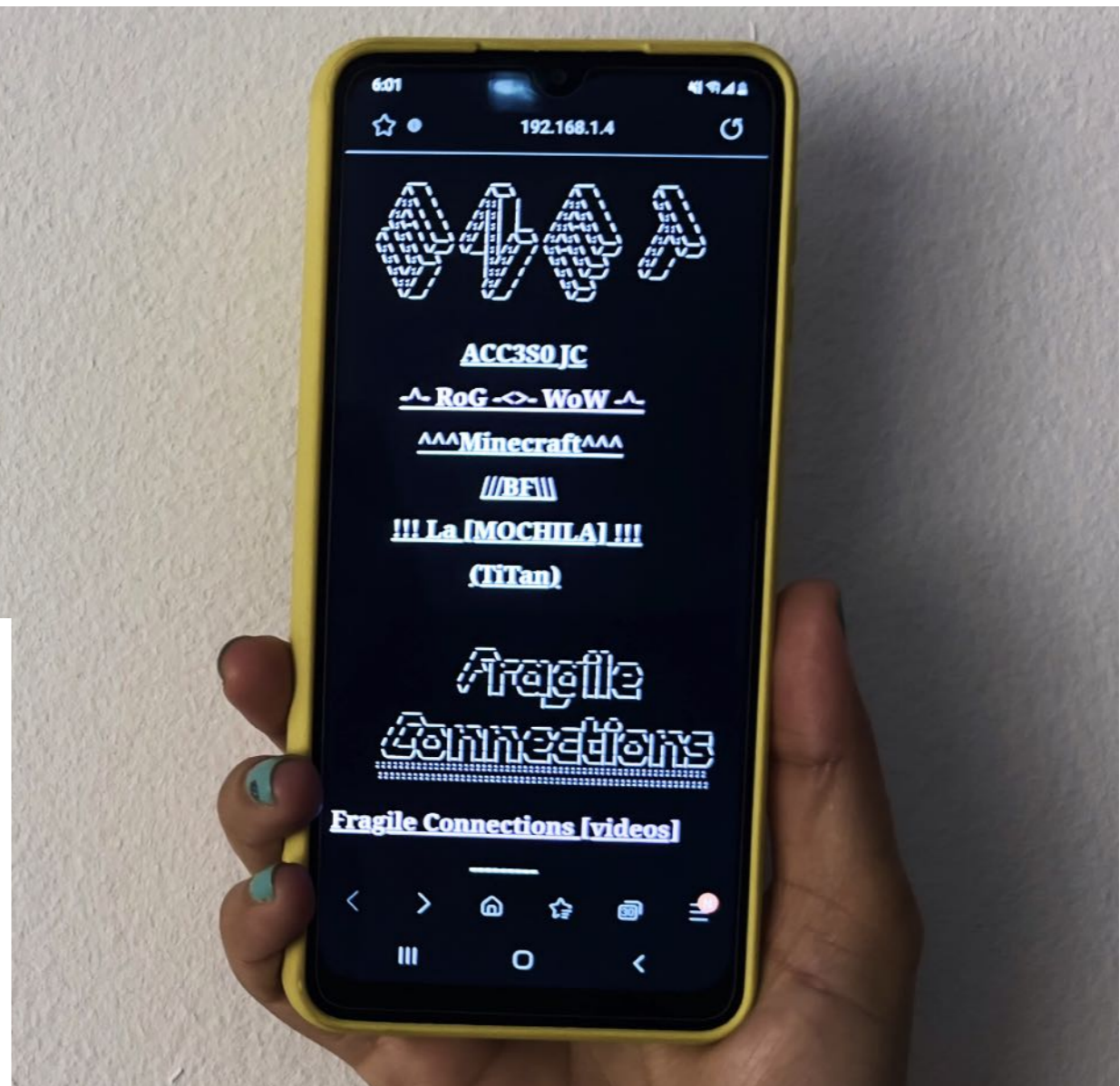
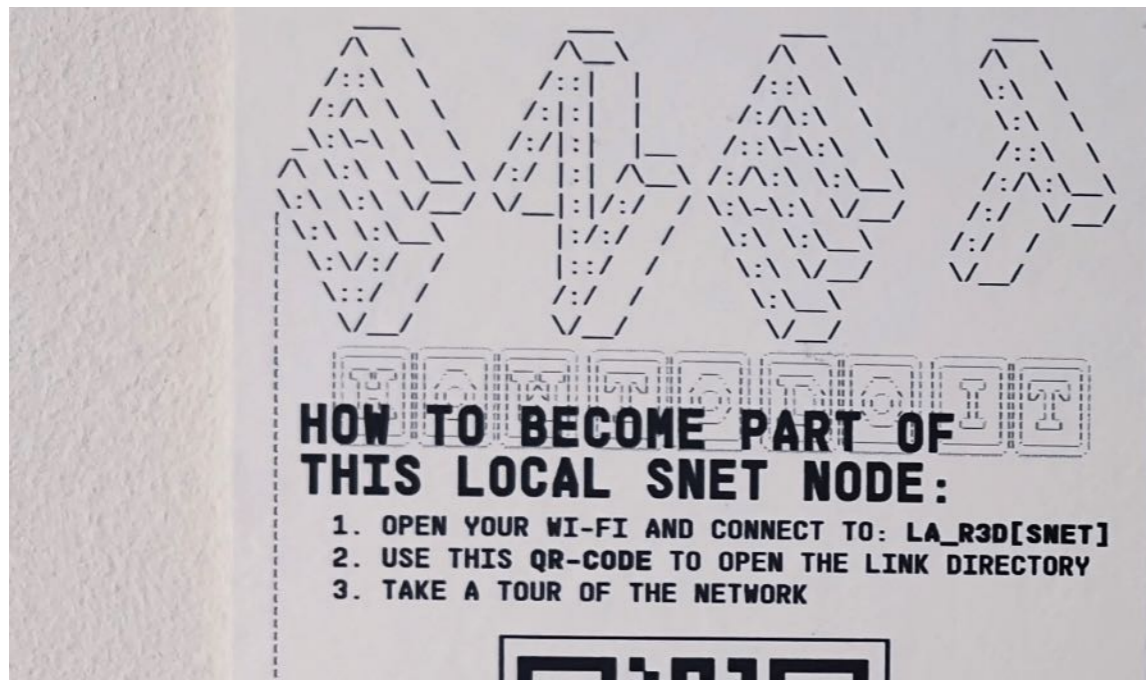
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- 👤 Admin: Server administrator.....
- 👤 Grupo Técnico: User who assists with services.....
- 👤 Tiburón: Male online stalker.....
- 👤 Piraña: User that flirts with men online.....
- 👤 Ninja: Bad gamer.....
- 👤 Parchao: Very skilled player.....
- 👤 Desatado: A very popular user.....
- 👤 Chica Sexy: Beautiful female user.....
- 👤 Chico Sexy: Handsome male user.....
- 👤 Soltero: User who is single.....
- 👤 Casado y con Compromiso: User who has a partner.....
- 👤 Coronel de Coronelos, Segurosos: Despicable user.....
- 👤 Mal de la Cabeza: Controversial user.....
- 👤 Soy Novato: User new to the network.....
- 👤 Soy Caliente: Problematic user.....
- 👤 Pastillero: Unpredictable player.....
- 👤 VIP: A user well connected in the network.....
- 👤 Madrugador: User that plays all night.....
- 👤 Fiestero: User who likes to party.....
- 👤 Tomador: User who likes drinks.....
- 👤 I love música: User who frequents DJ groups..
- 👤 I LOVE android: User who has an Android phone.
- 👤 I LOVE iPhone: User who has an iPhone.....
- 👤 Chicho y Chica en PC: Couple using the same PC.



NESTOR SIRÉ

[Camagüey, 1988] lives and works in Havana, Cuba.

Nestor Siré's artistic practice intervenes directly in social contexts in order to analyze specific cultural phenomena. His artistic methodology consists in engaging with existing social structures in order to explore new ways in which art can impact the complex relationships between official and informal networks. Often engaging with the particular idiosyncrasies of digital culture in the Cuban context, he works within the vernacular infrastructures his fellow citizens use for the distribution of media, information and goods.

His works have been shown in the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (Havana), Queens Museum (New York), Rhizome (New York), New Museum (New York), Hong-Gah Museum (Taipei), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Mexico City), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santa Fe (Argentina), The Photographers' Gallery (London), among other places. He has participated in events such as the Manifesta 13 Biennial (France), Gwangju Biennale (South Korea), Curitiba Biennial (Brazil), the Havana Biennial (Cuba) and the Asunción International Biennale (Paraguay), the Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Cuba and the Oberhausen International Festival of Short Film (Germany).

Articles Selection

[Rhizome] [Net Art Anthology in El Paquete Semanal](#) by Michael Connor

[Artforum] [Julia Weist and Nestor Siré](#) by Hannah Stampler

[Art in America] [Packet Switching: Cuba's Offline Internet](#) by Julia Weist & Nestor Siré

[Mousse] [An Offline Internet That Fits in a Suitcase](#) by Julia Weist & Nestor Siré in conversation with Orit Gat

[Document Journal] [El Paquete: an Underground Railroad for Art in Cuba](#) by Richard Morgan

[Document Journal] [Offline in Cuba](#) by Benjamin Gutierrez

[Frieze] [Permission to Participate: What it Takes for a Cuban Artist to Exhibit Abroad](#) by Julia Weist & Nestor Siré

[Cuban Art News] [El Paquete Semanal Comes to New York](#) by Lidia Hernández Tapia

[Hyperallergic] [Delivering the Internet, an Underground Network Keeps Cubans Connected](#) by Mimi Wong

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