

# ARMORY

For Immediate Release: May 1, 2017

Contact: [exhibitions@armoryarts.org](mailto:exhibitions@armoryarts.org) | 626-792-5101 x 122 | [www.armoryarts.org](http://www.armoryarts.org)

Exhibition: ***Giacomo Castagnola:***  
***Common Trades, Urban Metabolism of Knowledge, L.A. Version***  
***Oficios Comunes, Metabolismo Urbano de Saberes, Versión L.A.***

Exhibition Dates: Sunday, May 7 through Sunday, September 17, 2017

Opening Reception: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 6-8pm

Location: Armory Center for the Arts, Mezzanine Galleries  
145 North Raymond Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91103

**Micro-local alternative technologies  
and economies of exchange  
are explored in *Common Trades*.**



Photo: Giacomo Castagnola

*Pasadena, CA* – The Armory Center for the Arts is proud to present *Giacomo Castagnola: Common Trades, Urban Metabolism of Knowledge, L.A. Version / Oficios Comunes, Metabolismo Urbano de Saberes, Versión L.A.*, an exhibition with new and recent work by Armory’s artist-in-residence, Giacomo Castagnola, a San Francisco/Mexico City-based architect and designer. The project explores how to challenge formal globalized economies—and their unsustainable, inequitable systems—on a local level, while also addressing the relationships between architecture, design, and art in relation to the human body. The exhibition is on view in the Armory’s Mezzanine Galleries from May 7 through September 17, 2017. A reception, free and open to the public, will take place on Saturday, May 6, 2017 from 6-8pm. The exhibition has been organized by Irene Tsatsos, Director of Exhibition Programs/Chief Curator.

*Common Trades, Urban Metabolism of Knowledge, L.A. Version* began in downtown Mexico City, where Castagnola interviewed informal “makers,” artisans, and local skilled trade workers, many of whom are migrants from rural Mexico and beyond, to identify the knowledge associated with their material culture. There, Castagnola worked with informal wire ware makers who create the grills and other structures for street vending. Through their work they developed new objects, which include an Ikea-type catalogue that is now used by the vendors to sell the new wire ware. The project had a second iteration in Cuzco, Peru, and has since ventured to Los Angeles.

Castagnola’s project for the Armory is the newest in his series of art and design initiatives that investigate social and material culture. Castagnola studies “common trades” of urban and rural communities, such as glaziers, carpenters, and metal workers – whose skills are commonly utilized but under recognized – along with site-responsive, self-generated systems for distribution and production of their work. While in residence at the Armory, he met with local artisans and trade/craft people, in order to research these trades in migrant communities in East Los Angeles, starting in Boyle Heights.

In an effort to study directly the crafts of these laborers and the alternative, micro-economies within which many of them conduct business, Castagnola mapped where the makers of taco stands, *paleta* merchants, fruit sellers, and other traditional Latin American food vendors fabricate their mobile carts. Based on this and his ongoing conversations, he created a video piece that documents their trades, which is exhibited at the Armory alongside video works of “common trades” from his research in Mexico and Peru. This residency and exhibition represents significant research into local knowledge, alternative technology, and economy, and are anchored in specific people within a neighborhood, with the intention to design new objects and systems for better and/or different methods of production.

According to curator Irene Tsatsos, “Giacomo’s investigation into labor practices and means of exchange is happening at a moment of disturbing relevance in Los Angeles, as the city grapples with its laws around street vending and the racist demands of federal agencies around deportation practices. Street vending in Los Angeles has long been a source of revenue among Spanish-speaking immigrant populations who have, through ingenuity and perseverance, adapted to a new culture that often marginalizes them. Society’s ongoing need to investigate and monitor labor practices and forms of exchange has become especially urgent in today’s political climate.”

*Giacomo Castagnola: Common Trades, Urban Metabolism of Knowledge, L.A. Version / Oficios Comunes, Metabolismo Urbano de Saberes, Versión L.A.* is part of a series of exhibitions, events, and publications – collectively entitled *#BetweenDownBelow/#EntreAbajoMasAbajo* – that have emerged from extensive research in Mexico for the Getty’s forthcoming LA/LA initiative. The residency and exhibition with Giacomo Castagnola have been made possible with support from California Arts Council: Artists Activating Communities and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

### **About the Artist**

**Giacomo Castagnola** received his Master of Science in Art, Culture and Technology (SMACT) from the School of Architecture and Planning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 2013, and holds a degree in architecture and urbanism from Ricardo Palma University (URP) in Lima, Peru. Originally from Lima, he lived and worked in the Tijuana/San Diego border region for seven years (2003-2010), where he established Germen, an architectural and design studio, to investigate the self-organized “informal” city that composes up to 40% of the urban and growing infrastructure of many Latin American cities. Currently, Castagnola works between Mexico City and San Francisco on architecture for exhibitions and design that explore new ways of displaying art, archives, and material culture. His work seeks to overcome the white cube and the bureaucracy of drywall; it proposes to treat the museum as a public space through the use of different structures and exhibition systems that explore the interstitial space between document, body, furniture, and architecture.

### **About the Armory**

Armory Center for the Arts, in Pasadena, California, believes that an understanding and appreciation of the arts is essential for a well-rounded human experience and a healthy civic community. Founded in 1989, the Armory builds on the power of art to transform lives and communities through presenting, creating, teaching, and discussing contemporary visual art. Parking is available on the street or in the Marriott garage directly north of the Armory for free for 90 minutes. The Armory is off the Gold Line at Memorial Park – walk one half block east to Raymond and one half block north to the Armory. For more information please visit [www.armoryarts.org](http://www.armoryarts.org).

###