

Cátedra México with Sebastián

A Visions and Voices Signature Event
Presented with the Consulate General
of Mexico in Los Angeles

Wednesday, November 14, 2018, at 7 p.m.
Town and Gown
University of Southern California



ABOUT SEBASTIÁN

- Sebastián is a Mexican artist known for creating colorful, minimalist sculptures at monumental scale for public spaces in cities around the world.
- He has made more than 200 sculptures since the 1960s.
- A multimedia artist, he also works in jewelry, set design, fashion, and more.
- His art is informed by mathematical and scientific concepts such as the Möbius strip.
- A member of the Mexican Academy of Arts and the Dutch Royal Academy of Art, Sebastián has exhibited in museums and public spaces around the world.
- Sebastián is the 2018 visiting artist of a residency at USC called Cátedra México, a joint initiative of USC and the Consulate General of Mexico in Los Angeles.

FAMOUS WORKS BY SEBASTIÁN

GATES (PUERTAS)

Sebastián is known for his “Gate” (“Puerta”) sculptures such as the *Gran Puerta de México*. There are several of these colossal doorway sculptures throughout Mexico.

CABALLITO

One of Sebastián’s most famous works is *Caballito* (*Little Horse*), in downtown Mexico City. It is a bright yellow, geometric, abstracted representation of the head of a horse. Far from little, the steel sculpture, coated with acrylic enamel, measures 28 meters.

Caballito, inaugurated in 1992, serves two functions: It is a piece of visual art that replaced Manuel Tolsá’s equestrian sculpture of Charles IV (which was moved to what is now Plaza Manuel Tolsá), while also serving as a vent for Mexico City’s deep drainage system.

A MULTIPLICITY OF INFLUENCES

You may see the influences of these artistic movements in Sebastián’s work.

MINIMALISM

In sculpture, minimalism is a trend that gained popularity in the United States and Europe in the mid-20th century, characterized by simple yet massive forms. Artists were reacting against the heavy meaning and metaphor of the prior generation’s Abstract Expressionism by creating large geometric works with industrial materials that deliberately avoided conventional fine-art aesthetics and any suggestion of representation or metaphor. They touted their new ideas as democratic, yet feminist critics have noted the masculinism of the work and the fact that minimalism was a very male-dominated field. Famous minimalist sculptors include Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt.

POP ART

Pop Art was another reaction against Abstract Expressionism and traditional fine art, as New York- and British-based artists in the late 1950s and ’60s drew on imagery from mass media, pop culture, and commonplace consumer products instead of the “high art” themes of the prior generation. Artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein deliberately blurred or questioned the boundaries between “high” and “low” art, with works characterized by the bright colors of advertising.

CUBISM

Cubism emerged via the groundbreaking innovations of Picasso and Braque in the early 20th century and proved to be one of that century's most important artistic movements, as it substantially pushed art forward into the modernist era. Cubism is characterized by the use of geometric shapes to play with form and represent multiple perspectives. Diego Rivera, a leader of the Mexican mural movement and one of the most prominent Mexican artists of the 20th century, drew upon cubism and added brighter colors and a larger scale.

PUBLIC ART

Public art can be any size, in any medium, in any public space. It might be a large sculpture, a minimal tag, or a site-specific sound piece, just to name a few examples. What makes it public art is that it exists in public space and is there for anyone who enters that space. Site-specificity (or being designed specifically for the site in which it is placed) and community involvement are common hallmarks of public art, but there are also plenty of examples of public art that are neither site-specific nor created in collaboration with the community they are placed in.

PUBLIC ART TO CHECK OUT IN L.A.:

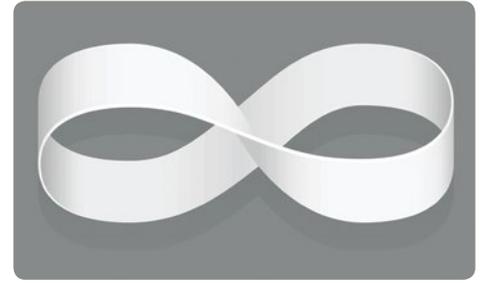
- *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* by Judy Baca—in the Tujunga Wash Flood Control Channel, on Coldwater Canyon Avenue between Burbank Blvd. and Oxnard St.
- *Four Arches* by Alexander Calder—at 333 S. Hope St.
- *Urban Light* by Chris Burden—in front of LACMA
- *The Wall Project* by various artists—at 5900 Wilshire Blvd. (across the street from LACMA)
- *Gintong Kasaysayan, Gintong Pamana*, the nation's largest Filipino American mural, by Eliseo Silva—at 1660 Beverly Blvd.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- How do you see Pop Art, minimalism, and cubism informing Sebastián's work?
- If Pop Art and minimalism were initially American and European trends, what do you think Sebastián added to these art discourses from a Mexican perspective?
- Why do you think Sebastián's art has such global appeal, working in cities all over the world?
- Can you think of other artists or art forms that engage the connections between math, science, and visual art?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT

- Sebastián's website
sebastiansculptor.com
- Social and Public Art Resource Center
sparcinla.org
- Public Art in L.A.
publicartinla.com

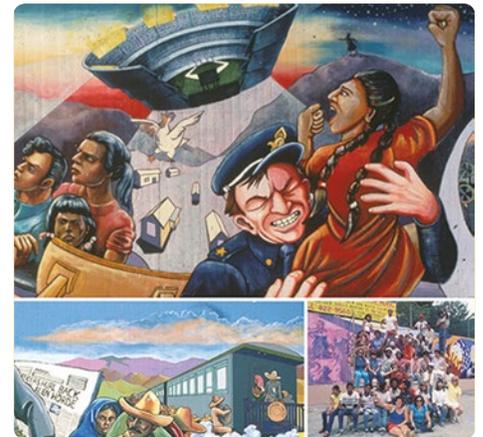


MÖBIUS STRIP

Sebastián sometimes works with space in relation to what's known as a Möbius strip. Named after the mathematician who came up with it in 1858, a Möbius strip has only one edge and one side, making it non-orientable. Möbius strips are used in practical objects like conveyor belts and continuous-loop recording tape.

Here's how to make one:

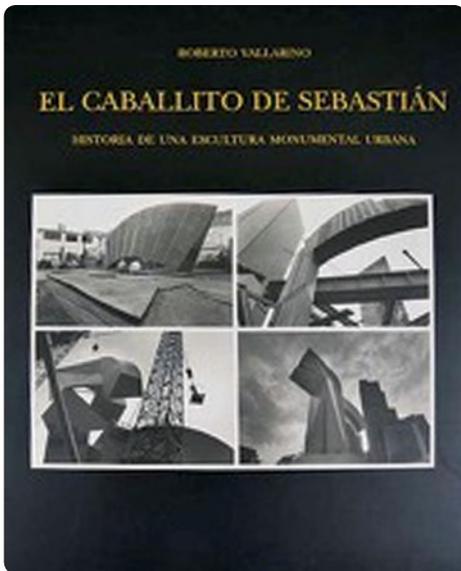
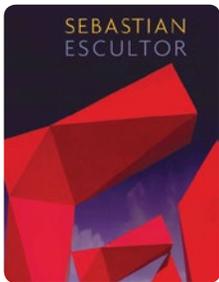
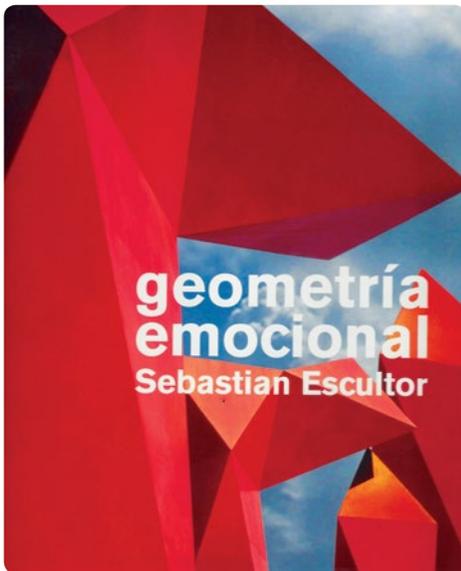
- Take a strip of paper and give it a half twist.
- Join the ends together to form a loop.



The Great Wall of Los Angeles (Detail) by Judy Baca



Four Arches by Alexander Calder



DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

MELISSA MILLER of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about tonight's event. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g. journal articles and databases) are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

BOOKS

- Sebastián. *Geometría emocional, Sebastian Escultor*. Ciudad de México: Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, 2004.
USC Architecture and Fine Arts Library, Call Number: **NB259.S43 A4 2004**
- Sebastián, and Héctor Tajonar. *Sebastian: Escultor* 1st ed. México: Fundación Sebastián, 2009.
USC Architecture and Fine Arts Library, OVERSIZE,
Call Number: **NB259.S43 A4 2009**
- Sebastián, Fernando de Haro Lebrija, and Omar Fuentes Elizondo. *La obra monumental de Sebastian*. 1st ed. Bosques de las Lomas, México: AM Editores, 2005.
USC Architecture and Fine Arts Library, Call Number: **NB259.S43 A4 2005**
- Vallarino, Roberto., and Sebastián. *El caballito de Sebastián: historia de una escultura monumental urbana*. México: Taller Sebastián, Ediciones del Equilibrista, 1995.
USC Grand Depository, Call Number: **NB259.S43 A64 1995**

ARTICLES

- Dennis, Carly. "Sebastián: The Global Sculptor Combining Math and Art". Retrieved from <http://www.latinxspaces.com/sebastian-the-global-sculptor-combining-math-and-art>
- Orozco, Sylvia. (2017) "SEBASTIÁN: THE GEOMETRY OF SPACE AND TIME". Retrieved from <http://mexic-artemuseumevents.org/sebastian>

VIDEO

- México News Network. "Sculptures around the world, by Sebastian". Filmed [May 2014], México News Network. YouTube video, 01:33. Posted [May 2014]. <https://youtu.be/y1zxmjGDSkA>

DATABASES

- ARTbibliographies Modern (ABM)
- Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art