

ALEJANDRO CONTRERAS:

**In Work We Trust
¡Chamo,
¿qué hiciste con el carro?!**

Curated by A.E. Chapman

ELM Foundation | The Boiler

191 North 14th st. Brooklyn, NY

May 6th – July 29th, 2023

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday: 1 – 6pm



ELM Foundation | The Boiler is proud to present *In Work We Trust | ¡Chamo, ¿qué hiciste con el carro?!,* a special installation exhibition by Alejandro Contreras. In this show, Contreras will transform an annexed industrial space of The Boiler into a sculptural landscape portal that fuses together the past and present while reimagining the future. Untouched for decades, the Annex houses a water tower that powered the boiler factory room in its original operation. No longer functioning, Contreras repurposes the water tower relic into an entry point for investigating its materials, their conditions of production, and the potential that their byproducts possess when reconstituted and framed for the viewer as a vista of aesthetic possibility. In this spirit, Contreras also incorporates his own broken-down Jeep into the site. He labors with the crumbling, deteriorating framework of the Annex architecture and the failed machinery of the vehicle to create a hybrid of remnants that transfigures the site and object, both formerly identified with their function, via a pictorial intervention which merges and celebrates their entropic decay.

In the first part of the show's title– *In Work We Trust*, Contreras appropriates the well-known phrase, *In God We Trust*, printed on all United States currency. Replacing God with Work, he interrogates the integral role labor plays in value and belief systems in the United States. Electing to continue the process of dissecting and conjoining both site and machine throughout the run of the exhibition, Contreras presents his own personal labor as a core part of the materials employed in the inherently ephemeral work. Given that the artist traces his earliest relationship with making to working with cars in his early youth, he appropriately finishes the second part of the title with colloquial language specific to his hometown of Caracas, Venezuela. Moving to Miami from Caracas as a teenager, the artist's transcontinental trajectory provided him with insight into stark contrasts in each country's relationship to labor and materials. Sculpting with his output, industrial parts, and time, Contreras presents the process as the work and the work as the process.

Similar to Contreras's practice of subverting value, notions of art, and institutional spaces, ELM Foundation views art as a tool essential to investing in our value as individuals, neighbors, a community, and collective histories. At the close of this exhibition, the Annex will be reconfigured and transformed yet again into space for ELM to expand its programming and better serve the neighborhood as an arts nonprofit organization.



ABOUT ALEJANDRO CONTRERAS

(b. 1983, Caracas, Venezuela; lives and works in New York, N.Y.)

[Alejandro Contreras](#) earned a Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from New World School of the Arts at the University of Florida. He has been part of group and solo exhibitions including Mindy Solomon Gallery, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, White Box, Frost Museum of Art, McLoughlin Gallery, Spinello Gallery, and Fredric Snitzer Gallery, amongst others. He was also selected to attend the Home and Away residency sponsored by Oolite Arts at Anderson Ranch in Snowmass Colorado. He currently teaches drawing printmaking at Columbia University and screen printing at ELM Foundation.

Contreras's *In Work We Trust | ¡Chamo, ¿qué hiciste con el carro?!* is part one of a three part series. In June, he will present chapter two— *305: ¡Esto es lo que hay!* at [Mindy Solomon Gallery](#) and chapter three— *Por un tubo* at Frost Art Museum, both located in Miami.

ABOUT THE BOILER

The Boiler is an arts gallery space within [ELM Foundation](#) that provides equitable access to exhibition space, creative resources, and mentorship. Through ELM Foundation, we offer our youth the chance to work with each exhibiting artist in our Steam Works series. Designed as a free workshop, students engage in projects with the current exhibiting artist directly related to their practice and work on display in The Boiler. In addition to this educational series, we host Community Works events for the general public such as artist panels, tours, performances, and celebrations. Funding from all activities within The Boiler supports ELM kids programming.

ABOUT ELM FOUNDATION

ELM Foundation is a community-based nonprofit that promotes the healing and transformative power of the arts. Our methods include advocating the benefits of arts therapy, providing multidisciplinary arts education, and facilitating a nurturing environment for self-expression, all working together to form a regenerative creative collective

Image: Alejandro Contreras sits on his 2000 Jeep Cherokee SE inside the Annex at ELM Foundation | The Boiler, April 2023. Photo: [Nathan West](#)

