

Press Release

# OMAR CASTAÑEDA

*Food of War: Panela the new gold of Colombia*

Chalton Gallery  
96 Chalton Street  
London NW1 1HJ

**DEMONSTRATION:**

**Making Art You Can Eat**

Wednesday, August 26

4:00 - 9:00



*Goddess in Metastasis, 2012-2015*

Omar Castañeda has an MA in Fine Arts from Saint Martin's Art College in London. He has lived in England for over a decade yet still remains close to his Colombian heritage. This is the reason why he keeps exploring subjects and materials related to his native South America. His main inspiration and resource when creating art is food. By using common elements, he dissects the past of towns and regions, tells personal stories and recreates armed conflicts, both current and past.

A basic human necessity, food is loaded with cultural, social and political implications with regard to its value, production, source and consumption. Food effectively dissolves most preconceived distinctions between nature and culture, production and consumption, morals and markets, family and society, the individual and the collective, body and mind.

*Panela the New Gold of Colombia*

Sugar was the gold of Europe 500 years ago. Royals and Nobles liked to display their rotten teeth due to exaggerated intake of sugar. It was a sign of power and opulence. This parallel between Panela (pure dried sugar cane juice) and Gold is one of Omar's visual and conceptual explorations.

# SANDRA HIGGINS

Independent Art Advisor and Curator

The protest of Colombian peasants against the government in 2013 did not end in blood or violence. When the armed police arrived to a town near Bogota, they were received with a traditional drink of sugarcane (Aguapanela) to make clear that their statement was political and not violent. Food was a balsam of peace in the middle of a conflict and these prints made of sugarcane ink reproduce those moments. The protest was not about clashing forces or raising turmoil, and it made the tabloids for all the wrong reasons. The whole outlook for the rural population in Colombia is not promising due to Free Trade Agreements with the United States and the EU. The Colombian peasants are left alone to battle corporate giants like Monsanto or to compete against countries with subsidised farming. The peasants raised their voices in protest peacefully through food.



*Colombian Peasants Against the Government, 2013-2014*

Panela is a staple in the Colombian cuisine, it is used as a drink, spice and source of energy. It is a national treasure and it has been around for centuries. Coming from the first pressing of sugar cane, Panela has been involved in all the developments of the country from the slaves involved in its production at the beginning, to the industrialisation of the agricultural fields.



*Lost Power in Their Hands, 2013*

Nowadays, Panela shows a duality of values very similar in contradiction because inside of it there is clash of two primary needs of survival in this overpopulated society: The one of supplying a source of energy able to sustain our development versus the other, the more primary need of supplying food.

Panela, when valued as a biofuel, increases its value as a drink but it is threatened as such at the same time. It is related to power, inequality and poverty. Gold and Panela are both recipients of two extreme values, interlinked in this collection as two mirrors reflecting each other and creating images full of glimmer, bitterness, pain and sweetness.

## The Demonstration

This event aims to show the versatility of Panela. It will be served as a cocktail, and most important, the plasticity will be present in the works produced by the artist on the evening where Panela is the medium and the message alike. The panela ink, developed by the artist, will be imprinted on edible papers so the audience can eat the art works, a very peculiar experience, rarely found in a gallery!

A short video about how Panela is made will also be shown.

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Independent Art Advisor and Curator

## Individual Shows:

2015 - *Open Studio*, London, UK; 2015 - *Elucidar: Parte I y Parte II*, Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires, Argentina; 2014 - *Aguapanela is my cup of tea*, Commonwealth Studios, London, U.K; 2014 - *The Golden One*, Colombian Consulate, London, U.K; 2013 - *Feast of Hunger*, La nit de L'Art, Palma de Majorca, Spain; 2013 - *Feast of Hunger*, La Boqueria, London UK; 2011 - Former Westminster College, London, U.K; 2011 - *Hunger in the land of sugar*, Fox Williams, London, U.K.; 2009 - *Corpses over my land*, Camberwell prevention Centre, London, U.K; 2007 - *Is it in our house?* Camberwell Prevention Centre, London, U.K; 2003 - *Icasa modelo # 2*, Bogota , Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.

## Seleccionadas Exhibiciones en Grupo:

2015 - *The Others* , (56 Venice Bienale) Venice, Italy; 2015 - *Bienal del Fin del Mundo*, Segunda Etapa, Valparaiso, Chile; 2014 - *Bienal del Fin del Mundo*, Mar del Plata, Argentina; 2012 - *Faccade Video Festival*, Plovdiv, Bulgaria; 2012 - *Survival of the fittest*, London, U.K; 2012 Screening 2012 - the Public, West Midlands, U.K; 2011-2012 - *Jungle City*, London, UK.; 2011 Latin American Film Festival, London, U.K; 2011- *Jungle City* Edinburg, Scotland.; 2011 - CSM Art Auction; 2011-, London, U.K; 2011- *Politics and Power*, London Comunitation College, London, U.K; 2011 - *Agens Shop* – Covent Garden – London U.K; 2011 - Inter-Show Bargehouse, London U.K; 2010 - CMS Art Auction, London, U.K; 2010 -*Artspool Gallery*, Oxford, U.K; 2010 - *Xhibit 2010*, London college of Communication, London, U.K; 2010 - *Some you win, some Deleuze*, The Factory, London, U.K; 2009 - *Pigy land*, Victoria house, London, U.K; 2008 - *Mi receta*, Integra, Madrid, Spain; 2008 - *Co-operation*, Camberwell Prevention Center, London, U.K; 2004 - *Little Voices*, video 30min, la Bienal de Cine de Venecia, Venice, Italy

## Distinctions:

2014-2015 - Artist Residency , Tres Pinos Foundation, Buenos Aires, Argentina; 2012 - Corydon College Residency, London U.K; 2011- Short listed Bar-Tur award London U.K; 2011 - Selected-Art Below Poster at the underground London U.K; 2011 - Future Map 2011 Nominated London U.K; 2010 - 1st Prize Art Camelot, London U.K; 2010 - Short-listed Red Mansion Art Residence; 2010 - Selected for Xhibit; 2008 - Mi Receta, second prize, Intregra, Madrid, Spain

Biography: <http://www.omarcastaneda.org/#!about2/cloqb>

Artist: Omar Castañeda,

Exhibition Title: Food of War: Panela the New Gold of Colombia

Date: Wednesday, August 26 2015, Opening hours: 4:00 - 9:00

Location: Chalton Gallery, 96 Chalton Street, NW1 1HJ

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