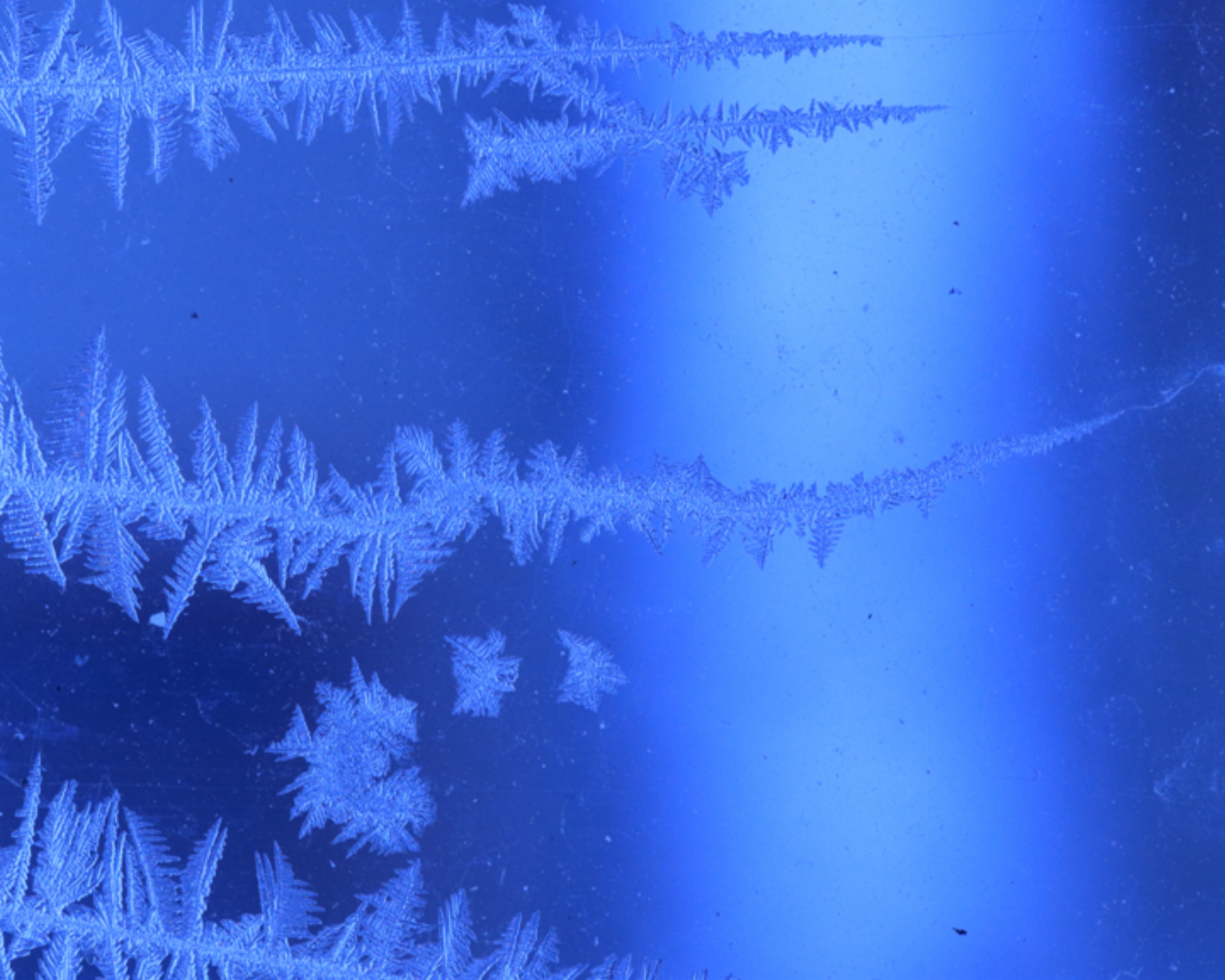


SCOURING HEAVEN AND EARTH  
ESTEBAN MOLINA  
GABRIEL



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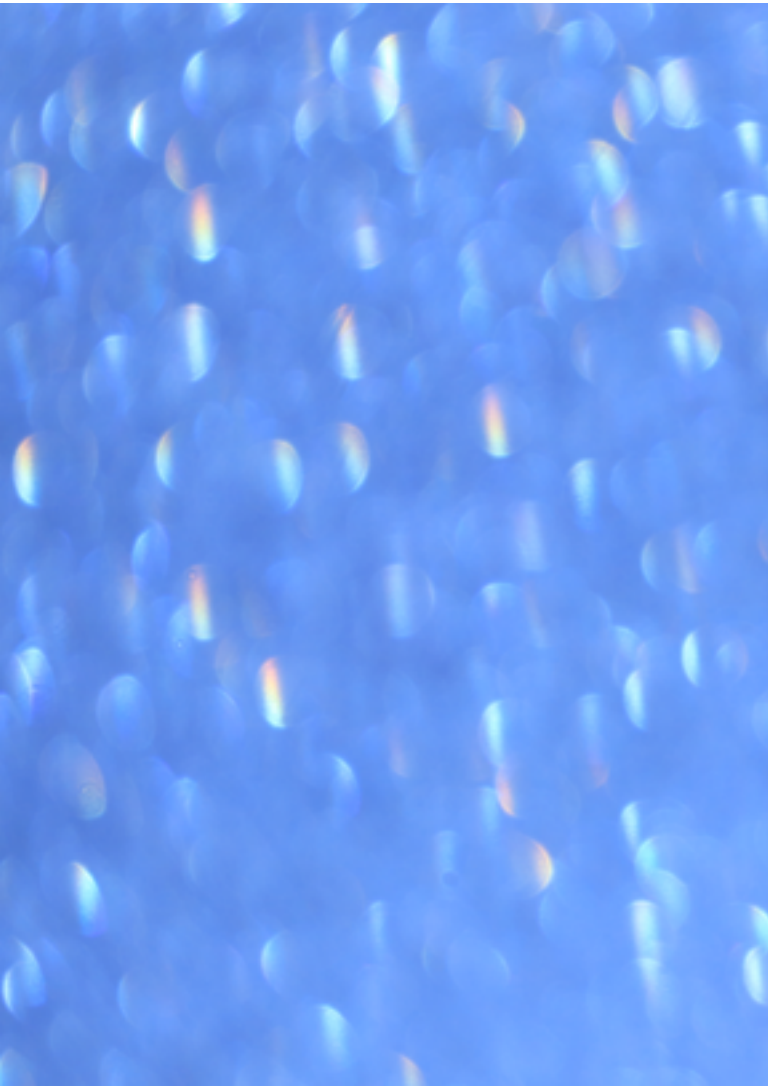
# Acknowledgments



The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) and the Travelling Exhibition program (Trex) acknowledge that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaty 6, 7 and 8. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations, and we are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgment as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.

This publication was produced in conjunction with the Trex Southeast exhibition *Scouring Heaven and Earth*. The exhibition will tour throughout Alberta to non-traditional gallery spaces from September 2024 to February 2027. For more information on the program and locations of each travelling exhibition, visit [trexsoutheast.ca](https://trexsoutheast.ca).

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# About

The **Alberta Foundation for the Arts** (AFA) has supported a provincial Travelling Exhibition program (Trex) since 1980. The mandate of the AFA Trex program is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community. Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA:

**Trex Northwest** > **Art Gallery of Grande Prairie** > **Grande Prairie**  
**Trex Northeast** > **Art Gallery of Alberta** > **Edmonton**  
**Trex Southwest** > **Alberta Society of Artists** > **Calgary**  
**Trex Southeast** > **Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre** > **Medicine Hat**

Each year, more than 300,000 Albertans enjoy many exhibitions in communities ranging from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south and virtually everywhere in between. Trex also offers educational materials to integrate the visual arts into the school curriculum. Exhibitions for the Trex program are curated from a variety of sources including private and public collections. The program assists in making the AFA's extensive art collection available to Albertans. This growing art collection consists of over 9,000 artworks showcasing the creative talents of more than 2,000 artists. As the only provincial art collection in Alberta, the AFA collection reflects the development of the vibrant visual arts community in the province and has become an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.

The **Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre** is where arts and heritage come to life in Medicine Hat, where the stories of our great collective culture are told through music and dance, theatre, visual arts, artefacts, archives and more. The centre is located on Blackfoot territory just steps from the South Saskatchewan River in the city's downtown. The Esplanade opened its doors in celebration of Alberta's centennial in 2005 and ever since, Medicine Hat has been proudly hosting a lively procession of artists and audiences, storytellers and story-lovers, from around the region and around the globe. To discover more, visit [esplanade.ca](http://esplanade.ca).

# Curatorial Statement

*Scouring Heaven and Earth* presents a selection from Gabriel Esteban Molina's larger *Criología* series, showcasing the artist's experimental photography practice. The collection began with numerous photographs of ice crystals frozen on the windows of Molina's home in the winter of 2021, with the name deriving from the word cryology – the study of snow and ice.

As part of his artistic process, after photographing, Molina uploads the images to his computer and employs his camera much like a scientific instrument: zooming in and searching for compositions which he rephotographs from the screen, playing with blur, focus and scale to create different textures, lighting and effects. Rephotographing allows Molina to experiment with abstraction and explore patterns and possibilities within the images.

The work reveals in the human proclivity towards pareidolia – the tendency to perceive a specific or meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern. For example, looking for animals in the shapes of clouds, or faces in the lines of a cliff escarpment. In a few of the pieces, the

imagery of ice crystals remains evident. Others appear familiar but unrecognizable. Could it be a low-res satellite image taken of the cosmos? A glitch rendered by artificial intelligence? A microscopic investigation of plant growth? The body of work is further contextualized by the artist's beloved dog passing away on the second day of the original photo-spree. Conceived amidst grief, the work raises questions about why humans constantly search for patterns and meaning. Is it a distraction, a coping mechanism, entertainment, meditation, something hardwired into our brains?

Ultimately, Molina aims to draw connections between artistic pursuit, science and religion as methods for discerning meaning from existence. *Scouring Heaven and Earth* invites viewers to zoom way out and to dive in deep. To ask questions and be imaginative and to pay attention to the little and big things happening all around.

*Text by Sierra Zukowski*

*Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre, TREX Southeast*

# Artist Statement

*Scouring Heaven and Earth* is an exhibition of my *Criologia* series that uses macro photos of ice as a source material. These works are made by taking numerous photographs of ice crystals on the frozen windows of my old home in the winter of 2021. On the second day of this photo spree, my elderly dog passed away, and I continued photographing to try and distract myself from the immense grief by getting lost in the patterns and lights created by the ice. The photos were taken throughout the day and at different locations through the house. The rephotographing process lets me explore patterns and forms on a different scale leading me to structures and landscapes resembling ice fields, mountain ranges, islands, star fields, and globular clusters. Sometimes, the images lead to colour fields, or imagery that doesn't resemble anything in particular to me, but might resemble something to someone else.

My experimental lens-based practice is inspired by techno-romanticism, glitch aesthetics, and the unintentional to try and capture moments and create spaces. As part of my process, once I'm done photographing, I upload the images to my computer and use my camera much like a scientific instrument, zooming in and searching for compositions which I rephotograph from the screen, playing with blur, focus, and scale to create different textures and lighting and materiality. Rephotographing lets me alter the images further and play with abstraction. I let myself be guided by the phenomena of pareidolia and apophenia, where random information is perceived as meaningful or in the case of pareidolia as resembling a face or person, or looking for animals in the clouds. The search for interesting imagery and forms is very observational and meditative. Through this process-based abstraction, my aim is to draw connections between artistic pursuit, science, and religion as methods for discerning meaning from existence and the resulting works appropriately resemble celestial bodies, satellite imagery, and microscopy.

With this scientific aesthetic and influence, the works are given naming conventions similar to those used for astronomical bodies or satellite imagery: LoRISE is a reference to HiRISE or the High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment, which are a series of cameras observing Martian terrain. LS

refers to Landsat, as in satellite imagery from Earth, NGC references the New General Catalogue of Nebulae and Clusters of Stars, and AFM refers to Atomic Force Microscopy, a non-optical technique that uses a sharp tip to map the contours of surfaces to produce images at an atomic scale.

# Artist Bio

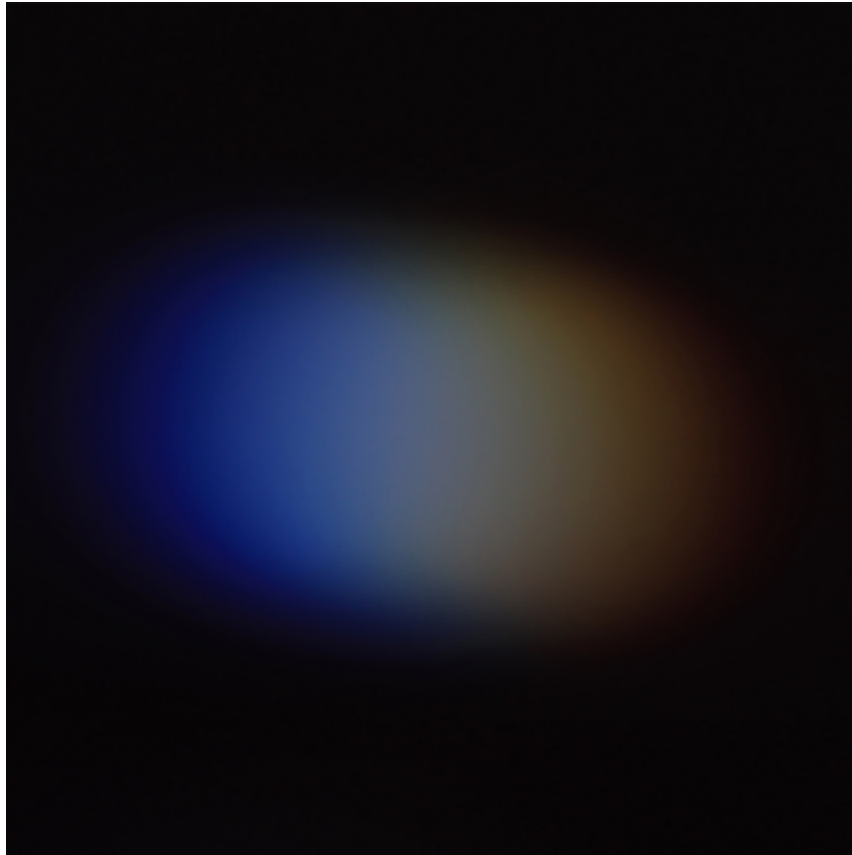
My name is Gabriel Esteban Molina and I'm a visual artist based in Edmonton, Alberta, also known as amiskwaciwâskahikan. I am a first-generation Canadian of Chilean descent, having spent my early years between Edmonton where I was born and raised and Quilpué, Chile from where my family hails. I completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Alberta in 2013 and a Masters of Art in Fine Art at the Chelsea College of Arts in London, England in 2015. I've had various group and solo exhibitions throughout Edmonton, as well as Alberta, London, Italy, Iceland and online. I've participated in residencies at the Banff Centre for the Arts and ArtsIceland in the Westfjords of Iceland.

In 2021 I was awarded the Edmonton Artists Trust Fund and in 2022, I presented my most recent project *Memory Palace* at Latitude 53 with an exhibition text written by Liuba Gonzalez de Armas. In 2023 I was shortlisted for the Eldon and Anne Foote Prize and the ScotiaBank New Generation Photography Prize, and participated in Nuit Blanche Toronto 2023 as part of the augmented reality group exhibition Translunar Formations with PIX FILM Collective and The Artificial Museum based in Vienna. My work will also be featured in public art presentations as part of the Capture Photography Festival 2024 in Vancouver, co-curated by B0000000M and mounted at the Lansdowne Canada Line station, as well as a new mural for the Youth Lounge at Millennium Place in Sherwood Park, Alberta. In 2024, I will present a solo exhibition of prints, *Scouring Heaven and Earth*, with TREX Southeast, and will exhibit new works as part of *Memory Palace* with a solo exhibition at Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix in London, England.



photograph of the artist  
Gabriel Esteban Molina

# List of Artwork



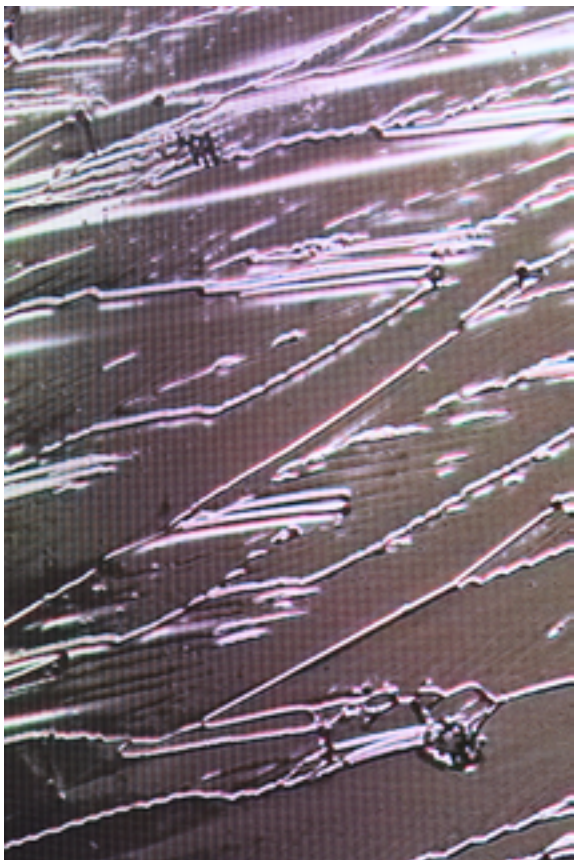
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[AFM\\_5597](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to  
media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



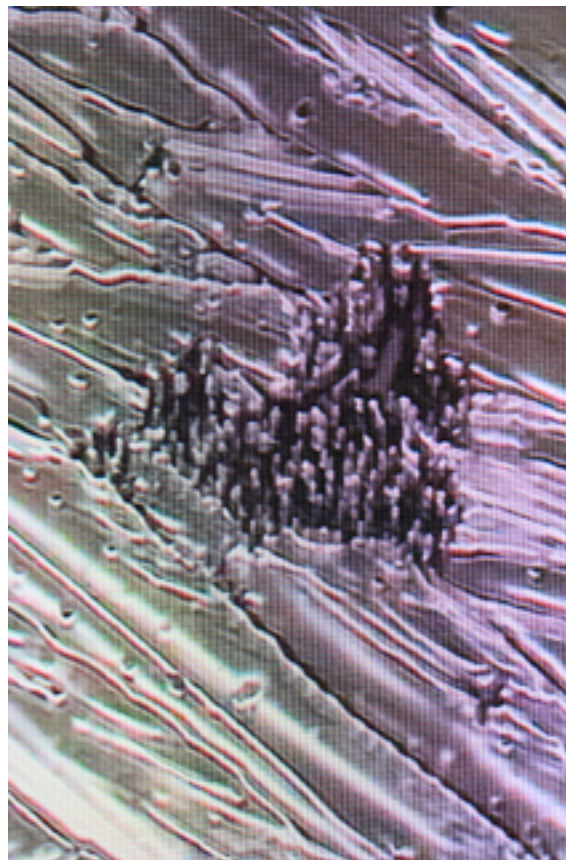
Gabriel Esteban Molina

**Criología III (LoRISE\_3626)**

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina

**Criología II (LoRISE\_3654)**

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

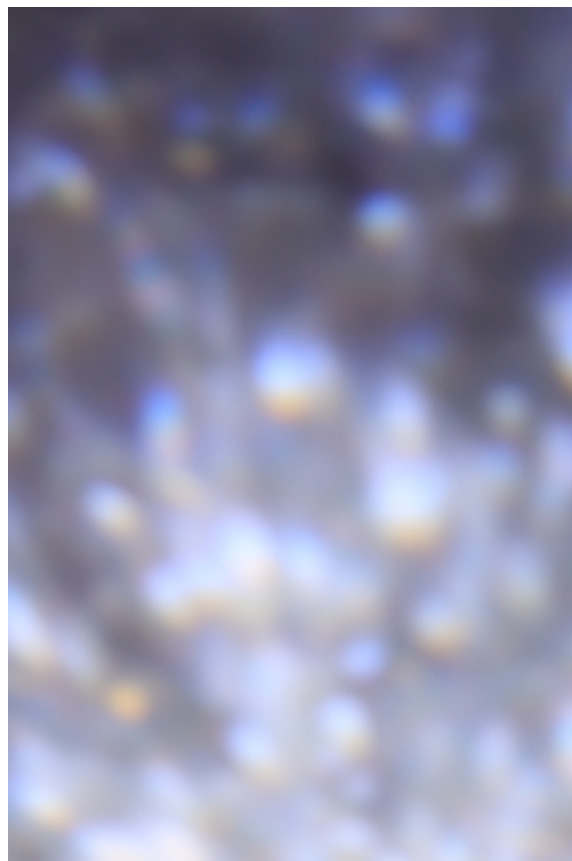
Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina  
**Criología I (LoRISE\_3651)**

2021

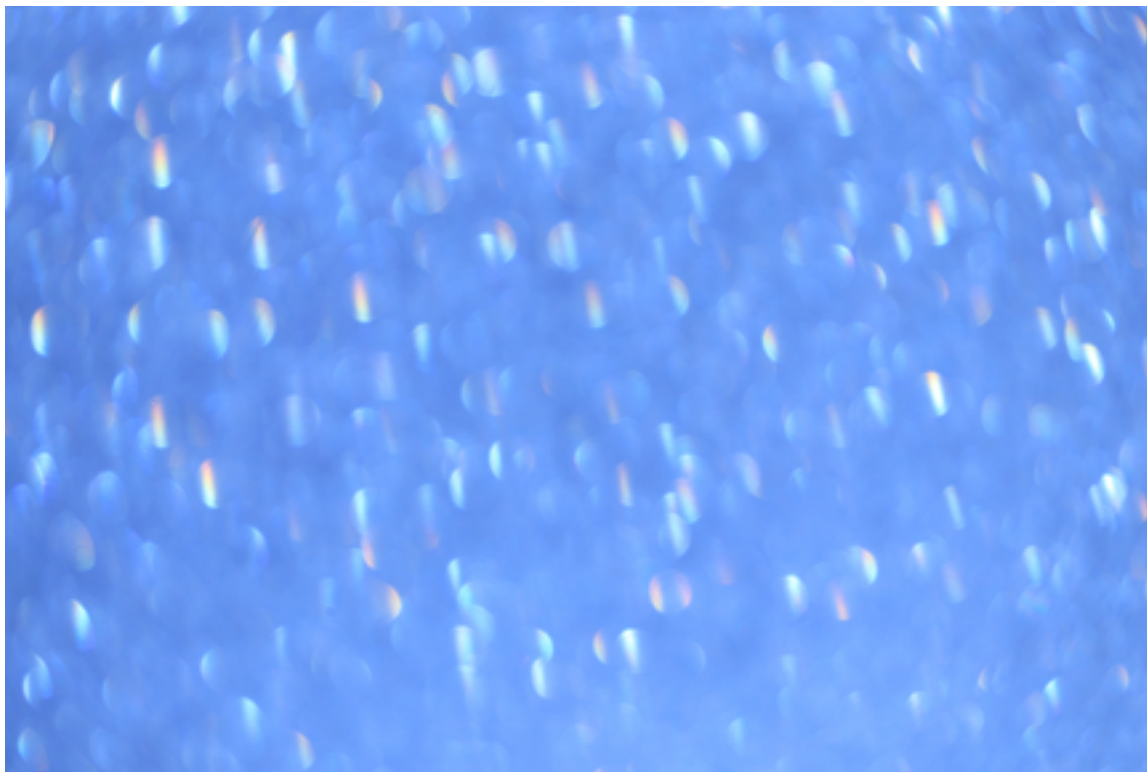
Digital print, direct to media print on dibond  
 Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina  
**AFM\_4586**

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond  
 Collection of the artist



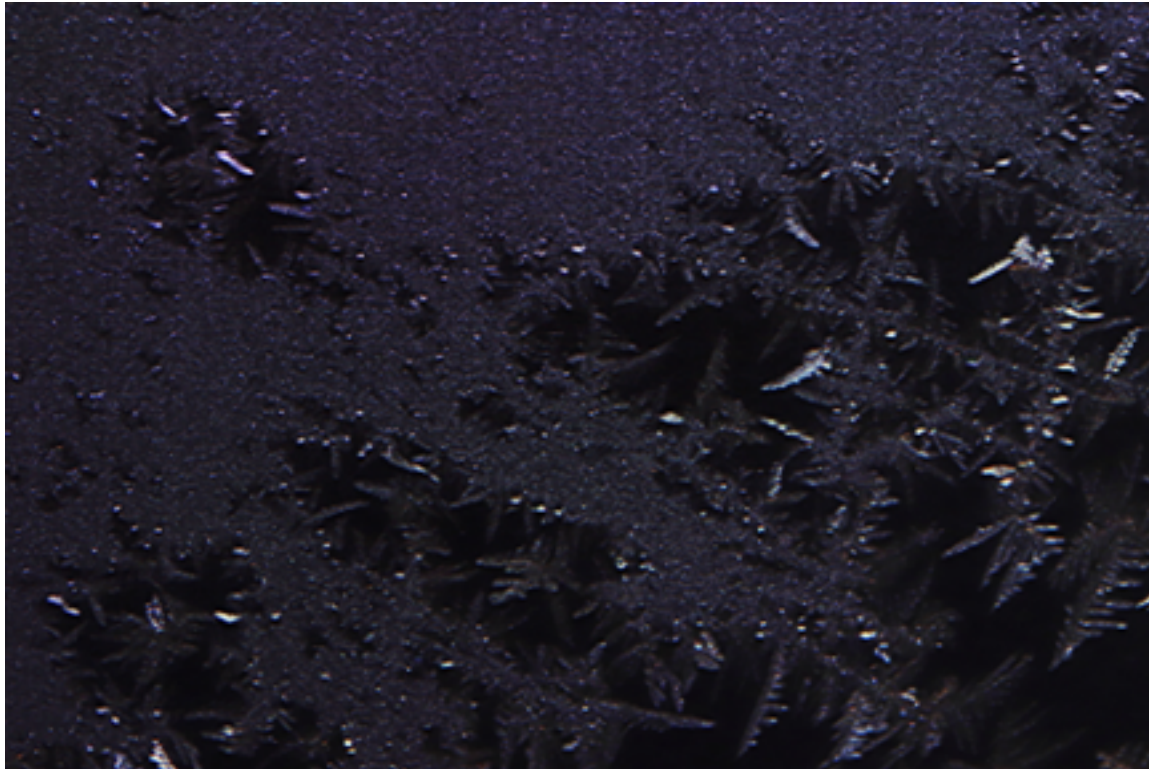
Gabriel Esteban Molina

**Criología VII**

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina

**Criología XV (LoRISE\_4335)**

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



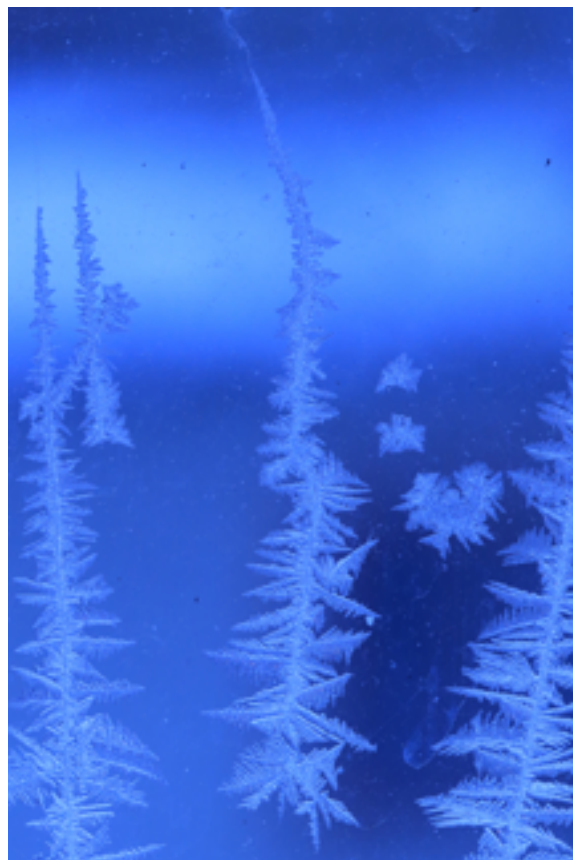
Gabriel Esteban Molina

**Criología XII**

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina

**Criología XVIII**

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



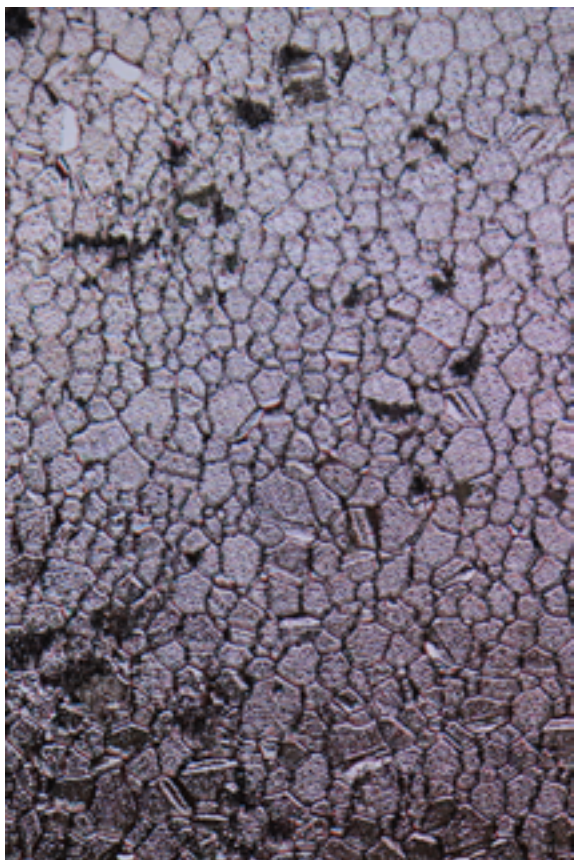
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[LoRISE\\_4656](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



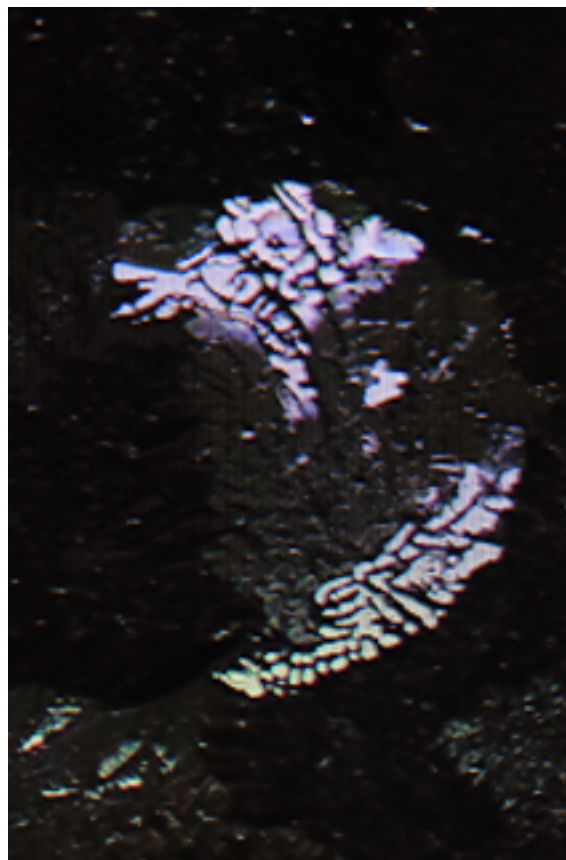
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[LoRISE\\_3496](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



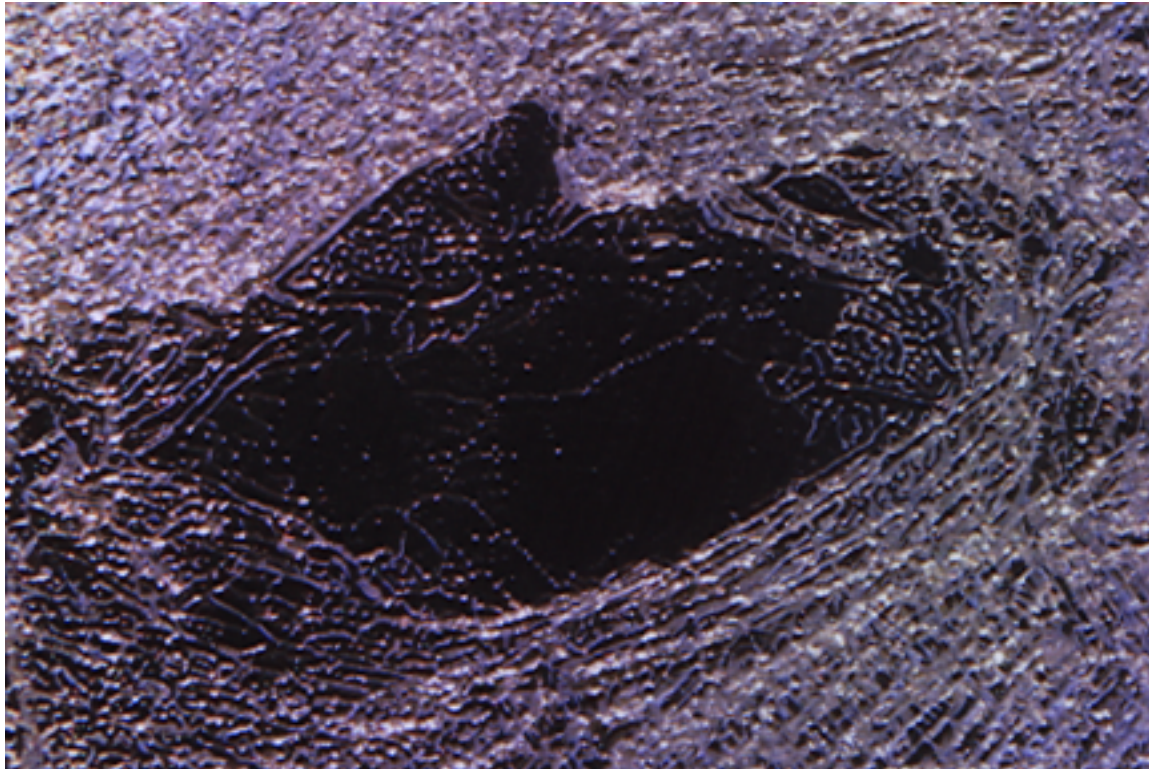
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[LS\\_5043](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



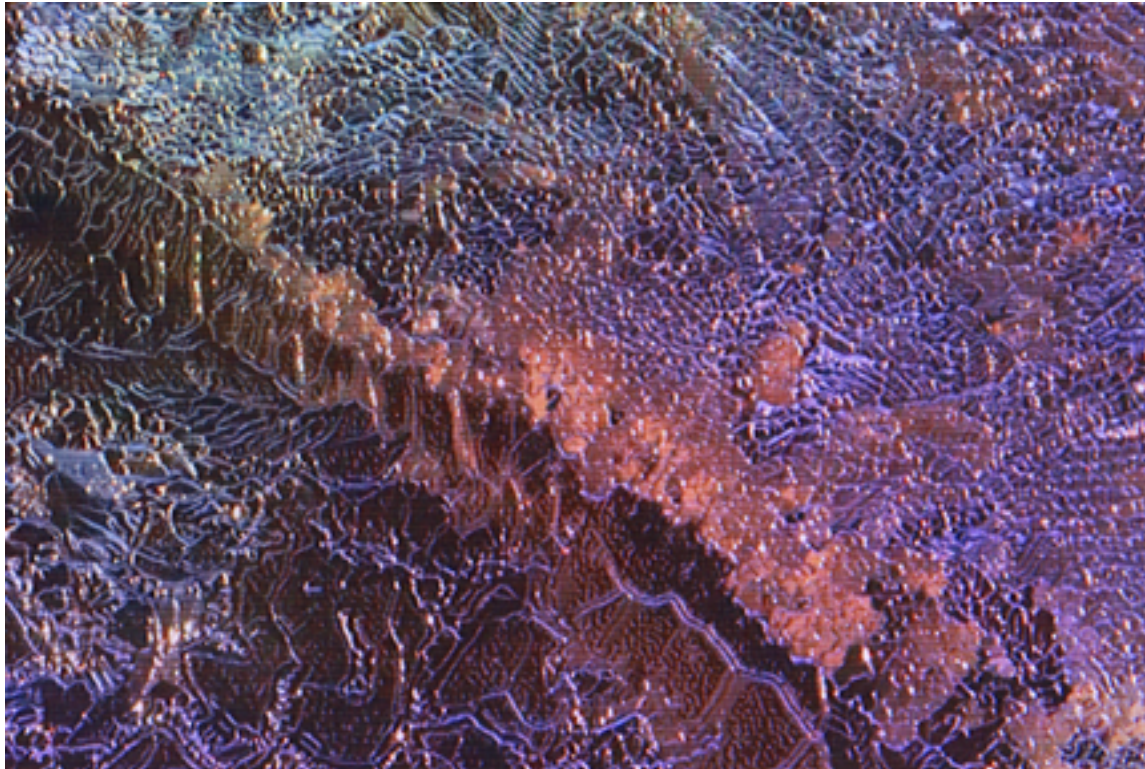
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[LoRISE\\_5092](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



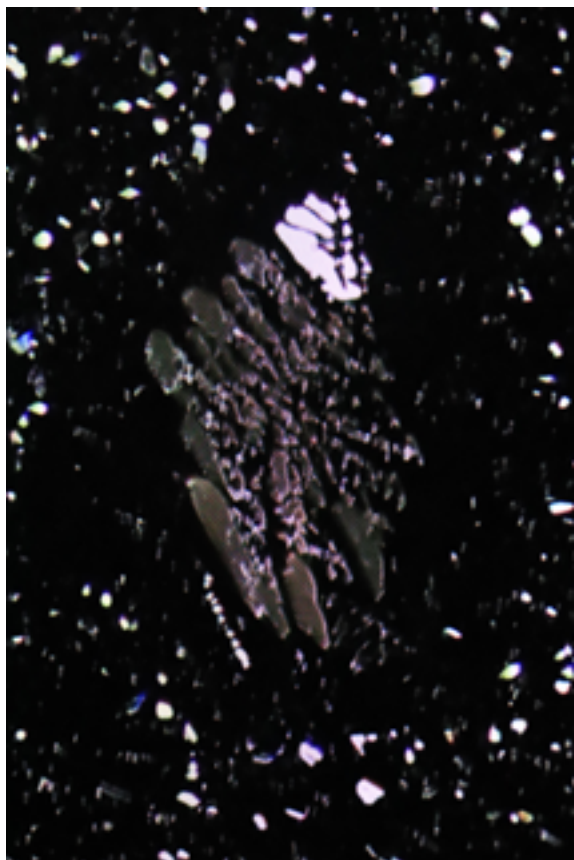
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[LoRISE\\_4705](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina

[NGC\\_3395](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



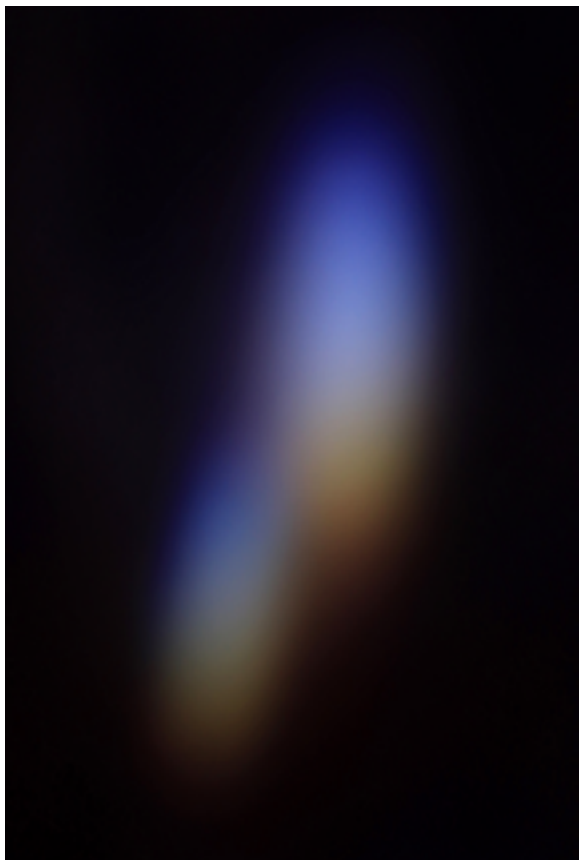
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[NGC\\_3814](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina

[AFM\\_5598](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



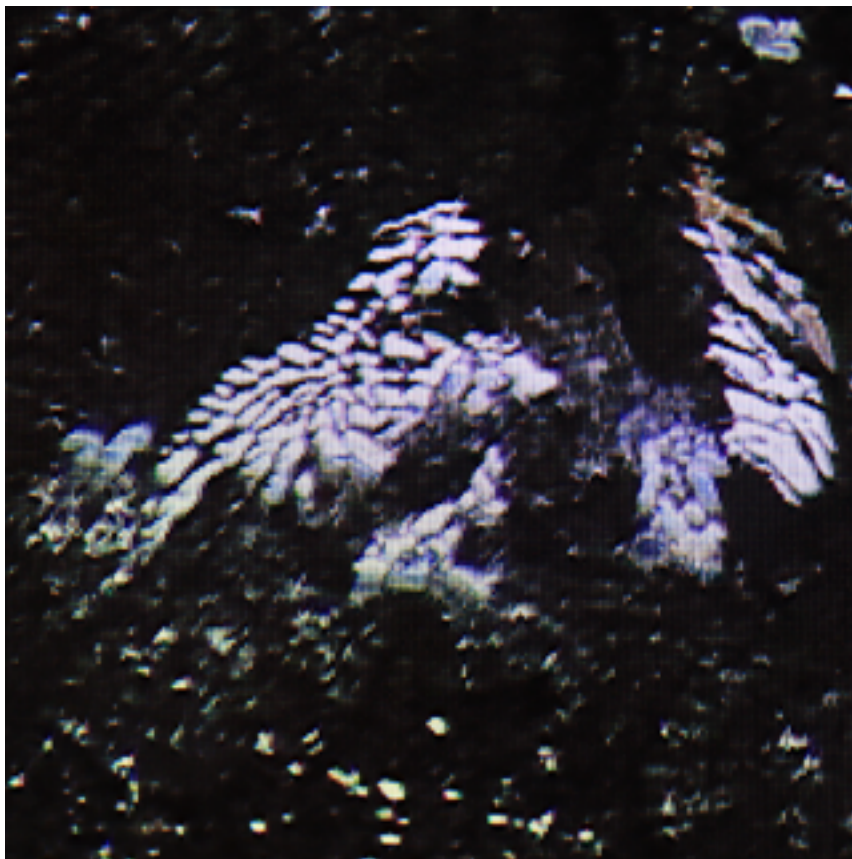
Gabriel Esteban Molina

[NGC\\_2417](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist



Gabriel Esteban Molina

[NGC\\_5045](#)

2021

Digital print, direct to media print on dibond

Collection of the artist

# Education Guide

These lessons use photography and video to teach participants about time, observation, focusing on a subject and composition.

## LESSON 01 >> ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHY

### Overview

The idea behind abstract photography is to take familiar subjects and make them seem unfamiliar. Instead of trying to take a picture of a regular subject, look for patterns, fields of colour, texture and light. When we make something appear unfamiliar or abstracted, and we lose the ability to tell what something is right away by looking at it, it can open our minds to different possibilities. Do you see anything in those patterns? Can you trick us into thinking we're looking at something we are not? Can you make the surface of an object look like a landscape photograph or a satellite image?

### Objectives

Participants will:

- > Learn about composition.
- > Learn to look at things differently and consider other perspectives.

### Materials

- > Immediate surroundings, both indoor and outdoor, as necessary
- > Digital camera or smartphone

### Instructions

1. Start by finding a subject. This could be the sky or the ground or even the floor. Start to take notice of patterns, surfaces and textures.
2. Stare at your subject until your eyes go out of focus. Squint your eyes and keep looking. Get up as close as possible, or zoom in with your camera. What about this subject do you find interesting?
3. Take as many pictures as possible of your subject, utilizing the different techniques you were practicing while looking at it, such as zooming in and out and adjusting focus. Do your pictures look like what they are, or do they look like something different? Can you see a pattern that you can isolate, like tree bark, shadows or reflections? Would a viewer be able to tell what the object is right away, or does it appear abstracted or like something else entirely?



abstract photography examples

## LESSON 02 >> PHOTOGRAPHING PHOTOGRAPHS

### Overview

The idea behind photographing photographs is to take existing photographs and search within them for other compositions. This lesson invites participants to interact with the artworks using digital photography. Given that some of the images are intensely pixelated, there will be interesting interactions between the device and the image, causing possible moiré patterns, which are a type of interference pattern that may even end up in their images. Moiré patterns are what happen when two repetitive or grid-like patterns overlap, similar to what happens when walking near chain link fences or when you try to record videos of screens, causing these tight and semi-transparent patterns to overlap and create interference patterns.

Participants are encouraged to look for anything that they think is visually intriguing or cool, including interference patterns which may result from photographing images from books, digital prints or computer screens. Things may not appear as they were when you originally tried to photograph them, but that is the point. The act of taking the photograph creates something new, different from the original image. Looking for intentional disturbances, interference and visual patterns is part of what glitch aesthetics is about. Glitch art aims to harness the unpredictable, giving media artists a way of directly affecting the appearance and materiality of both analog and digital media. Glitch art uses the accidental and unintentional nature of errors to add a sense of magic to the work because we don't know exactly what it will look like until it is made.

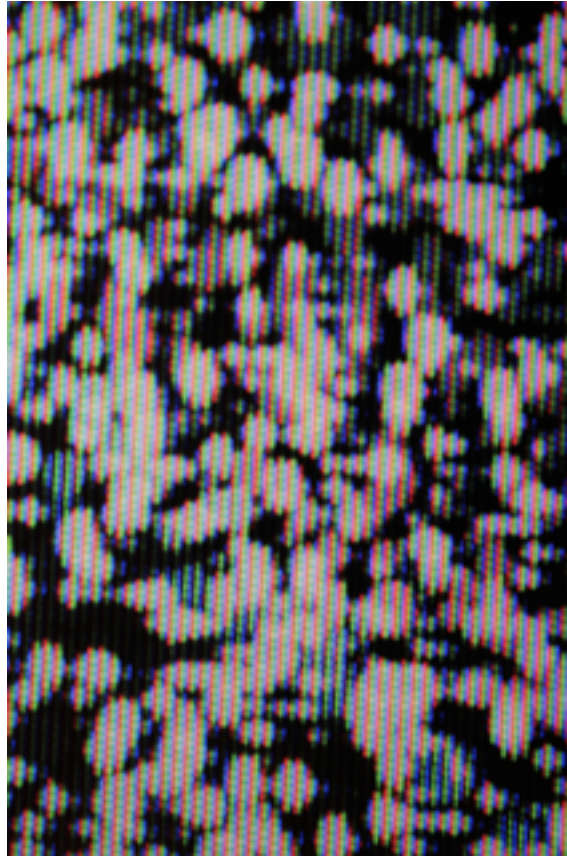
### Objectives

Participants will:

- > Learn about modern photography and art concepts like glitch aesthetics and appropriation.
- > Learn to look deeper and think differently about what they are looking at.
- > Demystify the process of photography and art making.



photographing a printed photograph



a photo of a photo of television static

### Materials

- > Artworks included in the exhibition *Scouring Heaven and Earth*
- > Digital camera or smartphone
- > Optional: computer lab with computers and screens

### Instructions

1. Look at the artworks in the exhibition (or at photobooks, science picture books, space books, or images from the internet). Try and think of them not as artworks, but as scenes, landscapes or areas of interest. Is there a shape or area within a larger piece that you particularly like that you want to focus on?
2. Point your camera at your source images and start experimenting with taking pictures and videos. Does anything interesting happen when you're looking at the work through a camera? Does the image appear to glitch, pixelate or show interference patterns?
3. Review your images and see if there are any interesting patterns or areas you want to explore again. Go back and repeat the process multiple times until you are satisfied with your results.

## LESSON 03.1 >> VIDEO PAINTING (aka MOVING IMAGE)

### Overview

Video art is capable of being just like a painting but with the element of time and movement. The idea behind video painting is to create a static video of a subject without moving the camera, like a landscape painting or a still life, except with the element of time. Time will continue to pass but the camera is kept still on this single shot. Try and find something happening, like a river, pond or the wind blowing through the grass. The element of time affects how one interacts with the video. Does it have a beginning and end? Is it a loop? Does it cut at random? All of these questions represent different choices one can make about how they express time in a moving image, and it's how you express time and capture movement that can make a moving image feel like a portal to another time and place.

The artist Gabriel Estaban Molina was trained as an artist in observational drawing, painting and sculpture, and this informs his approach to video and media art. He treats the video frame as a canvas, and light, movement and time as materials. Can the work make us feel like we're looking through a window and we're actually there?

### Objectives

Participants will:

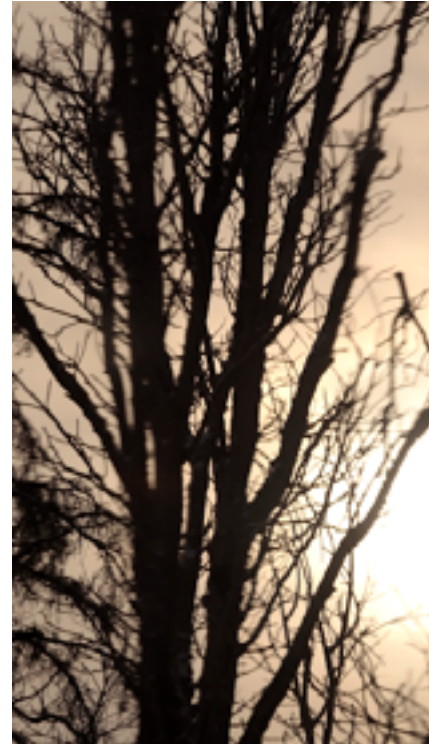
- > Learn about composition.
- > Practice stillness, patience and observation.
- > Find beauty in what surrounds them.

### Materials

- > Immediate surroundings, both indoor and outdoor, as necessary
- > Digital camera or smartphone
- > Optional: tripod, monopod or phone stand

### Instructions

- 1.** Look and see what kind of moments are happening around you and pay attention to details you may normally overlook. Are there clouds in the sky? Is the wind blowing in the grass? Is it snowing? Is the light reflecting in a particular way off of a nearby stream or river? Perhaps it's raining and the water is causing ripples in a puddle. Think of yourself as an observer, and of the camera as an instrument. You are trying to capture and preserve an interesting visual moment that you saw. What kind of movement do you see happening in your everyday surroundings? Is there something that looks pretty or cool that you want to capture?
- 2.** Determine how to best frame your scene and subject. This will be your composition, which you should be very intentional about. Do you want a landscape or portrait? What angle are you looking at it from? Do you want it in focus or out of focus? Are you making a flat scene or a deep one? Are certain things cropped or left out of frame entirely?
- 3.** Record your video while keeping as still as you can, or use a phone stand or tripod/monopod if you have one handy. Make sure to record as long as you can and be patient; try and record for at least one minute. Think about how your video will start and end. Do you want it to have a clear beginning and end, focusing on a single subject? Or do you want to have a video that could appear to loop?
- 4.** Watch the moving image you just recorded. What does your recording make you feel? Have you captured a moment that you could watch over and over? Is it perfect as is, raw, or could it be edited? Recording a video is only just the start of the process. The beauty of recording a video over taking a picture is that you can take stills from your video, capturing the sights, movements and sounds going on around you, and being able to see those recorded moments over and over again. This adds many more dimensions to the experience of art compared to traditional two-dimensional art forms by capturing more of the environment and overall experience. The end result could be looped or turned into a cinemagraph or GIF.



moving image stills

## LESSON 03.2 >> ABSTRACT VIDEO PAINTING

### Overview

A quick way to achieve abstracted and interesting colour fields and motion is by holding a smartphone up to a screen which is playing a video. The scene will continue to move around, but since the phone is so close to the screen, we can only make out movement, light, colour, and sometimes shapes moving around on a backlit screen. For example, this video art piece ([youtu.be/ETmJx1zMcqQ](https://youtu.be/ETmJx1zMcqQ)) was made using this experimental process when Gabriel held his phone up to the screen and recorded while watching a tv show.

### Objectives

Participants will:

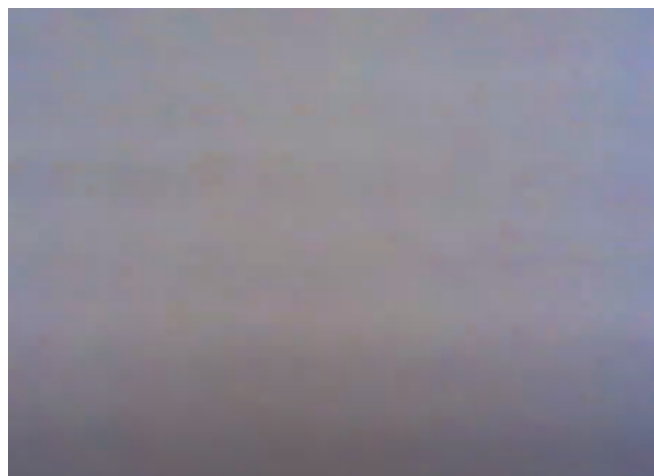
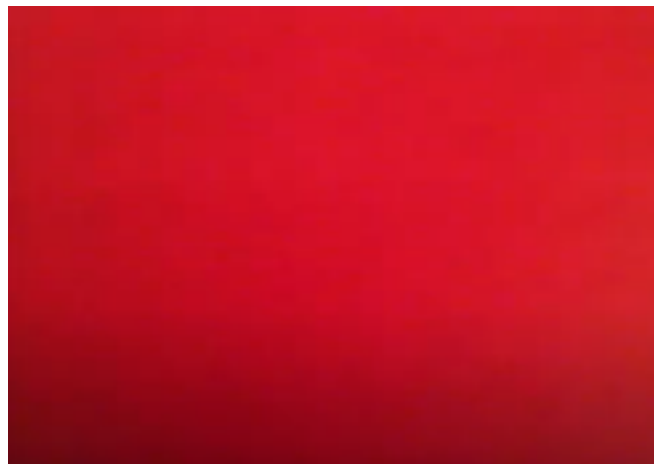
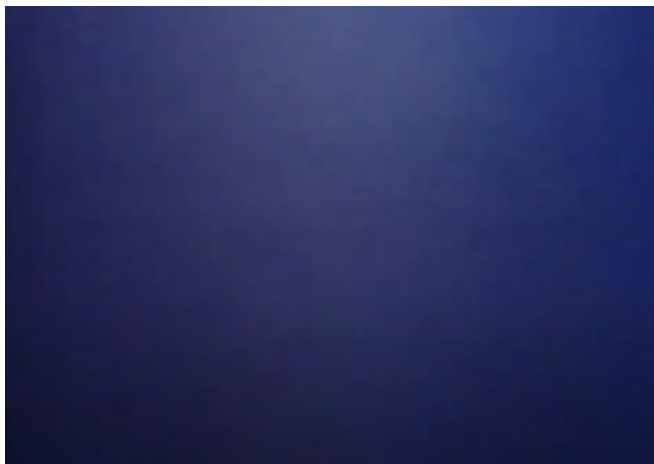
- > Make art in unconventional ways.
- > Learn about abstract art, video art, materiality and exploration.
- > Pay attention to the processes behind art making, as opposed to only the end result.

### Materials

- > Immediate surroundings, both indoor and outdoor, as necessary
- > Digital camera or smartphone
- > Optional: a projector or computer room with multiple screens

### Instructions

1. Turn on your camera or smartphone camera and hold it up against a screen that is playing a video. This could be a computer screen, a TV, a projection or another smartphone.
2. Try to follow any movement or changes in light and colour. Do you want the phone pressed up against the screen or held slightly away from it?
3. Experiment. See the changes in light and texture and colour and movement. Play around with focus and blurriness. Anything is valid. In this activity, exploration and process may be more important or compelling than the end result. The aim is to push materials to their limits and garner new ways of working that may be weird or unconventional. You never know what happy accident or technique you may stumble upon; the joy is in the process!



abstract video painting stills



