

Arocha-Schraenen: Gaining Perspective
November 7–January 9

moniquemeloche is pleased to present *Gaining Perspective*, a solo exhibition by the artist duo Arocha-Schraenen (Carla Arocha, Venezuela and Stéphane Schraenen, Belgium). Working across media including painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, and installation, Arocha-Schraenen are internationally recognized for their large-scale mirrored sculptures and modular installations that are rooted in traditions of non-objective and optical art. Often beginning with familiar subjects and materials, they strip them of their conventional function to reveal their essential structures, revealing the complexities of visual experience. For their third solo show at moniquemeloche, and their first at the gallery in over 15 years, *Gaining Perspective* presents a site-specific intervention of the physical architecture of the gallery, offering newly conceived works that engage with perception and reality.

In 2006, Arocha and Schraenen became a collaborative duo, connected by shared affinities and concepts of their respective, established practices. Arocha was born in Caracas, Venezuela; her upbringing influenced by post-war modernism and kinetic art that had a wide reach throughout the country's architectural landscape. Arocha studied art in Chicago in the 80s and 90s diving into Postminimalism and critical theory which deeply shaped her practice, alongside her prior studies in biology. Her early work frequently explored the tension between geometric abstraction and decorative pattern and experimented with materials such as mirrored plexiglass. Schraenen was born in Antwerp, Belgium surrounded by modernism and late 20th century avant-garde art. Studies in graphic design and exposure to Antwerp's experimental cultural scenes in fashion, music, publishing, and filmmaking contributed to his interdisciplinary artistic identity. Schraenen's early work investigated conceptual systems and the ways images are organized, framed, and experienced, often employing pared-back geometric forms and carefully organized relationships between positive and negative space. This unique blend of geography, education, and visual sensibilities has informed their collaboration as an intellectual and sensorial praxis.

Conceived for moniquemeloche, *Gaining Perspective* will have a destabilizing effect upon entry. Subverting the conventional use of the white cube, the artists have chosen to treat the gallery itself as the primary material. At first encounter, viewers may notice that the familiar confines of the gallery architecture have been spatially disrupted via a series of angular walls. Spanning the surfaces, a geometric pattern derived from Arocha's 2003 painting *Untitled (Brown Burst)*—a work originally exhibited by moniquemeloche more than two decades ago and will also be included in the exhibition alongside an early work by Schraenen—blurs the boundaries between the existing structure and the built interventions. Small peep holes throughout reveal what lies behind, simultaneously expanding and contracting the depth of field, creating a perceptual illusion. Also featured are a series of sculptural interventions that are visible differently depending on one's position in the space. Pulling from minimalist investigations in art, the works are untethered from traditional painting or sculpture and focuses instead on a dialogue between disruption and observation.

This continuously changing experience subtly dismantles viewers' assumptions about the familiar architecture through these precise interventions that destabilize depth, orientation, and perspective. By asking viewers to continually renegotiate what is physically present, Arocha-Schraenen offers us something fundamentally different. *Gaining Perspective* invites us to slow down, shift our position, and reconsider the assumptions we bring to the viewing experience.

The exhibition carries particular significance for Chicago, where Arocha earned her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1991 and her MFA from the University of Illinois Chicago in 1994, and follows the publication of *Carla Arocha and Stéphane Schraenen: Monograph as Project*, a landmark 600-page volume published by Mercatorfonds and Yale University Press, whose Chicago launch was celebrated at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in December 2025. The artists' work is held in major public collections, including locally at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; and is also permanently installed at Chicago Transit

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Authority's Howard station. Accompanying the exhibition, a public conversation hosted by the UIC School of Art and UIC Gallery 400 Voices Lecture Series on Wednesday, November 4 will bring the artists into dialogue about their collaborative practice, moderated by Denny Mwaura, Assistant Director and Curator at UIC Gallery 400. On Saturday, November 7, an informal exhibition walkthrough during the gallery's opening reception will feature Arocha-Schraenen alongside architect Dirk Denison, who designed Monique Meloche Gallery's current space on Paulina Street and its former location on Division Street.

Bio

Carla Arocha and Stéphane Schraenen have collaborated as the artist duo Arocha-Schraenen since 2006, following individual careers in the arts. Working across media—including painting, drawing, photography, print, and installation—they are internationally recognized for their immersive, large-scale mirrored sculptures and modular installations. Rooted in the traditions of geometric abstraction and optical art, Arocha-Schraenen's practice engages with everyday objects, stripping them of their function to reduce them to their most essential forms. Reflection, repetition, and illusion are central themes in their work, challenging viewers' perceptions of space and reality. Their installations often blur the boundary between solid form and reflected image, exploring the tension between surface and depth, object and facsimile. Through this nuanced visual language, Arocha-Schraenen interrogate the complexities of contemporary visual culture and the persistent interplay between representation and abstraction.

Arocha (b.1961, Caracas, Venezuela) received a degree in Biology from St. Xavier University, Chicago in 1986, and received her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1991, followed by her MFA from the University of Illinois, Chicago in 1994. Schraenen (b.1971, Antwerp, Belgium) attended Higher Institute for Communication Management of the Province of Antwerp in 1992, and graduated from Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp in 1996. The two began collaborating publicly in 2007 with their exhibition *Mauraders* at moniquemeloche. Since then, their collaborative practice has been featured in major international exhibitions, including at the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Belgium (2026) the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, Belgium (2024); the Busan Biennale, Republic of Korea (2024); Museum of Fine Arts Split, Croatia (2019); Fondazione Prada, Italy (2018); XIV Bienal de Cuenca, Ecuador (2018); Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, Belgium (2016); CC Mechelen, Belgium (2014); Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO (2013); The Wallace Collection, United Kingdom (2011); and at FRAC Auvergne, France (2006). In December of 2025, the artist-duo launched a significant 20-year monograph, *Carla Arocha and Stéphane Schraenen. Monograph as Project*, at the MCA Chicago.

Work by Carla Arocha and Stéphane Schraenen is held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, FL; Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos CAB, Burgos, SP; FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand, FR; and Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp, BE. Their works are permanently installed in the Chicago Transit Center, IL; in Belgium at Hof Ter Leenen, Nevele; Tekbroek Nature Park, Puurs-Sint-Amands; and the Campus Coppens, Brasschaat.