

SOFÍA SALAZAR ROSALAS

Journeys of a tear

20 February –
26 April 2026
Atrium 1

“The soul that weeps has a way of navigating.”

Nicolás Guillén

A tear does not announce its path. It moves according to gravity, contact, and the resistance of the body that contains it. In a similar way, *Journeys of a tear* unfolds as an experience of sensitive displacement, in which the perception of space transforms as the body advances. The exhibition does not present itself as a succession of isolated works, but as a territory already inhabited by a superimposition of times, memories, and trajectories. The journey is constructed through walking, through attention to detail, and through the shifting relationship between body, structure, and environment. To perceive this space is to recognize that each step modifies the experience and that the journey is not only physical, but also affective and temporal.

In this context, Sofía Salazar Rosales's practice unfolds as a territory in transformation, where materials, structures, and gestures articulate reflections on migrant memory, affective architectures, and historical traces that persist in bodies and spaces. The exhibition proposes a slow reading, attentive to layers of meaning that emerge from the contact between matter and experience. To move forward is to read: each material gesture preserves, filters, or distorts memories associated with transit, rooting, and structural violence inherited from colonial processes that remain active.

The journey begins with a path of cardboard grilles that activates an initial experience of mediation. These structures refer to historical traditions of Roman and Hispanic ironwork and to Andalusian latticework: devices that do not merely delimit but regulate access and modulate the gaze between interior and exterior, the visible and the veiled. In Salazar Rosales's work, these architectures are reactivated as metaphors of border, mobility, and permeability. In the Latin American context, the grille hybridizes as urban ornament without losing its ambiguity: it protects and excludes, allows looking while imposing routes. Vision is never direct; it is always traversed by a structure that conditions the point of view, as occurs with migrant bodies and subjects who move through spaces regulated by systems of control.

The journey opens through a portal where two chairs coated in wax function as threshold and shelter. Replicas of domestic furniture associated with the everyday observation of the street; they appear as surfaces that accumulate time. The wax, deposited layer upon layer, turns the object into a record of repeated gesture, of waiting and duration.

In *They Ask to Stay* (2026), five hanging pieces articulate networks woven with beads through artisanal and ritual techniques that hold bananas modelled and covered with charcoal. A tension emerges between manual processes and industrial materials, between the structural fragility of the weave and the physical weight of the suspended object. The banana—historically associated with extractive economies and colonial commodity circuits—

appears fossilized, transformed into a mineral body that bears the memory of invisible labour and exploited territories. The networks do not only hold they inscribe relations of dependence, care, and structural precarity.

As one enters the network of grilles the visitor's experience becomes active and decisional. There is no single path nor a closed reading: moving forward, backtracking, detouring, or pausing configures a choreography of situated choices. The public ceases to occupy a contemplative position and becomes an agent of the journey.

The journey leads into a second open space where movement slows and the question of rooting after displacement emerges. In *They seek to set roots* (2022–2025), a column of stacked tires rises as a contemporary totem. Associated with circulation, the tire appears here immobilized, stopped after having travelled so much that it can no longer advance. From its interior emerge iron rods—known in Ecuador as “rods of hope”—which suggest the possibility of building even from stasis. The work condenses the tension between forced mobility and impossible rooting: how to remain after displacement, how to inhabit a territory when the body has been shaped by logics of transit, extraction, and circulation inherited from an ongoing colonial history.

These questions extend in *We are contextual and sentimental & when the axial skeleton decides to speak* (2026), as well as in *Witness* (2026), where construction beams appear as bodies loaded with memory. Far from operating as neutral supports, the structures emerge as skeletal remains of a social system built upon hierarchies, resource extraction, and human displacement. Architecture becomes body; support becomes material witness to historical violences sedimented in the built environment.

In the scaffold network *Attempt at a portrait and effort to remember* (2026), the architecture appears as a structure in process, closer to an organism than to a stable form. House, body, and territory overlap within a logic of continuous transformation. Architecture asserts itself as an open system that adapts, recomposes itself, and keeps visible the traces of its construction, evidencing dwelling as a relational and mutable condition.

These narratives dialogue with historical forms of ornamentation present in representations of cimarrons, such as *Los caciques de Esmeraldas*—where nose rings and earrings operate as signs of rank, protection, and affirmation of existence. In Salazar Rosales's practice, ornamentation shifts from the iconographic register to the constructive: bells, suspended elements, and sonic gestures introduce rhythm and vibration as active marks of presence. Sound integrates into space as an index of bodies that move and claim visibility.

This network leads to *What Does the City Hide in an Embrace?* (2023), where two industrial bodies sustain

each other through a *tôle armée* structure, a perforated material whose surface evokes the shape of a tear. The artist translates a language proper to urban infrastructure into a sensitive surface, shifting matter from the functional register toward an affective dimension. The embrace appears as a minimal architecture of containment: a gesture of proximity that inscribes care and permanence within the urban landscape, tensioning industrial hardness with an emotional charge that makes visible the vulnerability of the structures that sustain everyday life.

Journeys of a tear thus configures an exhibition landscape in which each work articulates relations between body, history, and architecture through situated materiality. The pieces operate as active presences: chairs that observe, embraces that sustain, columns that seek roots, structures that filter light and memory. The journey is constructed as an experience of transit in which each element participates in a system of correspondences activated by the visitor's movement.

Within this framework, the evocation of Nicolás Guillén, "Water of memory, clear; water of forgetting, turbid", introduces a poetic key that traverses the project. Memory appears as an unstable process: it clears or clouds depending on the body and the time that contain it. The tear is defined by its itinerary: it moves between

grilles and lattices, settles on objects and surfaces, tracing routes that never fully fix themselves, yet keep active what persists in the experience of the journey.

Jimena Blázquez
EXHIBITION CURATOR

Sofía Salazar Rosales (Quito, Ecuador, 1999) is an artist whose practice lies at the intersection of sculpture, installation, and architecture, with a particular interest in processes of transit, displacement, and the construction of memory as they relate to space. Her work is articulated through materials associated with construction and the urban environment, which she uses to generate structures that mediate the viewer's bodily experience and their relationship to the exhibition space.

Through her projects, the artist investigates notions of passage, permanence, and transformation, as well as the physical and symbolic dimensions of the places we inhabit or move through. Her works propose spatial itineraries in which the visitor's body becomes an active element, invited to pass through, move around, or temporarily inhabit the structures she creates.

1. *Gesto: dibujos sobre el miedo, sensualidad y muros [Gesture: drawings of fear, sensuality, and walls]*, 2026. Recycled cardboard, acrylic painting, silicone and paraffin
2. *¿De dónde viene la fuerza? [Where does the strength come from?]*, 2025. Iron filings, cardboard, glass beads, iron and nylon wire, polyester resin and fiberglass
3. *Por eso sigo fiel cada día en la espera*, 2026. Recycled cardboard, cement, plaster, silicone and paraffin
4. *Ellas piden quedarse [They ask you stay]*, 2026. Glass beads, charcoal, iron and nylon wire, paraffin plaster bandage, acrylic painting and iron
5. *Puentes y dibujando lágrimas [Bridges and drawing tears]*, 2026. Recycled cardboard, acrylic painting, silicone and paraffin
6. *Cuando el esqueleto axial decide hablar (ofrenda) [When the axial skeleton decides to speak (offering)]*, 2026. Glass aggregate, glass beads, nylon and iron wire, vinyl glue, polyester resin and fiberglass
7. *Tentativa de retrato y esfuerzo por recordar [Attempt at a portrait and effort to remember]*, 2026. Metallic bells, iron, iron and nylon wire, cyanoacrylate adhesive and acrylic painting
8. *Testiga [Witness]*, 2026. Glass aggregate, vinyl glue, 3d printing, fiberglass, brass leaf and polyester resin
9. *Ellas buscan enraizarse [They seek to set roots]*, 2022-2025. Asphalt, silicone, plaster, metal, fiberglass, polyester resin and epoxy
10. *Somos contextuales y sentimentales y cuando el esqueleto axial decide hablar [We are contextual and sentimental & when the axial skeleton decides to speak]*, 2026. Glass aggregate, plaster, vinyl glue, powdered bitumen, paraffin, polyester resin and fiberglass
11. *¿No la escuchas respirar? [Can't you hear her breathing?]*, 2026. Bronze
12. *¿Qué esconde la ciudad en un abrazo? [What does the city hide in a hug?]*, 2023. Plaster, wire mesh, cardboard, polyester resin, fiberglass, iron filings

