

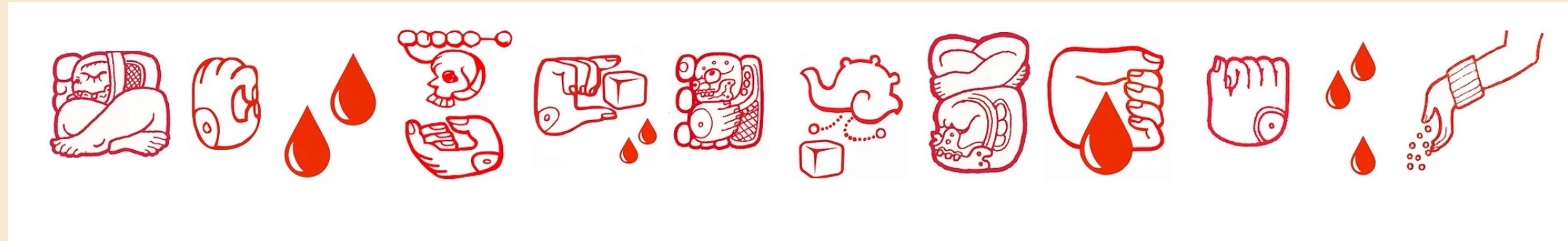
# Decolonizing the Clock: Non-Western Time Constructs in Central American Art and Literature

Eden Van Saun

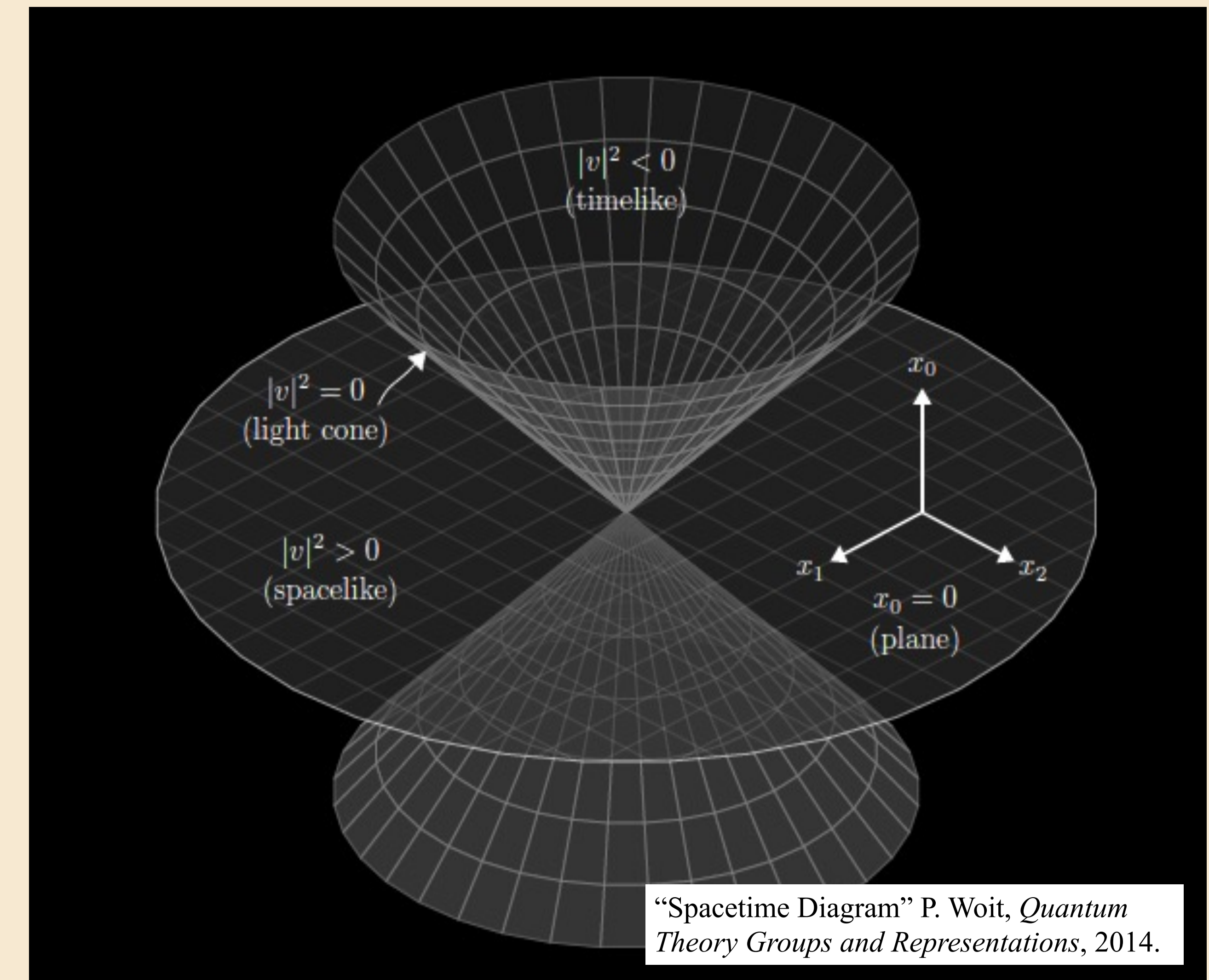
Dr. Julia Medina, Languages, Cultures, Literatures | Keck Humanities Fellowship



Beatriz Cortez, "Chultún El Semillero," 2021.



My own photo of the Maya site Mirador El Caracol (Yucatan Peninsula)

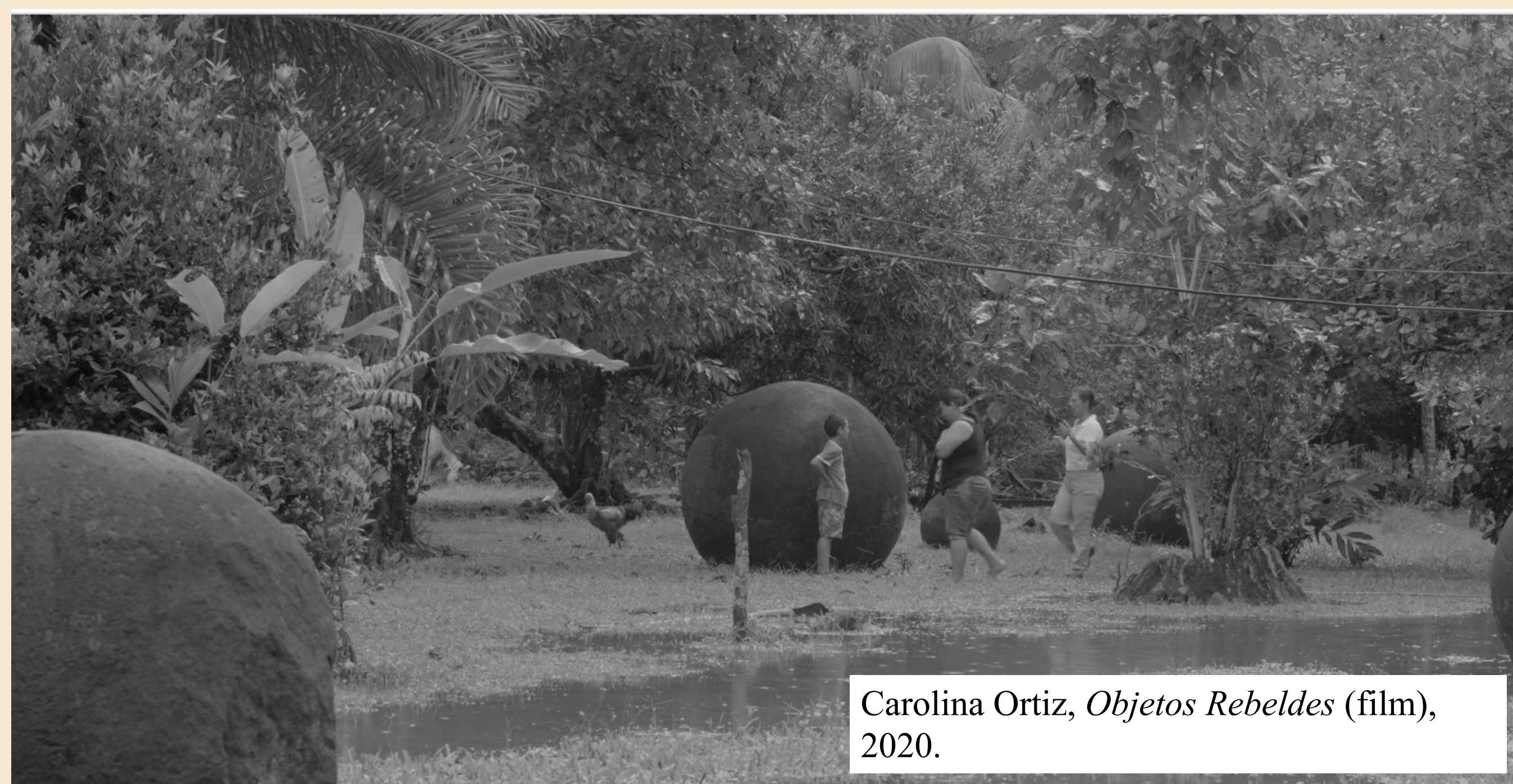


"Spacetime Diagram" P. Woit, *Quantum Theory Groups and Representations*, 2014.

## Research Trajectory:

My research explores the intersection of time— among other concepts such as space, place; memory and nonlinearity— in Central American literature and art. Particular focus is given to indigenous and Black voices, as this is where most of the alternative processes to Western ontological time emerge from. My project therefore works to demonstrate how Central American voices have worked to question and decolonize the dominant Western time narrative, and— by bridging forms of often competing epistemes— my project considers these perspectives from a space that encompasses and bridges theory between humanities and the sciences.

- Precolumbian mathematics & Initial Secondary Sources
- Precolumbian visual art & 'It's the Aliens' Phenomenon
- Central American fables & legends
- Secondary Sources – Western Mathematics
- Science Fiction & Film
- Contemporary Visual & Performance artists



Carolina Ortiz, *Objetos Rebeldes* (film), 2020.

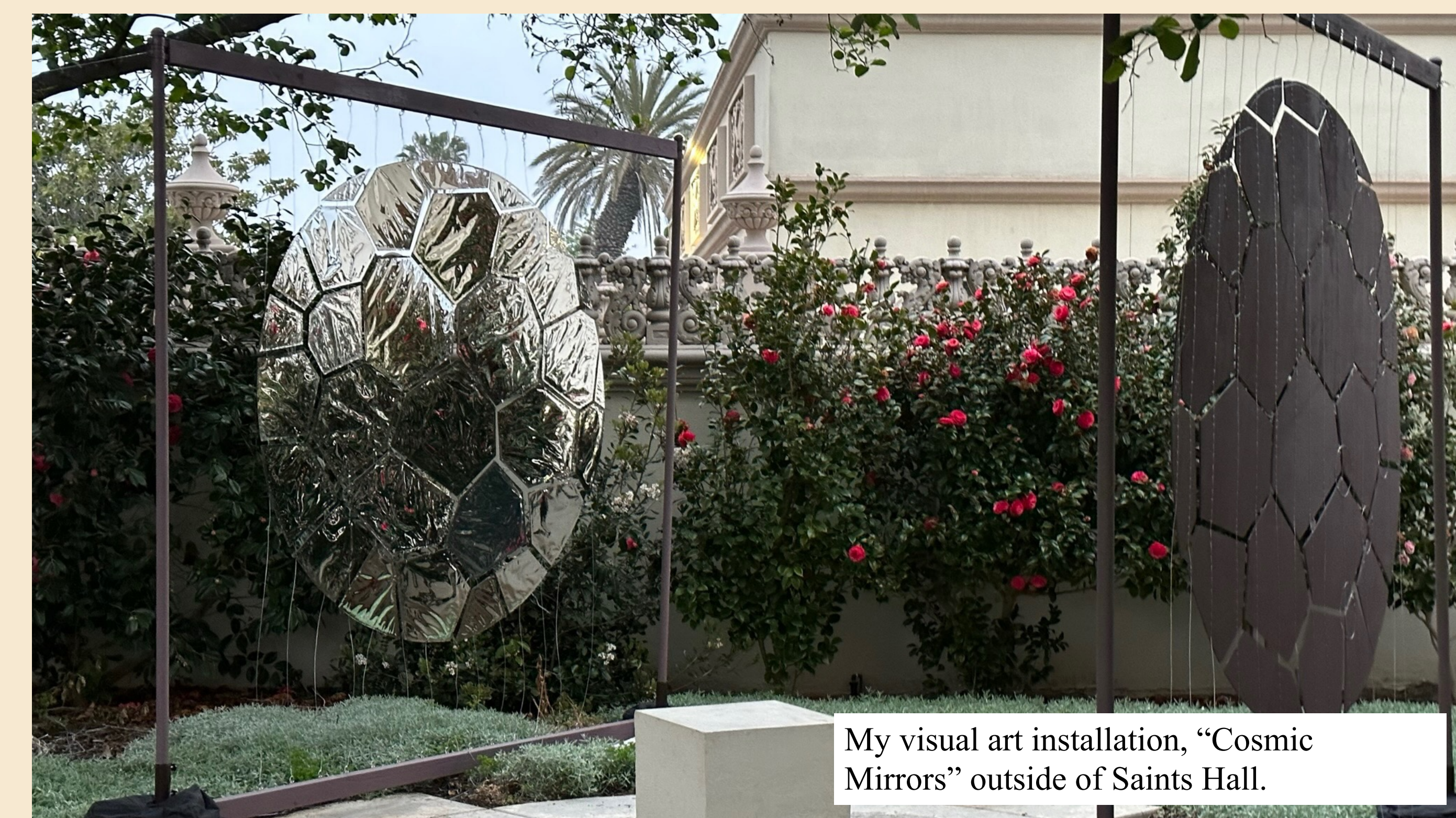
## Scope and Conclusions:

As Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwani Smith writes, anthropology and archeology “made the study of ‘us’ into ‘their’ science.” The West’s research of indigenous worlds, Smith argues, is situated in their own ‘taken-for-granted’ view of the world, space, and time. In seeing indigenous world in their own senses of time, scientists and archeologists— just as original explorers and colonists in early America— lead to a supposedly “scientific understanding of the past” where researchers extricate themselves from the equation, “operat[ing] at a distance from the universe.” (Smith, 55). I therefore situate my work within this universe, deconstructing Western notions of space and time to instead embrace the speculative, the contradictory and dual/plurality of Meso and Central American worldviews. In seeking to learn and understand new ways of perceiving and thinking about our world(s), I both complicate the ‘objectivity’ of Western time constructs, and demonstrate the ways in which alternate timescapes and spatialities can help forward ongoing processes of decolonization, redefine so-called ‘secular objectivity’ and share knowledges across spaces, places, and times.

## Select Sources:

Though much of my research analyzed physical sites, performance art, and other visual media, these are a selection of texts that are seminal to the final article and have influenced much of my own processes.

- *El Popol Vuh* (various authors / iterations)
- *Tiempo principia en Xibalbá*, Luís de León (1985)
- *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, Macarena Gómez-Barris (2017)
- *El pájaro que limpio el mundo* – Victor Montejo (1992)
- *Waslala: Memorias del futuro*, Giaconda Belli (1996)
- *La Llorona*, Jayro Bustamante, dir. (2019)
- *Timescales: Thinking Across Ecological Temporalities*, Caroline Alvarez, ed. (2020)



My visual art installation, "Cosmic Mirrors" outside of Saints Hall.