



## The Genealogy of the Flashy Beast

Irvin Morazán creates fantastical sculptural headdresses that he wears during performances, photographs, and videos. He intertwines indigenous traditions with urban street aesthetics to create new cosmologies that blur the boundaries of stereotypes. The performances are often hybrid rituals intent on crossing the metaphysical space between spectacle and absurdity. The work draws upon multiple associations and meanings while valuing history and its relationship to contemporary culture.

In Morazán's work, pre-Colombian practices are meshed with contemporary references, a mesh that usually gets covered by a layer of gold spray paint. Morazán's parameters range from Central American glyphs to New York City graffiti culture, from positions of power to marginalized discourses. Morazán establishes parallels between ancient and contemporary manifestations, which he transforms into new versions of themselves. For example, the trend of gold teeth in hip-hop culture visually relates to Mayan priests drilling jade into their teeth. Indigenous kings decorating themselves in gold or precious objects function similarly to rappers wearing gold chains and driving fancy cars with gold rims.

Cultures continuously go through processes of hybridization and "mestizaje"; artifacts become vibrantly impure, and cultural symbols mutate, modifying their original function or meaning. The two main visual elements that Morazán has appropriated for his personal cosmology are "El Coyote" and the "Ghettoblaster." By absorbing these two different cultural symbols into his artistic practice and providing each with a new narrative, Morazán installs new meanings into each symbolic image.

### El Perro-Coyote

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In Latin America, "El Coyote" is what one calls a person who smuggles immigrants over the United States / Mexico border. In Mesoamerican times, when the Mayan Empire was at its peak, shamans used coyotes to transcend spiritually during rituals. The coyote's elusiveness and mischievousness was said to navigate through the natural world. "El Coyote" was named after this animal. As an eight-year-old child, Morazán crossed the US / Mexico border illegally with the aid of "El Coyote" and his wolf-like dog. As they drove to the border patrol, the dog had lain on top of Morazán and covered him, making him invisible.

In 2011, Morazán was invited to perform at the US / Mexico border in Ruidosa, Texas, where he crossed the border illegally for

the second time. Instead of camouflaging himself while crossing, he created and wore a shining headdress that contained a giant solar reflector, amplifying the sun's light. Morazán wore this elaborate, over-the-top sculpture to perform this transcendental ritual, which reversed the original path he took as a child. He created a new visual memory for the entangled genealogy of border-crossing stories.


### The BOOM BOOM MAN

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Morazán arrived in New York in 1984. The city was full of graffiti and there were ghettoblasters playing everywhere. The sound in the city was thundering. Ten ghettoblasters playing different music all at once, trying to be louder than the other. I'm louder than you. You are even louder than me. It was an urban ritual among the youth. Today, this ritual has been silenced by having the sounds pushed internally by headphones. Ten iPhones playing at the same time, no sound.

The ghettoblaster that Morazán uses is a digital replica of a classic RUN DMC boom box. It's a hybrid that merges digital technology with the classic loudness of a portable stereo. He uses abstract sounds to create the noise of a new beast. An excessive, absurd, metallic, and over-indulgent beast that interweaves analog, digital, urban, ancient, fake, and original cultural threads through sculpture. In the summer of 2012, he performed in San Antonio, Texas, with twelve Harley Davidson motorcycles. He conducted the roaring motorcycles in conjunction with the sounds coming out of the ghettoblaster on his head. In Morazán's imagery, roaring motorcycles became howling wolves, an urban pack howling in the night under headlights.

After every performance, his ghettoblaster headdress needs repair, therefore it visually metamorphs into a new version of itself. As a cast reinforces a broken bone, Morazán mends the structures by adding new elements that transform the sculpture aesthetically and conceptually. In Mesoamerican times, every new king built a pyramid on top of the previous king's pyramid. If you were to dissect a Mayan pyramid, you would find multiple temples layered underneath the existing one. Similarly Morazán's sculptures and rituals are continuously layered with elements and concepts that die and are reborn in an organ of transformation.

Morazán's sculptures and performances interfere with the general meanings of things by intensifying their implications and rhythms. His performances confront everyday life with surprise and strangeness by creating symbolic and imaginary movements of transcultural readjustments. 





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