

LOW-TECH

PAPER PULP LAB

Recycling and upcycling have become increasingly important as we strive for a more sustainable future. In particular, the art world has played a crucial role in exploring creative ways to repurpose waste materials.

The participatory installation Low-tech Paper Pulp Lab, a collaboration between artists Ana Rita Ant3nio and Patr3cia J. Reis, took place in 2022 in Havana, Cuba, as part of the Art Biennale. The goal was to gather individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, encouraging collaboration with the artists in a happening/performance that enacted a commodity chain for recycling and upcycling paper. The four-week action began with an open call to participants to bring their own obsolete paper objects. The recycling laboratory was designed to resemble a 'kitchen studio', including various workstations for collecting, sorting, shredding, pulping, de-inking, drying and modelling the paper. Participants could choose which part of the chain they wanted to contribute to and participate in, as well as which object they wanted to create as the final outcome of their participation. Collaborators worked together in a close and intimate environment, fostering peer-to-peer and hands-on transfer of knowledge. The different stages of the production process were structured like a narrative, acting as a community laboratory that offered a temporary safer space for sharing, healing and contemplating future economic, ecological, social and affective sustainability.

Each object was thoroughly documented before and after the recycling process. We wanted to observe the process and artistic production in the specific context of Havana – a context in which recycling and upcycling are part of daily Cuban citizen routines, out of necessity because of the lack of materials and resources. In the end the workshop was more like an open working space in which we absorbed more knowledge than

we imparted. From collecting to modelling, there was always a moment of discussion, reflection and sharing knowledge. The most collected sources of paper were the national free distributed newspapers, such as *Gramma* and *Juventud Rebelde*, but also outdated books and flyers. Participants from all over Havana were happy to transform their newspapers into meaningful objects, often reflecting their thoughts on the current social, economic and political situation. In this book we present some of the outcomes, but, as the participants requested, their identity is kept confidential.

The Low-tech Paper Pulp Lab was designed by Ana Rita António and assembled through a modular system designed under an open source grid available on an online platform called Open Structures (<https://www.openstructures.net/>). Creatives from around the world contribute with the design of parts, allowing the structure to be organically rearranged and adapted for diverse purposes. What is a paper pulp lab today might be a greenhouse or shelter structure tomorrow.

The full schematics of the lab, including assembling instructions in English and Spanish, are available for download at <https://anaritaantonio.com/>.







Ana Rita Ant3nio and Patr3cia J. Reis, Low-tech Paper Pulp Lab, 2022
Happening/Performance at the Havana Biennial, Havana, CU, dimensions variable

Photo credits
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Schematics and drawings: Ana Rita Ant3nio

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