



## Everywhere Kiosk

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In Venezuela, kiosks have long occupied a discrete centrality in daily life. While their practical function may integrate those of a newsstand, a convenience store, and a bodega, their social meaning far exceeds the boundaries of commerce. Their cultural importance is rooted in a sense of local embeddedness that shaped life for most Venezuelans until the late 1990s. Despite their modest scale and utilitarian form, the local kiosk—*el kiosko de la esquina*, as one often calls it, whether placed in a corner or not—has long served as an anchor of neighborhood sociability: a place where neighbors pause over coffee to comment on the day's events; where children on their way to school buy the same sweets their parents once bought; where someone leaves a note or parcel for another neighbor to collect later; where job postings circulate and where congratulations or condolences pass between neighbors with the natural closeness of everyday ties. Kiosks form a kind of micro-territorial memory, their cross-generational continuity reflecting patterns of residential permanence in Venezuelan cities and towns. As small enterprises embedded in local communities and their histories, they often operate within a logic of trust-based neighborly exchange, where informal installments or deferred payments—"put it on my tab, I'll swing by tomorrow"—have long rested on the stability of social bonds.

For Venezuelans abroad, a longing for home often surfaces in the memory of these everyday structures. Recollections of a neighborhood in Caracas, Maracaibo, or Porlamar are frequently entangled with the image of the neighborhood kiosk—its warmth, its chatter, its presence as a point of encounter. Within the context of displacement—what the sociologist Avtar Brah terms "diaspora space"<sup>1</sup>—the kiosk may function as a mnemonic device for a vanished urban intimacy, a small architecture that anchors a locally grounded sense of belonging. This affective landscape is inseparable from the broader historical forces that have reshaped Venezuelan life since the late twentieth century, and particularly over the past decade.

Since 2015, Venezuela has experienced one of the largest migration crises in modern history, with more than eight million people leaving the country—nearly a third of its population.<sup>2</sup> This vast dispersion has unsettled the social, political, and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Emergency Appeal: Venezuela Situation," accessed November 24, 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/venezuela-situation>.



structures that once sustained a shared sense of national community. But the origins of our exodus reach further back: the earliest waves of what would become a global diaspora began more than a quarter century ago, catalyzed by the political and economic instability surrounding Hugo Chávez's ascent to power in 1998. Over this long period, Venezuelans abroad have faced not only the challenges of migration but also a deliberate effort by the state to diminish our civic presence. What began as a strategy to limit the electoral impact of Venezuelans overseas expanded into a wider pattern of obstruction: the shuttering or hollowing out of consulates, the near-impossibility of renewing passports, and the bureaucratic abandonment of ever-growing communities abroad. These forms of exclusion—subtle in their mechanisms yet forceful in their effects—have unfolded alongside our country's descent into autocracy and economic collapse, shaping a transnational condition of vulnerability.

In our host countries, we have encountered conditions as varied as the geographies we now inhabit. In the United States, early gestures of humanitarian relief have given way to policies that cast migrants as criminals and targets of law enforcement. Distinctions between citizenship, asylum, TPS protection, or undocumented status shape every aspect of daily life—from employment and healthcare to mobility and legal security. Despite these legal differences, however, the prevailing climate of hostility amplifies vulnerabilities already produced by Venezuela's own policies of exclusion, generating a condition of double precarity: politically marginalized abroad and severed from representation at home.

An often-neglected dimension of this crisis is the question of cultural visibility and representation. As Venezuela's institutions collapsed and its diplomatic presence disintegrated, infrastructures that once connected Venezuelan artists to the world also evaporated: no cultural diplomacy, no exhibition networks, no stable platforms for the circulation of contemporary Venezuelan practices. This is a striking fate for a country that, in the mid-1950s, became the first Latin American nation to secure its own pavilion in the Giardini of the Venice Biennale, and whose capital, Caracas, once hosted one of the most vibrant art scenes in the hemisphere. In the current vacuum, Venezuelan artists must construct their own fragile circuits of support and exchange—improvised, contingent, and sustained largely through personal networks rather than institutional frameworks.

EL CONSULADO NYC emerged in response to this challenge: a collective formed around the need to generate visibility where no institutional structures exist.



Symbolically, its name usurps the representational role once played by the long-closed Venezuelan consulate in New York, a city that concentrates a significant constellation of Venezuelan creative production. But the collective conceives the wider diaspora as its true field of action. As its first initiative beyond New York, the installation *KIOSKO* at NADA Miami 2025 constitutes an intervention attuned to the increasingly deterritorialized condition of Venezuelan culture. This itinerant, collaborative structure functions as a micro-vitrine, a gathering space, and an anthology of artistic production across media, borders, and generations. Designed to be lightweight, modular, and easily replicable, the installation is conceived from the outset as a temporary platform that can be reassembled or replicated anywhere— a *radicant* structure, to borrow Nicolas Bourriaud's formulation.<sup>3</sup>

Reimagining the function of the kiosk for our present condition of mobility, *KIOSKO* showcases works by dozens of Venezuelan artists in formats ranging from prints, books, and fanzines to vinyl records, cassettes, stickers, and pins, and makes them available for purchase at modest prices. Its dense, materially saturated display intentionally echoes a kiosk's traditional function as a compact point of sale where goods of disparate origins converge and appeal to a broad spectrum of consumers.

This conjuring of the kiosk's humble, retail-oriented logic is intentional. Within the context of an art fair—where single artworks circulate at exorbitant prices—the installation challenges a model of cultural promotion anchored in the figure of the individual genius. *KIOSKO* opens a space in which authorship becomes porous and creative labor emerges as a shared field. It recognizes that cultural production does not stem from artists alone but from a broader constellation of collaborators—designers, editors, writers, artisans, printers, documentarians, promoters, etc.—understood here as cultural makers within a wide, relational, deterritorialized framework. The installation foregrounds this relational ecology rather than the mythology of the lone creator, proposing a model of creativity grounded in interdependence, shared risk, mobility, and collective imagination. Crucially, anyone can join this proposition by purchasing any item in the installation and receiving a certificate of participation rather than one of authenticity.

It is helpful to consider the temporal arc linking *KIOSKO* to a pivotal moment in late twentieth-century Venezuelan art: the controversy surrounding Meyer Vaisman's installation *Verde por fuera, roja por dentro* (green outside, red inside). Created in 1993

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<sup>3</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009).



and first exhibited at the Galería Nacional de Arte in Caracas, the work consisted of a reconstructed *rancho*—a vernacular form of informal, working-class residential architecture—reimagined as an autobiographical container. Mobilizing the precarious materiality of the *rancho* as a critical lens, Vaisman situated his own coming of age within the fractures underlying Venezuela’s petro-developmental self-image. When the project was subsequently proposed for the Venezuelan pavilion at the 1995 Venice Biennale, cultural authorities rejected it, unwilling to confront such an unflinching reflection on the instability of the national narrative. As curator Jesús Fuenmayor noted at the time, the episode revealed a structural disconnect: an artistic sphere sustained by narratives of national progress that stood at odds with the country’s social realities.<sup>4</sup>

Like Vaisman’s intervention three decades ago, EL CONSULADO NYC mobilizes an imaginary of informal architecture as a critical lens through which to apprehend Venezuela’s shifting realities—realities that today bear little resemblance to those of the early 1990s. Indeed, while Vaisman sought to expose the contradictions of a modernist national project from within the machinery of state-sponsored cultural representation, *KIOSKO* speaks to a present in which that machinery has all but vanished. The revolutionary project that took over Venezuelan politics in 1998 has devolved into an authoritarian regime responsible for the displacement and disenfranchisement of a third of its population. Today, the question of cultural visibility is not one of contesting the narratives projected abroad, but of responding to an absence of representation altogether. *KIOSKO* does so from the vantage of the diaspora and within a global art system in which Venezuela has become conspicuously absent.

This absence stems from both Venezuela’s political and financial isolation and the profound dysfunction of its cultural infrastructure. Over the past two decades, the country’s museums and cultural institutions have sunk into a prolonged state of neglect: exhibitions occur sporadically, acquisitions have ceased, and the public and private circuits that once sustained artistic visibility have withered. The contrast with neighboring nations is stark: in countries like Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, or Colombia, the vitality of museums, galleries, biennials, and fairs contributes to the international visibility of their artists and the viability of their practices. In Venezuela’s case, the collapse of these ecosystems has severed most channels through which cultural production might circulate globally, leaving Venezuelan artists with only tenuous points of access to the international art system. With no institutional framework to lean on,

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<sup>4</sup> Jesús Fuenmayor, “Venezia/Venezuela: A Project for *ARTFORUM* by Meyer Vaisman,” *ARTFORUM* (Summer 1995), 82-85.



expanding communities of Venezuelan artists around the world are compelled to craft new routes of visibility, connection, and cultural presence.

In this landscape of improvised circuits and fragile networks, EL CONSULADO NYC proposes one possible route: a nomadic structure of presence following the movement of Venezuelan life—across borders, through contingencies, and in the hands of many. A mobile site of exchange, a gathering point set loose from place. An everywhere kiosk.