In a dark and immersive gallery, Michael Menchaca expands on the colonial fantasies of the Texas creation myth with their newest video work. Conceptually, **The 1836 Project (Extended Widescreen Edition)** digs deep into the histories of Texas to reframe conversations about race and identity. This exhibition has a timely resonance as the nation debates over the inclusion of critical race theory in schools and scholars work to dispel the myths surrounding historical figures and sites. Source materials include a research into technology, history, and popular culture, especially in relation to Texas. Stylistically, this work employs vivid colors, active layering, purposeful pacing, and use of familiar cultural images which convey the colonial and racist realities of Texas history.

Inspired by primary sources of indigenous knowledge such as ancient Mesoamerican codices, the artist's oeuvre is comprised of multi-media artworks which contain this contemporary visual vocabulary. During their residency at Artpace, Menchaca has developed their personal lexicon of icons to include figures and items culturally specific to Texas and has transformed symbols like the Alamo, the Stetson hat, and spurs into elements of a revisionary language. This animated video installation allows the viewer no pause from the realities of a flawed storytelling in the United States.

The delivery of this art is through a five-channel video projection synchronized to play the animations throughout the entire installation. Accompanying the visual art is a deep rhythmic soundtrack created by the artist to mesmerize the viewer and create a space of somber contemplation. Underlying the conversation around the revisionist history of colonization and white supremacist tropes in popular culture is the significance of modern technology and its impact on people of color. Menchaca argues that “government agencies and Big Tech companies have constructed a digital caste system to maintain existing racial inequities in what Dr. Ruha Benjamin characterizes as ‘The New Jim Code’ era.” Mastery of digital technology with art turns the tables on the industries who monopolize our culture.

The exhibition title is taken from the bill that Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed in early June called the “1836 Project” or House Bill 2497. The 1836 Project is meant to “promote patriotic education” but will likely be a continuation of whitewashing history and suppressing people of color. Historical reframing isn’t something that is a part of our past. It is an active attack happening right now in Texas and around the country. Artist Menchaca invites you to investigate your relationship with Texas and its complex history.

### WORKS LIST

1. **The 1836 Project (Extended Widescreen Edition)**
   - Five channel video installation featuring *Take A Look* by Polly Anna, 2021
   - Narrated by: AnaKaren Ortiz Varela, Kevin Menchaca, Galileo Gonzalez
Michael Menchaca is a Xicanx artist based in San Antonio, TX. They work in print media and new media formats to generate anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist visions of the world. They received their BFA from Texas State University in 2011, and their MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2015. They have been an Artist-in-Residence at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (ME), Vermont Studio Center (VT), The Serie Project (TX), The Segura Arts Studio (IN), The Studios at MASS MoCA (MA). Exhibitions include The Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (AR), El Museo Del Barrio (NY), The Davis Museum (MA), North Carolina Museum of Art (NC), The Chrysler Museum of Art (VA), The Smithsonian American Art Museum (DC), The McNay Museum (TX), and the IPCNY (NY). They were a 2015-2016 Visual Arts Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA and a recipient of the 2018 National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC) Fund for the Arts Grant.