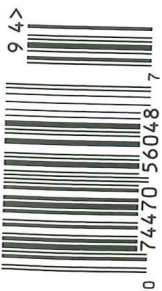
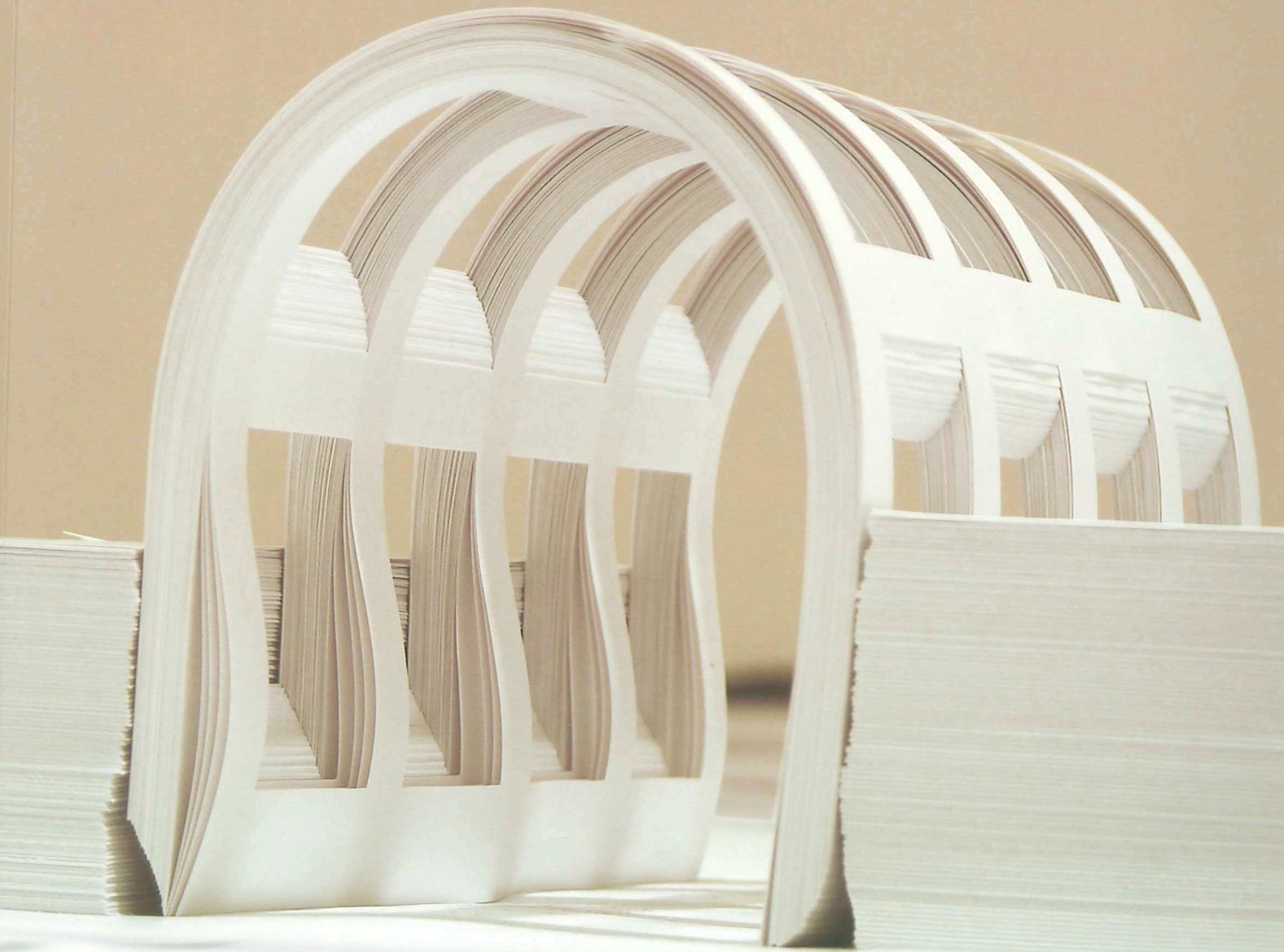


# ArtNexus

No. 75 Volume 8 Year 2009



**Marco Maggi**

**Marta Minujín • Nijinski • Sandra Cinto • Regina Galindo  
Fernando Uhía • Between Art and Design • Bartomeu Mari**

This body of work comes after a long and serious consideration of the place and function of art and of the possibilities represented by large-scale work and works placed in public spaces. Working initially with cardboard, the artist began to sew felt because of its sensibility, its link to industry but also to physical warmth and energy, to history and to modern art. The artist acknowledges both Josef Beuys and Robert Morris as important figures and as influential to her consideration of materials.

The initial encounter is with the elevator's walls, which are covered in pieces of mismatched "corrugated metal" fashioned from felt. The even curves of the felt "metallic" surface perfectly mimic its actual counterpart, composing one wall of the elevator with felt of two different colors, the artist underscores the haphazard nature of small constructions made from this industrial material that is often associated with temporary structures (and with third world locations). Outside the elevator, the long red "hot water" pipe traces the spaces between the tall, slender columns of the museum's balcony, appropriately overlooking the museum's renovations. Following this work is an installation outside the museum's theater wall.

Among the carefully juxtaposed works in the installation are a hand truck, a selection of ("fancy") auto rims coveted by aficionados of car culture, a smorgasbord of hardware, a ladder, a shovel, and a selection of car doors, all hand made from felt. Playing with scale, Ms. Unzueta also pays homage to the works of Claes Oldenbreg and Coosje van Bruggen by occasionally supersizing her hardware. A mammoth hinge hangs on the wall and, on the floor, we see a pile of colossal screws, nuts and bolts. This aspect of play in the work

is important because it underlines a note of humor within the artist's work.

The selection of car doors includes a significant element of realism represented by live feed. The artist has installed a speaker that is broadcasting the favored radio station of the workers at auto parts and services stores in Willet's Point. This purposeful link to the reality of those who spend their working lives in this area is important because it also points to the informal economy of the area. In the manner of Zora Neal Hurston, the artist acts as a kind of cultural anthropologist, a recorder of this unique landscape and its contemporary inhabitants.

Rocío Aranda Alvarado

## Dias & Riedweg

Americas Society

In an exhibition apparently dominated by video, the walls were painted red as a symptom of the anthropophagi that permeates the works and to undercut a coldness that to some people appear to be an inherent part of the technological media. Those who know the works by Mauricio Dias and Walter Riedweg also are aware that they address social themes associated with ethnography and that these artists articulate their works by combining installation, video, performance, photography, sculpture, film, and theater – the latter two of these demonstrating experimental characteristics. The exhibition consists of the following five works: *Suitcases for Marcel* (2006-2008); *Throw (Tire)* (2004); *David & Gustav* (2005); *Mama* (2000), and *Os Raimundos, os Severinos e os Franciscos* (1998). The museography was shaped to underscore the artists' focus. Indeed, a certain pressure can be perceived, a

somehow disjointed dynamic, as the spectator is alternately placed inside and outside to force him-her to face public and private situations, a characteristic of works by Dias and Riedweg.

This transdisciplinary exhibition provides a close look at social interaction. The intensity of the subjective is perceived as soon as one is exposed to the content of each of the works. All of these transcend the visual, but as the exhibit's title *...And It Becomes Something Else* suggests, it also becomes something different. The main exhibition room contains two of the five works shown in the exhibition. The first, *Suitcases for Marcel*, is a small video-object installation that consist of six open suitcases (each measuring 34 x 30 x 23 cm) placed on sculpture stands and each housing a portable projector and a 7-inch monitor pointed at the ceiling for the spectators' viewing pleasure. This is an overt homage to Duchamp and to his *Boite-en-Valise* (Box in a Suitcase) by Dias and Riedweg. Something similar unfolds in each suitcase: circulation-rotation-transportation processes that nevertheless vary in duration, location, and the individuals who appear in the screen. There are recognizable areas from Rio de Janeiro during different seasons of the year. The work self-contains its own history. It is also possible to understand the metaphor that has been proposed: just as works of art are circulated around the world, so is capital. The title and the declaration by the authors establish these Duchampian parameters. Beyond that which cannot be denied, there is the reading that is already tattooed on the contemporary word with respect to the act of transporting, picking up, and dropping off a suitcase or package: the connection with drugs and drug money.

In another installation, a large screen shows an action that unfolds on Park Avenue: a truck parked on the street, in front of the building where the exhibition takes place, contains another work entitled *Throw*. Lasting 39 minutes, it is the longest video in the exhibit. It was recorded in Helsinki and shows people being interviewed in a public place commonly used as a forum for individuals to express their opinions. There, Dias and Riedweg asked people to throw whatever they wanted at the camera, but within certain limitations. There is no doubt that videos or photographs can be invasive, despite all of the people who enjoy appearing in them. Our senses register this weighty combina-

Dias & Riedweg. Installation view of the exhibition *Dias & Riedweg...and it becomes something else*, 2009.



tion between the internal and the external, as well as the different unscripted gestures deriving from each interviewee.

Although the work by Dias, a Brazilian, and Riedweg, who is Swiss, could at first glance be confused with a documentary, it is actually different, in that the format is solely an excuse to transgress the culture of the superficial image. It is no coincidence that Dias is from the place where the Anthropophagic Manifest by Oswald de Andrade originated. The concepts were later rescued by Paulo Herkenhoff, general curator of the XXIV São Paulo Biennial in 1998, in which Dias and Riedweg participated. The transgressive vision contained in the works by these artists is manifested in different ways; they continually change their method. Dias and Riedweg see themselves as outsiders even as they target outsiders. *Mama* is a virulent installation. The video shows a group of U.S.-Mexico border patrol officers interacting with their police dogs and demonstrating their commitment to the well-being of their animals. This is set in stark contrast to the rough treatment of the illegal immigrants from the neighboring country of Mexico. It is a video that conveys highly charged psychological connotations, among these the problems associated with the exercise of power. The installation acquires character when, on entering the dark room to see the screening, spectators find themselves surrounded by elaborately framed portraits of the trained police dogs. The works *David & Gustav* and *Os Raimundos, os Severinos e os Franciscos* command our undivided attention, the latter especially.

... *And It Becomes Something Else* was organized and curated by Gabriela Rangel, director of visual arts at the Americas Society, with the curatorial assistance of Isabella Villanueva. Mariela Hardy was in charge of coordinating the exhibit. The works belong to the artists and to the Vermelho Gallery. To summarize, the exhibit embodies the concept of a peculiar mobility, understood as something physical – art in time – and as a social situation. These concepts are conveyed in different ways and in different sized screens throughout the exhibition, as an accent placed on the action, and as a high degree of contrast between humor and peril is established, under several contemporary ethnographic approaches. These combinations of elements reveal a Brazil with strong artistic and conceptual proposals. Although not to undermine the Swiss elements con-

tributing to the works, the Latin American elements surface more frequently, as these are well appreciated by Europeans. This review merits a call from the Anthropophagic Manifesto: Against the vegetative elites, and in communication with the soil.

Graciela Kartofel

### Damian Ortega

Barbara Gladstone Gallery

There are at least three major problems in viewing Damian Ortega's works, several (but not all) of which most artists would love to have. First, he has already created several works so visually explosive, such as the exploded Volkswagen ("Cosmic Thing") or the large circle of weapons hanging in the air ("Controller of the Universe"), that you tend to measure all his work against them, forgetting that far more of his work is very quiet and all of it theoretical. The second problem is common to socially committed artists: to achieve some balance between theory and practice or form, especially in an exhibit with a title like this one, "Capital-Less". The third follows from his success and reinforces the first: Ortega has already established his general ideas, practice and materials. When we walk in, we nod, as if to a neighbor, and ask "what's new" but not expecting too much.

This show is quiet, even poetic. There are five large built forms, or, as Ortega titles them, "buildings"—each about seven feet tall—made from dull red colored bricks cemented together with concrete and then pressure sanded into eroded and irregular forms that evoke, for this writer, deserted pueblos or mesas chiseled by wind and wa-

ter over time rather than a post-apocalyptic industrial accident. Their net feeling seems "nature-al". The success is their gentle formalist evocation of ruins and a sense of time now long ago, perhaps of civilizations lost. But what Ortega wants is what Walter Benjamin called an historical now-time ("jeitzeit") where history looks simultaneously back and forward. To help make the connection to current and future time, each brick is constructed and visibly marked by a series of horizontal, irregularly eroded registers, many created by metallic inserts that form small rectangular channels through each piece, meant to recall, according to the press release, "both the regular geometry of modernist urban planning" and "osseous tissue like bone." In short, Ortega wants it both ways: the organic within the industrial and social or vice-versa.

The reference is important but the problem is that the visual—and to a large extent the conceptual and social—"key" to his metaphoric thinking is in another room, easily missed and not mentioned in the press release. You have to ask, search for it, or leave the exhibition without knowing, all of which raises the cult of the knowledgeable or professional viewer/artist to ridiculous extreme at the expense of the art work; i.e. it effectively separates practice, theory and meaning. It's not until we see the video titled "Treme-treme" that we get it!

The three-minute looped video is a rising shot of Ortega's own large composite photograph (to avoid the skewed perspective of a normal upward camera pan) of a building that one blogger called "edificio degradado," located near São Paulo's Mercado Municipal downtown. Officially titled "Edifício São Vito", the fifty-year old, immense, multi-

Damián Ortega. *Capital Less*, 2009. Photo: David Regen.

