

# ArtNexus

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The Whitney Biennial

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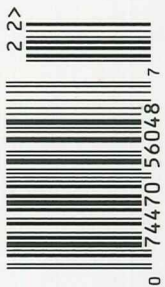
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ity of her pieces—regardless of the theme or actual dimensions. The exhibition entitled *Burning Earth* is consistent with the two referents of her production previously mentioned. On this occasion, Guillermo explores geometrical-organic abstraction as she sublimates her relationship with figuration.

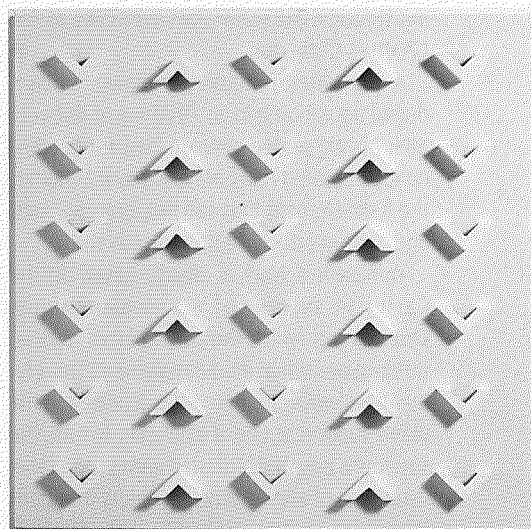
*Abducción* (Abduction) and *Corteza Esencia* (Bark Essence) are two of the sculptures presented in this exhibition. They are unarguably baroque, as are all works by this artist. *Abducción* is full of superimpositions crowned with dual conclusions; it is the prototype of several works in this exhibition—its characteristics include inverted positions, so the bulkier part rests on top of the thinner lower part of the piece. On the other hand, *Corteza Esencia* focuses on another observable characteristic: the coexistence between ceramic and wood in several of her works. The work by Rosario Guillermo involves baroque sculptures characterized by asymmetric tensions, contrasting materials, and the opposition of weight and volumes; all of these, important components of certain works like *Tectaria*. Pre-Colombian influences permeate some of her works. Rendered in green and brickred tones *Espiral Escalonada I y II* (Layered Spiral I and II) is one of the few sculptures in the exhibition that does not use white slip as do most of the other sculptures.

To a certain extent, these sculptures offer enchanted realizations that stemmed from the author's efforts to control mass, weight, and fire. Rosario Guillermo exacerbates the perception of ascending and gyroscopic movements. Some forms are more recurrent than others, while others are more playful. There are the overlapped pieces constructed from a relationship with wood, like *Tectónica* (Tectonic), *Dinamición*, and in the already mentioned *Corteza Esencia* (Bark Essence). *Tornastructura* is a piece that also combines ceramic and wood. Guillermo has resolved the interaction with the pairing of these two materials in a notable and diverse manner. This is her most important achievement. And these are the important works that cannot be missing in the lists when we specialists write about the most important works of a particular period and discipline. Some of the titles of Guillermo's work make reference to nature. They project movements that are something we could call the opposite densities of the material (ceramic) and the "immaterial (wind)." The naturally occurring phenomenon of the wind is harnessed by the

artist to create spiral forms as in *Huracanado* (Hurricane-Force) or *Spirada*. References to the chalice, the capital of a column, and to the handling of ascending piped matter are presented in the exhibition in works as noteworthy as *Terra Mather Estia I y II*. Sumptuous and deconstructive elements are intertwined in several pieces. Viewers find in *De Babel I, II, y III* (Of Babel I, II and II) a series of ascending forms that pay homage to the *Monument to the Third International* by Vladimir Tatlin.

The museography proposed a discontinuous and continuous gravitation toward the group that allowed viewers to appreciate some sculptures individually, collectively, or through comparisons. Because baroque does not care about straight lines or uniformity, the arrangement of the works set the proper concentration of pieces to be in groups while others were isolated in emptier spaces. Rosario Guillermo developed twelve predominantly elongated "wall sculptures" that are expectedly baroque, voluptuous, and linguo-phallic; among these, the pieces *Lenguawave* and *Lenguarizo*. She also evokes the wave, the volute, and the equilibrium between opposing forces, expressed in works like *Oscilante* (Oscillating), *Orbital* and *El Origen de las Especies IV* (The Origin of the Species IV). Just as she did with the large size sculptures, Guillermo treated most of the wall sculptures with off-white slips; only a few works received other applications of colors and even gold-leaf like *Oscilante* (Oscillating) y *Orbital*, while red was used in the piece *Lengualava*. These reliefs, which reach a maximum dimension of 84 × 41 × 18 cm (33 × 16 × 7 inches), were exhibited as a group in an exhibition room-chapel.

While the larger pieces could not be regarded as monumental in other circumstances, the fact that they are ceramic pieces gives them the right to be called that way. To create ceramic pieces in the size produced by Guillermo is quite remarkable for this type of sculpture. At 2.25 meters (7.38 feet) high; the work *Metamorfa* is one example of this. Because the process of ceramic sculpture requires that each part of the piece to be fired separately, most artists working with this medium experience limitations when it comes to the size of the works. The complexity involved in the movements that are needed to complete the work, not only has to do with size but also with the weight of a material that must be settled in one place, to let it dry, and then moved again to be fired. The only artists that can create larger pieces are those



Luis Tomasello. *Atmosphère chromoplastique No. 985*, 2011. Acrylic on wood. 26 1/4 x 26 1/4 x 2 1/8 in. (66,8 x 66,8 x 5,8 cm.)

who work outdoors and built their ovens around the piece. I remember that Jorge Luis Borges once said that he defined baroque as "that style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its own possibilities, and that borders on self-caricature," and that is precisely what permits it to exist.

Graciela Kartofel

## MIAMI / FL

### Luis Tomasello

#### Ascaso Gallery

Located in the Wynwood Art District in Miami, the Ascaso Gallery presents a superb retrospective exhibition entitled *Tomasello: Visible Structure and Reflected Color* that centers on the work of Argentinean Lumino-Kinetic master Luis Tomasello.

Curated by Art Historian and Emeritus Professor at the Sorbonne, Serge Lemoine, the exhibition includes fifty of the most important works by Tomasello, and offers an in-depth survey of the artistic production of this pioneer of kinetic art from 1975 to this day.

Luis Tomasello was born in La Plata, Argentina, in 1915. He visited Europe for the first time in 1951 and was captivated by two elements that eventually became central components of his entire artistic production: on the one hand, the structural notion that the universe of Mondrian revealed to him; and, on the other, the plenitude of light he observed in the immersive bath of colored light flood-

ing through the stain glass windows of the Chartres Cathedral.

A year later, Tomasello completely abandoned figuration and, in 1958—just one year after having settled down in Paris for good—he incorporated relief in his work. It becomes the ludic element that catches, domesticates, and redirects the light through the space.

Tomasello's work is always based on the Cartesian support of a two-dimensional structure on which the artist places a serial three-dimensional modular element. This element—always geometric—is attached to the plane-support at one of its angles. In turn, the support is evenly distributed with progressive variations of angles, sizes, or colors that generate that central rhythmic-tensional effect that characterizes the work by Tomasello.

The interaction between these elements, light, and the viewer's movement, generates this singular experience that characterizes his work and where the ludic element plays a central role.

In this sense, *Atmosphères Chromoplastiques* series are magnificent examples of such interaction. This exhibition includes several great pieces from this series, like *Atmosphère Chromoplastique No. 852* and *Atmosphère chromoplastique No. 868* (2006 and 2007 respectively).

*Atmosphères Chromoplastique No. 868* consists of 100 rhombohedrons evenly distributed on the plane. Each rhombohedron is attached to the plane at one of its angles. They reveal some inclination that confers them dynamism. Painted with orange, the posterior faces irradiate light on the plane to generate a lumino-chromatic experience.

In *Atmosphères Chromoplastique No. 852* Tomasello superimposes a grid and places orange and blue color planes on it that are projected over the other faces of the grid to create a very peculiar chromatic experience.

Tomasello's *Objets Plastiques* are different from his *Atmosphères Chromoplastiques* in that the color is applied on the frontal faces of the serial elements instead. Two examples of this are *Object Plastique No. 854* and *Object Plastique No. 935* (2006 and 2009, respectively). Both works are included in this current exhibition. In other instances, such as in the case of *Object Plastique No. 861* (2007) the work is entirely monochromatic. So the interaction occurs somewhere else: between the serial elements and the changes of natural light with the passing of time throughout the day; these are the central components that animate this work.

Another group of works belong to the *Lumière Noire* series. We are presented with matt surfaces that are mostly painted black—thus its name, although there are also works in white and indigo. Divested of any elements that can be projected over the plane, this group of works attempts to penetrate the plane through narrow slots that delve into the depths of each piece. Two works that are representative of this series are *Lumière Noire No. 737* and *Lumière Bleue No. 944* (1994 and 2010, respectively).

While it is true that Tomasello's work is born out of a creative process marked by mathematical rigor, the perception of the resulting artifact invites viewers to a casual ludic experience in which the public, free from any referential tyranny, surrenders to the pure enjoyment of the forms themselves. Therefore, the masterful utilization of light and color—that create dynamic elements through their interaction with the public—is essential.

The same interest he demonstrated in his inquiries about the space helped Tomasello to make the initial leap from two-dimensional works to relief, and would eventually lead him to explore the architectural space.

The first of these interventions occurred in 1971, with the creation of a "chromoplastic mural" for the San Pedro building in Guadalajara, Mexico. Monumental works by Tomasello can also be found in Argentina, France, Mexico, Morocco, and more recently, in the US, where last year the artist created another chromoplastic intervention at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, in Kansas, Missouri.

As an indicator of the important group of works included in this retrospective of Tomasello organized by the Ascaso Gallery, the exhibition includes a mockup for a marble pond and fountain, where the artist's interest in light and color contribute to the interaction with the reflections generated by the water and the sun rays.

To complement this desire to explore the space, the exhibition also showcases a selection of jewels that Tomasello created in a collaborative effort with Catalonian goldsmith and designer Chus Burés, known for using his talent in projects for various visual artists. The sophisticated, iconic jewels represent a great way to encapsulate Tomasello's artistic proposal, for they become, as Serge Lemoine well said, "the expression of the infinitely large embodied in the infinitely small."

Janet Batet

## Milagros de la Torre

### Americas Society

The Americas Society presented *Observed*, the first monographic exhibition in New York City of the Peruvian-born artist Milagros de la Torre (1965). A collaborative project with the Museo de Arte de Lima that is hosting a parallel exhibit from March 6 – July 1, 2012, the exquisite curatorial vision was in the hands of guest curator Dr. Edward J Sullivan, with the assistance of Christina de León and Theodora Doulamis. His vision brought exponential value to this mid-career retrospective – part of a strategy of exhibitions the institution opened to relevant artists of Latin American origin, under the guidance of Gabriela Rangel. The curator's selection helped to expose the tip of the iceberg of De la Torre's work, spurring the curiosity of those with inquisitive minds.

Surveillance, criminality, violence, memory and a socio-political construction of identity are the themes that inform De la Torre's photography. An awareness of "the other" is perhaps an underlying ongoing subject of her visual investigation, which has developed since the beginning of the 1990s, and is developed through series that are associated with specified photographic techniques. *Observed* did not follow a chronological narrative; the curator organized the works by series, highlighting a minimal representation of each and creating an essential notion of the artist's creative paths.

De la Torre's photographic work is characterized by a sharp-witted focus of her stories that concisely assembles her imagery, always based on in-depth archival and bibliographical research – a process that also informs her technical approach. *The Lost Steps* (1996) is a series that takes its title from the name given in 1912 to the hallway and main patio of the Palacio de Justicia in Lima. In this series, she uses the archives of the courthouse to focus on incriminating evidence of everyday violence cases, at a time in which Sendero Luminoso – the Maoist terrorist group – was violently beating Peruvian civilians. Nonetheless her photographs' subjects are humanized metaphors of violence and its players. The photos are named following a literary description of the photographed object, with the intention to establish a clear understanding and a lineal connection with the viewer.

"*Shirt of journalist murdered in the Uchuracay Massacre, Ayacucho*" is a straight picture