

# ArtNexus

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**Iole de Freitas**

The Venice Biennale • Iván Contreras-Brunet

Visual Arts Biennial of the Isthmus • Omar Rayo

Fotográfica Bogotá • Carlos Estévez



curving, wavy lines, while the other is made up solely of straight lines. Puerto Madero is an ideal setting for Siquier's works because it is the newest and most thriving part of the city. An area which has been built on the remains of something that was there before. Its modern and postmodern architecture is a perfect correlate to Siquier's deceptively modern oeuvre.

Fernando Castro R.

## MADRID / SPAIN

### Juan Pablo Echeverri

La Fresh Gallery (Madrid)  
CIS Art Lodgers (Barcelona)

Juan Pablo Echeverri is, without a doubt, a true transvestite. And he is a true transvestite inasmuch as his discourse activates the resorts—always apotheotic, always extended—of the culture of the spectacle and the carnival of multiple, patchwork identities. His work, intelligent, bold, and fun, *subjetivizes* each and every one of the states of "appearance." Everything is possible, nothing is definitive: the given lies, mocks its status as truth, like identity itself as it mutates, like the face that shifts and ensures for itself the cubism of a visuality that is inscribed on the thicket of literary texts abducted by the baroque impulse. Resulting from this torsion he introduces into the play of mirrors is a kind of imperialism and tyranny with respect to that "natural" context implied in the everyday image, the image the mirror shoots back to us in the morning. If, as Severo Sarduy noted, "in the baroque *the signifier* is always erect, always aroused"<sup>1</sup>, in Echeverri's transvestite snapshots it is *the referent* (his own visage) that is always on the prowl for desire, searching for its sublimating and seductive functions. In this way, the work signals the true-to-life—yet deceitful—passage from neurosis (when he has what he wants, he stops wanting it) to psychosis (which goes from homicide to suicide). In this way, the performance never ends. The subject transforms time and again into a masturbatory delirium and the desire for restitution/death. From such ambiguity of the signifier altered ad infinitum in its narrative potential, from this unsheathed passion for the conquering of the expanded cubism of appearances, the work is born as a cult of the *eternal nightmare* of correction and cosmetics.

Echeverri's two recent solo exhibitions in Spain, curated by Alex Brahmin in Madrid (*yosoytuereleseella*, at Fresh Gallery) and

Barcelona (*todo x el pelos*, at CIS Art Lodgers), trace the outline of a physical indestructibility—vulnerable in the end—that boasts of a critical delectation in simulacra. Without any debatable disparity in method, both exhibitions, each in its way, revealed the boldness of a speculative and potentially playful essay in which the subject of truth is the alibi of all kinds of deceit. Both traced the persuasive and anything but discreet writing of the trajectory in which *self-representation* becomes the result of the fiction of the contemporary drama of an identity requiring the wild cards of gender, passports, assumption of the notions of race, nationality, sex, social status. Echeverri's staging implies, then, a licentious and rabidly erotic slap in the face of the hegemonic socio-semiotic narrative that dominates the concurrence of those social and cultural stereotypes charged with constraining the subject's freedom. These photographs believe more in "being" and its exponential diversity than in the "ought to be" of the most rancid modern psychology. Thus their transvestite and transversal character, their taste for juxtaposition and palimpsest, for admixtures and for the seminal orgy that fecundates the image in an infinite logic of delirious multiplications where, in the effort to assert themselves, the dichotomous distances of all Cartesian binaries fail. At their core, in the hermeneutic locus of this essay, opposites commingle as in the baroque banquet of the Americas, which provokes socio-cultural experiences of varying degree and depth. The transvestite image appears then as voyeurism, as an object of desire, of seduction, as an aesthetic pirouette that slakes (or amplifies) the thirst for ambitions of an era when the death of the *ego* has only generated its extended mystification. And it is precisely here that the reassertion of the subject, multiplied in its more radical otherness, must be read as the gesture of a narcissistic and predatory age that needs the figures, as volatile as they are anodyne, of power and prestige.

In this way, Echeverri's work brings forth a particular vision of his own complexity as a tribute to the *ontology of the human*, in dialog with the establishment and consolidation of a *different discursive regime for the subject's identity*. Because of this I think, by virtue of the prodigality of his references and the diversity of his cultural interests, that the greatest lucidity of Echeverri's poetics resides in his own *praxis*, in the way in which it opposes the order of conventions and static classifications, of models and their tyranny. The fact that

we are talking about a Latin American artist, nomadic and on the move like the majority of them, forces us to think also of the dimension of mutability of the very concepts or categories that are discovered, atomized, in his works. This disguise, this game at once fun and dangerous of being everything and nothing at the same time, it is but the nominalization of a cultural paradigm like Latin America's, which has always been exposed to being enunciated and named by others. Clothes, masks, artifices are, then, weapons for attacking—from within the system—this discussion of the centrality of discourses that render is always other, always alternative, always the savage marked by seduction and derision. Let the disguises and cosmetics outwit the image proposed by that mirror. Juan Pablo knows, and knows well, that the ideology of language precedes and determines us. This is where his game, his dance of masks and deceit, comes from. With it and from it we discover an audacious hollowing of the signs of power entrenched in the discourse of domination. In the end, the mask becomes a face.

#### NOTE

(1) Severo Sarduy. "Farther than the image". Interview with Jacques Henric, published in the *Revolución y Cultura* magazine. (Havana). No. 2, 1998. p. 67.

Andrés Isaac Santana

## MÉXICO D.F. / MÉXICO

### Miguel Ángel Ríos

Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros

I see a stork arriving from Paris and before I clear the small clouds from my eyes, I use them to count sheep in a dream, sheep that jump a fence to follow the yellow road. Then, one stays on the Berlin border... or, I am not sure, was it perhaps the Great Wall of China? I meditate without crossing the barrier of fluffy walls of whiteness so intense that it beclouds my vision.

I rub my eyes to discover fences and barbed wired bars—hurdles where the need for freedom is present in the remnants of clothing and other fabrics. It is then when I think that the way many countries celebrate their nationalisms depends on the degree of homogeneity among their peoples and that the more homogeneous as a group the more they celebrate their identity equality... But no, I am actually looking at the exhibition *Across the Border* by Miguel Ángel Ríos.

Notwithstanding the support or medium used, Ríos's work encourages us to wonder whether or not—with the advent of cognitocracy—cosmopolitanism is nothing but a constellation of images created by transnational and advertising companies and publicized through mobile devices. Anarchic groups attempt to assert their own voices by sabotaging the commercial empire—the same one that promotes standardized and short-lived stereotyping, the most plausible through pseudo-autonomous thought (vg. TAZ), even if at the end of the day turn into imaginary communities (Benedict Anderson)—just as ungraspable as the fake nations (annotation?) that once were/are nomads (indigenous, gypsies, etc.) and that have escaped the plans to be mapped and outlined. Contradictorily, because of new technological devices they now unlawfully hold a certain gift of ubiquity: phantasmagoria, the same one used for the transparent cube.

Between San Pascualito and the Santa Muerte there are at least two types of believers between life and death. Anyhow, here we are interested in the work by an artist who explores bordering territories that are not necessarily geographic in terms of Latin American demarcations. We are before an artist that does not reveal any edges. His phantasmagoria of the transparent cube is seductive in that it places a sort of lens that maximizes our everyday imago of journalism. But it will not innovate anything beyond the title if one is incapable of looking down on further.

Either way, the subject (the border) is approached spontaneously, almost empirically, and—thankfully—with a theory not explored or surpassed and—thankfully again—never

assumed. If I paint my line of the margin, then, where is it that I cannot cross? It would appear that Ríos has gone through customs in many galleries. The question we should ask ourselves is whether or not his documents are in order according to aesthetic laws. And the answer is yes, his audacity heads him toward a ratio that is no longer golden, but one that could be defined with other chemical symbols like the one for uranium: utopia.

In other words, his artistic record is outstanding, his handmade technique not solely when it comes to video but also his ludic illustrations invite us to confront behind the glass a differed reality of borders that places us outside of an accommodating center. Because it is not enough to approach border issues as if they were merely transhistorical. Here we are able to dissect the scars of history in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Peru... the periphery seen through a golden ratio that is the cube. To my way of looking at it, we are witness to a ludic perception of the canon. In other words, we look down on the rural—exposed in the drawing as if behind the scenes—previously believed to be moldy; that video recorded in the proscenium of a realm otherwise removed from fractures that are not solely sociopolitical, but also cultural, and why not say it, above all economic.

While to some extent it is about a certain cinematographic narrative in which we are able to X-ray eugenics through the earlier drawings, rather than a forceful, closed, discourse; as I see it, it is about a proposal in the manner of an *opera aperta* that deserves commentaries from viewers; dipsomania of eyes that do not support a panoptic like the

one sold in mainstream news, both printed and electronic. No, here it is about plunging into the cube like a lens and rethinking the cameras, while we ask ourselves whether or not we are tourists of reality.

Therefore, when it comes to the ambiguous current situation, this truly controversial work proposes a palimpsest—a small one perhaps—but also presents us with an artist who, by putting the cards on the table, dispels not solely the crux of his production but also the moments in which he has worked with verve. Not necessarily successful in its entirety, the interesting thing now is to reflect on how to capture, to rob the soul of those already fractured through drawing. And most importantly, the question is how to perceive the reality of people immersed as subjects of a drawing that will eventually be filmed by someone behind a lens who will not represent them in an exhibition.

In other words: Are we before the musealization of the scars of history? In *Through the Border*, Miguel Ángel Ríos leaves marks in our aesthetic experience, as he also provokes a plausible headache in the sociopolitical appreciation of our daily lives.

Mayra Inzunza

## Carlos Amoraless

### Museo Tamayo

Carlos Amoraless (Mexico, 1970) archives, recuperates, and actuates. He appropriates what is his own with the intelligent momentum of someone who follows his intuitions and turns them into a graphic display of (im)probable (un)knowledge, not subject to verification, further pondering not needed. Amoraless has been putting together a collection of images that comprise his "liquid archive" for over a decade. Its very name *unmakes* the concept-as-function of the archive, understood as the site and meaning of safeguard, denomination, warehousing, and ordered inter-relation. The "liquidity" convoked by Amoraless in his gathering of images seeks, then, to re(s)olve the semantic capacity of its holdings beyond their formal boundaries and, certainly, the boundaries of their meaning.

Carlos Amoraless' recent solo exhibition at Museo Tamayo—curated by Magnolia de la Garza—includes works whose language and reverberations become consistent with the tone, *fear and trembling* (Kierkegaard) of some of the art held in the museum; the

Miguel Ángel Ríos. *The Phantom of Modernity*, 2012-2013. Video.

