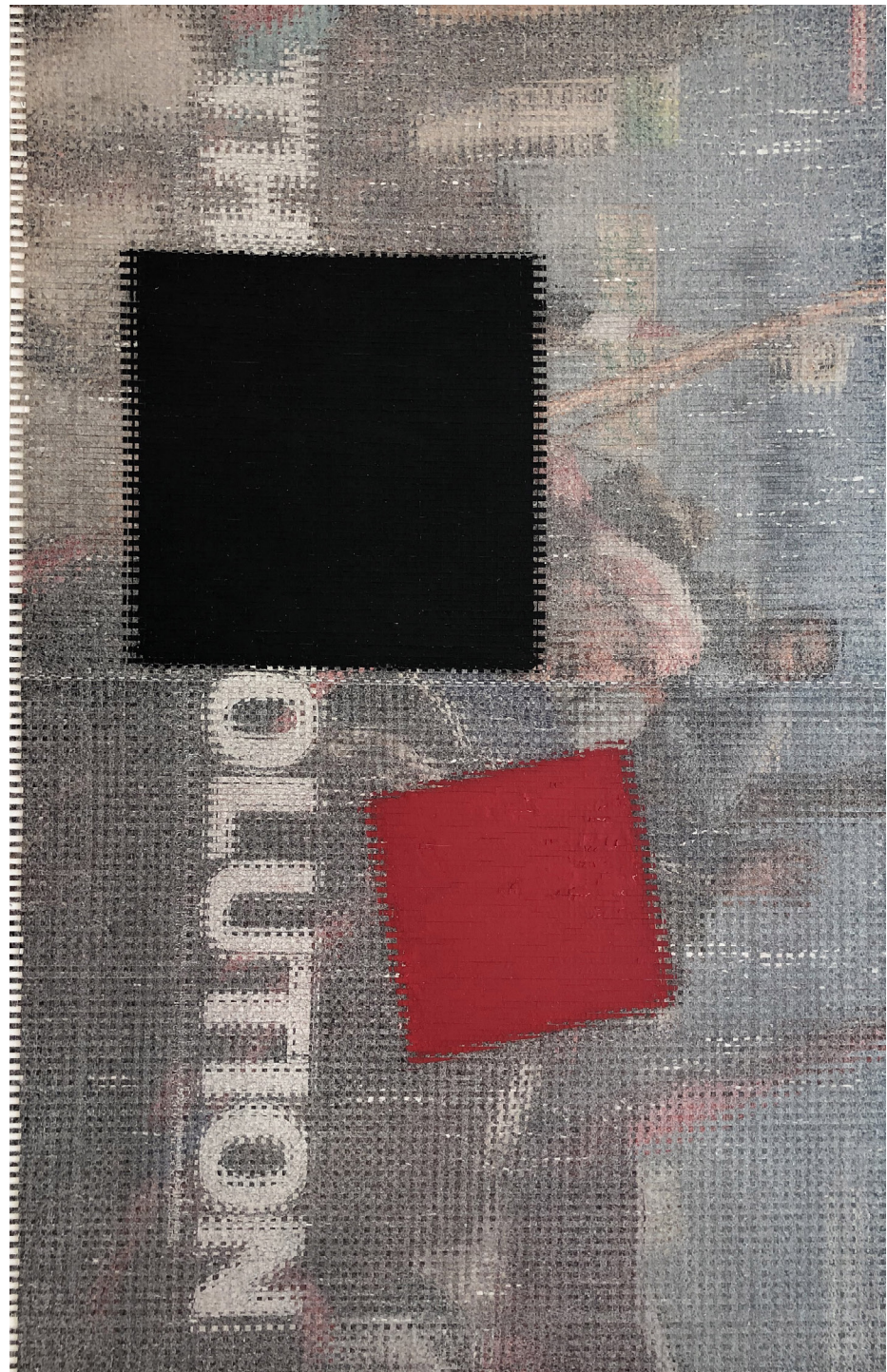


Sicardi |
Ayers
Bacino

Subtext

July 8 to
August 21, 2021

John Sparagana
*The Revolution [with Malevich:
"Black Square and Red Square," 1915]*, 2011
Magazine pages with oil stick, sliced and
mixed on paper
19 11/16 × 31 1/2 in.



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SUBTEXT

Artists:

León Ferrari
Cildo Meireles
Gabriel de la Mora
Oscar Muñoz
Marie Orensanz
Miguel Ángel Ríos
Miguel Ángel Rojas
John Sparagana
Ana Maria Tavares

The question that inspired this exhibition is how to investigate the relationship that exists between the image and the word, between the work of a visual artist and that of a writer. These two mediums have always been considered opposite disciplines, and tradition has reduced both to their use value. Words are merely an explanation or translation of art, and the image's sole objective is to illustrate discourse. To accept their incompatibility,

however, ignores their poetic power and their capacity, when they dialogue with each other, to inspire imagination and to create a new reality. This is precisely the idea behind *Subtext*, an exhibition that brings together a series of contemporary artists from Argentina to Mexico who have straddled this border in order to go beyond it.

It was on the border between words and images that these artists found a way to approach and understand the tumultuous social reality of Latin America. The poetic search for and the exploration of different media in Latin America responds to the question of how to create an image of a violent event which by its very nature is "unspeakable" and, thus, unrepresentable. This is a question not only of what but also of how to represent it, how to remember it, and how to leave its mark on history. In other words, the intensity of daily life in Latin America inspired many of these artists to go beyond traditional ways of making art, with topics



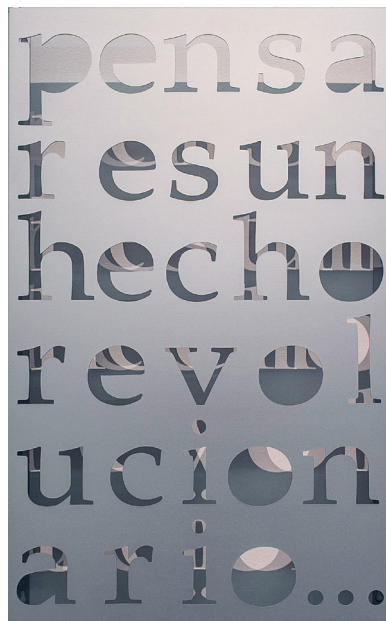
Cildo Meireles, *Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca Cola Project*, 1970-2018
3 glass bottles, 3 metal caps, liquid, and adhesive labels with text

that dealt with violence and political protest finding a place in experimentation. These artists, wanting to do more than just send a clear and direct message to the viewer, took on the difficult task of reading reality and its multiple meanings. One of the ways they found to respond to this problem was by combining word and text as a vehicle to contaminate the formal purity of conceptual art and to add a gesture of political criticism to their work.

It is precisely within this creative space that each one of these artists found ways to protest and to encounter real humanity and to make their protest heard and remembered. The main point of their work was to show how violence interrupts history by destroying meaning and unleashing a crisis of language. On the one hand, memory would no longer be verbalizable in a classical sense but must now also respond to a fracture in history and the visual arts. Hence the importance given by some artists, such as Oscar Muñoz, Marie Orensanz, Ana Maria Tavares, León Ferrari, and Gabriel de la Mora, to words and texts, to ar-

chives and documents. On the other hand, political protest should not be a simplistic form of propaganda but should have recourse to irony in order to insert itself into the system and into popular culture, common strategies within the work of Miguel Ángel Rojas, Cildo Meireles, and Miguel Ángel Ríos.

Ferrari, for example, spent most of his time in the 1970s and 80s writing illegible letters of protest, drawings containing what look like deformed letters arranged in disordered planes that completely break with the linearity of grammar and linguistics. Orensanz and Tavares carried out installations in public spaces that forced the viewer to physically confront sculptures with their body so that their interaction with the work participated in the process of the construction of meaning in order to activate and decipher the message. Muñoz plays with historical documents by intentionally burning them and making them disappear. Reinterpreting this erasure reminds us that history is also an act that can be deliberately manipulated.



Marie Orensanz
Tenemos el poder de elegir, 2010
Hydro-cut aluminum
20 × 31 3/4 × 3 in.

Pensar es un hecho revolucionario, 2010
Hydro-cut aluminum
20 × 31 3/4 × 3 in.

Miguel Ángel Rojas
Tables of the Law series: In Gold We Trust, 2018
Copper, gold plated on Corian
11 × 80 5/16 × 1 1/16 in.

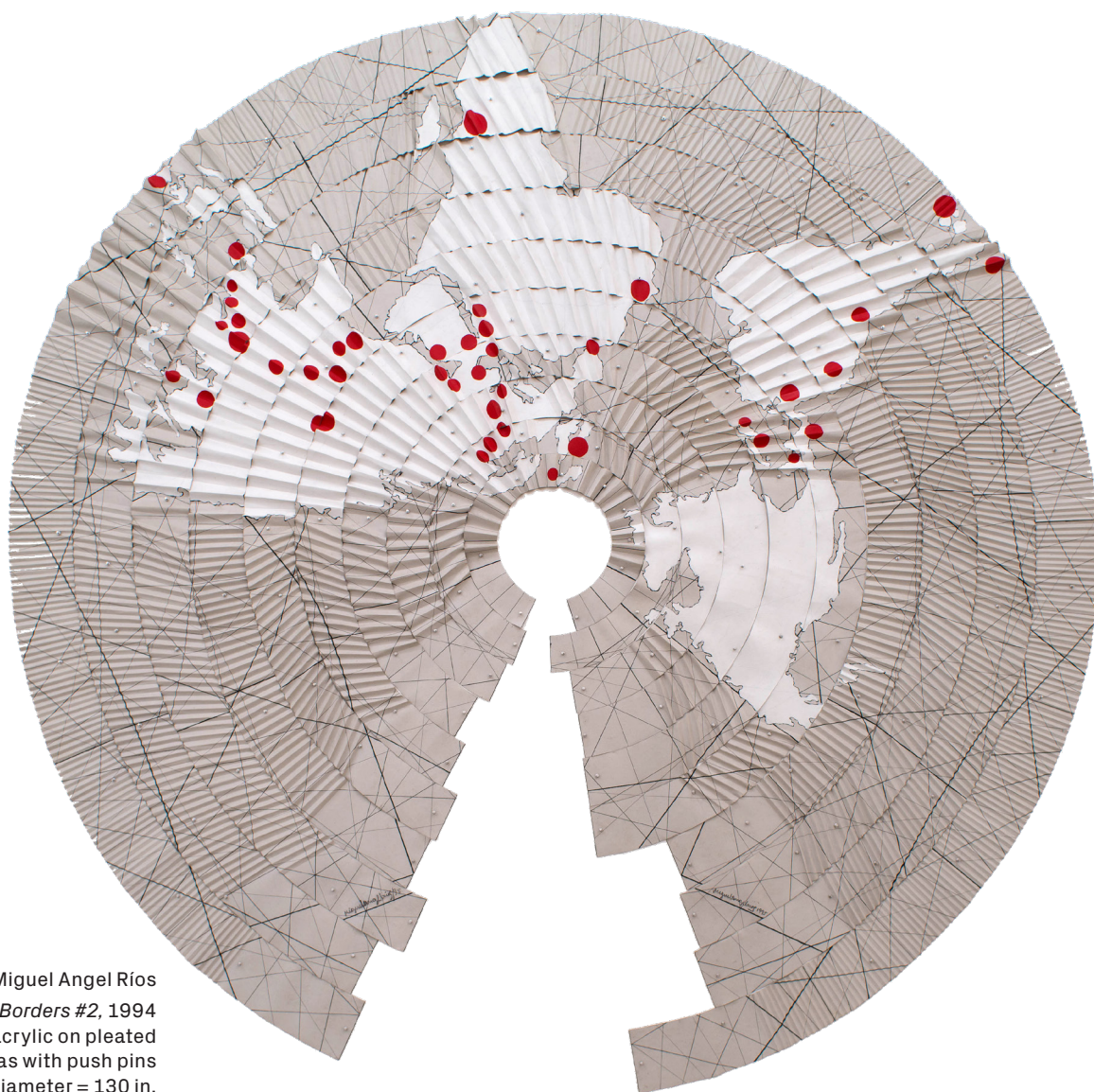
IN GOLD WE TRUST

Rojas and Meireles reveal the contradictions and paradoxes of the messages and images that circulate daily. For example, the Colombian artist takes the phrase *In God We Trust*, which appears on dollar bills, and substitutes with the text *In Gold We Trust*. In the 1970s, Meireles intervened a series of Coca-Cola bottles with subversive texts so that they could circulate in the same markets that he criticized. The artistic activity of both these artists is also political activity, as their written texts, lines of protest, and criticism only makes sense because they are camouflaged within the same system they intend to combat. De la Mora from Mexico and Ríos from Argentina disarticulate the words and images that exist within Western ideology until they are almost unrecognizable. By disorganizing texts and maps, both of these artists challenge the logics that order time and space, re-

bellling against concepts such as “right” or “left” and “north” or “south” in order to propose another way to read history, one in which the violent logic of power becomes visible.

As mentioned at the beginning of this text, each of these aesthetic projects is transformed into material that reorganizes itself to create a social critique and to question the way in which contemporary narratives are constructed. The poetic voices of these artists not only translate, reveal, and criticize a traumatic and violent reality, they also find a way to create their own language. Within their work, these artists reinterpreted reality and gave meaning to the problems of their time, creating their own language in order to illuminate our present times.

Ximena Gama
Independent Curator



Miguel Angel Ríos
Pleats and Borders #2, 1994
Drawing, acrylic on pleated
canvas with push pins
Diameter = 130 in.