

The MUCA Roma

Luis Orozco*



THE VENUE

The University Museum of Arts and Sciences in Mexico City's Roma Neighborhood, or MUCA Roma, opened its doors in April 1999 to disseminate and promote new forms of management and production of international contemporary art by young people. It is an experimental venue where contact with the work is more intimate because of the proximity inspired by the physical space; this means that visitors relate to each project by almost being a part of it. Also, all the work is recent. This is the case of the exhibits in the beginning of 2011 described below.

* Curator of the University Museum of Arts and Sciences in the Roma Neighborhood (MUCA Roma).



Photos this page by Patricia Pérez.

“Not everyone who belongs is here...”

Urban elements in dialogue with objects and images of intimacy and displacement between cities occupy a common ground in most of the projects in this exhibition, the result of each artist’s interpretation of a specific context or city. The works use traditional printing and reproducing techniques (offset, linoleum prints, and xerography) applied to unusual supports and presented as part of diverse discourses. However, there are coincidences in the themes and concerns the artists develop in each proposal. The projects demonstrate three levels of approaching the urban: a profound level, that involves elements of intimacy; another that externally functions as the support (dwelling, building, etc.); and lastly, everything that makes up the scenery of the city, from sewers and flying buttresses to monuments.

Raúl Calderón, from Morelia, Michoacán, and Arturo Angulo, from Mexico City, appropriate elements from Buenos Aires and Munich, respectively, to make prints in which the viewer can identify both the original motif and the technique used to represent it, which plays a leading role in constructing these images. Transfers, lithography, and digital processes are the procedures these artists use to translate a fragment of urban



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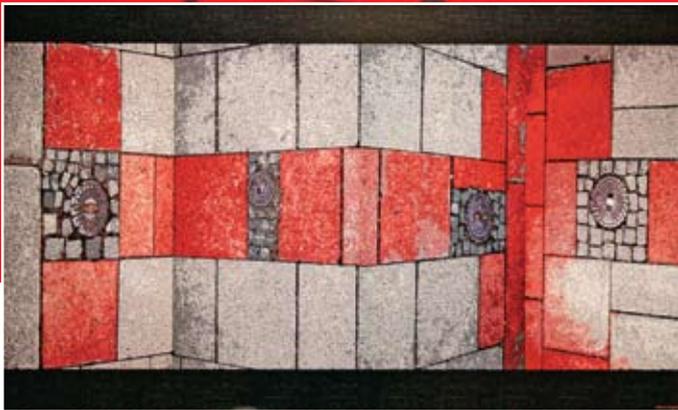
Osmeivy Ortega, from the “American Dream” series (linoleum prints on dishcloths).



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Raúl Calderón, from the “Urban... Buenos Aires” series (transfer and lithograph).

Urban elements dialogue with objects and images of intimacy and displacement between cities.



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Arturo Angulo, from the "Munich, Monaco of Baviera" series (digital print).

landscape into a graphic, which is simultaneously both a testimony of a journey and an experiment.

Osmeivy Ortega, from Havana, Cuba, and Iván Krassoievitch, from Mexico City, use items used in day-to-day life like dishcloth and LP record covers to build a nostalgic discourse expressed in the images printed on them. In his project *American Dream*, Ortega makes a critique from the standpoint of precariousness—therein lies the reason for the dishcloth as a support—of a culture in constant dialogue and controversy—Cuba’s—which aspires and dreams through images alien to its own reality. In contrast, Krassoievitch’s meticulously transforms LP record covers, representatives of an era and a reflection to a great extent of the lives of the people who used them: memory linked to technology, where the original images are barely recognizable because of the format, which is simultaneously both support and object.

Mr. Fly from Mexico City and Víctor Muñoz, from Medellín, Colombia, use popular printing presses to reproduce their ideas and develop their projects. Different in form, but at bottom similar, Mr. Fly portrays 10 icons of popular art and culture to make street stickers in a kind of collage and *décolage* that he mixes with ads for dances, concerts, and other kinds of publicity. Inside the gallery the phenomenon is re-

peated, using these images and playing with one of the show’s premises: establishing a dialogue between intimacy and the exterior. For his part, Muñoz turned the space into a laboratory where the image of an element is used as a module, just like a real brick, to build fictitious spaces, projections, and artist’s books. The play between representation and construction, two-dimensionality and volume, invites an immediate reflection about the object that sparks it: the brick as a unit that can be handled and used for building.



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Víctor Muñoz’s fictitious spaces.



Iván Krassoievitch’s intervention of LP record covers.



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Memory linked to technology, where the original images are barely recognizable because of the format.

“...and not everyone here really belongs.”

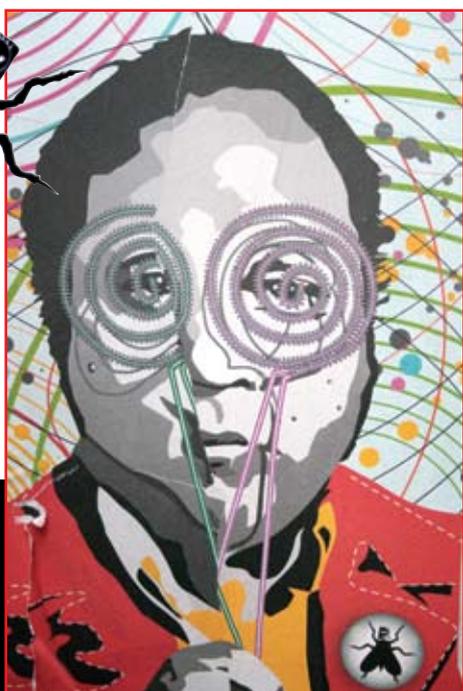
The concepts of pop art and popular (or folk) art, that would seem to be based on the same premise, are actually used to refer to different forms of expression. The former is the name given to the twentieth-century artistic movement that was famous for using icons from the world of entertainment and publicity as models. The latter, popular (or folk) art is made by craftsmen and women, almost always anonymously, generally linked to traditions and with materials determined by its place of origin.

However, both pop art and folk art use resources based on repeating a technique or elements easily identifiable by the collective memory of their culture, whether disseminated through the media or rooted in their customs. Another way of approaching the difference that is presumed to exist between these manifestations of art is in the origin of each expression itself.

Pop art is presumed to be part of a system of “high culture,” even when it uses images recognizable by a large number



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Mr. Fly (collage of street stickers).

Mr. Fly portrays 10 icons of popular art and culture to make street stickers in a kind of collage and décollage.

of its viewers who it shows utilitarian objects consumed daily turned into vibrant colored prints-cum-works of art. Meanwhile, folk art maintains a close relationship between the objects produced and their functionality. Pop art is constructed on the basis of recent history, and folk or popular art maintains strong links to the remote past. One ponders industry, and the other, the attitude.

“...and not everyone here really belongs” included three projects dealing with the differences and similarities between the pop world and the world of tradition. One point about what can be seen as “what is Mexican” is the constant that unifies these projects: in the three cases, the artists clearly have a legitimate concern about reflecting on this topic, more than coinciding in time with the historical moment that frames these reflections. Each artist deals with different periods of the country’s history with different aesthetics and supports.

Richard Moszka from Mexico City uses different media to reproduce an Olmec head in a realistic style and as caricature. Through the play of representation —of history and of the object— he invites us to think about the monolithic presence of *The Mother Culture*, represented in figures em-



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA



Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA

Richard Moszka's Olmec Head.

blematic of our past that can be found continually paraphrased in modern monuments. With the change in size, materials, and context, this installation alludes to things like the form and function of these heads, which, since their discovery have been moved around and exhibited as “museum pieces,” shown theatrically, just like animals in a zoo (including the reproduction of their habitat).

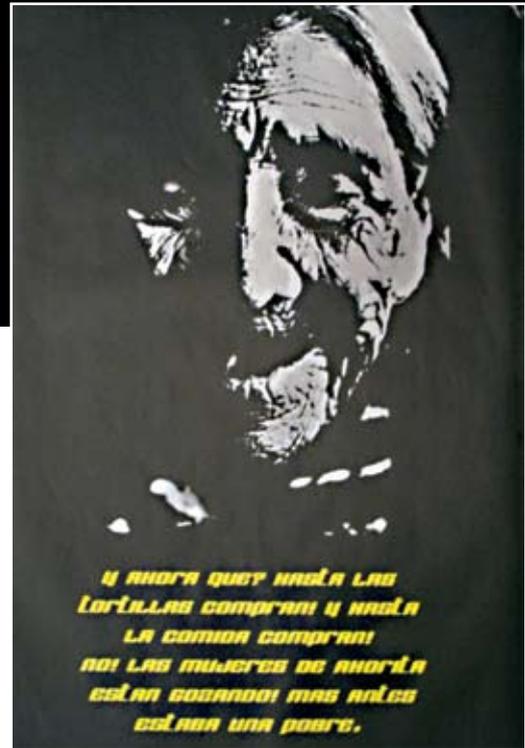
The Children of the Revolution is the work by Pablo Casacuevas and Katia Tirado, from Mexico City, photographer and action artist, respectively. Both become vehicles through which a series of Mexican rural characters relate historical and mythological events about what we know as the Mexican Revolution. In a kind of living archaeology, the artists transform testimonies into video and poster documents through which the project deals with various aspects of recent Mexican

The artists clearly have a legitimate concern about reflecting on “what is Mexican.”



Pablo Casacuevas and Katia Tirado, images from the *The Children of the Revolution* project.

Courtesy of MUCA-ROMA



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Pablo Casacuevas and Katia Tirado, *The Children of the Revolution* project.

history. The revolutionary past in the form of a short story and the arid present of the protagonists seem to construct a third truth: a balance between history and story.

Amateur is an experimental film project and sketch of cinematographer Ángela Reginato, from California. Films and film clips the artist found are projected, a trio of films made up of *Contemplating the City*, *To Live Dreaming*, and *Memory Maintained* are complemented with a series of sketches by

Huichol artists Esmeralda and Eliseo Carrillo, who reproduce frames of the films being shown. The projection is a collage of constructed and recovered images that all together propose a reading of Mexico in the 1970s. The sketches, done in yarn and beeswax, are simultaneously anecdote and commentary on an object of folk art turned into a sign representing an era.

This montage is part of a more complex project, *Memory Maintained*, in which Ángela constructs a visual essay using poems, films, and songs to tell the story of a Mexican middle-class family that draws a portrait of itself that is revealed in the film. **MM**



Ángela Reginato, *Amateur* film project.



MUCA ROMA

Tonalá 51, esquina Colima
 Colonia Roma, Mexico City
 C.P. 06700
 Phone: (54 55) 5511-0925

Open to the public:
 Tuesday to Sunday
 from 10:00 a.m. to 18:00 p.m.

Ongoing events and exhibits:
<http://www.cultura.unam.mx/index.html?tp=articulo&id=2462&ac=mostrar&Itemid=229&ct=296>