

# Post-Latin American Art At San Diego's Museum Of Contemporary Art



Rubén Ortiz Torres, *Bart Sánchez*, 50 x 40 x 5.5 cm, 1991 (oil on particle board).

San Diego's Museum of Contemporary Art is currently presenting the exhibition "UltraBaroque: Aspects of Post-Latin American Art," exploring the influence and impact of the baroque on a broad range of contemporary artistic expressions in the Americas. The exhibition, open from September 2000 to January 7, 2001, presents a critical reevaluation

of the baroque and its use as an important cultural metaphor in contemporary art.

"UltraBaroque" features sixteen of the most dynamic and innovative young artists working in the Americas today, whose work is well known in their own countries and abroad but, in some cases, not previously seen in the United States. The exhibit encompasses a tremendous diversity of endeavors including painting, sculpture, photography, video, installation and an array of

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Franco Mondini Ruiz, *High Yellow* (detail), 243.8 x 182.9 x 274.3 cm, 1999 (colored water table).

multimedia works. The artists' wealth of ideas and attitudes is equally rich, from highly personal concerns to the exploration of the most relevant social and political topics, from powerful engagements of regional histories and memories to humorous and irreverent critiques of contemporary global culture. The exhibition's array of themes, diversity of interests and hybrid media reflect not only contemporary international artistic language but also the unique interweaving of cultures, races and voices that characterize the Americas today.

The museum's curators chose the concept of "ultrabaroque" to counter the central problems they perceived with the reception of Latin American art in the United States. They found that a common, disqualifying stereotype about

Latin American art was that it was "baroque." Instead of just rejecting the clearly Eurocentric cliché behind the stereotype of twentieth-century Latin American art and culture, they mounted an exhibition that is intended as "an open proposal that examines the validity of the baroque as a means of examining our globalizing impulses, particularly in the area of visual culture." In her catalogue introduction, Elizabeth Armstrong, senior curator of the San Diego museum, writes, "The designation 'ultrabaroque' is itself a self-conscious (and intentionally playful) hybrid, which we apply to the art and spirit of this exhibition to suggest a very contemporary, postmodern, exuberant visual culture with inextricable ties to a historical period, style and narrative. It plays off the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier's idea of a 'New World Baroque,' in which the European baroque [in its heyday at the time of the colonization of the Americas] encountered indigenous forms that were also baroque. The mingling of European and American forms produced an intensified baroque, 'a baroque to the second power'<sup>1</sup> —an ultrabaroque."<sup>2</sup>

The roster of artists in "UltraBaroque" includes Miguel Calderón (Mexico), María Fernanda Cardoso (Colombia/Australia), Rochelle Costi (Brazil), Einar and Jamex de la Torre (Mexico/United States), Arturo Duclos (Chile), José Antonio Hernández-Diez (Venezuela/Spain), Yishai Jusidman (Mexico), Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle (United States), Lia



Rochelle Costi, *Rooms*, 183 x 230 cm, 1998.



Battista Agnese, *Mappamundi*, 1544 (wash on vellum).

Menna Barreto (Brazil), Franco Mondini Ruiz (United States), Rubén Ortiz Torres (Mexico/United States), Nuno Ramos (Brazil), Valeska Soares (Brazil/United States), Meyer Vaisman (Venezuela/United States/Spain), and Adriana Varejão (Brazil). The exhibition co-curators are Elizabeth Armstrong, MCA Senior Curator, and independent curator Victor Zamudio-Taylor.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum has published a 212-page fully illustrated, bilingual catalogue that elaborates on the show's theme and underlying ideas and offers a history of art and culture in Latin America. The publication, available through Distributed Art Publishers (DAP), has three major components: individual entries on each of the artists in the exhibition; cross-cultural essays addressing historical precedents and contemporary issues raised by the exhibition; and a "sourcebook" of key texts that constitute "UltraBaroque's" artistic, literary and intellectual heritage.

Authors for the publication include Paulo Herkenhoff, Director of the Fourteenth São Paulo Biennial and Adjunct Curator at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; Serge Gruzinski, research director at the Center for Latin American Studies, the University of Paris; Victor Zamudio-Taylor, independent art scholar, critic and co-curator of the exhibition; and Elizabeth Armstrong, MCA Senior Curator and co-curator of "UltraBaroque."



José Antonio Hernández-Diez, *Indy*, 1995 (table stands).

Following its debut in San Diego, "UltraBaroque" will travel to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; the Miami Art Museum; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. **MCA**

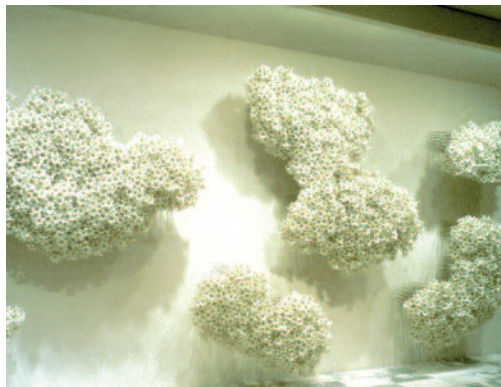
#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lois Parkinson Zamora, "Magical Ruins/Magic Realism: Alejo Carpentier, François de Nome, and the New World Baroque," Bainard Cowan and Jefferson Humphries, eds., *Poetics of the Americas: Race, Founding, and Textuality* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Armstrong, *UltraBaroque: Aspects of Post-Latin American Art* (San Diego, California: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000), p. 4.



Artist Lia Menna Barreto's garden, Porto Alegre, Brazil.



Maria Fernanda Cardoso, *Cemetery/Vertical Garden*, dimensions variable, 1992/1999 (artificial flowers and pencil on wall).