

EPHEMERAL / TRENDS IV, 2006

EPHEMERAL/TRENDS. LATIN AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY ART in its fourth edition at Merrill Lynch *arteaméricas* 2006 reconfirms its strength and its eerie splendor. More than eighteen works interpret the spirit of contemporary times, where representation has shifted to new mediums and meanings. A new visual vocabulary, removed from tradition and academicism, emerges. New icons, new subjectivities and personal myths continue to flow out incessantly. Contemporary Latin American Art is no longer a peripheral issue enclosed in a microcosm, restrained to tight borders or simple geographies. Contemporary Latin American art reveals itself concisely strong and vividly rooted in the global hemisphere. In spite of its polemic content and its theoretical ambiguity, globalization has extended its scope and covered the whole world of art. Latin American art is not an exception.

Contemporary artists construct and deconstruct from mass culture and from collective platforms. They render a mix of fictional tales and real show-like visualities in a delirious blending of wonders and cultural politics. Art nowadays outlines a complex imaginary world of parodic paradises and auratic halos. Contemporary Latin American art revolves around iconic spaces, but it also functions – through its disruptive strategies– as a “transformer” of social conscience.

Ephemeral / Trends IV 2006 juxtaposes multiple narratives and intercrosses ideological standpoints, crystallizing and mirroring critical world issues. It incorporates ephemeral elements in the works, and places them in singular or irrelevant architectural spaces. The art works hang from the ceiling of the Coconut Grove Convention Center or are spread out over the outdoor garden. This dislocates the traditional visuality and forces the public to perceive from new angles of vision. Each artist, in his/her own way, questions reality and interrogates the purpose of the world.

Nina Dotti, with a socio-ideological approach that focuses on the undervaluing of the menopausal woman, proposes the site-specific installation *Hot Flashes Bar* (only for women over 35), where the public may take “pills” (sweets) bearing the names of the different hormones. Nela Ochoa presents the performance and video *I could be you could be me*, inducing sociological reflection: dressed as a “homeless”, dirty and with a neglected appearance, she interacts with the surprised audience, handing to the attendees a paper that reads “I could be you could be me”. Ana Martínez’s digital photograph *The World is Flat* highlights the contemporary mental communication overload by means of an immense photograph featuring a humanoid monster whose fractured head has been transformed into a chess board. In an allusion to a poetics of nostalgia and destroyed collective memories, Lilia Fontana exhibits fragments of family photographs in *Family*. The collaborative duo Néstor Prieto and Juan Maristany, alerting on consumerism and its dangerous labyrinths, shows a video featuring parts of the publicity advertising a toy –the supposedly ingenious Swing-wing, produced in the 1960s by Transogram–, which required that children make dangerous movements with their necks. Due to the serious risk it implied for children, the Swing-wing disappeared completely from the market, and today it cannot be found in any kind of shop selling antique toys. Julián Navarro –*Hands*– shows a video featuring a quasi-still image, whose narrative develops without

the spectator actually perceiving it: in a great close-up, a hand almost imperceptibly shows the subtle psychological movement of the fingers. In *Supper is Ready...Are you OK?*, Andrés Michelena features a great crucifixion in plexiglass and neon acrylic, with the letters “R-U-K?” applied onto Christ’s body, thus restating the meaning of the relationship between man and the sacred. Leonor Mendoza questions in her digital photograph the critical feminine condition through a great close-up of a woman’s mouth swallowing a gigantic onion, in a grotesque-sensual mimicry. Also resorting to digital photography and in a harsh critique of the devouring big city, Claudia Calle exhibits a monumental photographic palimpsest of New York City, and in its center, a subtle female face as a pacifying goddess. Giovanni Basile presents an architectonic pendant piece featuring multiple eyes in transparent acrylic that resemble spermatozooids striving furiously after fecundation. Restating the difficult processes of the minorities’ search for freedom, Sydia Reyes shows an installation –*Liberty*– a mouth made with burned foam rubber. Lilia exhibits sculptures of transparent figurative spells, rendered by way of ethereal beings that have transcended materiality. Evelyn Valdirio, with his paintings that represent Federal Reserve Bank Notes, poses the predicament of money in the developed countries, devoured by the financial markets. **In the gardens we find the work of Sylvia Riquezes; multiple red spheres invading the adjacent palm trees to illustrate the “devourment” of natural by industrial products.** In her *Sisyfus Series*, Aisen Chacin shows thousands of white fibrils interlacing to form delirious spheroidal forms as a metaphor for the deconstructive cycles of life. Conveying a message of political idealism, Antuan proposes an installation featuring a gigantic flag that gathers together in a collage all the national flags of the planet; around it there are antique chairs meant to be used for the reflective contemplation of this symbol of a universal homeland. In a context of irony and parody, Mariu Beyró presents a set of endangered animal and plant species made of plastic materials. Denoting a strong aesthetic obsession, Pablo Contrisciani proposes great geometric, fractal, polychrome forms competing in splendor with the natural forms in the surrounding garden. Paula Krauze’s outdoor site-specific installation *Green House*, a cubicle containing multiple garlands composed by a variety of plastic flowers, and a single chair to sit the spectator, recovers a neo-romantic feeling of nature as a spiritual mystic place of contemplation and insight. Maria Luisa Tadei’s installation alludes to the enlightenment of life. Her work possesses an “élan”, an aura that projects lightness and beauty. Her materials –acrylic bubbles, feathers– function as metaphors for greatness.

Latin America is a territory of intercrossing and diversity. Contemporary Latin American art is a direct expression of the amazing peculiarity of this geography, with the additional component, in this case, of the processes of radical change derived from migration and cultural transmutation: a significant reality in this group of participating artists.

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