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THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

Getting Your Head Around (and Hands on) the Art of Abraham Cruzvillegas

Conceptual artist brings "Hi, how are you, Gonzo?" to the Contemporary Austin

BY BARBARA PURCELL, FRI., MAY 3, 2019

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Barbara Purcell
"Getting your head around (and Hands on) the Art of Abraham Cruzvillegas"
The Austin Chronicle - May 3rd 2019
https://www.austinchronicle.com/arts/2019-05-03/getting-your-head-around-and-hands-on-the-art-of-abraham-cruzvillegas/

In Abraham Cruzvillegas' "Hi, how are you, Gonzo?," now at the Contemporary Austin, visitors are encouraged to get up close and explore each piece – something more common at a science museum than an art exhibit. It is the rare treat to so openly interact with an artist's work, resulting in one small dilemma: You might step on the art (and sit on it, too).

An evolving sculpture of broken tiles and beer caps has taken shape on the floor near the entrance, for instance, and a rogue garlic bulb rests on the ground, right where one might stand when reading Cruzvillegas' ode to Austin, *Keep it weird*, scrawled on the gallery wall. When the artist himself is to blame for such a happy mess, trying to tidy it up suddenly illustrates the very point of his work.

"I am an animist," Cruzvillegas explains as we chat at a table garnished with books suspended from wire. "I'm not New Age, I'm not religious, but the chair you are sitting in is alive and has an opinion." I shift a little in my seat, made of salvaged two-by-fours and Styrofoam (which, incidentally, offers excellent lumbar support). Pointing to the literary mobile, I ask Cruzvillegas which writers, since he is a writer himself, have most impacted his work. He names many, including Langston Hughes and William Carlos Williams. Being from New Jersey, my ears prick up: "You're drawn to poets from the Northeast?"

"Borges, also – so the Deep South," he quips. It is not surprising that the Argentine writer comes up, as well as other South American artists, given the natural intersection of art and activism within the Latin American context.

Cruzvillegas grew up in the Ajusco neighborhood of Mexico City, which he describes as a "sprawling slum" and where *autoconstrucción* ("self creation") was a way of life. Through sheer resourcefulness and collaboration, his community built itself without any real funding or stability (it rests on volcanic rock) from discarded objects which became the bones of buildings and the soul of its architecture. Out of necessity came a highly creative and adaptive approach – which clearly informs his own application of these techniques.

Photo by Brian Fitzsimmons

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Much of this solo exhibition is, in fact, made up of recycled materials collected from the Contemporary and Aspen Art Museum (where the show travels next), repurposed in the spirit of autoconstrucción. Plastic crates, pieces of painted and unpainted wood, Styrofoam – detritus' usual suspects – all accounted for in these furniture-esque installations. One rather asymmetrical table, made from a milk crate and scraps of wood, reads ASPEN MUSEUM, its Sharpie lettering partially covered by a houseplant perched on its more stable end: proof that the two museums worked together in hauling junk across state lines.

What also links these cities in "Hi, how are you, Gonzo?" is the show's title itself, a reference to Austin's Daniel Johnston and Aspen's late, great Hunter S. Thompson: two oddball heroes who epitomize each town's unique flavor. Referencing such disaffected cult figures perhaps reflects how Cruzvillegas, an internationally renowned conceptual artist, feels in his own surroundings – both locally and globally.

He's clearly interested in what makes a particular place tick, and by inviting artists, performers, educators, and other community members to take part in this show, Cruzvillegas has facilitated, on a local level, an exchange of ideas and aesthetics without the usual confines that separate artists from their audience. Cruzvillegas shies away from the term democracy when describing this organic process, preferring a less political, more universal, word: horizontal.

"I'm not against democracy, but I think it's just a fantasy," he explains, later adding, "There is a horizon in which everything is the same, where we all deserve respect."

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In this way, Cruzvillegas is a participant in his own exhibit as much as he is the main player, instigating an ongoing experiment of improvisation: live performances, interactive workshops, a weeklong book swap, storytelling, and Roller Derby-ing – enough stuff to keep you occupied until its closing in mid-July. When I inquire about the importance of these scheduled events, or "activations," he is quick to clarify that the exhibit itself is teeming with life all the time. Plants, for instance, are displayed throughout the galleries, as well as strategically placed potatoes, ginger, and the aforementioned garlic.

Cruzvillegas is a participant in his own exhibit as much as he is the main player, instigating an ongoing experiment of improvisation: live performances, interactive workshops, a weeklong book swap, storytelling, and Roller Derby-ing.

He checks the time: An activation is about to begin. We head to the second floor just as a sound artist – a guest percussionist from Mexico City – slowly glides through space, guided by the incessant clang of his own triangle. A small crowd has gathered, including a woman who places her toddler on a plastic crate adorned by knobs of ginger root, momentarily transforming the sculpture into a tiny throne. The musician picks up the pace, seemingly in tense conversation with a potted plant inches from his face, an experimental and quirky move which amuses the audience, including Cruzvillegas.

Some weeks after the opening, I return to see what contents may have shifted, if the garlic bulbs or bottle caps have nomadically moved to another part of the gallery (they have), and if I'll happen upon some impromptu activation (yes, a local high school music performance). The ink-on-paper primates hanging in the galleries are more evident to me this time around, and the fledgling animist within wonders if they, too, are digging the exhibit.

Over at the floating library, the same batch of books is still stylishly suspended – one of the few installations that has stayed put – including Cruzvillegas' art catalog from his 2018 show "Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue." I recall our earlier conversation: "This is from a previous exhibition I did in Switzerland last year," he announced while plucking his paperback from the air. "It's kind of similar to this one, but absolutely different, of course."

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Galerie

The 5-Minute Journal: Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Opens His Diary for Galerie

Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas's practice is rooted in the concept of *autoconstrucción*—or "self-construction," an idea grounded in notions of transformation, dialogue, and play. During his current exhibition at The Contemporary Austin, "Hi, How Are You, Gonzo?," a show co-organized by Aspen Art Museum CEO and director Heidi Zuckerman, Cruzvillegas creates sculpture from found objects and then engages visitors as participants in the transformation of the work. Thus, he has furnished the museum staff at The Contemporary with diagrams instructing them on how to create his sculptures. The Contemporary sourced found materials from around the city to create a set of site-specific assemblage sculptures that participants will activate during the run of the show through music, performances, workshops, roller derby, and artmaking led by Austin-based community partners.

"The 5-Minute Journal: Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Opens his diary for Galerie"
Galerie - May 7 2019
https://www.galeriemagazine.com/the-5-minute-journal-artist-abraham-cruzvillegas-opens-his-diary-for-galerie/

Cruzvillegas has shown at museums and institutions around the world, including the Walker Art Center, MoMA, and Tate Modern, where, in 2015, he received the Tate Turbine Hall commission. His work has been featured in numerous biennials, including the Venice Biennale (2003), Documenta (2012), and the Gwangju Biennale (2012). He shows with Kurimanzutto.

As his show "Hi, How Are You, Gonzo?" is under way (the show will travel to the Aspen Art Museum in October 2019), Cruzvillegas shares his daily journal with *Galerie* at the behest of Aspen Art Museum's Zuckerman. In January, in celebration of the museum's 40th anniversary this year, Zuckerman began a project where she shared her journal with our readers for one week. Since then, she has asked one artist per month to share their journal with us. This month, it's Mexican artist Cruzvillegas.

For more background on Cruzvillegas, you can also read an excerpt of an interview he did with Zuckerman, which will be published in *Conversations with Artists Vol. II* (Aspen Art Press, fall 2019). Enjoy!

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Day 5: Abraham Cruzvillegas's 5-Minute Journal for Thursday, May 9, 2019

Still from video shot by Abraham Cruzvillegas.
Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

What made you feel loved today?

My dear colleagues from Monterrey, Mexico, sent me this video commemorating the sculpture we made in a workshop last year at Parque Fundidora, an urban sustainable park in Monterrey. It's a large pipe pole holding on its tip a whistle, exactly like the original one used at the foundry factory. The only difference with this one, is that it whistles randomly, subverting the efficiency of the original one. I asked them to paint it half pink, half green, celebrating again the beautiful artist Hélio Oiticica's samba school in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Pink and green are the national colors of the Mangueira neighborhood [a shantytown neighborhood] in Rio de Janeiro. I've been using this color combination for 15 years now all through my work. My colleagues on this project were Adrián Dávila, Alma Nelly Silva Vanegas, Amelia Carmen Loyola, Anllelica Pérez Salinas , Elías Juárez Kury, Fernanda Villarreal, Fernando Fuentes García, Guillermo Aguilar Huerta, José Ibarra Hernández, Luis Frías Leal, Mario Gildardo García, Nancy Guzmán Rodríguez, Yasodari Sánchez.

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The traditional pre-Columbian *maque* lacquerwork made by the Navarro–De Saint Phalle family.
Photo: Courtesy of the artist

What surprised you today?

Discussing with Janine Mileaf my project for this September at the Arts Club of Chicago, I had to find an image of the traditional pre-Columbian *maque* lacquerwork made by the fantastic family Navarro–De Saint Phalle (Martina, Erandine, Sophie, Irepani, and Thomas), from Capacuaro, Mexico, that I'll include again in my sculptures. I'll also incorporate found objects, local plants, and handmade works by Tarascan immigrants in Illinois, as I did for works in my recent show at Kurimanzutto gallery in Mexico City. I would also love to work again with the color theory of Swiss expressionist painter Johannes Itten to make funkier combinations for new empty Venn diagrams.

Day 4: Abraham Cruzvillegas's 5-Minute Journal for Wednesday, May 8, 2019

"The 5-Minute Journal: Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Opens his diary for Galerie"
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https://www.galeriemagazine.com/the-5-minute-journal-artist-abraham-cruzvillegas-opens-his-diary-for-galerie/

What made you feel loved today?

Having the punk band Bat Lip performing in my exhibition space at The Contemporary Austin museum during the roller derby was a nice reminder today about all activations happening there until July.

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What was the most surprising thing about your day?

Being drawn by Amelie Bendrik became a highlight today!!!

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What would you have done differently?

Trying to make a new work out of children's leftovers . . .

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Day 3: Abraham Cruzvillegas's 5-Minute Journal for Tuesday, May 7, 2019

"The 5-Minute Journal: Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Opens his diary for Galerie"
Galerie - May 7 2019
https://www.galeriemagazine.com/the-5-minute-journal-artist-abraham-cruzvillegas-opens-his-diary-for-galerie/

What made you feel loved today?

Today was surprisingly nice. After years of friendship, knowing that Alexandre Constanzo—the French philosopher who specializes in art and cinema—is as deeply in love with Pier Paolo Pasolini's work as I am. Alex visited the atelier group at the Beaux-Arts of Paris, and we discussed again Antonin Artaud, Wang Bing, Thomas Hirshhorn, Jean-Luc Moulene, Pedro Costa, and Franz Kafka.

What was the most surprising thing about your day?

It was fantastic having Niklas Svennung in this conversation: I met Alex through him, some 13 years ago, because they attended the same school as children. Now we work together.

What would you have done differently?

Taking a look at the photos I took almost a year ago in Aspen—as my exhibition at The Contemporary Austin museum will travel to the Aspen Art Museum in October this year, I regretted not having a better one from the gondolas there. I'm still thinking of doing something in one of them—hopefully!

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Day 2: Abraham Cruzvillegas's 5-Minute Journal for Monday, May 6, 2019

Courtesy of the artist.

What made you feel loved today?

When I arrived today to the atelier in the school for today's meeting with the Beaux-Arts' students, I saw this handrail that I didn't notice before. I found it really beautiful and took a picture of it. Then I remembered that I've been taking pictures of similar objects in different places and situations for many years. I thought that it would be nice to make an exhibition of re-creations of all of them. The handrail makes me think of those at my parents' house, that my father's friend Gabriel Jiménez installed everywhere so as not to fall on all the ramps.

"The 5-Minute Journal: Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Opens his diary for Galerie"
Galerie - May 7 2019
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What was the most surprising thing about your day?

It was nice reading this comment of one of the students in the studio: "The best discovery from the atelier is the twist of my consciousness about collective action, about its difficulties, and that it's absolutely necessary, anyways."

What would you have done differently?

I don't know exactly what's not wrong in this scene that I found when arriving to the space in the school where we hold Monday meetings.

DAY 1: Abraham Cruzvillegas's 5-Minute Journal for Sunday, May 5, 2019

"The 5-Minute Journal: Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Opens his diary for Galerie"
Galerie - May 7 2019
https://www.galeriemagazine.com/the-5-minute-journal-artist-abraham-cruzvillegas-opens-his-diary-for-galerie/

What made you feel loved today?

My son, DJ's fourth birthday rock-and-roll party, on May 5th!!! Along with Ana, my sister, DJ keeps collecting all kind of little debris from the street and says, "For your sculpture, Papá. . . . " In the picture, he is mimicking Lux Interior, from The Cramps, after the playlist we arranged together as a soundtrack for his party, but also for collecting things as we walk around. The playlist included that band but also Blondie, Three Souls in My Mind, The Slits, X-Ray Spex, the Bodysnatchers, Rigo Tovar y Su Costa Azul, The Ramones, The Clash, and some Beatles as well. . . . The song we were listening to is "Garbageman."

Abraham Cruzvillegas's son, DJ.
Courtesy of Abraham Cruzvillegas

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Installation view of Abraham Cruzvillegas's exhibition "Hi, How Are You, Gonzo?," at The Contemporary Austin
Photo: Courtesy of Abraham Cruzvillegas

What was the most surprising thing about your day?

I'm fascinated with the activation of my exhibition at The Contemporary Austin museum, which is traveling to the Aspen Art Museum in October. There have been so many beautiful local people using the sculptures and the space for very different purposes, notably in recent days, the Texas Roller Derby, that went just amazingly. . . . During the party today, I was wearing the T-shirt from one the teams there—everybody loved it.

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What would you have done differently?

I'm anxious to go back to teaching tomorrow morning, at the École Nationale de Beaux-Arts of Paris, after two weeks of a fantastic vacation in Sicily.

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REVIEWS May 1, 2018

Abraham Cruzvillegas

ZURICH

at Kunsthaus Zürich

View of Abraham Cruzvillegas's exhibition "Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue," 2018, at the Kunsthaus Zürich.

Abraham Cruzvillegas's sculptures and installations often hew to a principle he calls "autoconstrucción" (or "self-construction"), which—inspired by the manner of architecture he encountered while growing up in the Ajusco neighborhood of Mexico City—centers on making work collaboratively in an ad hoc fashion with materials at hand. The approach, which he began pursuing around a decade and a half ago, has spawned various offshoots, such as *autodestrucción* and *autoconfusión*. His Kunsthaus Zürich exhibition seemed to signal a new development. Titled "Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue," the show was a constantly changing installation: not only were sculptures regularly produced on-site and incorporated into the overall mix, but workshops and other events carried out within the installation served to alter it with their frequent activity and influxes of people.

Arife Rosenmeyer
« *Reviews - Abraham Cruzvillegas zt Kunsthaus Zurich* »
Art in America, May 1, 2018.
https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/abraham-cruzvillegas/

Usually, the windows in this gallery at the Kunsthaus are covered, but for Cruzvillegas's show they were not, allowing sunlight to stream into the space—openness was the order of the day. In a "studio" area set up near the windows, assistants made works using a motley assortment of materials, including cardboard, plastic and wooden crates, and discarded electronic equipment. They painted certain components pink and green (a palette Cruzvillegas has used in previous work, in reference to the colors of a mambo school that Hélio Oiticica was involved with, and took great inspiration from, in the Mangueira favela in Rio de Janeiro). The assemblages were sometimes given absurd flourishes, as in a chair on roller skates that was incorporated into *Das soziale Gewebe A* (Social Tissue A, 2018), which also featured shelving units and a potted tree. Organic elements cropped up repeatedly: in addition to several houseplants, there were a couple avocadoes, a spring onion, a sweet potato, and so on. A stage, a reading area, and a sort of skate park were constructed. Events held in these areas included concerts by local bands, a series of lectures given by refugees on subjects ranging from fashion in Senegal to aircraft maintenance, choreography workshops, and skateboard lessons. Visitors were allowed to sit, climb atop, and otherwise interact with many of the pieces, as well as to make works themselves.

As sculptures were completed, they were transferred into the exhibition proper and given labels, and, thus, endowed with the status of artworks. While most work in the show was of this newly constructed variety, there were some extant sculptures by Cruzvillegas on display, including a few pieces from 2017 featuring circular fishing nets. For each of these, a net is pulled up from the ground into a cone shape by a cord. Dangling at one end of the cord (just above the net) is a pigeon claw, and at the other a dried sausage, some smoked scamorza, or a beer bottle. Such works attested to the poetry, humor, and oddly affecting quality Cruzvillegas's sculpture can have, though they were inevitably overpowered by all the hubbub around them.

Cruzvillegas's approach in the show was both traditional (in that his community-oriented project was taking place within the confines of an established institution) and experimental (with the artist testing how he might direct the resources at his disposal to generate an expanded form of art-making). While one wished to see more of Cruzvillegas's own sculptures, the art in this show lay, as the title suggested, in the social fabric that he wove. The perishable items scattered around the exhibition underscored that something intentionally short-lived and provisional was being orchestrated.

Arife Rosenmeyer
« *Reviews - Abraham Cruzvillegas zt Kunsthaus Zurich* »
Art in America, May 1, 2018.
https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/abraham-cruzvillegas/

An Aerial Dance with an Abraham Cruzvillegas Sculpture

At the Kitchen, choreographer Bárbara Foulkes will perform an improvised aerial dance with Cruzvillegas's suspended sculpture, with musical accompaniment by Andrés García Nestitla.

Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes, and Andrés García Nestitla, view of the performance, "Insistir Insistir Insistir" at La Pista, Mexico City (2017, courtesy of the artists, photo by Carlos Altamirano Allende)

The sculptural assemblages of Abraham Cruzvillegas often appear precarious, fragile, and haphazard, creating a heightened awareness of their fragility — and a fear of tripping over a taught rope or delicately balanced chair. Cruzvillegas, however, does not share viewers' precious attitudes toward his art objects. In his performances, most of these Rube Goldberg machine-like installations, which string together found materials, become percussive instruments or dynamic objects that spin into motion with the help of choreography and musical accompaniment. One such sculptural performance is coming to Chelsea this week.

At the Kitchen, *Autorreconstrucción: To Insist, to Insist, to Insist...* will feature a sculpture Cruzvillegas is assembling from materials gathered on the streets of West Chelsea — an area in the midst of a major construction boom of high-end office and condo buildings. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, choreographer Bárbara Foulkes will perform an improvised, aerial dance, a duet of sorts with Cruzvillegas's suspended sculpture, with musical accompaniment by Andrés García Nestitla.

Benjamin Sutton
« *An Aerial Dance with an Abraham Cruzvillegas sculpture* »
Hyperallergic, April 3, 2018.
https://hyperallergic.com/435950/abraham-cruzvillegas-performance-the-kitchen/

Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes, and Andrés García Nestitla, view of the performance, "Insistir Insistir Insistir" (June 22, 2017) at La Pista, Mexico City (courtesy of the artists; photo by Carlos Altamirano Allende)

"*Autoconstrucción* is about scarcity, solutions and ingenuity ... how you can conceive a philosophy of life that you can make something out of nothing," the artist has said of this project, which debuted in his hometown of Mexico City last year. "That is also a metaphor for identity ... we are constantly transforming ourselves." For those seeking further insight into the processes and ideas informing the liftoff of this unwieldy sculpture, Cruzvillegas will discuss the work with co-curator Tim Griffin at 5pm on Saturday.

When: Thursday, April 5 and Friday, April 6 at 6:30pm and 8:30pm; Saturday, April 7 at 2:30pm, 4:30pm, 6:30pm (artist talk Saturday at 5pm)
Where: The Kitchen (512 West 19th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan)

Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes, and Andrés García Nestitla, view of the performance, "Insistir Insistir Insistir" (June 22, 2017) at La Pista, Mexico City (courtesy of the artists; photo by Carlos Altamirano Allende)

Benjamin Sutton
« *An Aerial Dance with an Abraham Cruzvillegas sculpture* »
Hyperallergic, April 3, 2018.
https://hyperallergic.com/435950/abraham-cruzvillegas-performance-the-kitchen/

« Abraham Cruzvillegas' 'Autorreconstrucción: To Insist, to Insist, to Insist…' at The Kitchen », *Blouin art info*, April 4, 2018.
http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/2965068/abraham-cruzvillegas-autorreconstruccion-to-insist-to-insist

BLOUINARTINFO

Abraham Cruzvillegas' 'Autorreconstrucción: To Insist, to Insist, to Insist…' at The Kitchen

View of the performance "*Insistir Insistir Insistir*," June 22, 2018, La Pista, Mexico City. Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes y Andrés García Nestitla

COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS. PHOTO: CARLOS ALTAMIRANO ALLENDE

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COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS. PHOTO: CARLOS ALTAMIRANO ALLENDE

View of the performance "*Insistir Insistir Insistir*," June 22, 2018, La Pista, Mexico City. Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes y Andrés García Nestitla

COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS. PHOTO: CARLOS ALTAMIRANO ALLENDE

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View of the performance "*Insistir Insistir Insistir*," June 22, 2018, La Pista, Mexico City.
Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes y Andrés García Nestitla

COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS. PHOTO: CARLOS ALTAMIRANO ALLENDE

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View of the performance "*Insistir Insistir Insistir*," June 22, 2018, La Pista, Mexico City.
Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes y Andrés García Nestitla
COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS. PHOTO: CARLOS ALTAMIRANO ALLENDE

Abraham Cruzvillegas, Bárbara Foulkes y Andrés García Nestitla; View of the performance Insistir Insistir Insistir, June 22, 2018, La Pista, Mexico City.
(Courtesy of the artists Photo: © Carlos Altamirano Allende)

« Abraham Cruzvillegas' 'Autorreconstrucción: To Insist, to Insist, to Insist…' at The Kitchen », *Blouin art info*, April 4, 2018.
http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/2965068/abraham-cruzvillegas-autorreconstruccion-to-insist-to-insist

The Kitchen hosts Abraham Cruzvillegas' multidisciplinary art performance titled, "Autorreconstrucción: To Insist, to Insist, to Insist..." that will be held from April 5 through April 7. The show marks Abraham Cruzvillegas' first institutional work in New York since 2007. For the show, the artist will combine all the elements of sculpture, music and dance, perfectly in tune, in a harmonic activation of assemblage that has been founded on the very basis of found objects. The performance will build on the artist's working methodology of autoconstrucción which means "self-construction." This self-construction is activated through the effects of improvisation, transformation as well as decay upon his works and materials. The performance was first staged at Pisa last year at an abandoned dance space in Colonia Roma of Mexico City. The iteration of the title, "Autorreconstrucción: To Insist, to Insist, to Insist" explored the artist as he produces a sculpture making use of everyday found objects presented by The Kitchen in Chelsea. The neighborhood is currently under the grabs of a large-scale construction and development. This work will begin with a slot of 20-minute performances by the choreographer Barbara Foulkes. She will present an improvised, aerial dance that mirrors the suspension of these objects on display. There will be a musical intervention as well presented by Andrés García Nestitla. The performance will be organized by Tim Griffin and Rachel Valinsky and will take place from April 5 through April 7 at The Kitchen, 512 W 19th St, New York.

Cruzvillegas said about the concept, "Autoconstrucción is about scarcity, solutions and ingenuity... how you can conceive a philosophy of life that you can make something out of nothing. That is also a metaphor for identity... we are constantly transforming ourselves."

Abraham Cruzvillegas was a student of pedagogy at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and during 1986-1990. Around this time, he simultaneously attended Gabriel Orozco's "Taller de lo viernes." He was awarded a number of prestigious accolades which includes the 5th Yanghyun Prize (2012), and the Prix Altadis d'arts Plastiques (2006). Abraham Cruzvillegas' significant projects and presentations include:

"Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue." Kunsthaus Zürich, Zurich, Switzerland (2018);

"The Water Trilogy 3: Autoconclusion: Ideologically Inconsistent Identity: Jetties, Gutters & Urinals, as part of Sensory Spaces 12." Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2017);

"Autoconstriction approximante vibrante retroflexe." Carré d'art musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, Nîmes, France (2016);

"Empty Lot," Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2015);

"MALI in situ: Abraham Cruzvillegas," Museo de arte de Lima, Lima, Peru (2015);

"Autoconstrucción," Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico, and Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2014);

"Abraham Cruzvillegas: The Autoconstrucción Suites," Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2014)

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, United States (2013);

"Self Builder's Groove," Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Diens, Berlin, Germany (2011);

"Autoconstrucción, the Film," The New Museum, New York, United States (2011);

"The Magnificent Seven: Abraham Cruzvillegas," CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, United States (2009);

"Autoconstrucción: The Soundtrack," Center for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, United Kingdom (2008), among others.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Negro, Virginia. « ¿Cuánto yo cabe en un museo? Entrevista con Abraham Cruzvillegas », *nexos*, May 11, 2018.
https://cultura.nexos.com.mx/?p=15843

nexos

¿Cuánto *yo* cabe en un museo? Entrevista con Abraham Cruzvillegas

11 MAYO, 2018

Virginia Negro

El artista exhibirá *Autorreconstrucción: Detritus* del 12 de mayo al 8 de agosto en el Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte. La obra de Abraham Cruzvillegas (Ciudad de México, 1968) se abre a la participación transformando los museos en espacios públicos. Su trabajo resulta un proceso de aprendizaje. Versa sobre los materiales, el paisaje, la gente y sobre sí mismo.

Hace un frío húmedo que atraviesa los abrigos y entra en los huesos, típico de las ciudades rodeadas por colinas. Ciudades de valle como Florencia. Un camino empedrado lleva hasta el *Portico degli Innocenti*. Según mi profesor de geografía, fue la primera obra de arquitectura erigida según el principio prospéctico. Una ciudad que "está construida con las piedras vivas", como decía el filósofo romano Agustín, quien en *La ciudad de Dios* destaca la correspondencia entre lo animado y lo inanimado.

Para el mundo romano la *urbe*, el acervo de las casas y calles, de las cosas que se pueden tocar y la *civitas*, el conjunto de actos que conectan a los ciudadanos, están íntimamente relacionados en la formación del paisaje. Por generaciones, la mirada occidental fue moldeada con estas leyes y la ciudad se interpretó como una forma de estar juntos. Hasta el año 1500, con la invención de la perspectiva, se dividen los ojos de los dedos y un nuevo esquema separa el sujeto del objeto.

El geógrafo Franco Farinelli sostiene que la genealogía del modelo del sujeto moderno se funda en el paradigma de la visión prospéctica, que contrapone radicalmente el sujeto que mira y el objeto que es mirado. Toda nuestra organización occidental de la estatalidad y de la territorialidad viene de esta creación conceptual que responde al espacio como isotrópico y geométrico, de la reducción del globo a mapa.

El primer desacralizador de la perspectiva fue Leonardo. El *polimata* florentino llamaba aberraciones marginales a las limitaciones de la técnica de la perspectiva, y las definía como "la diferencia existente entre la relación de los ángulos visuales y la relación de los segmentos obtenidos por la proyección sobre una superficie plana". El fenómeno, también llamado *anamorphosis*, es una deformación de la imagen prospéctica que se produce si el espectador se coloca en un punto periférico, observando desde un lugar imprevisto. A partir de ello, nace una batalla infinita: ¿buscar la objetividad o subjetividad?

En esta batalla por los modelos de interpretación del territorio se inserta el trabajo del artista mexicano Abraham Cruzvillegas, uno de los protagonistas del *avant-garde* latinoamericano, con Damián Ortega y Gabriel Orozco, el anfitrión del célebre "Taller de los viernes": reuniones que tuvieron lugar de 1987 a 1992 en las que jóvenes artistas tenían un dialogo creativo presentando su obra, escuchando música, compartiendo inquietudes y, sobre todo, planteándose la necesidad de posicionar su propia obra en la escena global.

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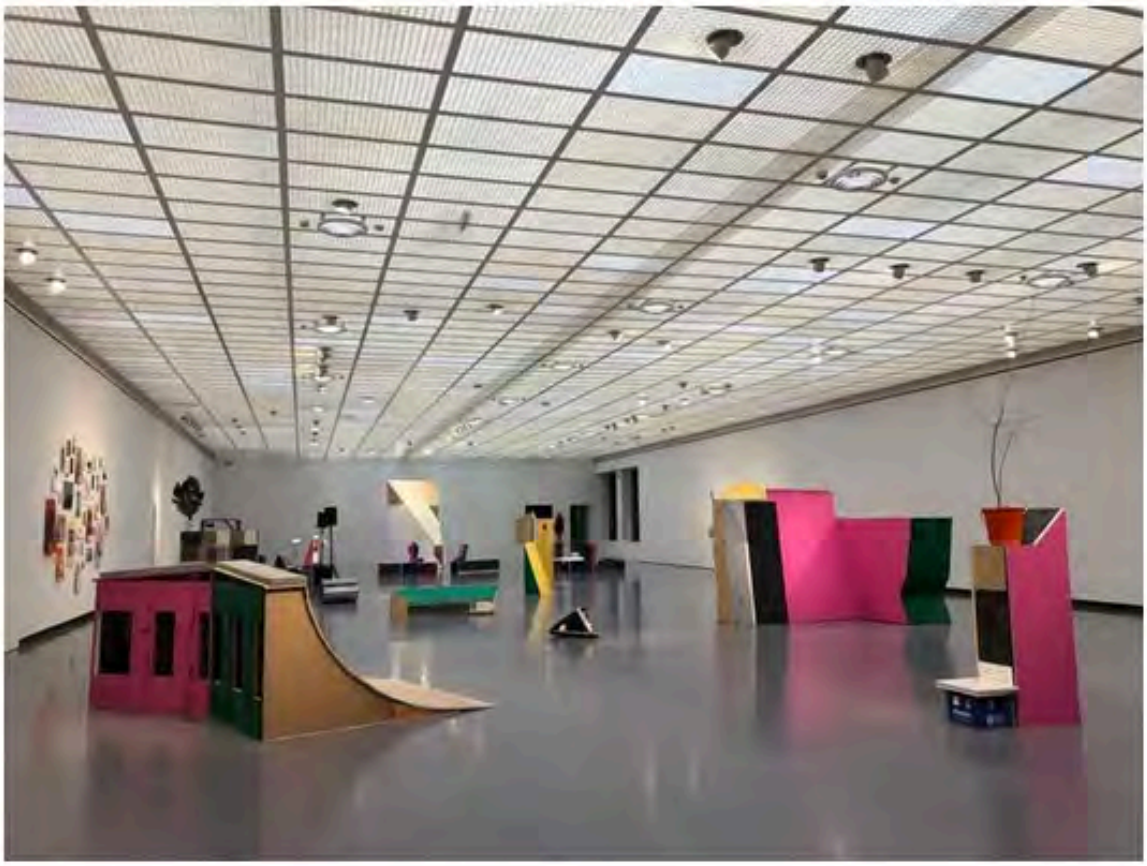

Las fotografías corresponden a *Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue*, muestra en la Kunsthaus, Zúrich, del 16 de febrero al 25 de marzo de 2018. Cortesía del artista y de la Kunsthaus Zürich, 2018. Fotografías de Abraham Cruzvillegas.

El trabajo de Abraham habla de su infancia en el sur de la ciudad de México y de la lucha de su barrio por la supervivencia, durante la primera fase de trasformación de la capital hacia una megalópolis neoliberal. Un trabajo que explora los procesos de autoconstrucción tan frecuentes cuanto marginalizados en la capital mexicana. Una práctica urbana que en este caso es también un elemento personal.

Nacido bajo el volcán, el Xitle, en el Ajusco, Abraham recuerda el lugar de su infancia, donde en los años 60 los vecinos y vecinas comenzaron a organizarse para construir autónomamente sus casas con las piedras que el paisaje rocoso les ofrecía.

Una lucha en que se revela el antídoto a la esquizofrenia del sujeto moderno, reducido por el urbanismo contemporáneo a una metonimia congelada y encerrada en los barrios privados: las *gated communities*. Una tipología habitacional cuya consecuencia ha sido la edificación de los muros, a los cuales el ciudadano contemporáneo ha entregado una excepcional autoridad. Estas formas urbanísticas son los escombros genealógicos de la perspectiva, cuyo efecto funciona únicamente si el sujeto está inmóvil. Como diría Farinelli, la perspectiva es un truco, para manejarlo se necesita creer dogmáticamente en una herramienta técnica: el mapa. Es la muerte de la política, que pasa de ser el cuidado de la ciudad del cual hablaban los romanos a la reducción cartográfica del territorio: donde se definen y separan los grupos sociales, los lugares y sus usos.

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Abraham Cruzvillegas se suma a los que se resistieron a la fijeza de la mirada, a la perspectiva, un batallón liderado por pensadores revolucionarios como la periodista y urbanista estadunidense Jane Jacobs, que defendió el valor de uso de los elementos urbanos; y la pareja formada por Deleuze y Guattari con su idea de un sujeto nómada planteada en su más célebre obra: *Mil mesetas. Capitalismo y esquizofrenia*. La insuficiencia del modelo prospéctico se revela y nacen en respuesta una serie de nuevas narraciones que han contribuido al estallar de una renovada geografía donde la realidad interior se expone a la imprevisibilidad de la realidad exterior y el sujeto deja la máscara de la supuesta objetividad epistémica y empieza finalmente a preguntarse ¿quién soy yo?

¿Quién es Abraham Cruzvillegas? Así empieza la entrevista con el artista.

"Yo soy un andamio y un paseador de perros.

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"Un andamio es una construcción provisional cuyo uso es permitir el acceso de obreros y materiales de construcción a todos los puntos de un edificio en construcción; es la estructura fundante del trabajo. La identidad se construye y quizás se rehabilita gracias al trabajo, al hacer que surge del ingenio y de las necesidades.

"De este trabajo, de esta identidad, debemos continuamente hacernos cargo, como hace el paseador de perros que debe tener diferentes perros juntos y saber andar con ellos. Un día he visto a un paseador de perros al cual se le había escapado uno. Sentí su desesperación y a mí ni siquiera me gustan los perros.

"Lo que parece únicamente una carga de responsabilidad es en realidad un derecho. El de hacerse cargo de la identidad. Lo quiero llamar derecho porque estamos hablando de la posibilidad de construcción de una conciencia, a través de herramientas y para mí la más importante siempre ha sido la educación. Por esto estudié pedagogía."

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Hablas de autoconstrucción, pero también de autodestrucción: ¿qué significa?

"El origen que adviene vía destrucción (autodestrucción) y en un estado de autoconfusión por antonomasia permanente, porque la identidad no es algo esencial cuanto relacional y continuamente inmergida en un caldo de cultivo hecho por otras identidades, fuerzas, direcciones y deseos entremezclados. La identidad para el artista es un montaje de materiales diferentes, de símbolos, mitos y leyendas, colores, sensaciones, recuerdos personales, detalles de la memoria y la Historia. La construcción de la identidad tiene que ver con el recoger estas piedras perdidas de 'nuestros yo' fragmentados. Una práctica a través de la cual se descubre la increíble oportunidad de escoger nuestros trozos, con los cuales queremos quedarnos y los que decidimos cuidar como si fueran un tesoro que nos regala generosamente la educación".

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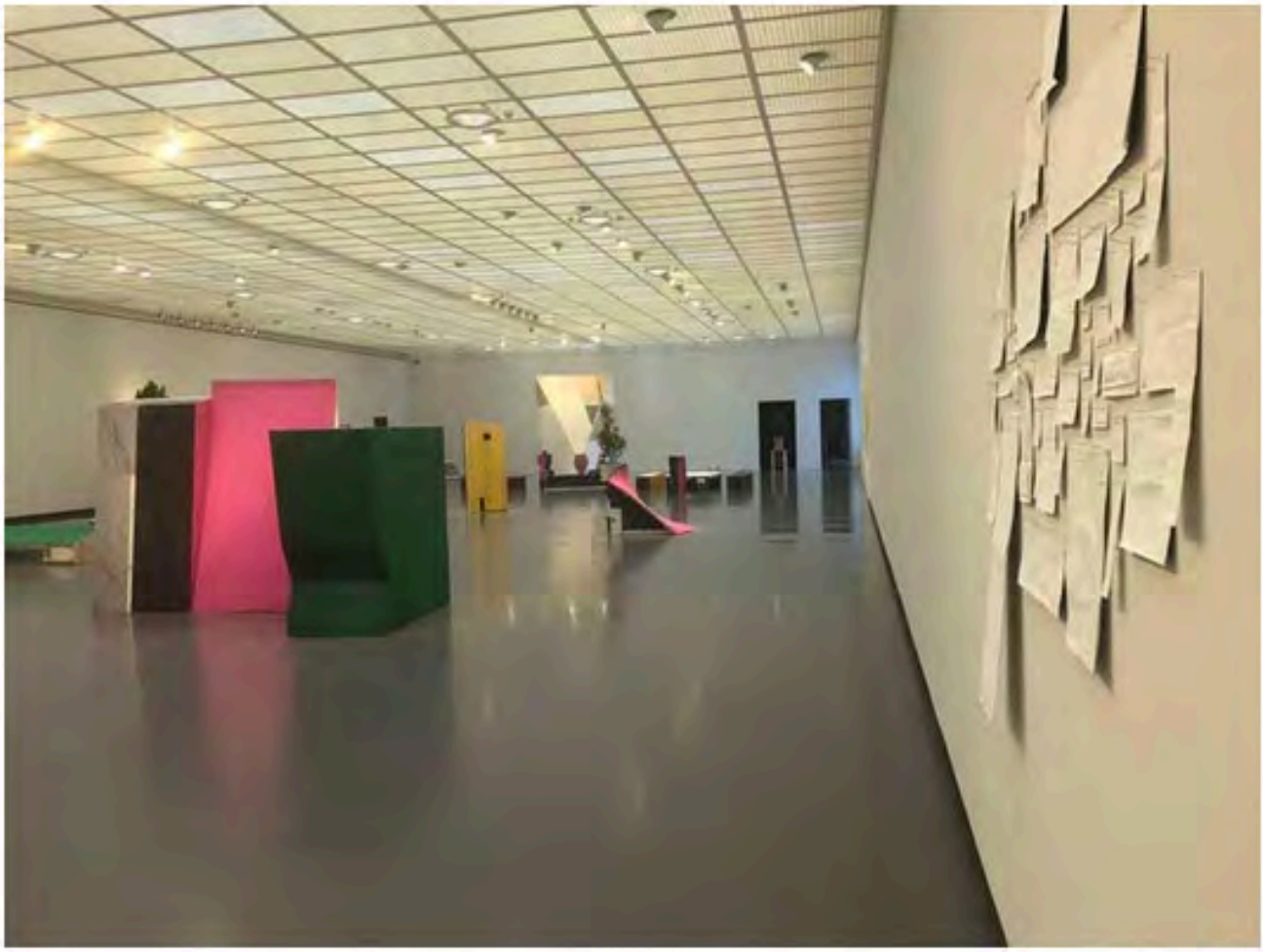

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La cuestión de la identidad es seguramente uno de los grandes motores del trabajo de Abraham, y, de hecho, cuando le pregunto qué es lo que aún lo mueve, me contesta:

"Quién soy, porqué y para qué. Pero claro que son preguntas que redacto cada vez de maneras distintas, incluso contradictorias, inestables, ineficientes, delirantes y ocasionalmente estúpidas. Pero, cuando ya aprendemos a hablar, ¿quién va a ser escuchado? ¿Las aberraciones marginales tienen las condiciones de enunciación necesarias?"

El trabajo de Cruzvillegas reflexiona justamente sobre la complejidad de estas condiciones de enunciación de los pueblos colonizados. ¿Si la pérdida de su voz fuera la condición que posibilita su palabra? Si una voz no es reconocible, su primera necesidad es la de decir "soy yo" para ser reconocida.

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El mundo que nos rodea es sin duda fruto de la dominación y de la acumulación. El arte de Cruzvillegas apuesta por la participación y la modificación, tema que exhibió en *Autorreconstrucción: Social Tissue*, exposición albergada del 16 de febrero al 25 de marzo de 2018 en la Kunsthaus en Zúrich, literalmente la Casa del Arte, y que sigue en México con la exposición *Autorreconstrucción: Detritus*, que se exhibirá del 12 de mayo al 8 de agosto del 2018 en el Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte (MUCA) en el corazón de Ciudad Universitaria.

El espacio de ambos museos en los dos lados del mundo se transforma en un lugar de encuentro para aquellos que entienden las artes como un movimiento solidario de cambio social, convirtiéndose en un taller continuo y participativo, produciendo así una obra escultórica en devenir. ¡Un juego! Y Abraham confiesa: "Lo interesante es que no tengo idea de cuál será el resultado. La escultura se modifica constantemente a través de su uso: el espacio-tiempo euclidiano le queda estrecho. Un arte que sigue la lógica del sujeto en movimiento, que transgrede el principio de homogeneidad y donde la felicidad se convierte en una estrategia de cambios".

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La exposición mexicana albergada en el MUCA es parte de un proyecto convocado por el artista Abraham Cruzvillegas con Peter Krieger, miembro del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas (IIE) de la UNAM; Humberto Urquiza, del Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina y el Caribe (CIALC); y Luis Zambrano, de la Reserva Ecológica del Pedregal de San Ángel (REPSA).

En este caso el proyecto surge a partir de la escultura *Reconstrucción* (2016), realizada en la Reserva Ecológica del Pedregal, en colaboración con el arquitecto Pablo Pérez Palacios. La escultura fue concebida a partir del descubrimiento de un muro inconcluso de trescientos metros de longitud, hecho de piedra volcánica de la zona del Xitle, y utilizado como material escultórico por Cruzvillegas.

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Usó el espacio de la Universidad con sus escombros y cascajo, que fueron agregados a la barda de la REPSA con el objetivo de concluir la misma, pero el muro sigue inacabado debido a cambios en la administración universitaria.

¿De dónde surge la nueva exposición en el MUCA? ¿Cuál fue la idea originaria?

"La exposición surge a partir de la necesidad de abordar una intersección entre ciencia y arte, este proyecto busca generar un espacio vivo para el intercambio de pensamientos, creaciones, movimientos, textos y juegos, así como la realización de una exhibición de arte contemporáneo y un programa de actividades en el MUCA, con una convocatoria amplia. Todas las actividades, incluida la exhibición, se gestionarán a través del intercambio y la colaboración de los participantes con su tiempo, experiencia y trabajo.

"Asimismo, un eje discursivo fundamental será planteado en el coloquio internacional sobre Estética y Ecología organizado por Peter Krieger y que se realizará el 11 y el 12 de mayo en el auditorio del MUCA. De las conferencias y de sus derivados se desarrollarán líneas de análisis que darán pauta a algunas de las actividades a desarrollar en el curso de la exposición, paralelamente a eventos, talleres y programas vinculados directa o tangencialmente entre sí: conferencias, talleres de danza, conciertos, clínicas de patineta, dibujo y cerámica, un ciclo de cine, concursos, lecturas de poesía y convocatorias ciudadanas, por nombrar solo algunos."

¿Cuál es la gran diferencia entre el arte y el mercado del arte en Europa y en América Latina?

"Imagino que el tipo de cambio."

¿Cuáles son tus fuentes de inspiración?

"La capacidad humana de destruir y de sobrevivir, los modos en que logramos relacionarnos, de maneras conflictivas o no, con nuestros semejantes y con la naturaleza. La inventiva y la creatividad inherentes. Me inspiran los inventores de herramientas, los cocineros, los médicos, los periodistas, los músicos, los ingenieros, los campesinos, los obreros, los estudiantes, las mujeres y los hombres como mi madre, mi esposa, mi hija, mi padre, mi familia, mis amigos y algunas personas que no conozco en persona."

Llegan las elecciones: ¿cuáles tus visiones futuras sobre México?

"Son visiones muy optimistas, anuncian la inminente acción ciudadana. Más allá y a pesar de las elecciones, tenemos muchas otras prioridades, como la conmemoración digna del aniversario de la matanza de la Plaza de las Tres Culturas, hace cincuenta años, tal vez haciéndonos individual y colectivamente diversas preguntas asociadas a nuestra responsabilidad en los problemas que nos abruman y que han dado pie a que la democracia haya dejado de ser una herramienta confiable para la vida en sociedad. Están en el poder gobernantes autoritarios, violentos e impunes. Es el momento de derrocar la partidocracia y reconstruir el tejido social de los escombros a los que nos han arrinconado. Es, entonces, una visión feliz que nos exige ser agentes de cambio. Es un gran reto, una enorme oportunidad: ahora es cuando, yerbabuena le has de dar sabor al caldo… Sí se puede."

Si el urbanismo de las ciudades neoliberales se basa en la representación de un número de funciones y lugares, en un orden que delega su futuro en la segregación, la obra de Cruzvillegas quiere alterar este orden que por siglos ha gobernado las relaciones entre las personas y el mundo, recordándonos que hubo un tiempo en que no existía ningún mapa y la Tierra era el abismo, la oscuridad, lo invisible.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Rodriguez-Campo, Elisa. « Abraham Cruzvillegas, Galerie Chantal Crousel »,
ArtNexus, *No.106*, September - November 2017, pp. 107-108.

ArtNexus

Abraham Cruzvillegas

Galerie Chantal Crousel

With the exhibition titled *The Water Trilogy 1: Ichárhuta: Autodefensión Approximante Vibrante Retroflexe* Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas pays a heartfelt homage to the natural, cultural and historic heritage of the Mexican state of Michoacán.

In two spaces of the Galerie Chantal Crousel, in the city of Paris, Cruzvillegas installed a group of proposals centered on the serious issue of pollution and the degradation of the town's main driving force and center: Lake Pátzcuaro. It is an issue that has caused the disappearance of local species and the end of several cultural practices like traditional fishing, a longstanding practice in this community since time immemorial.

With his characteristic adherence to synthesis and the collection and recontextualization of diverse elements, Abraham Cruz Villegas establishes a grammar charged with new connotations as he warns us about the imminent loss of the main natural and cultural values in the state of Michoacán, a "place of fishermen," according to Nahuatl ety-

Abraham Cruzvillegas. View exhibition *"The Water Trilogy 1: Ichárhuta: Autodefensión Approximante Vibrante Retroflexe"*, 2017. Installation. Variable dimensions. Photography: Florian Kleinefenn. Courtesy: Galerie Chantal Crousel.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Rodriguez-Campo, Elisa. « Abraham Cruzvillegas, Galerie Chantal Crousel »,
ArtNexus, *No.106*, September - November 2017, pp. 107-108.

ArtNexus

mology. Michoacán was the name that the Aztecs and Mexicans gave to this fertile territory in Western Mexico, where majestic lakes were once surrounded by dense pine forests.

By relying on different icons historically associated with fishing and life around the lake, Cruzvillegas underscores the profound denunciation and clamor for the recovery of lost values.

Several audiovisual installations rely on music as an accurate vehicle to express, in falsetto and with improvised coplas and violins, a compelling message performed by a traditional Huasteco trio. A desperate song, sang by an *Ambystoma dumerilii* (known as *achoque* or axolotl) about to be devoured by a white fish, narrates the imminent extinction of life in the lake. Both are endemic and, unfortunately, endangered species that only live in Lake Pátzcuaro.

A staple of the local culture, the *Chirostoma estor* or white fish (also known as *michin*) hoists the glyph of Michoacán at the top of a green hill. Unfortunately, the white fish that for centuries fed the communities established in the region has been replaced by exotic species introduced in the lake, dramatically altering its natural equilibrium.

Cruzvillegas puts into orbit the cultural universe of Michoacán around the exhibition's central piece: *Ichárhuta atonal en cientotreyntaidosavos de tono (para Luis González y González)* [Ichárhuta Atonal in a Onehundredthirtysecond Tone (for Luis González y González) 2017], a canoe specially used for fishing carved from a single block of pinewood. This watercraft is suspended in the air 49 meters (160.7 feet) high from the floor of the exhibition room, a number that corresponds to the shocking amount of mass that the lake has lost in little more than a decade.

Cruzvillegas declares his intention of shedding light on the effects of human activity on the environment and the manner in which such activity generates palpable and highly symbolic content. He emphasizes the delicate natural balance that can be literally left hanging in the air when no appropriate actions are taken and no efforts are made to generate awareness.

Located at high altitude, Lake Pátzcuaro is home of an important settlement of archaeological, natural and cultural remains. Its degradation is the direct result of global warming, the deforestation of neighboring forests and a population increase in the area, in combination with high levels of pollution, which not only negatively affects the local life but also its traditions.

Abraham Cruzvillegas proposes a reconstruction with the remnants that once made this region great: dances, rituals, the dynamics of community collaboration and, above all, fishing—the activity from which the term Michoacán and the demonym *michoacanos* originate—is practiced with the emblematic butterfly shaped nets called *guaromútacuas*. This practice is reproduced on the enlarged copy of a fifty pesos bill that is part of the exhibition and that also serves as a fantastic exhibition room sheet.

Fishing nets and gear are displayed across the gallery space to convey the fragility that their existence represents.

Black and white postcards—memory fragments—of the overexploited region are displayed on the walls and kept in place with a machete and a sickle. They are intervened with drawings of the peculiar salamander that has also been condemned to extinction.

Lastly, Cruzvillegas echoes a particular situation that is sadly replicated in several other lakes and rivers whose waters embody the tragedy of environmental degradation. To right this wrong it is necessary to be self-motivated and become aware: we are all responsible when it comes to defending what is ours.

The Water Trilogy 1: Ichárhuta: Autodefensión Approximante Vibrante Retroflexe is the first part of an exhibition trilogy. The second part was presented at the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, in Tokyo (April, 2017), and the third one will be exhibited at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, in Rotterdam (October, 2017).

ELISA RODRÍGUEZ-CAMPO

« The Water Trilogy 1 », *parisart*, April 21, 2017.
http://www.paris-art.com/the-water-trilogy-1/

parisart

The Water Trilogy 1

01 Avr - 13 Mai 2017

GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL

ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS

L'exposition « The Water Trilogy 1: Ichárhuta: Autodefensión Approximante Vibrante Retroflexe » à la galerie Chantal Crousel, à Paris, dévoile de nouvelles installations d'Abraham Cruzvillegas. Il s'agit de la première partie d'une trilogie d'expositions mettant en lumière les conséquences de la pénurie d'eau qui se profile en de nombreux endroits de la planète.

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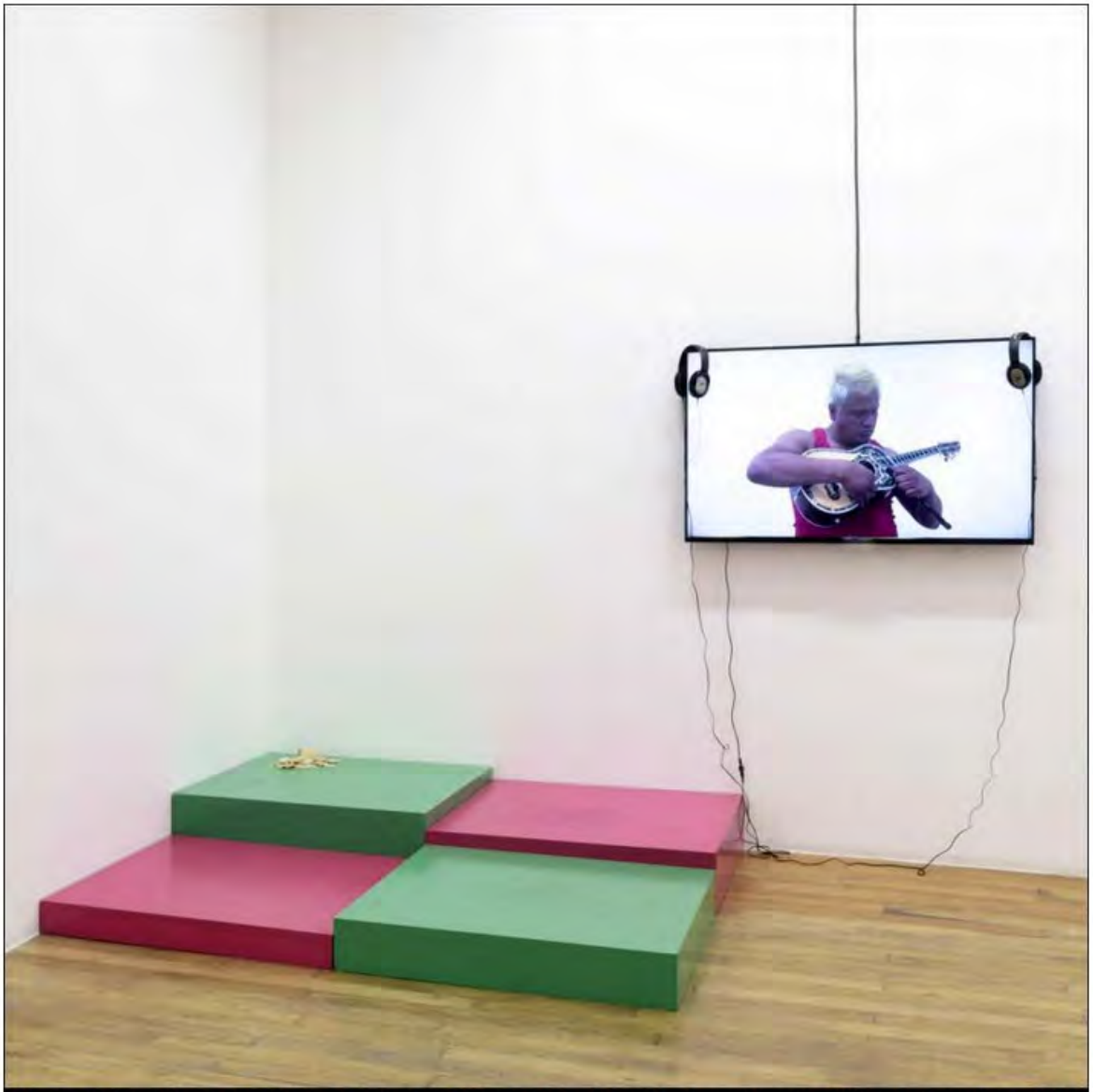

Abraham Cruzvillegas, The Water Trilogy 1: Ichárhuta: Autodefensión Approximante Vibrante Retroflexe, 2016.
Podium en bois de pin, 3 videos avec son. 123 x 200 x 200 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris. Photo Florian Kleinefenn

« The Water Trilogy 1 », *parisart*, April 21, 2017.
http://www.paris-art.com/the-water-trilogy-1/

parisart

L'exposition « The Water Trilogy 1: Ichárhuta: Autodefensión Approximante Vibrante Retroflexe » à la galerie parisienne Chantal Crousel présente les nouvelles installations d'Abraham Cruzvillegas. L'artiste mexicain y met en évidence les multiples conséquences de la pénurie d'eau dans son pays.

« The Water Trilogy 1 » : les conséquences de la pénurie d'eau au Mexique

L'exposition constitue la première partie d'une trilogie inspirée par l'eau et surtout par le manque de cet élément vital qui se profile en de nombreux endroits du globe. L'ensemble des installations est inspiré par des faits précis observés au Mexique, pays dont est originaire Abraham Cruzvillegas.

Au plafond de la galerie est accroché un canoë de type « papillon » provenant du lac de Pátzcuaro, à Michoacán, à l'ouest du Mexique, une région dont il est emblématique. Il est suspendu dans l'air, à une hauteur qui correspond au niveau d'épuisement de l'eau, selon les statistiques des quarante-neuf dernières années.

La collecte et le recyclage sont au cœur de la pratique d'Abraham Cruzvillegas

Au sol, autour du canoë, sont disposés trois tas de débris qui constitue des socles semblables à ceux supportant des sculptures. Sur chacun d'eux se tient un musicien appartenant à la communauté huastèque, peuple autochtone du Mexique qui descend d'une civilisation précolombienne et possède sa propre culture et sa langue. Tout en tentant de parvenir au sommet du tas, ils interprètent une chanson traditionnelle qui conte l'histoire d'une petite salamandre axolotl sur le point d'être avalée par un poisson blanc. L'existence de ces deux espèces qui ne vivent que dans le lac de Pátzcuaro, comme celle des Huastèques, dont la culture traditionnelle est liée au lac, est aujourd'hui menacée par la baisse de ses eaux.

Ces installations s'inscrivent dans la réflexion d'Abraham Cruzvillegas sur les interrelations, l'histoire et la construction collective et individuelle suivant les contextes économique, social et politique. Une réflexion qui est portée par une pratique de collecte et de recyclage d'éléments hétérogènes, parfois externe à sa création et d'autres fois interne, comme dans le cas des trois tas que gravissent les musiciens. Ces monticules sont en effet constitués d'objets issus d'une vaste installation présentée par Abraham Cruzvillegas lors de sa précédente exposition. La nouvelle vie des objets ainsi réutilisés trouve ainsi dans leur nouveau contexte de nouvelles interprétations.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

ARTFORUM

ENDS MAY 13TH 2017

Assorted artifacts installed in the gallery by Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas convey urgent political and environmental messages. For instance, a traditional "butterfly" canoe from the Pátzcuro lake in western Mexico is suspended from the ceiling so that the distance between the boat and the floor matches the lake's water shortage level (as measured over the last forty-nine years), an event that has resulted in the loss of endemic species and the decline traditional activities and rituals practiced by the local community.

Abraham Cruzvillegas
Apr 1 - May 13, 2017

Galerie Chantal Crousel
10 rue Charlot / +33142773887 / crousel.com
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Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Maniglier, Anne. «Abraham Cruzvillegas, un homme pressé au verbe affûté», *Happening*, November 16, 2016.
http://www.happening.media/fr/category/interviews/2542/abraham-cruzvillegas-the-matchmaker-sculpture-and-performance-meet-politics

INSTITUTIONS ARTISTES 16.11.2016 Anne Maniglier

Abraham Cruzvillegas, un homme pressé au verbe affûté

A la manière d'un Charlie Chaplin, Abraham Cruzvillegas orchestre la transformation d'objets trouvés dans les lieux et les villes qu'il visite à travers le monde.

Connu plus particulièrement pour sa série *Autoconstrucción*, l'artiste est actuellement exposé à Nîmes, au Carré d'Art, où il a travaillé avec des étudiants de l'Ecole des beaux-arts pour créer une seule et grande sculpture qu'il a nommée *Autoconstrucción approximante vibrante rétroflexe*. Une fois la sculpture achevée, l'artiste a demandé à deux musiciens et performers, Viridiana Toledo Rivera et Andrès Garcia Nestitla, de venir la transformer à nouveau et provoquer des sons et des vibrations.

Abraham Cruzvillegas est un artiste animé par le désir de partager et de créer un lien, une unité, une solidarité rapide parfois fulgurante avec ceux qui l'entourent et l'accompagnent dans la construction de ses pièces. Rencontre.

Quand tu décides de ramasser des objets trouvés à Nîmes et d'en faire une sculpture, y a-t'il une réflexion violente sur notre monde ? Sur le sur-consumérisme, même si nous comprenons que les objets renaissent et se réinventent ?

Tous ces objets sont en train de tomber, l'équilibre de cette sculpture est très précaire, ma perception de notre monde est la même, tout est en train de s'effondrer politiquement et économiquement.

La pauvreté est un concept occidental, chez moi au Mexique et dans ma famille on n'en parlait jamais, mais on parlait de corruption, de mauvaise redistribution des ressources, de régime autoritaire, ici en Occident, on parle de cultures périphériques, de la banlieue, et de cultures marginales.

En ce sens si tu veux, je n'ai pas de message à faire passer, mes œuvres ne demandent pas de compétences, ce n'est pas du bricolage, ni du « do it yourself »....

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Maniglier, Anne. «Abraham Cruzvillegas, un homme pressé au verbe affûté», *Happening*, November 16, 2016.
http://www.happening.media/fr/category/interviews/2542/abraham-cruzvillegas-the-matchmaker-sculpture-and-performance-meet-politics

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Vue de l'exposition "Autodestrucción 8: Sinbyeong", Artsonje Center, Séoul, Corée du Sud, 2015. Photo Kim Taedong. © Abraham Cruzvillegas.

Cette inégalité que nous constatons tous et partout et pas seulement en France ou au Mexique nous emmène vers l'intolérance, la peur, la violence, la ségrégation ; bien sûr souvent ce sont les politiciens qui provoquent ce chaos et qui destinent les moins éduqués d'entre nous vers ces sentiments et actes.

Voilà ma perception, mais je n'ai pas d'affirmation, et pas de message mais juste des questions, tout est lié à mon identité, d'où je viens, pourquoi je viens de là et à quoi ça sert. Les gens qui viennent ici doivent essayer de voir ce travail comme une symphonie, un poème et se poser aussi des questions.

Mon interprétation sera totalement différente de la tienne ; cette différence entre les interprétations est la raison pour laquelle je continue à créer de la sorte, cette différence de pensée nous rend tous plus riches, meilleurs, c'est ce que je veux, créer un outil éducatif.

Maniglier, Anne. «Abraham Cruzvillegas, un homme pressé au verbe affûté», *Happening*, November 16, 2016.
http://www.happening.media/fr/category/interviews/2542/abraham-cruzvillegas-the-matchmaker-sculpture-and-performance-meet-politics

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© Anne Maniglier

Explique moi l'idée des deux danseurs ?

J'ai une affinité avec la danse, et le corps, une fois Chantal Crousel, mon amie qui est aussi ma galeriste à Paris m'a emmené voir Israël Galvan, une danseur de flamenco espagnol, ce fut une révélation pour moi.

Viridiana Toledo Rivera et Andrès Garcia Nestitla viennent du Mexique et vont se servir de la sculpture comme d'un instrument de musique, ils sont professeurs d'une danse traditionnelle mexicaine, précolombienne, précoloniale, et qui s'appelle le Zapateado, ils sont restés des heures seuls après que nous ayons fini la sculpture, et nous les avons filmé ; deux vidéos sont montrées avec la sculpture, et font partie intégrante de notre travail.

J'apprends de ses danseurs, j'enrichis mon vocabulaire grâce à l'intervention de toutes ces personnes sur mon travail, cette danse indigène est aussi pour moi de la politique, et elle explique d'où je viens, on se sert de son corps comme d'un outil, elle affirme mon identité propre.

Maniglier, Anne. «Abraham Cruzvillegas, un homme pressé au verbe affûté», *Happening*, November 16, 2016.
http://www.happening.media/fr/category/interviews/2542/abraham-cruzvillegas-the-matchmaker-sculpture-and-performance-meet-politics

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Quels sont tes projets ?

Je vais au Japon en février pour une exposition, puis à Zurich et au Portugal.

« Autoconstrucción approximante vibrante rétroflexe »
Du 14 octobre 2016 au 19 février 2017

Carré d'Art-Musée d'art contemporain
Place de la Maison Carrée. 30000 Nîmes

« Interview Abraham Cruzvillegas | Carré d'Art - musée », *Youtube*, *Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes*, November 24, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WB7iizU6Z5E&feature=youtu.be&spfreload=1

Interview Abraham Cruzvillegas | Carré d'Art - musée

Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes

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A l'occasion de l'exposition AUTOCONSTRICTION APPROXIMANTE VIBRANTE RETROFLEXE (avec la participation de Viridiana Toledo Rivera & Andrés Garcia Nestitla), présentée par Carré d'Art - Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, du 14 octobre 2016 au 19 février 2017

La pratique d'Abraham Cruzvillegas convoque l'histoire et la construction de soi dans des contextes économique, social et politique. Il utilise différentes stratégies de production et de réception pour créer du sens. Il donne aux objets une nouvelle vie dans de nouveaux contextes générant des changements dans leur interprétation. L'improvisation et l'assemblage sont au centre de sa pratique en relation avec l'idée de survie économique, du travail et du ready-made. Il a développé le projet d'Autoconstruction à partir de l'expérience de ses parents qui ont construit leur maison à partir de matériaux trouvés. L'exposition à Carré d'Art est constituée de nouvelles œuvres réalisées en relation au contexte à partir de la collecte de matériaux dans la ville de Nîmes et inclut la participation d'un couple de danseurs traditionnels qui interagissent avec les sculptures pour produire divers sons.

Vettier, Elsa. « Abraham Cruzvillegas », *Zéro Deux*, Numéro 80, 2016.
https://www.zerodeux.fr/reviews/abraham-cruzvillegas/

Abraham Cruzvillegas

—

par Elsa Vettier

Galerie
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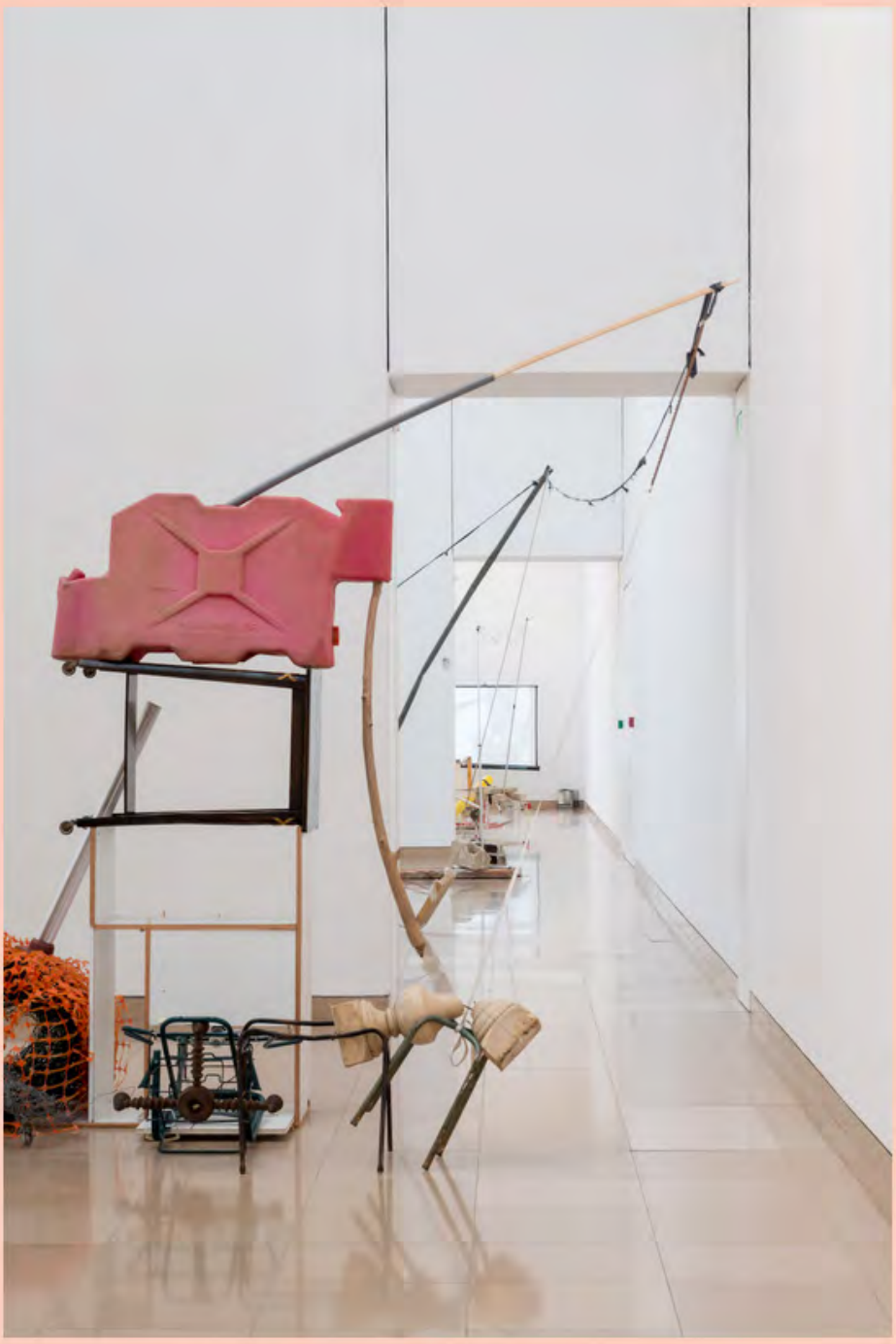
***Autoconstriction approximante vibrante rétroflexe*, Carré d'Art, Nîmes,**

14.10. 2016 – 19.02.2017

Dans un ouvrage paru en 2010 intitulé *Vibrant Matter*, la théoricienne politique Jane Bennett raconte comment un matin à Baltimore elle fut interpelée par un amas de déchets gisant dans un caniveau. Le tableau formé par un vieux gant en plastique, un bout de bois érodé et un cadavre de rongeur exhibait selon elle son « *thing power* », autrement dit la capacité de ces choses a priori inanimées à avoir un effet non seulement sur quiconque prendrait le temps de les considérer mais, par extension, sur la vie publique. Cette matière vivante que sont les débris habite le travail d'un certain nombre d'artistes dont Abraham Cruzvillegas fait partie. À Nîmes, comme à Los Angeles, Saint-Nazaire ou Glasgow auparavant, l'artiste mexicain s'est tourné vers les rebuts matériels de la ville afin de composer avec eux une seule et même sculpture qui court à travers les trois salles du Carré d'Art. Les palettes, matelas, bribes de carcasses métalliques mis bout à bout forment un agrégat hétéroclite rampant et sinueux. Là où étagères et caissons s'empilent, l'assemblage se densifie et s'élève sans que jamais la liaison entre les objets ne soit rompue. Les fils électriques, tuyaux et autres tiges métalliques qui hérissent l'installation en de nombreux endroits semblent assurer la conduction d'énergie entre les choses, donnant à l'ensemble des airs de réseau électrique de fortune, machine précaire sur le point de s'écrouler.

Vettier, Elsa. « Abraham Cruzvillegas », *Zéro Deux*, Numéro 80, 2016.
https://www.zerodeux.fr/reviews/abraham-cruzvillegas/

S'écartant le plus possible de toute tentative de sélection des objets, l'artiste a confié la responsabilité de la collecte à deux étudiants de Nîmes avec la consigne presque animiste de laisser les objets venir à eux. Parmi leurs trouvailles, Cruzvillegas n'a opéré aucun tri, une attitude qui n'est pas sans rappeler celle de Marcel Duchamp envers les ready-made dont il disait se saisir sur la base d'une pure « indifférence visuelle[1] ». La roue de bicyclette, clouée par ce dernier sur un tabouret en 1913, est d'ailleurs enchâssée dans l'installation de Cruzvillegas. Au-delà du détail iconographique, la chaîne d'objets trouvés de Nîmes évoque sous certains angles des compositions duchampiennes de plus grande ampleur. On pense notamment aux silhouettes géométriques encastrées et machines délicates représentées sur le *Grand Verre* (1915-1923) ou à la compilation de ready-made qui figure sur *Tu m'*, toile commandée à l'artiste en 1918 dont émerge un irrévérencieux écouvillon.



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Vettier, Elsa. « Abraham Cruzvillegas », *Zéro Deux*, Numéro 80, 2016.
https://www.zerodeux.fr/reviews/abraham-cruzvillegas/

Depuis une dizaine d'années, Abraham Cruzvillegas intègre les objets déclassés à une démarche qu'il qualifie d'*autoconstrucción* et qui s'articule autour des dynamiques propres à ce qui est soi-disant inerte : le sens et l'énergie que produit l'agencement de certaines choses dans la sphère sociale et politique. Le choix du terme « autoconstruction » résulte d'un rapprochement opéré par l'artiste entre sa pratique d'assemblage et le processus de construction *ad hoc* des habitations de son quartier d'enfance, Ajusco. Dans cette favela située en périphérie de Mexico, la configuration de la maison familiale évoluait au fil des trouvailles de bric et de broc qui venaient l'augmenter. Mais dans l'idée d'autoconstruction, il est moins question de bricole que d'édification de soi et de développement d'un langage plastique. Ainsi, suivant une logique dialectique, depuis quelques années les projets d'autoconstruction connaissent des pendants autodestructifs pour finalement trouver un nouveau développement à une lettre près au Carré d'Art : l'autoconstriction.

Si le titre donné à l'exposition, « Autoconstriction approximante vibrante rétroflexe », semble mimer l'œuvre en sa qualité d'amalgame d'éléments disparates, il signale également un resserrement autour de l'idée de langage. « Constriction » et « rétroflexe », renvoyant respectivement à la contraction de la gorge et à la flexion de la langue, concernent le fonctionnement organique de la parole et nous amènent à repenser l'installation comme une longue phrase articulée et ponctuée de sursauts. Quant à la vibration, qui pourrait déjà émaner de la friction et de la mise en équilibre des bribes, Cruzvillegas choisit de la souligner par l'intervention de deux *zapateados*. Ces danseurs, dont les mouvements de talon saccadés s'enracinent dans des traditions chorégraphiques précolombiennes, improvisent sur la sculpture. Leurs gestes, retransmis sur deux écrans à l'entrée et à la sortie de l'exposition, font résonner les qualités sonores de la sculpture et parler sa matérialité. Cette activation sonore et chorégraphique de l'installation peine pour autant à faire vibrer l'ensemble. Il est en effet difficile de lever les yeux du sol glacial sur lequel court la sculpture et de s'abstraire de la symétrie implacable du white cube conçu par Norman Foster qui fige le bric-à-brac habituellement réjouissant de Cruzvillegas dans une sorte de chaos muséal organisé. L'idée est belle pourtant lorsque l'on se replace dans la perspective de ces fragments biscornus qui composent l'œuvre et qui retourneront probablement à l'endroit où ils ont été ramassés. Ces trouvailles auront traversé l'existence d'une œuvre d'art avant que l'œuvre elle-même ne redevienne banal objet. Une parade modeste de choses déchues ou, pour reprendre le titre d'un projet antérieur de l'artiste, *an optimistic failure*[2].

[1] Marcel Duchamp, « À propos des ready-mades », *Duchamp du signe*, Paris, Flammarion, 1975, p.191.

[2] Abraham Cruzvillegas, « Autoconstrucción: The Optimistic Failure of a Simultaneous Promise », Modern Art Oxford, 2011.

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Place de la Maison Carrée
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www.nimes.fr
www.carreartmusee.com

Autoconstriction approximante vibrante retroflexe

Abraham Cruzvillegas est né en 1968 au Mexique. Artiste nomade, il s'inspire et s'enrichit des lieux qu'il traverse, du hasard des rencontres, des objets récupérés, réutilisés, transformés auxquels il redonne une vie nouvelle, générant ainsi des changements dans leur interprétation.

Son travail artistique s'est nourri dans son enfance, lorsque ses parents, habitants de banlieues improbables auto-construisaient leur logement à partir de matériaux de récupération trouvés çà et là, assemblés au fil des besoins entre nécessité et opportunité. Une architecture précaire, perpétuellement remodelée, où l'improvisation et l'adaptabilité sont les maîtres-mots.

C'est cette expérimentation qu'Abraham Cruzvillegas cherche à nous faire partager en assemblant des objets délaissés, transformés en variant matériaux et techniques, au gré des réalités socio-économiques dans lesquelles il évolue. Une façon d'appréhender l'identité comme une construction de soi, indéfinie et perpétuelle.

Après avoir développé le projet *Autoconstruction* à partir de l'expérience de ses parents, il est passé en 2012 à celui d'*Autodestruction*, cherchant ainsi à créer de l'espace pour laisser s'ouvrir de nouvelles perspectives, de nouveaux désirs, libérer l'imagination.

Pour cette exposition à Carré d'Art, il entame une nouvelle série, *Autoconstriction*. Il a choisi de s'immerger dans la réalité nîmoise, qu'il connaît déjà puisque qu'il avait participé à l'exposition *Pour un art pauvre* en 2011. Il a analysé la ville, ses habitants, sa façon de vivre au quotidien, ses touristes, ses musées, ses monuments… tout ce qui fait son identité. À l'aide d'étudiants de l'École des Beaux-Arts, il a collecté différents matériaux au pied d'un immeuble ou à l'angle d'un carrefour, qui constitueront la base de l'exposition. Assemblés, rassemblés, ces installations constituées d'éléments de vie abandonnés, ressuscitent et réunissent, interrogeant notre époque sur ses valeurs, ses utopies pour inventer un futur meilleur…

Autoconstriction fait aussi référence au corps, au chant et à la danse. Un couple de danseurs traditionnels mexicains interagira avec les sculptures pour produire différents sons. La vidéo de cette performance sera ensuite diffusée dans l'exposition.

Ballade au raz du ça et jusqu'à l'obstruction de l'articulation

CARRÉ D'ART

La nouvelle exposition qui s'est ouverte à Carré d'art propose deux modes d'appréhension de l'espace et du temps. Anna Boghiguian ouvre une porte sur la mythologie reliée à l'ici et au maintenant. Abraham Cruzvillegas inflige, lui, une «Autoconstriction approximante vibrante réflexe»

Nîmes

Choc induit par la différence de la mise en perspective d'une pensée, par la représentation du monde qui semble en opposition. Les apparences paraître cachent cependant de nombreux ressorts de l'être et pour le cas des deux artistes, de ce qui les anime, de l'essence même de l'oeuvre construite autour d'une élaboration, tige de papiers dessinés de végétaux, de matériaux aussi divers que variés.

Histoire du monde, évolution de l'esprit

Anna Boghiguian qui n'a pas encore eu de grandes expositions (mais elle commence à être visible dans quelques musées importants dont Eindhoven en Hollande) est un phénomène. Érudite autodidacte elle se balade dans la mythologie et dans l'inconscient comme un poisson dans l'eau. Inutile de préciser qu'elle a trouvé sa place à Nîmes où elle est en résidence depuis juillet. Elle s'est imprégnée de la ville qu'elle trouve «inscrite dans l'universel» avec une rare intelligence de l'histoire qui, pour elle, est avant tout «se servir de ses oreilles et de la Grande (réf. à l'inconscient). Après avoir écouté les bruits du monde dans un état choisi de nomade (elle s'est tout de même attachée au Canada pendant 20 ans), elle sert sur un plateau les empereurs romains, les amours d'Auguste et Cléopâtre et sortie de l'histoire grecque et romaine, elle se penche sur l'industrie du coin, le textile très vite relié aux problématiques coloniales... Tout cela transparaissant dans les constructions de papier mâché grand format. Dessins processionnaires inscrivant des gens qui marchent ou arche de bois à quatre coins (du monde ou cardinaux), elle ne manque pas d'associer l'ancien et le nouveau, les traversée humaines révélées dans la Bible qui rattrapent les immigrés du monde d'aujourd'hui. Elle insiste sur la répétition de l'histoire associée à la transformation des esprits. Son oeuvre est inspirée par la lecture «de nombreux livres et de gens qui m'ont raconté des histoires» L'intégration de plantes , «je voulais ajouter des éléments vivants, quelque chose d'organique est indispensable «On a tous un jardin en soi-même»

L'entrée dans l'oeuvre d'Abraham Cruzvillegas qui convoque également l'histoire, vise dans son organisation même le contexte économique, social et politique. L'installation comme l'indique le titre de l'ensemble souligne l'autoconstriction une difficulté crée dans le passage peu confortable de l'articulation, de la création. «Mon sujet principal porte sur la production de connaissance, la compréhension du comment l'activité humaine produit des formes. Son projet d'autoconstruction est dicté par une idée mise en pratique, celle de ses parents qui ont construit leur maison à partir de matériaux trouvés, récupérés, fameuse architecture justement nommée de nécessité et d'opportunité, une manière de s'inscrire activement dans des circuits parallèles périphériques, alternatives économiques à la société de consommation. Constat incontournable : pour construire une nouvelle société, il faut détruire l'ancienne. Pour Carré d'art, il a collecté des matériaux dans la ville et invité des danseurs mexicains qui font des recherches sur la période colombienne pour faire naître du son et insuffler du mouvement, redonner vie aux objets

M.J.Latorre

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LA MARSEILLAISE
17 octobre 2016

EXPÉRIENCE Abraham Cruzvillegas à Carré d'art à Nîmes

Un monde instable

Une installation à partir de matériaux récoltés sur place.

C'est une véritable expérience que propose le plasticien mexicain Abraham Cruzvillegas à Carré d'art à Nîmes. Depuis des années, l'artiste travaille autour des autoconstructions, c'est-à-dire les maisons qu'assemblent, bâtissent et rebâtissent sans cesse leurs habitants dans les bidonvilles. Enfant, il a lui-même connu avec sa famille ces logements bricolés de façon anarchique dans la banlieue de Mexico.

Comme ses parents qui avaient créé leur habitation à partir de l'environnement immédiat, Abraham Cruzvillegas conçoit des œuvres liées au contexte de production et d'exposition.

■ **Cruzvillegas parmi ses fragiles édifices.** Photo S. C.

Rebuts abandonnés

Avant l'accrochage à Nîmes, l'artiste a demandé à ses assistants de récolter dans les rues de la ville des objets délaissés. Ainsi se sont amassés des briques, des palettes, des morceaux de ferraille, des planches, des rebuts abandonnés par la société de consommation... Abraham Cruzvillegas a conservé toute leur sélection. Le travail commence par le classement des trouvailles par catégories : « *industriel, fait à la main, vieux, joli, laid...* ». Puis les objets sont répartis dans les pièces et assemblés. Peu à peu, dans l'improvisation, a pris forme une étrange sculpture précaire qui serpente à travers les différentes salles du musée.

Le visiteur déambule à l'intérieur de cette œuvre fragile, en équilibre instable comme « *une métaphore de notre société où tout est près de l'effondrement* ».

Mais il y a aussi de la vie dans les autoconstructions. Et Abraham Cruzvillegas fait résonner sa sculpture des bruissements du monde. Une fois l'assemblage terminé, il a invité Viridiana Toledo Rivera et Andrés Garcia Nestila, spécialistes des danses précolombiennes, « *c'est-à-dire précoloniales* ». Les artistes se sont enfermés seuls dans les salles du musée et ont été filmés dansant sur l'installation. Les vidéos sont projetées aux deux extrémités de cet enchevêtrement et donnent à relire toute l'installation qui soudain chuchotte, sonne, chante, prend vie...

STEPHANE CERRI
scerri@midilibre.com

Jusqu'au 19 février. Du mardi au dimanche, de 10 h à 18 h. À Carré d'art à Nîmes. 04 66 76 35 70.

MIDI LIBRE
8 janvier 2017

«Las manías de Abraham Cruzvillegas y Mario Bellatin», *El Pais*, May 16, 2016.
http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/05/15/videos/1463263929_427691.html?id_externo_rsoc=TW_AM_CM

EL PAÍS 40!

CONVERSACIONES INESPERADAS ›

Las manías de Abraham Cruzvillegas y Mario Bellatin

El escritor y el artista visual hablan de las redes sociales, reflexionan sobre la modernidad y la necesidad imperiosa de crear en todo momento

EL PAÍS

México 15 MAY 2016 - 00:45 CEST

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Mota, Melissa. «Entrevista | Abraham Cruzvillegas», *gastv*, May, 2016.
http://gastv.mx/entrevista-abraham-cruzvillegas/

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ENTREVISTA | ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS

Galerie
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Por Melissa Mota | Marzo, 2016

El Museo de Arte de Zapopan (MAZ) presenta hasta el 29 de mayo Reconstrucción, un proyecto de Abraham Cruzvillegas que aborda las formas de apropiación del lenguaje. La iniciativa consistió en la invitación a artistas de Guadalajara y sus alrededores, a quienes se les asignó la tarea de reinterpretar una obra de arte que haya sido crucial para cada uno de ellos en un tiempo récord y con un mínimo de recursos. En la exposición se puede ver el resultado traducido a diferentes soportes como pintura, instalación, video y performance. Entre los artistas que participaron se encuentran Isa Carrillo, Cristian Franco y Javier Barrios.

Tuvimos la oportunidad de conversar con Abraham Cruzvillegas sobre el proceso y la naturaleza de esta muestra.

Como muchas de tus obras, esta exposición le da un peso importante al proceso. Por un lado, la conversación continua que sostuviste con los artistas y, por el otro, el proceso particular de la realización

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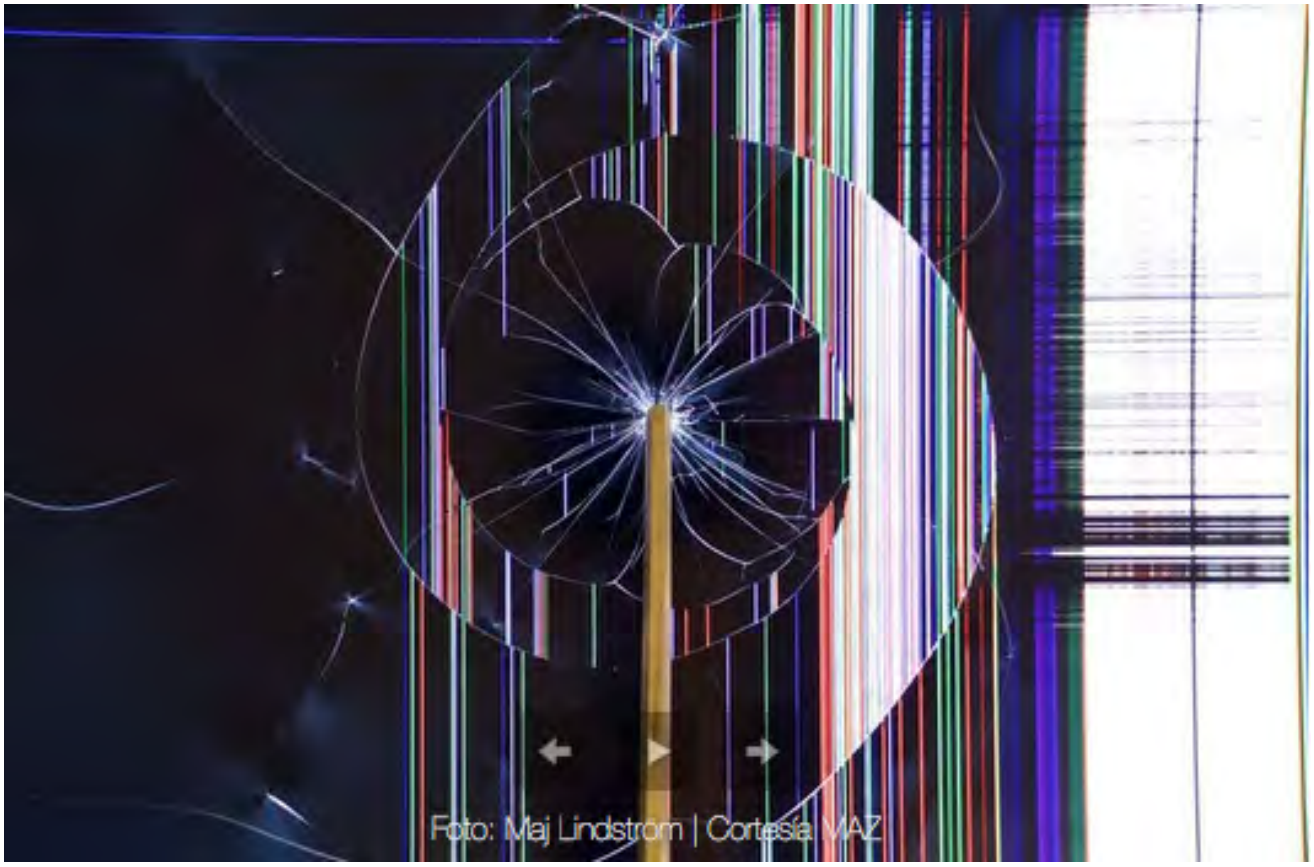

de cada pieza con un mínimo de recursos y en tiempo récord. ¿Nos puedes platicar sobre cómo se fue construyendo la exposición?

El proceso inició con la voluntad de Viviana Kuri, con quien configuré una metodología de trabajo que tomó forma solo a partir de su redacción de una lista de creadores locales, que finalmente aceptaron participar a partir de una carta que les escribí, que es un guiño de ojo acerca de lo que nos pertenece: el lenguaje. A partir de sus propuestas, la conversación con los artistas participantes fue muy breve, muy intensa y muy fructífera. Todxs improvisamos de una u otra forma, sin procurar consensos o acuerdos, decidiendo juntxs sin votaciones, ni evaluaciones autoritarias ni perniciosas. La exposición se construyó sola.

En tu quehacer artístico está siempre presente el concepto de lo "definitivamente inacabado, lo que se está construyendo a sí mismo siempre". En Autoconstrucción evidencias aquello que se va añadiendo con el tiempo, sin planeación, con una estética improvisada, que propicia una creatividad en condiciones restrictivas, aspectos presentes también en Reconstrucción. En este ejercicio, al concebir obras emblemáticas como no terminadas, se genera una desacralización que permite continuarlas, modificarlas o entablar un diálogo de tú a tú con ellas. En este sentido, ¿cómo se entretejen los conceptos de reconstrucción y autoconstrucción en esta muestra?

Supongo que quienes tendrían que responder esta pregunta son los artistas que dan cuerpo a la muestra, pero imagino que se entretejen de maneras caprichosas, arbitrarias, subjetivas, inestables, contradictorias, precarias, sudadas, felices, comprometidas, sensuales e inconclusas, pero lo más probable es

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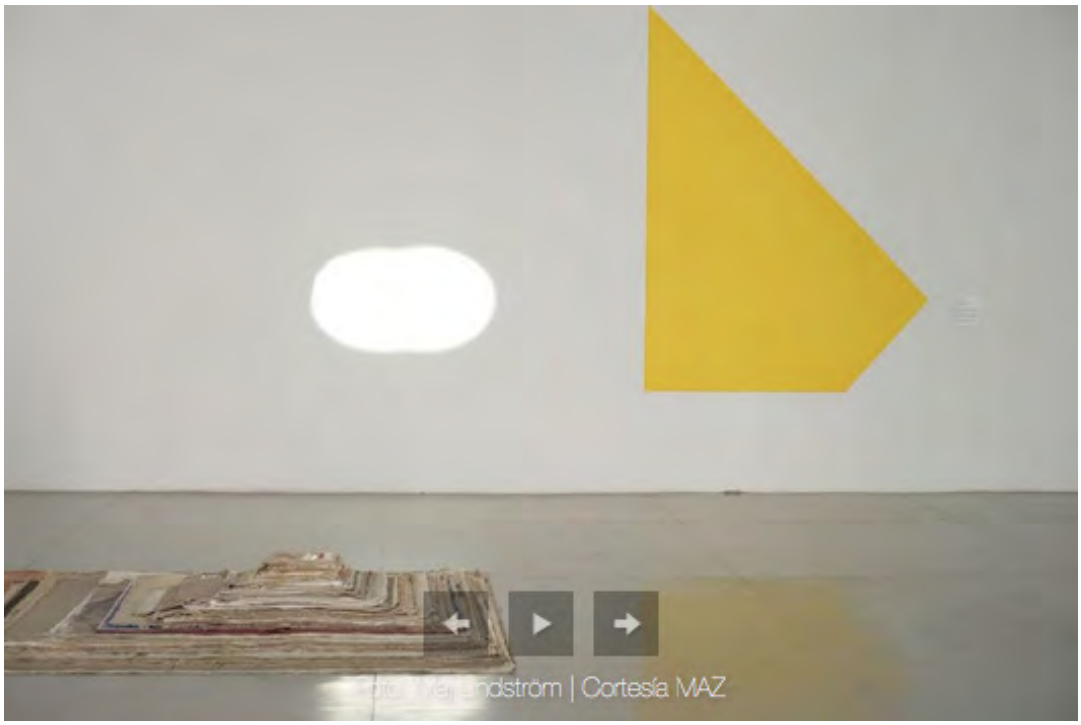

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que me equivoque, de muchas maneras.

Generalmente, la historia del arte es revisada desde la teoría, sin embargo, en Reconstrucción es repensada desde la práctica y las experiencias individuales de los artistas que conforman la exposición. Al ver las obras que cada uno eligió y el resultado derivado de las apropiaciones y reinterpretaciones particulares ¿a qué conclusiones llegas en cuanto a los paradigmas del arte y su influencia en el gremio del arte contemporáneo mexicano? (Por ejemplo, es interesante que sólo dos artistas se basaron en creadores mexicanos o las técnicas hegemónicas, etc.)

En La estructura de las revoluciones científicas Thomas Kuhn analiza la manera en que los paradigmas se transforman, se trascienden o se reconsideran, son procesos que probablemente son imperceptibles o poco importantes para quienes no participan de ellos, pero que ocasionalmente pueden significar vueltas de tuerca para la humanidad; ejemplos clásicos serían dejar de pensar que la tierra es plana o que el hombre es el centro del universo. Yo no he llegado a ninguna conclusión sobre nada, mucho menos sobre mis propios paradigmas, en cambio procuro hacerme preguntas en voz alta, compartirlas, aunque suenen a estulticias improductivas, independientemente de su origen o nacionalidad.

Las aproximaciones y formas de apropiación de las obras por parte de los artistas es variada; hay piezas que son una extensión del referente, como Caminamos de manera exagerada alrededor del perímetro de un cuadrado de Claudia Cisneros; otras las modifican o deconstruyen; algunas, como la de Daniel Guzmán, son una reactivación de una acción, y varias insertan el discurso original al contexto político local como Pemex arde de Luis Alfonso Villalobos o Sin título (21 de diciembre- 4 de enero) de Héctor Jiménez. ¿Cómo dialogan en el espacio estos diferentes acercamientos y qué generan conjuntamente?

En su diversidad —fincada en lo individual, de lo que se compone cualquier comunidad, que no la masa— esta muestra habrá de ser construida por los espectadores, más que por los creadores, quienes han ofrecido de las maneras más sinceras a la convocatoria interpretaciones que devienen obras nue-

vas, frescas y nutritivas. Esto generan conjuntamente la institución, el público y los artistas, literalmente, a virotazos.

Otro aspecto interesante de la muestra es que las obras elegidas como referentes van desde las primeras manifestaciones artísticas, como Sin título de Héctor Rentería, quien se basa en las pinturas rupestres de la Cueva de Chauvet, pasando por representantes del modernismo (como Kazimir Malévich, Yves Klein, José Clemente Orozco), así como por artistas contemporáneos, pertenecientes a diferentes corrientes y activos en las últimas décadas (como Jean Michel Basquiat, John Baldessari, Bruce Nauman o Vito Acconci), hasta creadores con práctica vigente como Olafur Eliasson, Oscar Tuazon, Roman Ondak, Mona Hatoum o Paul McCarthy. ¿Cómo convergen todos estos tiempos en el presente?

Yo más bien preguntaría ¿cómo hacer que no converjan todos los tiempos en el presente? Incluyendo al futuro, pues en la carta de invitación a los participantes no se excluía la posibilidad de referir a una obra que no ha sido realizada, como son todas las que se presentan en la muestra, son en su totalidad obras inéditas y sus autores son los que están, no sus referentes···

¿Qué ventajas te da tu experiencia como artista y tu conocimiento pedagógico en la práctica curatorial?

No tengo ningún conocimiento pedagógico en la práctica curatorial, ni en ningún otro campo: haber estudiado pedagogía me da más desventajas que lo contrario, pues a diferencia de los demás no estudié arte, ni arquitectura, ni diseño. Mi experiencia como artista, en todo caso, me da herramientas para aprender de los participantes en este proyecto, ahí reside —desde cualquier perspectiva— lo pedagógico de esta aventura.

¿Qué obra fue la que a ti te cambió la vida y por la que decidiste seguir el camino del arte?

Mi tía abuela Amalia Vera Medina trabajó años cocinando y lavando ropa en diversas casas de las Lomas de Chapultepec, en el ex Distrito Federal, sus ancianas y expertas manos, deformes y atrofiadas por detergentes, cloro, amoniaco y otros productos de limpieza, habían perdido casi toda la sensibilidad y podían sostener pocillos candentes sin percibir calor ninguno. En su larga experiencia, logró domeñar recetas y platos varios, que en su convencionalidad aparecen injustamente como carentes de méritos o destreza ninguna: arroz a la jardinera, caldo de pollo, bisteces encebollados, frijoles charros, ensaladilla rusa, espaguetis al horno. Su gran éxito era la sopa de letras. Un día, cuando tenía como ocho años, dispuesto a embuchacarme una cucharada de aquel brebaje malnutriente que mi malhumorada tía preparaba cada fin de semana, cuando nos visitaba desde la lejana y mítica Tacubaya, entre los hervores que emanaba el cuenco enfrente de mí, leí claramente —sin faltas de ortografía ni de redacción— 'SÍGUELE'. Y aquí sigo, en el camino.

Foto: La Tempestad.

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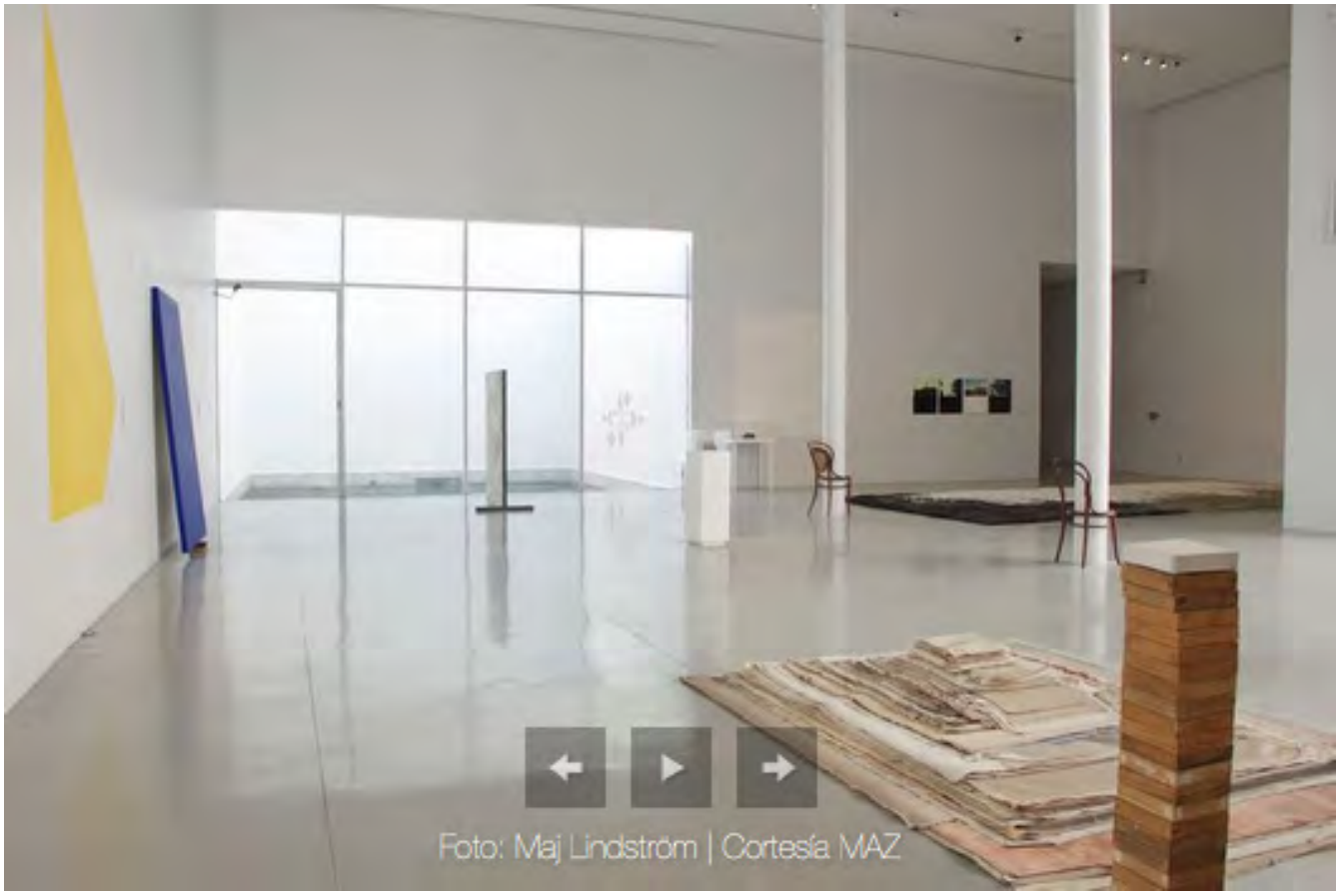

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Construir a Abraham Cruzvillegas

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Con su arte, Abraham Cruzvillegas se plantea preguntas a sí mismo y, con un poco de suerte, las transfiere a los demás.

Por **ANNUSKA ANGULO** @nuxka / FOTOGRAFÍAS DE **DIEGO BERRUECOS**

En su conversación y en su obra, Abraham Cruzvillegas tiende a ramificarse, a la asociación, al “apilamiento”. Sin embargo, en su casa, en su taller, y en su pensamiento impera un orden peculiar. Es un apilamiento coherente. A veces sus esculturas (y sus textos) parecen a punto de caerse, y como en la Ciudad de México donde nació y creció, el equilibrio en ellos es un asunto casi milagroso. A partir de una crisis del artista —que sucedió cuando pasó una larga temporada fuera de México—, empezó una reflexión sobre la relación entre su forma de trabajar y la casa y el barrio donde creció, una colonia marginal en la que los vecinos, colonos llegados de provincia, se hicieron sus propias casas con materiales encontrados en la zona o con lo que podían comprar con sus presupuestos limitados. Sin arquitectura, sin planes, y respondiendo a necesidades urgentes, la forma de construir de sus padres y sus vecinos es análoga a la forma en la que Cruzvillegas ha armado su propio lenguaje, que abunda en preguntas e incertidumbre. Autoconstrucción, más que una serie de obras reunidas bajo un mismo título desde el 2007, es un intento de comprenderse a sí mismo.

Es uno de los artistas mexicanos más destacados del mundo en este momento. O eso piensan los directores de la Tate Modern de Londres que le otorgaron la comisión del Turbine Hall 2015-2016. La primera serie de comisiones, patrocinadas por Unilever (2000-2012), presentó a artistas como Louise Bourgeois, Anish Kapoor, Doris Salcedo y Ai Weiwei. El inmenso espacio dentro de la Tate Modern mide 35 metros de alto por 153 de largo, y los artistas realizan instalaciones sitio-específicas que serán vistas por millones de personas a lo largo de seis meses. Después de tres años sin comisionar el Turbine Hall, la Tate Modern invitó a Abraham para iniciar la nueva serie, esta vez patrocinada por Hyundai. Abraham construyó una enorme chinampa, una isla de tierra sobre andamios. No sembró nada, como en un lote baldío. Así se titula la pieza: Empty Lot.

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Empty Lot se levanta sobre dos enormes andamios triangulares divididos por una pasarela sobre la cual pasean los visitantes. Sobre los andamios colocó una retícula de cajones triangulares de madera que fueron rellenados de tierra de unos 35 diferentes lugares: parques, jardines públicos y privados, y otras áreas verdes de Londres. Durante los seis meses que duró la instalación, crecieron todo tipo de plantas, tal y como crecen en cualquier pedazo de tierra abandonada a su suerte. En algunos de los casos parecen como bromas: en la tierra recogida del Buckingham Palace ha brotado un rosal; en la de una guardería de niños, unas opiáceas.

“El material principal es la esperanza”, dice Abraham en el video que presenta Empty Lot en la página de la Tate. Es la esperanza de que crezca algo, de que algo suceda. Desde luego, ya sucedieron muchas cosas. Igual que en los lotes baldíos, en esta escultura a gran escala crecieron yerbas (buenas y malas) y las críticas (buenas y malas), además de juegos, interpretaciones e ideas. Los galeristas de Abraham en México, José Kuri y Mónica Manzutto, relatan el momento en el que les dieron la noticia:

—La Tate ya tenía quizá veinte obras de Abraham dentro de la colección permanente, así que no fue una ocurrencia del momento —comienza José—. Pero es quizá la comisión más visible que hay en el mundo del arte, la más mediática. Era un compromiso enorme, tanto para la Tate como para el artista que escogieran, por esta visibilidad. A él se lo avisaron con dos años de antelación. El primer año fue absolutamente secreto. Lo sabían cuatro personas.

Los tres estaban en Múnich, en la inauguración de Abraham, cuando los llamó Achim Borchardt-Hume, director de exhibiciones en la Tate Modern, para hablar con ellos. Tomó un avión por la mañana y regresó a Londres por la tarde.

—Nos citó en el bar del museo y ahí nos avisó. Fue una mezcla gigante de sensaciones. Inmediatamente los tres pedimos un mezcal. “No los veo tan contentos”, dijo Achim Borchardt-Hume. Y sí estábamos muy contentos, pero fue como sacarse el tigre en la rifa: o lo domas o te devora.

Para Jonathan Jones, crítico de arte del periódico The Guardian, la de Cruzvillegas es la peor de las instalaciones del Turbine hasta la fecha. En una nota publicada el 16 de octubre del 2015, escribió: “No tiene poder estético, y da poco que pensar […] Esto es un arte que olvida su misión de inflamar el alma”. Sin embargo, Jeremy Hutchinson, artista conceptual de Londres, fue a visitar la pieza en varias ocasiones con algunos colegas. A él no parece importarle demasiado la ausencia de “el poder estético” de la pieza, y aunque no haya inflamado su alma, le ha hecho meditar y hacerse preguntas: “En resumen, todos estamos de acuerdo en que es una pieza exitosa. Sobre todo en comparación con otras instalaciones anteriores, que han sido o demasiado monumentales o no lo suficiente. ¡Es un reto! Creo que el acierto fue hacer una pieza de gran escala usando materiales muy rudimentarios, lo que esquiva de forma inteligente el problema de ‘demasiado monumentalista’. La pieza es un comentario sutil sobre la propiedad, y sobre el problema más importante que ahora enfrenta la comunidad artística en Londres: el territorio, y dónde carajos se supone que debemos colocarnos nosotros. En fin… Lo sentimos relevante”.

Abraham dice, mientras comemos albóndigas en salsa verde con su hija y su mujer, que para él ha sido uno de los proyectos más generosos para sí mismo porque ha podido darse el tiempo de hacer una gran investigación que le ha dado oportunidad de aprender sobre Gran Bretaña, su relación con el paisaje, la historia de su imperialismo:

—Aprendí sobre movimientos sociales que tienen que ver con el uso de espacios. Solamente el índice de conceptos para aproximarse a lo que nosotros en español llamamos “parque” es infinito, y cada uno de

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estos conceptos tiene su genealogía. Su relación política-económica-social-lingüística con la realidad es muy interesante. No estoy haciendo una apología de los británicos tampoco. Para nada: para mí es una aproximación en crisis, que desde mi circunstancia individual me genera un dislocamiento que me maravilla, en un sentido político (no puede ser de otra manera). Y me lleva a ver mis propias circunstancias de otra manera, naturalmente…

Después de una larga trayectoria en la que cada proyecto es un nuevo aprendizaje para él, la cantidad de información que ha acumulado es impresionante. Tal vez sea en sus textos, o en las conversaciones, donde esta acumulación de conocimiento se hace más evidente.

—Creo que en tus textos lo conectas todo de una manera muy peculiar, ¿no?

—Bueno… sí, pero en un sentido más estricto y análogo a la escultura que hago, creo que es más bien un apilamiento. Es un desorden.

—Pero aquí en tu casa todo está tan ordenado. Y la impresión siempre en tus esculturas es que hay un equilibrio, una lógica. Yo no diría que son caóticas.

—Ese orden que ves viene de la neurosis. Lo digo como algo positivo, no me molesta, soy así, tengo esa tendencia a poner las cosas de determinada manera. Y eso no tiene ninguna explicación. Es como poner las reglas de un juego. Está armado y después no sabes lo que va a pasar. Eso es lo que a mí me provoca mucho. Me genera muchísima felicidad. Que tú pones un orden, una estructura que parece muy bien planteada, y después es un puto desmadre donde no sabes qué va a pasar en lo aleatorio, en el caos, es lo que a mí me interesa.

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“El arte es la posibilidad de generar una investigación de largo plazo, en la que ocasionalmente se entregan informes a la sociedad”, dice Abraham Cruzvillegas.

Mientras tanto en Londres casi todos los recipientes de Empty Lot están llenos de plantas. Mucha gente pasa por allí para tirar semillas.

—Y ahí está la onda del optimismo. Que yo no creo mucho en eso del optimismo, eh…

—¡Cómo no! ¿No eres optimista?

—Nooo, no, no, no.

—Alejandra, ¿no crees que él es optimista? —le pregunto a su mujer para que Abraham pueda comer media albóndiga.

—¡Sí! Claro que eres optimista.

—Bueno, a ver, sobre todo en el contexto de esa pieza la idea no es tanto el optimismo sino la esperanza. Y

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no es la fe tampoco. La fe la perdí. Está pasando lo que tiene que pasar, y eso no depende de mí, y eso me da mucho gusto. Como la interpretación —como pasa en cualquier obra de arte— de la gente: el público no está tirando semillas: lo que tiran son ideas.

* * *

Para Guillermo Santamarina, artista, amigo de Abraham, y actual curador del Museo Carrillo Gil, la obra de la Tate es parte de un proceso reciente en el que el artista se está despojando de mecanismos anteriores. Santamarina piensa que la obra de Abraham ha sido en gran medida consecuencia de sus padres (a quienes recuerda como individuos extraordinarios). “Al igual que sus padres le encanta la amistad. Y no pierde este vínculo magisterial con las nuevas generaciones. Ha formado a muchos y ha conectado a muchos artistas entre sí. Y por eso mismo hubo este brinco internacional. Creo que Abraham fue una de las columnas de la Kurimanzutto, una de las antenas, con relaciones que él ha formado por su cuenta. También es un ególatra delirante. Eso está desde hace mucho tiempo, desde antes de que fuera reconocido. Siempre, siempre ha hablado mucho de él, de dónde viene, etcétera”, dice.

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Santamarina vio la pieza de la Tate en registros cuando se estaba montando. Le parece interesante el desarrollo orgánico, el proceso de crecimiento implícito en Empty Lot: “Siento que Abraham se está yendo hacia estructuras más y más silenciosas”, dice Guillermo, “casi discretas, casi inmatéricas, al permitir que la materia reaccione y vaya determinándose por sí sola. Cada día hace más acciones en la calle, un trabajo completamente efímero, en formato rumor. Está abandonando de alguna manera el objeto formal, la experiencia de la escultura”.

Acerca del gran impulso para la carrera de Abraham que supone la comisión de la Tate, Guillermo sonríe con un poco de misterio, como si eso no importara demasiado, y dice: “Él tiene una seguridad absoluta, y si les gusta qué bueno y si no también. Le resulta indiferente. Su obra sigue mutando. Pero sigue siendo él mismo. Tal vez lo que se está quedando atrás es precisamente este afán egolátrico, porque ya no le interesa tanto hablar de sí mismo, porque ahora tiene mucho más que decir que no pertenece a ese legado, a ese pasado. Ahora su necesidad de afirmarse lo está abandonando, se está perdiendo. Yo

encuentro que ese proceso está diluyéndose entre sus hijos”.

—Sí, bueno… Así es la vida… —replico.

—Bueno, para los que no tenemos hijos no es así —dice Guillermo—. Nosotros seguimos hablando de nosotros mismos.

* * *

Desde el año 2007, casi toda su obra se reúne bajo el mismo título, un proyecto a largo plazo denominado Autoconstrucción. A veces cambia de nombre: autodestrucción, reconstrucción, autoconfusión. El proyecto toma como punto de partida o como metáfora inicial la casa en la que nació y creció Abraham, en una colonia popular del sur de la ciudad, construida poco a poco, improvisando con los materiales disponibles. “Las premisas que me interesan tienen que ver con la posibilidad de entender (o inventar) la realidad a partir de dimensionar cada sitio donde uno se encuentre como una posible plataforma de creación a partir de la recuperación de los materiales a la mano” (de “Autoconstrucción: una introducción”, en La voluntad de los objetos, 2014, Sexto Piso).

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La práctica de este artista se extiende más allá de la escultura. Hace películas, danzas, textos, obras de teatro, dibujos, música, performance, arte efímero, y genera vínculos entre otros artistas. Hace unos años, de casualidad, me topé con el blog de la Galería de Comercio, ubicada en mi propio barrio, a unas cuadras de mi casa. Formaban parte de ella Abraham, Nuria Montiel, y otros tres artistas. Esta galería no era otra cosa más que una esquina pública, la de la avenida José Martí y la calle de Comercio, en la colonia Escandón. No tenía local, ni almacén, ni vendía nada. Era como una galería al revés: colectiva, utópica, efímera, no produjo ningún objeto mercantil. Desde el 2010 hasta el 2014 se presentaron allí decenas de acciones artísticas, como el Circuito antideportivo, en el que se invitaba a los participantes a una carrera en la que las reglas eran: no llevar ropa deportiva y no caminar ni correr de forma deportiva; o el Muestreo de flora y fauna en el que se recolectaron especímenes de plantas y animales de los alrededores de la esquina, que está cerca de un parquecito; en la cantina al otro lado de la calle se convocó una plática con dos biólogos que dieron cuenta del muestreo. Físicamente situada en la esquina del mercado de la Escandón, la Galería de Comercio estaba absolutamente fuera del mercado del arte.

Abraham, treinta años después de su primera exposición colectiva, se sigue preguntando qué es arte, qué es un objeto de arte. No deja de insistir en ello. Ha llegado a algunas conclusiones, que podrían cambiar de un momento a otro:

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—En uno de tus textos [del libro La voluntad de los objetos, 2014, Sexto Piso] describes el arte como un patrimonio de la humanidad. Un poco como lo es la ciencia, ¿no?

—El arte no es el producto, no es el objeto. Las obras de arte como tal las conocemos, son residuos de los procesos artísticos, son sobras, souvenirs, subproductos del arte. El arte es otra cosa, y eso es de lo que me ha gustado escribir. De nuevo, ¿dónde está el arte? ¿es el momento en el que el compositor redacta la partitura? ¿es el momento en el que se ejecuta la partitura? ¿la grabación? ¿o cuando yo hago tuttuuututu [chifla]?

—Está en todo eso, ¿no?

—Exactamente, sí. Pero el objeto en sí mismo no es la mejor evidencia del arte. O sea, el cassette, por poner un ejemplo ridículo, no es la sinfonía. Pero cuando tú ibas a la tienda, ibas a comprar la sinfonía.

—Bueno, pero el cassette traslada un poquito de lo que es el arte… con mucho ruido e interferencia…

—Sí, exactamente. Son vehículos, que no necesariamente comunican. Dicen que la comunicación es un vehículo, pero yo no creo en eso tampoco. Son objetos que procuran la proximidad a una obra de arte. Pero la obra de arte en sí sucede cuando te conmueve, cuando te hace pensar algo, cuestionar algo, preguntarte algo.

—Hay una incredulidad o desconfianza hacia el arte conceptual. ¿Qué crees que sucede, por qué esta reacción?

—Hay una percepción del arte que no necesariamente está atravesada de la voluntad de comprender, sino del prejuicio, y que no necesariamente viene de la gente externa al mundo del arte, sino también dentro del mundo del arte. Hay protagonistas que difieren de algunos modos de hacer arte, y hay críticos alebrestados en contra de lo que reconocemos como arte contemporáneo. Creo que es normal y que es signo de los tiempos que haya un contrapeso político de lo que aparece como algo “nuevo”. Nuevo entre comillas, porque lo que hoy llamamos arte contemporáneo tiene una tradición de al menos 100, 150 años. Además,

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yo creo que el público en general entiende lo que tiene que entender, porque todos tenemos una educación y un contexto distintos. Las interpretaciones multiplican la obra, la hacen ubicua. El arte exige una interpretación, y si no hay ejercicio interpretativo entonces no hay arte: hay un acto de veneración, una liturgia, es otra cosa, y yo eso lo encuentro peligroso…

—Pues sí, pero sigo pensando que es inquietante que haya como un enojo, una acusación, como si los artistas fueran caraduras, como si el arte fuera una manera de hacer dinero fácil.

—Sí. Pareciera que de alguna manera lo que pretende el artista es tomarle el pelo a la gente… En un sentido muy estricto, yo no hago obras para el público. Hago obras para hacerme preguntas a mí mismo. Querer preguntarme quién soy, eso es para lo que a mí el arte me sirve.
A mí. Pero es que yo no quisiera comunicar nada a nadie, realmente no tengo nada que comunicar, no sé quién soy. ¿Cómo voy a comunicar algo a alguien?

—¿No encuentras ese pensamiento un poco paralizante? Porque entonces, ¿qué es lo que te lleva a hacer arte?

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—Es una voluntad de entender, es la capacidad emancipadora de hacer esa pregunta en público. ¿Quién soy? ¿Por qué? ¿Para qué? Y ésa es una herramienta que comparto contigo o con quien se deje. Yo no estoy tratando de dar una enseñanza, o un mensaje. Esa voluntad didáctica del arte, a mí me parece perversísima. Tirar mensajes, enseñar algo a la gente, comunicarle… Yo no puedo con eso, me parece pavoroso.

—Hay un cierto optimismo en tu obra y en tus textos. Eso sí es comunicable.

—Claro, porque el motor real de todo es esa pregunta. ¿De dónde vengo? ¿Adónde voy? ¿Habrá boletos? (como dice Damián Ortega). Es pura incertidumbre, eso somos. No hay certezas. Retomando esa analogía que hiciste entre el trabajo de un científico y el trabajo de un artista: el neuroquímico tiene que pasarse toda su vida encerrado en un laboratorio haciéndose una pregunta.
Y probablemente nunca vaya a encontrar una respuesta.

—Sí… Tal vez encuentre otras preguntas, y otras respuestas diferentes…

—¡O tal vez no! Tal vez no… Por generaciones de científicos se han preguntado qué es un hoyo negro y qué es la energía que lo rodea. Hoy hubo una noticia sobre eso, que me parece fantástico, la escuché en la radio. Se están haciendo nuevas preguntas al respecto. Yo quisiera compartir esa responsabilidad, la del que se hace preguntas. No del que está obligado a dar respuestas. No creo que el arte sea para dar respuestas, ni la ciencia de hecho.

—¿Y entonces?

—¡El arte busca preguntas! En un sentido más amplio, la pregunta (para mí) es ¿qué es la identidad? (dentro de ese ¿quién soy yo?). Y yo llevo 30 años con esa pregunta. Soy mexicano, soy varón, soy hijo de éste y de ésta, de acuerdo a ciertas circunstancias, pero eso no es una respuesta para mí.

* * *

Nació en la Ciudad de México en 1968, el año de la matanza de Tlatelolco y las Olimpiadas. Es piscis. Creció en la colonia Ajusco, que no está en el Ajusco sino en el Pedregal, al sur de la Ciudad Universitaria.

Angulo, Annuska. “Construir a Abraham Cruzvillegas”. *Gatopardo*, May, 2016.
http://www.gatopardo.com/reportajes/construir-abraham-cruzvillegas/

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Sus padres son María de los Ángeles Fuentes, de Tacubaya, y Rogelio Cruzvillegas, de Nahuatzen, Michoacán. Ella es una activista social, comerciante y fundadora del Mercado de la Bola, él (fallecido) fue artesano y maestro en la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.

Abraham estudió Pedagogía en la UNAM, se licenció con una tesis sobre Joseph Beuys, y al mismo tiempo tomó algunas clases en la ENAP como oyente. Conoció a Damián Ortega en un taller de caricatura del Fisgón. Forma parte de la galería Kurimanzutto desde su inicio en 1999.

Dio clases de arte en la Esmeralda y en la ENAP hasta el 2004. Ha sido artista residente en Francia (en el estudio de Alexander Calder) e Italia (2004-2007), en Glasgow, Escocia (2008), Estados Unidos (2009) y Berlín (2010-2011). Lleva unos 15 años con Alejandra, su mujer. Cuando la conoció, no tenía coche, ni celular, y tomaba el pesero para ir a dar clases. Tienen dos hijos chiquitos, Ana y Damián; viven rodeados de plantas, objetos fantásticos y libros. Tiene muchos amigos.

* * *

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Desde la primera exposición de la Kurimanzutto en 1999 hasta dos o tres años después, los galeristas no consiguieron vender una sola escultura de Abraham, pero esto nunca les hizo dudar de que era uno de sus artistas más destacados. Según José Kuri, “el mercado jamás es un reflejo de la importancia de un artista, o de lo fundamental que puedan ser sus ideas: es sólo una variable más. En ocasiones —en muchas ocasiones— es al revés: el mercado distorsiona y complica [en el sentido negativo de la palabra], porque se va con cosas que son muy inmediatas, quizás seductoras a una primera instancia, y que después pueden llegar a ser huecas. Entonces, primero, de eso siempre hay que desconfiar, y segundo, creo que con los artistas que tocan temas más complejos, cuestionamientos más profundos, siempre cuesta más tiempo”.

Eduardo Abaroa, artista plástico, es amigo de Abraham desde principios de los noventa. Habla de la obra temprana de Abraham, que pasó casi inadvertida en México, y que es la que a él más le gusta: “Su primera exposición a gran escala, que se llamaba Round de Sombra, fue malentendida y pasada por alto. También hubo otra magnífica muestra, Artesanías Recientes, en Nahuatzen, Michoacán, en casa de su abuela. Allí trabajó con diferentes artesanos de la zona para elaborar piezas que eran aparatos terapéuticos disfuncionales. El gesto de ir a ese lugar tan lejano fue muy elocuente. Sólo fuimos como cinco espectadores. Cruzvillegas y otros artistas realmente internacionales del contexto de México se tardaron 10 o 15 años en empezar a vivir exclusivamente de lo que hacen. Todavía me acuerdo cuando Abraham me decía bastante decepcionado: “no vendo”.
Y eso que exhibía en una de las galerías importantes de México en ese momento, la OMR. Incluso ya como artista de Kurimanzutto no fue instantáneo. Requiere de mucho trabajo y hasta estrategia.

“La actitud de entender el arte como una actividad integral es una de las principales aportaciones de Cruzvillegas a la discusión. Haciendo un eco más de Beuys, él ha vivido su vida como una inmensa obra de arte, lo que no quiere decir nada romántico y cursi, o bueno, un poco… Lo que hace es intentar generar una discusión escabrosa, difícil, a partir de sus vivencias personales, incluso íntimas. Pero sin esos momentos de humor, sentimentalismo, confusión, etcétera, que a veces surgen en sus textos, en las obras, todo sería muy distinto y quizá no tan interesante. Al mismo tiempo el rigor y el nivel de compromiso son excepcionales.”

Hoy en día, esculturas que él vendió por dos mil pesos para pagar su renta se revenden por miles de dólares. No tiene más de seis o siete años que su trabajo se vende sistemáticamente y que él pueda vivir “de esto”. Ha sido profesor, ha escrito, ha hecho ilustración, paletas de melón, todo lo que pueda generar

un ingreso. "Y no me causaría ningún conflicto tener que hacerlo de nuevo. Yo tuve que crear mis propias formas de generar recursos para continuar con mi investigación, y no producir mercancía en una aspiración de pertenencia en la que yo hiciera algo que pudiera funcionar en ese espectro."

* * *

Las esculturas de Abraham son agrupaciones de cosas, objetos colocados en un equilibrio precario, muchas veces a punto de caerse. Son evocadoras, sarcásticas, elocuentes, ácidas, algunas muy bellas. Las últimas piezas tienen títulos largos, que en ocasiones hacen referencia al propio autor (con el verbo en gerundio, el título describe situaciones de la vida diaria, como A new self-portrait definitely unfinished, unstable, handmade and coherent with the landscape, cursing on the per capita Income at the ñhañhu region, 2012). En ocasiones improvisa con los materiales que encuentra en el mismo lugar donde vaya a ser la exposición, ya sea Seúl, Múnich o Londres. Guillermo Santamarina piensa que Abraham ha sido un artista que trabaja muy puntualmente con el concepto de la sitioespecifidad.

—En algún momento yo trabajé con él —relata—. Todavía no era el Abraham de ahora, pero estaba cerca de serlo. Sugerí y logré llevarlo a la Bienal de São Paulo, en 2003 o 2004, no me acuerdo [fue en el 2002]. Primero fuimos a hacer una visita de scouting, y pues… Ya no le vi más el pelo. Por ahí aparecía con cosas que había comprado o que se había encontrado. Nada más como pensando qué materiales podía usar en su idea de sitioespecifidad. Para cuando me di cuenta, ya había cambiado todo, todo lo que habíamos mandado desde México se quedó en una caja, y el pabellón ya no era lo que habíamos pensado. Yo ya no tenía nada que decir. De todas formas, yo no fui el curador, sólo ayudé a que él viniera.

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–Pero, ¿qué es lo que presentó entonces?

–Pues no sé, lo cambió mil veces. Yo estaba, tengo que decirlo, un poco mosqueado. Y un día a la noche, ya con todo montado, llegó al cuarto y me entregó un libro maravilloso sobre el desarrollo del arte de la plumaria en Brasil. Ya con eso me calló el hocico para siempre. Ahí lo tengo… Él es un erudito. Yo siempre lo pienso como nuestro Harry Smith.

* * *

En su casa hay unas vitrinas grandes que forman parte de la pared que divide el comedor/sala del patio exterior. En las repisas de vidrio, conviven en orden todo tipo de objetos: muñequitos de plástico y esculturas de piedra, semillas y piezas de maquetas, chácharas de ayer y hoy, objetos caros y baratos; una verdadera democracia de cosas. Así, de la misma forma, sin jerarquías, en un orden subjetivo y cambiante, impuesto por él mismo, entre las influencias más importantes para Abraham están: sus padres, Marcel Duchamp, sus vecinos de la colonia Ajusco donde creció, Joseph Beuys —sobre quien escribió su tesis—, el bisabuelo de su mujer, el músico y compositor Julián Carrillo, que desarrolló una teoría de música microtonal; guerrilleros, artistas, antropólogos, cineastas, familiares, filósofos, amigos, y ahora sus dos hijos, forman una colectividad que vive de manera horizontal en el mundo de Cruzvillegas, influenciando su obra, modificando su manera de hacer arte.

Recientemente se hizo de un cuaderno digital, donde puede tomar notas que pasan directamente a la computadora por bluetooth. En esos cuadernos dibujó "personas que le caen bien" para el catálogo de Empty Lot. Me muestra los dibujos: algunos están manchados de café. Los hace calcando los rostros directamente de la computadora: pone el papel sobre la pantalla y así él va realizando estos dibujos con puras líneas, sin sombras, algunos con una resolución casi geométrica.

Angulo, Annuska. “Construir a Abraham Cruzvillegas”. *Gatopardo*, May, 2016.
http://www.gatopardo.com/reportajes/construir-abraham-cruzvillegas/

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Entre sus dibujos de “gente que le cae bien” están personas tan dispares como Vasco de Quiroga y Yoko Ono; Günter Grass y el artista argentino Eduardo Costa; el pedagogo Paulo Freire y Antonioni; Maya Deren, Mercedes Sosa, Violeta Parra, Digna Ochoa, Patti Smith, Eva Hesse, Hannah Höch…

Las vitrinas de la sala serán uno de los primeros recuerdos de su hijo, que gatea hacia ellas y pega su cara en el vidrio. Ana, de tres años, y Damián, de nueve meses, como suelen hacer todos los niños, han cambiado la vida de sus padres. Alejandra es abogada y trabaja en asuntos de derechos de migrantes (en concreto, de los migrantes centroamericanos que pasan por México). Los niños se mueven entre piezas de arte, plantas y juguetes de colores. “Ha cambiado todo, sí, claro, pero nunca plantearía este tiempo como un sacrificio. Es un momento que se va rápido y no regresa”, dice Abraham ahora que tiene que adaptar sus exposiciones a la agenda escolar de Ana, y que el sueño será intermitente hasta que Damián duerma toda la noche seguida.

* * *

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Le pregunto cómo ve el panorama actual del arte en relación con las nuevas generaciones. ¿Qué se necesita hoy en día para sobrevivir como artista? ¿Qué puedes tú aconsejar a un muchacho que está estudiando arte desde tu perspectiva?, pregunto. Después de una larga introducción en la que establece la dificultad de responder a una cuestión así (“implica mucha responsabilidad”), reconoce que ha tenido que enfrentarse a ella en muchas ocasiones durante su larga experiencia como maestro. Como yo lo hago ahora, sus alumnos le preguntaron directamente “cómo le haces para exponer, para viajar, para vender”.

—Hay quien dice claramente: “el arte es una estructura en la que las relaciones públicas y la visibilidad (como la que te puede dar las redes sociales ahora) ayudan; y lo otro, casi todo lo demás (o sea, el arte) es intrascendente”. Y yo lo planteo —con quien se deja— en un sentido un poco más crítico: el arte es la posibilidad de generar una investigación de largo plazo, en la que ocasionalmente se entregan informes a la sociedad que ampara que tú seas artista en un tiempo de mierda. Y esos informes (esculturas, poemas, películas, etcétera) están sujetos a una evaluación: ¿Cuáles son los criterios para evaluarlos? ¿La crítica, el mercado, el éxito, la fama, el enriquecimiento? Esos criterios dependen de las necesidades de cada quien —no puede operar un mismo sistema para todos—. Es decir: “Me está yendo bien porque estoy vendiendo un chingo, porque me invitan a exponer mucho, porque tengo más novias, porque gano mucho dinero” o “me está yendo bien porque tengo la posibilidad de generar un lenguaje propio, de hacer algo que no existía antes, que nunca antes nadie pudo haber dicho de una manera que sólo yo puedo hacer”. No se puede poner en el mismo nivel esas categorías de análisis. El éxito para éste y para el otro son cosas muy distintas. Creo que no hay manera de transmitir un modo de evaluar ese éxito. Ahora, lo que yo diría es: no quites el dedo del renglón. No echarse para atrás, no arrugarse, no rajarse, pero tampoco hacerse pendejos. Hay que insistir.

* * *

Fui a visitar a Martín Núñez, un artista y skater de la Ciudad de México que desde hace 7 años le alquila una parte de su casa a Abraham como taller. Fue su alumno y hoy es uno de sus grandes amigos. La casa la construyeron sus abuelos en 1936 en una colonia tranquila de la Ciudad de Méxio, cuyas calles tienen nombres de personas equis, sin apellidos: Amalia, Sara, Abel, Graciela. Me pregunto quiénes serán (¿tal vez son personajes de óperas, o de obras teatrales?)

Martín es un ser tranquilo, con una seguridad absoluta en su propia incertidumbre. De alguna manera me

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recuerda a Abraham. Pinta, hace esculturas, tiene una marca de patines y ropa, y ha utilizado el espacio público como soporte para alguna de sus obras. Por eso lo buscó Abraham años después de haber sido su maestro en La Esmeralda: para invitarlo a participar con una acción en la Galería de Comercio.

—Mi idea fue invitar a mis amigos que patinan y que subieran por una rampa e hicieran un dibujo en la pared al azar con las líneas que genera la patineta con el polvo que recogen en las ruedas. En ese momento él tenia una camioneta, y vino a casa porque se iba a llevar la rampa. Entonces acababan de desalojar el piso de arriba de mi casa, y él mostró interés en rentar el espacio.

Así que desde entonces conviven en el mismo patio, y ahora entiendo por qué Abraham me dijo que Martín era su cómplice. Aquí los dos comparten momentos de intimidad, gustos, ideas, albures, juegos de palabras. Han hecho algunas esculturas juntos. Se conocen bien.

—A veces parece que te está atacando, —me dice Martín cuando le platico de mis entrevistas con Abraham—, o que se está defendiendo. Y bueno, yo entiendo por qué es así. Su trabajo no fue digerido en seguida. Me viene a la mente una revista, la Poliéster. Hubo un número en el que venía una nota sobre una exposición que hizo Abraham que tenía que ver con el boxeo. El crítico hablaba muy mal de esa exposición. Nunca ha sido el artista más querido del país, vamos. Pero cuando yo viajo me doy cuenta cómo lo quieren, cómo lo conocen fuera. Él tiene un impacto muy distinto afuera que el que tiene en su país. De hecho, no sé, igual me equivoco, pero siento que Abraham es de esos artistas que tal vez no tienen su justo valor en su país, y en su contexto. Él ha sabido, de forma muy inteligente, cómo salirse de esa aparente frivolización de su trabajo conceptualizándolo a partir de la idea de Autoconstrucción. Ha sido como un jugador de ajedrez.

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Después de conversar, Martín me invita a conocer ambos talleres. El de Abraham ocupa tres habitaciones de la parte superior de la casa, dos pequeñas y una más grande, y entre las tres forman una ele. Hay buena luz que entra por ventanas que dan a la calle y al patio interior de la casa. Uno puede imaginar la alegría que pudo sentir un artista sin taller al encontrar este lugar.

De aquí salen muchas de las "sobras de arte" de Abraham, sus reportes, sus souvenirs. Hay anaqueles de metal con libros, documentos, revistas y vinilos. Sobre dos largas mesas se secan papeles recién pintados que en algún momento sirvieron para algo y que Abraham cubre con pintura acrílica por uno de los lados: boletos de avión, páginas de revista con algún artículo, poemas, imágenes interesantes, listas de pendientes: ese universo de papel que acompaña la vida cotidiana. Son para una serie de piezas que lleva haciendo ya un rato, que a veces llevan el título de "autorretratos ciegos": los papelitos, colocados en grandes grupos, y volteados sobre la pared de la galería o la sala del museo, muestran sólo la parte pintada.

Pedazos de madera, unas botas; ruedas, muchas ruedas. En la parte que ocupa Martín, además de sus pinturas y esculturas, hay patines, que a veces pasan rodando al taller de Abraham.

El taller no está abarrotado y como en su casa todo está ordenado bajo una taxonomía cruzvilleguesca. La palabra taxonomía me hace pensar en taxidermia. Los papelitos estuvieron vivos un día, y ahora al voltearlos y cubrirlos de pintura acrílica rosa, Abraham los diseca, y algo de esa vida que tuvieron perdura en ellos, oculta, secreta o cancelada.

La palabra "pepenar" hoy en día en México tiene un sesgo despectivo, y me gustaría que no fuera así, porque suena muy bien junto a "pedagogo". Viene de la palabra náhuatl pepena, que quiere decir "escoger o recoger". Que es lo que creo que hace Abraham, el pepenador pedagogo autodidacta: recoge y escoge,

Angulo, Annuska. “Construir a Abraham Cruzvillegas”. *Gatopardo*, May, 2016.
http://www.gatopardo.com/reportajes/construir-abraham-cruzvillegas/

escoge y recoge. Pienso que su trabajo se parece al de un bailarín cuando improvisa, que efectúa sus movimientos en un instante de decisión subjetiva que no tiene explicación lógica pero que se afinca en todo el conocimiento y la experiencia del ejecutante; y que a veces tiene éxito y a veces fracasa. Abraham lee, piensa, conversa, escribe y de vez en cuando, con todo eso, improvisa esculturas, películas, danzas, textos, e insiste.

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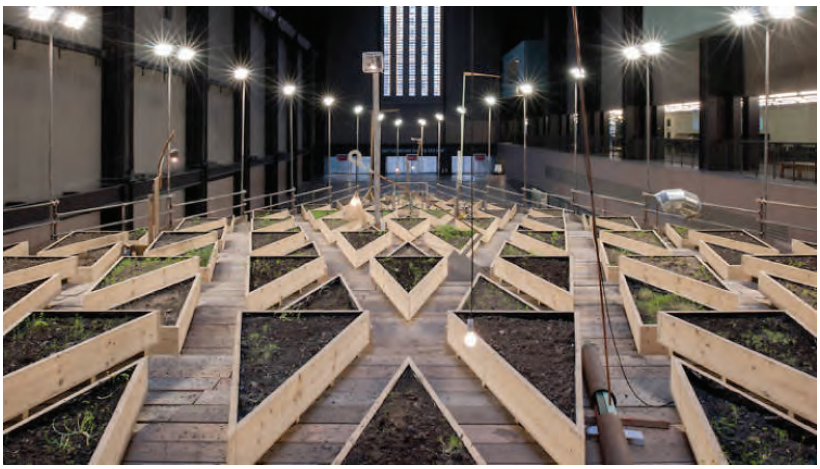
Matt Breen. «What' s sprouting in Tate Modern' s Turbine Hall?», *Time Out London*, February 15, 2016.
http://www.timeout.com/london/blog/whats-sprouting-in-tate-moderns-turbine-hall-021516

What's sprouting in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall?

Matt Breen
February 15 2016



Joe Humphrys

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When Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas's 'Empty Lot' opened in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall last October, it drew mixed reactions. The installation consists of 240 triangular wooden boxes, each containing soil taken from a different location in London. But, with nothing growing in them, it looked a bit barren. A sense of expectation hung over the piece.

So, when I check in on 'Empty Lot' I'm relieved to discover that it isn't empty any more. Nearly every planter has turned green. 'The piece is evolving, transforming,' says a delighted Cruzvillegas as we walk through the installation. 'It now talks about local identities. You can see there's a conviviality here.'

Matt Breen. «What' s sprouting in Tate Modern' s Turbine Hall?», *Time Out London*, February 15, 2016.
http://www.timeout.com/london/blog/whats-sprouting-in-tate-moderns-turbine-hall-021516

Many different plants are jostling for space, in true London fashion. Roy Vickery and Sarah Davey of the South London Botanical Institute are on hand to identify them. There are those you'd probably expect – stinging nettles, dandelions – and those you probably wouldn't. In the soil from Hampstead Heath, chinese chives and garlic mustard have appeared ('Probably escaped from someone's garden,' says Vickery), while opium poppies have started to grow in – wait for it – the earth from a primary school in Finchley. 'No need for concern,' Vickery assures us. 'Few poppies produce a worthwhile amount of opium.' In Clapham Common's planter, an oak tree sapling is pushing its way through the soil. 'If this was left here, it could end up being 70 feet tall and going through the roof!' says Davey.

Not that the beds have been left entirely untended. 'We didn't want to impose any rules for visitors, apart from "no climbing in",' says Tate curator Mark Godfrey. 'So it was interesting to discover YouTube videos of guerrilla gardeners throwing beans and seeds into the beds. Look!' He points to a ball of compressed soil, sprouting little green shoots. 'That's a seed bomb.'

And what does the artist make of these interventions? 'I don't have a problem with it,' says Cruzvillegas. 'They're gestures of hope.' It's undeniably heartening to see life grow in the austerity of the Turbine Hall. The show is running for another two months, and as Davey points out: 'They're two good months for plants.' The rest of London might be still battling through winter but, at Tate Modern, spring has already sprung.

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Ariane van de Ven. «CoBo Social features Ariane van de Ven on Abraham Cruzvillegas at Chantal Croussel Gallery, Miami Art Basel 2015», *CoBo Social*, January 10, 2016.
https://www.cobosocial.com/uncategorized/top-10-latin-american-artists-to-follow-in-miami-art-basel-2015/?utm_campaign=partnership_art&utm_medium=article&utm_source=chantal-croussel-gallery

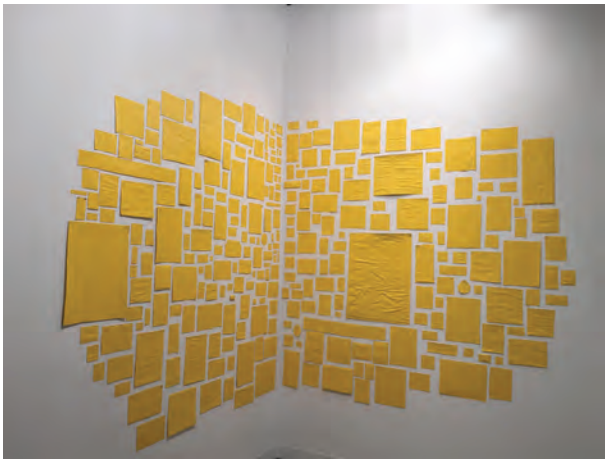
Top 10 Latin American Artists to Follow in Miami Art Basel 2015

Ariane van de Ven
10 Jan 2016

With its geographical specificity, the opening of Latin American Art Museum (LAAM) and the blooming art fairs in December every year, Miami is becoming the centre stage for the discoveries and showcasing of new and old talents from Latin America.

In deed, collectors and gallery owners from other regions rushed to the LAAM to see the over 1,000 works of mostly Latin American art currently showing at the museum as part of the collection. Artists including Wilfredo Lam, Roberto Matta, Rufino Tamayo, Joquin Torres Garcia, Carlos Cruz Diez, Jesus Rafael Soto, Fernando Botero, etc., among many others. With the rising economic power from the region, Latin American artists are getting more and more international attention and chances to show their work in other continents.

As a trend expert, it's becoming a habit for me to go to Miami with a clear intention to check out the Latin American artists. Nobody would deny that Miami finds its best mood in the company of the fiery high spirit of the Latino! Here are the top 10 LatAm artists to continue to follow after the Miami Fever!



Abraham Cruzvillegas
@Chantal Croussel Gallery

The Mexican conceptual artist is known for his work with found objects. This particular piece, an accumulation of yellow acrylic painted on paper, reflects the sense of humour of the artists with its title: *Blind self portrait listening to Arsenio Rodríguez singing 'Dame un Cachito Pa' Huelé' as I walk back to the ice cream shop to buy half a liter of mamey sorbet (…).*

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Chantal Croussel

Rachel Spence. «Abraham Cruzvillegas: Empty Lot, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London», *Financial Times.com*, October 13, 2015.
http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/182600d6-71b0-11e5-9b9e-690fdae72044.html

FINANCIAL TIMES

Abraham Cruzvillegas: Empty Lot, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London

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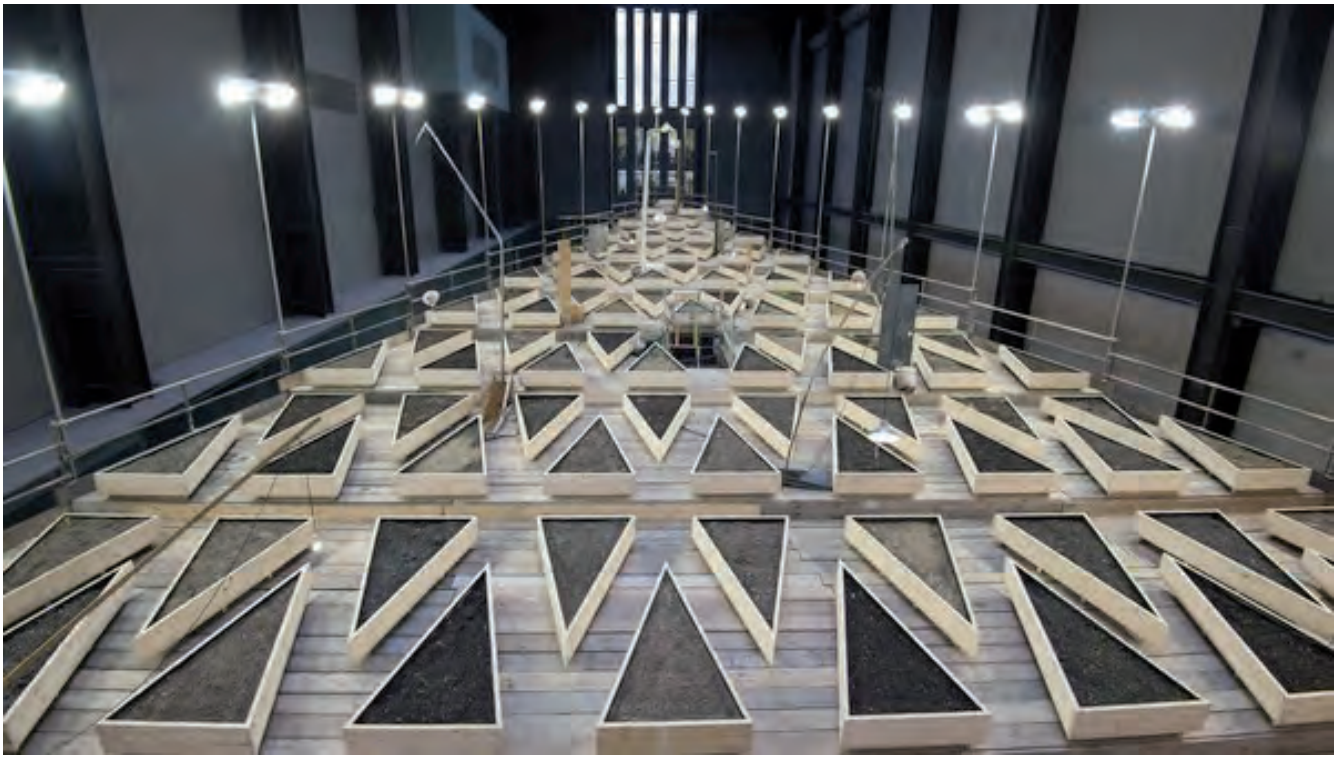

Abraham Cruzvillegas' 'Empty Lot' installation in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. Photo: Lauren Hurley/PA

Even the poster which advertises Abraham Cruzvillegas' new installation at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall demands a double take. It's not an image which arrests our attention. It's the title. In a city where wasteland and wilderness have never been more precious nor more threatened, the phrase "Empty Lot" calls to Londoners with the promise of disappearing Eden.

The three-dimensional reality does not disappoint. Enter the Turbine Hall on the lower level and Empty Lot rears up above you like the prow of a vast ship, its triangular foredeck perched on a keel of scaffolding, its perimeters bordered by willowy lights that loom above it like illuminated masts.

The mezzanine level delivers a different perspective. Fore and aft of the viewing platform immaculate rows of triangular plots filled with soil, bordered by wooden frames, stream back through the hall's magnificent volumes on stepped terraces.

Squint out the detail and you are gazing at a contemporary, minimalist cousin of the Russian constructivists. Those tidy, blank triangles cannot but evoke the Utopian politics of El Lissitzky as he sent his "red wedge" boldly among "the whites".

A similar idealism animates Empty Lot. Each of its allotments has been filled with soil scavenged from

Rachel Spence. «Abraham Cruzvillegas: Empty Lot, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London», *Financial Times.com*, October 13, 2015.
http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/182600d6-71b0-11e5-9b9e-690fdae72044.html

FINANCIAL TIMES

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

a different locale including a shoal of London schools and parks, Hampton Court Palace, the Horniman Museum and Garden, London Wetland Centre and even the gardens of Tate staff. With quiet ingenuity, Cruzvillegas has brought the city's green spaces within one of its most popular cultural ones.

If our times were less out of joint, Empty Lot would lack the air of vulnerable yet hopeful melancholy which makes it so powerful. But when land is being gobbled up for oil, property development and industrial farming with such alarming disregard for social and environmental consequences, the sculpture is a clarion call to the consciences of developers across the world.

With a major exhibition at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis behind him and a host of showings at international biennales, Cruzvillegas made his name via the objet trouvé. He is best known for his autoconstrucción series, which assembles improbable roomscapes — as if Heath Robinson was channelling the Freudian uncanny — from scavenged junk. Influences behind Empty Lot include the Latin American protest movements which called for ordinary people to be granted decent land rights, the chinampas — cultivated agricultural islands created by Aztecs when what is now the city of Mexico was essentially a large lake — and pioneering contemporary land artists such as Walter De Maria.

Like De Maria, whose 1977 installation "Earth Room" covered the floor of a Manhattan building with earth, Cruzvillegas has chosen not to plant anything in his soil beds. Yet green shoots are already sprouting. Someone has thrown down an apple. Undoubtedly, guerrilla gardeners will scatter their own seeds over the coming months. The result is a work of art which works on more levels than the Shard: as process, as performance, as politics and as spectacle. Cruzvillegas says he hopes it will be somewhere "that something can grow out of nothing". Like a green-fingered Beckett, his less-is-more philosophy makes him a seer for our times.

'Hyundai Commission 2015: Abraham Cruzvillegas: Empty Lot' runs to April 3, tate.org.uk

María Minara. « El Escarabajo del Arte contemporáneo », *El País Semanal*, September 16, 2015, pp. 61-63.

EL ESCARABAJO DEL ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO

El mexicano Abraham Cruzvillegas es el segundo artista latinoamericano que se enfrenta al desafío de ocupar la Sala de Turbinas de la Tate Modern. En el 'hall' del museo londinense instalará sus esculturas, improvisadas y amontonadas, testimonio de su empeño por construir sin consumir.

POR **MARÍA MINERA**
FOTOGRAFÍA DE **EDGARDO CONTRERAS**

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María Minara. « El Escarabajo del Arte contemporáneo », *El País Semanal*, September 16, 2015, pp. 61-63.

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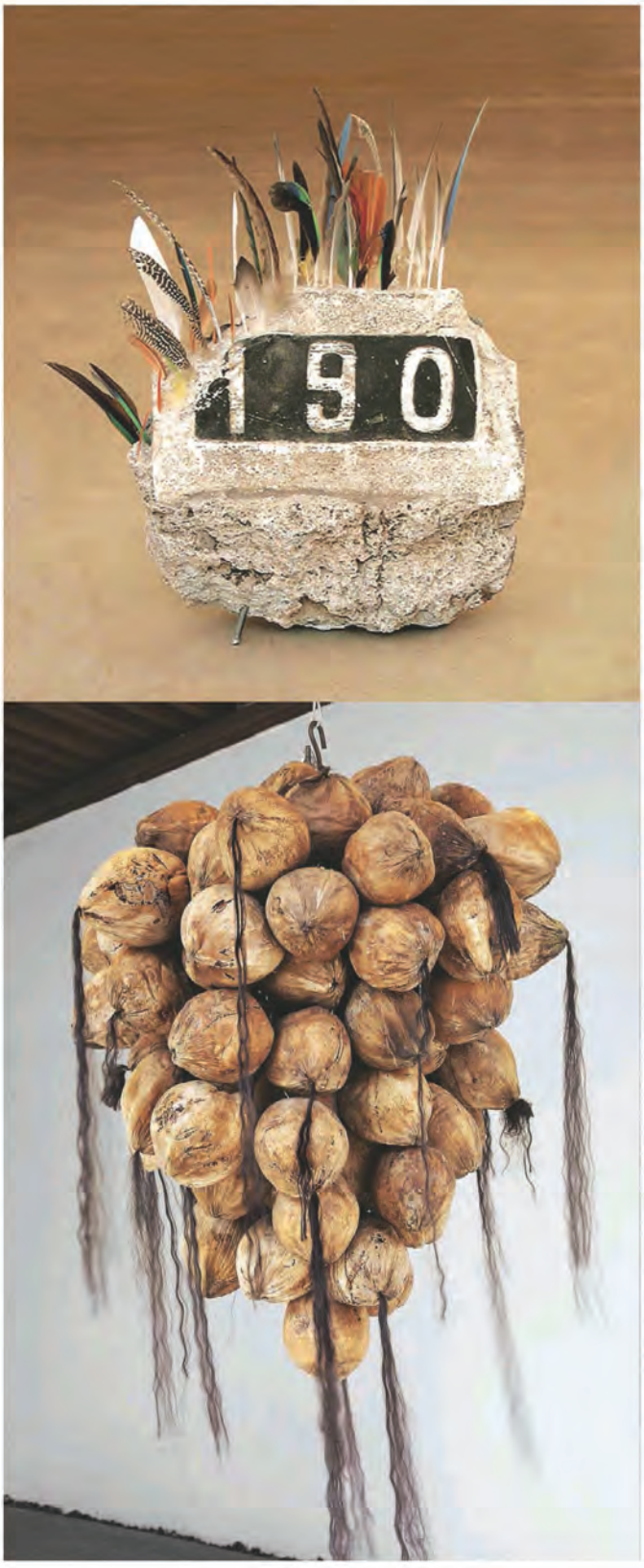
Abraham Cruzvillegas (Ciudad de México, 1968) es un artista autodidacta. Lo cual no significa que no haya estudiado, y mucho, pero según un complejo programa educativo que diseñó para sí mismo, ajeno a las escuelas de arte, y que, además del paso por la carrera de Pedagogía, involucró una serie de viajes por el Estado mexicano de Michoacán, de donde es originario su padre, un indígena purépecha, para construir un modelo de aprendizaje "a partir del uso de las manos". Según relata, anduvo cinco años de comunidad en comunidad, acompañado por su abuela, "para aprender las distintas técnicas artesanales: desde martillar cobre, tejer un sarape o tallar piedra, hasta hacer queso". Lo que buscaba Cruzvillegas, sin embargo, no era trasladar directamente esos saberes específicos al terreno del arte; más bien se trataba de lograr una comprensión profunda de los procesos productivos artesanales y del papel que desempeñan las manos en la transformación de la materia prima en un objeto con valor, no solo utilitario, sino sobre todo simbólico, "de cosa casi mágica", añade. Esa experiencia formativa derivó en una obra, realizada en 1993, que ponía en relación, "muy à la Fluxus", un piano de cola con el telar con el que su abuelo y sus tíos llevaban décadas produciendo gabanes de lana. Los dos instrumentos –uno para hacer música; el otro, abrigos– aparecían conectados por una manta larguísima tejida por él mismo con lana de ovejas negras.

Así que, además de las lecturas de Heidegger, Freire o Lévi-Strauss, de una tesis escrita en torno al proyecto educativo de Joseph Beuys y de algunas clases sueltas de historia del arte y de dibujo, los viajes de la mano de su abuela –"que fue como un Virgilio, pues no es fácil que te dejen entrar a las comunidades indígenas. Eres visto como un →



DOBLE PÁGINA ANTERIOR
Aprendiz perpetuo. La obra de madera y formica *Subtly Miserable* (2007), y el artista, fotografiado en su casa en la colonia San Miguel Chapultepec de México DF.

ESTA PÁGINA
Objetos mágicos. Arriba, *The Invincible* (2002), y abajo, *La familia*, realizada con cocos, pelo artificial, cable de acero y pegamento.

PÁGINA SIGUIENTE
Autorretratos. *Blind Self Portrait as a Post-Thatcherite Deaf Lemon Head. For K. M.* (2011); abajo, *Self Portrait Giving a Generous Tip Forgetting about the Oil Crisis* (2012).

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"Juego con los objetos, los apilo, y cuando están a punto de caerse me detengo. Me gusta esa inestabilidad provocada"

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María Minara. « El Escarabajo del Arte contemporáneo », *El País Semanal*, September 16, 2015, pp. 61-63.

turista"–ayudaron a Cruzvillegas a formular el modelo de trabajo en el que basaría sus investigaciones: "Siento que no he soltado la preponderancia del proceso de aprendizaje de esos años: cómo seguir aprendiendo como premisa principal". Y por eso, frente a algunas de sus piezas, uno puede tener la sensación de asistir a una suerte de lección de anatomía, pues a tal punto está puesta aquí en duda la noción de obra acabada que por momentos parecería que el artista ha diseccionado sus esculturas para mostrarnos más el funcionamiento que una fina envoltura. Algo parecido a la vista que nos ofrece un reloj que ha sido abierto y que, sin embargo, sigue marchando. Aquí tampoco la maquinaria se detiene, como si la escultura estuviera en vías de construirse a sí misma frente a nuestros ojos. Sus obras tienen también un aire de prototipos experimentales: aparatos que el aprendiz perpetuo construye, con lo que tiene a mano, para demostrar alguna conjetura (le gusta decir que su trabajo en realidad consiste casi únicamente en hacerse preguntas). Solo que, al contrario de lustrosos robots, lo que vemos aquí es la manera en que materiales en desuso –cajas de cartón, muebles, latas, palos de escoba, botellas, pedazos de madera– recobran un sentido práctico –piezas organizadas para sostener una estructura– según una estética de la improvisación y el amontonamiento.

El proceso que lleva a la obra puede llegar a ser muy largo, "porque, como el escarabajo", explica Cruzvillegas, "primero acumulo y acumulo y acumulo, hasta que en algún punto hago uso de algo de eso, pero porque lo necesito: un alambre me puede servir para amarrar dos cosas o un zapato para atorar una caja, por ejemplo. Pero no hay una estrategia, en el sentido de que vaya al estudio y haga un boceto de lo que voy a hacer". Más bien lo que hay es un trabajo cercano al del arquitecto: muchas veces de lo que se trata es de ir sumando capas o pisos. "En mi estudio juego con los objetos, los apilo, un poco como un Jenga, y cuando están a punto de caerse, ahí me detengo. Me gusta esa inestabilidad provocada, esos juegos de equilibrio, totalmente a propósito". Todo esto tiene lugar en la planta alta de una casa de la colonia Guadalupe Tepeyac, al norte de Ciudad de México, a la que el artista se desplaza (tarda una hora en coche, por lo menos) tomando el camino que lleva a la famosa basílica de Guadalupe. En ese segundo piso, él y sus asistentes llevan a cabo labores diversas: desde las propias del escarabajo recolector –que

ESTA DOBLE PÁGINA **Construir sin consumir.** Arriba, *Menu in Progress* (2005); en el centro, *A New Self-Portrait as a Mismeasured Punctuated Lack of Equilibrium (with Denim)* (2015). Abajo, a la izquierda, *Autorretrato muy enamorado y apretando el culo* (2010), y a la derecha, el artista, que en octubre desembarca en la Tate Modern londinense.

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"Como el escarabajo, primero acumulo, acumulo y acumulo, hasta que hago uso de algo. Pero no hay una estrategia"

hace cuidadoso acopio de reservas– hasta las del pintor –que, por ejemplo, cubre de acrílico la superficie de los papeles que la vida le va dejando (servilletas, sobres, notas de gastos, boletos de tren, envoltorios, recortes de periódicos)–. Por ahora, sin embargo, Cruzvillegas pasa más tiempo en su casa, en el barrio de San Miguel Chapultepec, debido a la llegada de su segundo hijo. Así que su mesa de trabajo está hoy llena de elementos contradictorios: libros y cuadernos junto al cojín y la manta para que el bebé haga la siesta. Nada que preocupe al artista, desde luego: su tema es precisamente lo caótica y fragmentaria que puede ser, a veces, la vida.

Y si sus esculturas parecen más los cimientos que el cascarón es porque, a grandes rasgos, eso es lo que está en la base de lo que Cruzvillegas llama "autoconstrucción"; un postulado que, dice, "tiene que ver con el desarrollo del capitalismo, con la modernidad entendida como consumo. He hecho propios estatutos de un discurso artístico de una generación anterior, que no tienen que ver con un arte proveniente del consumo, sino de la idea de reciclar". Sin embargo, a diferencia, por ejemplo, del arte *povera*, que buscaba deteriorar la experiencia del objeto dentro de la cultura de consumo de las galerías de arte, Cruzvillegas usa la precariedad para producir otro tipo de tensión, al retomar una serie de operaciones que más que del arte provienen del contexto en el que creció: una colonia que migrantes rurales –pioneros, los llama él– en busca de mejores oportunidades de vida establecieron en los sesenta sobre un terreno cubierto de roca volcánica a las entonces orillas de Ciudad de México. Allí, como en tantos otros asentamientos incrustados en los mapas oficiales de las grandes metrópolis del mundo, las casas se autoconstruyen de una manera intuitiva en "un momento en que se cruzan la voluntad visual, la urgencia del confort, el ingenio funcional y la escasez monetaria".

No cabe duda de que haber vivido en una casa en permanente autoconstrucción lo inspiró para incorporar en su trabajo algo de ese espíritu constructivo orgánico. Décadas de añadiduras, modificaciones y ajustes paulatinos que terminaron siendo "materia prima de una observación práctica". Pero, como ha dicho varias veces, no es que le interese "presentar modelos de arquitectura de la gente pobre" para el público de los museos o las bienales. Más bien la idea es producir un tipo de escultura que podríamos llamar de circunstancia: pues no es resultado de un diseño previo, sino de la pura contingencia y la capacidad para trabajar con lo que hay. En ese sentido, la autoconstrucción se refiere específicamente a una estética de la creatividad en condiciones restrictivas. Cómo construir algo sin consumir es la cuestión aquí.

Ciertamente, algo parecido a un estilo se deriva del principio estructural de las casas autoconstruidas, pues como los volúmenes se añaden a lo largo del tiempo, sin planeación alguna, la apariencia suele ser disparatada. Pero esto se debe a que las soluciones dependen, a decir de Cruzvillegas, de "necesidades y situaciones concretas, como hacer una nueva habitación, modificar un techo, mejorar o cancelar un espacio". De ahí que a una pared de ladrillos pueda seguir otra pintada de rosa; que los marcos de las ventanas sean muchas veces distintos, o que las varillas queden a la vista, para reanudar la edificación en un mejor momento. Y sin que sus esculturas sean espejos directos de esta lógica visual tendente a lo heteróclito, sí remiten vagamente a ella, a través de la acumulación de materiales con propiedades diversas y paradójicas. Texturas, tamaños, densidades, superficies y colores distintos que, no obstante, hablan solo tangencialmente de arquitectura, pues lo suyo es demostrar que "la actividad humana produce forma".

"Es cursi, si quieres, pues hay un grado muy alto de optimismo", reconoce el artista, "porque está vinculado a la esperanza, por lo menos en el ambiente en que crecí. Tal vez no tienes dinero, pero tienes otro capital. Un capital mucho más cálido que el monetario, y que en lo que toca a construir una casa significa mucho, porque no necesitas un arquitecto, no necesitas un presupuesto, no necesitas planeación, no necesitas permiso. El capital, siendo distinto, se hace entonces inmenso".

Un capital que pondrá nuevamente a prueba a partir del 13 de octubre, cuando inaugure el proyecto que ya prepara para la Sala de Turbinas que le ha encargado la Tate Modern de Londres. Cruzvillegas será el segundo artista latinoamericano, después de Doris Salcedo, en enfrentarse a tamaño desafío. La aproximación, sin embargo, será parecida a la de sus trabajos anteriores, solo que con una hipótesis un poco más extrema. "Incluso en las peores circunstancias, algo puede suceder". La cosa, entonces, será ver si sucede, y qué sucede, a partir de poner en juego las condiciones mínimas –y casi hostiles– en las que podría gestarse, o no, esa esperanza de la que habla ●

Nicholas Forrest. «Tate Modern Names Abraham Cruzvillegas for Inaugural Hyundai Commission»,
Blouin Art Info, January 22, 2015.
http://uk.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1073980/tate-modern-names-abraham-cruzvillegas-for-inaugural-hyundai

BLOUIN ARTINFO

Tate Modern Names Abraham Cruzvillegas for Inaugural Hyundai Commission

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Installation view of the exhibition Abraham Cruzvillegas: The Autoconstrucción Suites 2013, at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London, Kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris)

RELATED

ARTISTS
Abraham Cruzvillegas

London's Tate Modern and Hyundai Motor have announced that renowned Mexican conceptual artist Abraham Cruzvillegas will undertake the inaugural Hyundai Commission for the Turbine Hall which will open to the public on October 13, 2015.

Chris Dercon, Director, Tate Modern said: "I am delighted that Abraham Cruzvillegas has accepted the first Hyundai Commission to make a new work for Tate Modern's Turbine Hall. His work reflects Tate's deep interest in showing truly ground-breaking international art."
Cruzvillegas is best known for creating sculptural works from local found objects and materials. In recent years he has created a body of work that draws inspiration from the idea of autoconstrucción or "self-construction."

The term autoconstrucción references the improvised construction methods and techniques used by Mexicans of his parents' generation when they moved to the capital from rural areas in the 1960s and began building their houses in stages using whatever materials they could source.

The Hyundai Commission is a new series of site-specific installations by contemporary artists made possible by a unique long-term partnership between Tate and Hyundai Motor, confirmed until 2025 as part of the longest initial commitment from a corporate sponsor in Tate's history.

Mark Brown. «Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas accepts Turbine Hall commission»,
The guardian, January 23, 2015.
http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jan/22/abraham-cruzvillegas-turbine-hall-tate-modern

theguardian
Winner of the Pulitzer prize

Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas accepts Turbine Hall commission

Artist known for making sculptures from found material will take on inaugural Hyundai commission at Tate Modern

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Turbine Hall at the Tate Modern. Photograph: Dan Chung for the Guardian

The Mexican conceptual artist Abraham Cruzvillegas is to follow in the footsteps of Louise Bourgeois, Anish Kapoor and Ai Weiwei by taking on one of the most prestigious contemporary art commissions – filling Tate Modern's Turbine Hall.

Cruzvillegas is known for making sculptures from found material such as old furniture, bottles, bits of wood or feathers.

On Thursday Tate named him as the artist who will take on the inaugural Hyundai commission, opening to the public on 13 October this year. It was announced a year ago that Hyundai would support 11 years of Turbine Hall commissions in what is the Tate's largest and longest sponsorship deal.

Chris Dercon, the director of Tate Modern, said he was delighted Cruzvillegas had accepted the task. "His work reflects Tate's deep interest in showing truly ground-breaking international art," he said.

During a residency at Cove Park in Scotland in 2008, Cruzvillegas gathered materials including wool, discarded fencing, a rubber buoy and an old coat hanger to create sculptures subsequently acquired by Tate Modern.

Mark Brown. «Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas accepts Turbine Hall commission»,
The guardian, January 23, 2015.
http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/jan/22/abraham-cruzvillegas-turbine-hall-tate-modern

The Museum of Modern Art in New York owns a Cruzvillegas piece called Polaris made from an umbrella and pheasant and peacock feathers.

Cruzvillegas, who lives and works in Mexico City, creates his work under the title autocontrucción, or self-construction, which harks back to the way Mexicans of his parents' generation would build their houses in the city, improvising with what they found.

The Turbine Hall commission, previously sponsored by Unilever, is always popular. It began in 2000 when Bourgeois installed an enormous spider and has been followed by installations such as Olafur Eliasson's The Weather Project, where each day hundreds of visitors would lie down and bask in the beautiful fake sunlight, and Carsten Höller's enjoyable helter-skelter slides.

• The Hyundai commission is in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall from 13 October 2015 to 20 March 2016.

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ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS
Museo Jumex, Mexico City

Mid-career museum retrospectives can be deeply awkward occasions, a mid-life crisis of sorts. Abraham Cruzvillegas's first major museum presentation in his home country was certainly aware of the pitfalls: the catalogue was scrappy rather than tome-like; the explanatory wall texts not overly obsequious; and the work had an excitingly ad-hoc, anti-monumental appearance. This exhibition was nevertheless a mixed affair, with the most exciting social and political aspects of Cruzvillegas's work bubbling far below the surface.

Surveying a decade of sculptures, installations and other projects, the show included work made by Cruzvillegas under the banner of *autoconstrucción* ('self-construction'). The neologism is rooted in Cruzvillegas's upbringing in the district of Ajusco, in the south of Mexico City, which was built by poor immigrants from the surrounding countryside (his own parents included), who arrived there in the 1960s. More than a practice of re-purposing found urban detritus (scrap wood, metal, plastic) for home-building, *autoconstrucción* also invokes an ethics of mutual assistance and cooperation, of alternative economies. As an artist, Cruzvillegas has explored this ethical approach to materials within a global context, making sculptural works in London, Oxford, Paris and Gwangju that tap into local senses of place and identity.

Here lay a paradox. For while the rhetoric of *autoconstrucción* speaks of local or communal ecologies, this survey was nevertheless very much part of powerful art world systems. Part-sponsored by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, it was curated by Clara Kim, Senior Curator of Visual Arts at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and was on tour from the Walker Art Center and Haus der Kunst, Munich. It landed in Mexico at the Museo Jumex – a private space funded by a fruit juice manufacturer – with a smaller splinter show at the Amparo Museum in Puebla (which I did not visit). The Jumex and Amparo exhibitions included works borrowed from major collections in the US, Europe and Mexico; the Amparo show also featured an installation of found materials and concrete made with students from the local art college (*Reconstruction of the portrait of my Cholulteco twin …*, 2014). (Puebla was not on my itinerary during my trip to Mexico, and is not covered in this review.)

At the Jumex, the gallery space was dominated by a cacophony of sculptural installations. *Atelier Autoconstrucción: The Innefficient Tinkerer's Workshop: Free Advice Behind Cinema* (2012) was realized for the 2012 Gwangju Biennial, and consists of a number of smaller sculptural works made from found materials including an old broom and a sickle (*Indecent and Fragmentary*, 2012), and glass bottles lined up with elegant twig spindles stuffed in their open tops (*Communal and Democraticist*, 2012). These sculptures were produced in parallel with workshops that Cruzvillegas staged in a house near an abandoned cinema in Gwangju, with local musicians, thinkers and activists invited to discuss the city's history, its industrialization and the suppression of the democratic movement in the 1980s. Key words that emerged from these discussions – 'communal', 'democraticist', 'contradictory' – were then included in the titles of the individual pieces. These works celebrate the social potential of urban flotsam: the sense that contingent matter can become the focus for communal discourse.

Unfortunately, transported from the site of creation, these invocations of complex histories seemed deracinated. Also hard to get to grips with was *Autoconstrucción Room* (2009), an installation first shown at Thomas Dane Gallery, London, featuring small plinth-like units made from found wood, and items evocative of Mexico, including an agave plant and a stone pestle. The original London show rooted these clichés of Mexican imagery with a split-screen video work featuring interviews with Cruzvillegas's parents, as well as a set of drawn musical scores that suggested a more raucous understanding of *autoconstrucción*; however, both of these elements were absent from the Jumex. More successful in this context was the inclusion of works made for an exhibition at Modern Art Oxford in 2011, which toyed with ethnographic clichés and opened up a more convincing space of critique: *The Optimistic Failure* (2011), a mobile-like sculpture that re-creates, using crude lumps of mud, the shrunken *tsantsas* heads displayed in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum; and *The Simultaneous Promise* (2011) a tricycle equipped with an amp and speakers, designed to rudely blurt out music by local bands as it traversed the sedate streets of Oxford.

Haussmannian Leftovers: Richard Lenoir (2007), consists of wooden fruit and vegetable boxes found at the Marché Richard Lenoir in Paris, then painted with black paint on their undersides. Mounted on the immaculate white walls of the Jumex, the work looked graphic and punchy. More structurally impressive was *Autoconstrucción: à la petite ceinture* (Autoconstruction: The Small Belt, 2010), a large doughnut-shaped installation of ramps and scaffold-like edifices with a few vegetables (a beetroot, a leek, a piece of ginger) balanced haphazardly on its thin beams. Also made in Paris, this work references a now mostly abandoned tramline that delineates the rich core from the poorer outskirts of the city. (As I am writing this in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings, the contradictions of religion, geopolitics and violence resonate powerfully in my memory of the installation).

Clearly, Cruzvillegas's work thrives when it is created in direct response to an exhibition's site, its local economies, people and histories. This retrospective chose instead a more conventional collection-based display of anti-monumental objects whose air of preciousness seemed at odds with the ethos of *autoconstrucción* as a shared social activity (the exception was the sculpture made with students at Puebla and exhibited in the Amparo Museum). This exhibition can also been seen as marking the end of the *autoconstrucción* project, which Cruzvillegas has moved away from in the past few years in order to focus on what he calls *autodestrucción* ('self-destruction'): the creative potential of negation, the need to destroy in order to rebuild (recent shows have explored anti-establishment subcultures such as punk, Zazou and Zoot Suits). While this exhibition featured only the more positive *autoconstrucción* works, the radical potential of *autodestrucción* opens a path for Cruzvillegas beyond the accumulated stuff of a mid-career retrospective.

COLIN PERRY

1
Maria Thereza Alves
'The Long Road to Xico
(1991–2014)',
2015, exhibition view

2
'Abraham Cruzvillegas:
Autoconstrucción', 2015,
exhibition view

Coline Milliard. «"Trash" Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Takes on Tate Modern's Turbine Hall»,
Artnet News, January 23, 2015.
http://news.artnet.com/art-world/trash-artist-abraham-cruzvillegas-takes-on-tate-moderns-turbine-hall-230394

Galerie
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"Trash» Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Takes on Tate Modern's Turbine Hall

Coline Milliard, Friday, January 23, 2015

Installation view of the exhibition «Abraham Cruzvillegas: The Autoconstrucción Suites 2013» at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery

After a two-year hiatus, Tate Modern's ever-popular Turbine Hall commission is back. Abraham Cruzvillegas will inaugurate the new series, which comes courtesy of a new sponsor, Hyundai Motors.

One of Mexico's best-known conceptual artists and a former student of Gabriel Orozco, Cruzvillegas has made a name for himself with his makeshift sculptures and installations of found objects, including trash such as discarded cardboard boxes, CDs, and bits of wood.

Speaking with artnet News, project curator Mark Godfrey explained Tate's decision: "We believe that he's an artist who has a brilliant approach to material, who is asking very current questions about our relationship with materials: questions around ecology, economy and so on.»

Cruzvillegas certainly has big shoes to fill. The Turbine Hall commission was launched, like Tate Modern, in 2000. Its illustrious list of alumni include Bruce Nauman, Ai Weiwei, Anish Kapoor, and Olafur Eliasson, to name but a few.

For his dealer, Thomas Dane Gallery's partner François Chantala, the artist was "both the most obvious and the most maverick choice.» "I know no other artist who can meld Punk and Modernism, the vernacular and the universal, mundane materials and academic practices with such eloquence,» he said.

Coline Milliard. «"Trash» Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Takes on Tate Modern's Turbine Hall»,
Artnet News, January 23, 2015.
http://news.artnet.com/art-world/trash-artist-abraham-cruzvillegas-takes-on-tate-moderns-turbine-hall-230394

artnet news

The cathedral-like Turbine Hall-once the heart of the former electric power plant-is an obvious challenge. So is the fact that the space is essentially an oversized corridor, in which visitors pass through to reach the collections and exhibition upstairs, not necessarily expecting an art experience then and there.

Nonetheless, most of the Turbine Hall commissions have been huge successes-and not always for the reasons the artists might have anticipated. Eliasson's Weather Project (2003), which involved a half disc of light reflected in a mirrored ceiling, saw throngs of enthusiasts lying on the floor and spelling out words only visible high above them. Although sometimes decried as a populist stunt, Carsten Höller's slides also wooed the crowds.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Carsten Höller, Test Site
Courtesy of Tate Photography

The Turbine Hall commission has been a real game changer both within London and across the art world at large. Whitechapel Gallery director Iwona Blazwick, who co-curated the initial Turbine Hall Commission series, told artnet News, "The sheer scale, sense of immersion and of surprise-coupled with the fact that it is free of charge-has made a tremendous impact.

"There is also some ambivalence about the commissions within the arts community,» she added, alluding to its detractors: "Has art become spectacle? Could it suffer from gigantism? and so on … Nonetheless it has converted generations of uninitiated visitors to the viewing and appreciation of contemporary art.»

Initially inspired, according to Blazwick, by some of the DIA Foundation's projects, and the rise of major site-specific installations, the Turbine Hall commissions rippled across the global museum world. As Tate curator Godfrey pointed out, MoMA's Atrium and Paris's Monumenta program are only two examples of the way institutions have finally adopted large-scale sculptures and installations, which until the early noughties were mainly the remit of art biennials.

Coline Milliard. «"Trash» Artist Abraham Cruzvillegas Takes on Tate Modern's Turbine Hall»,
Artnet News, January 23, 2015.
http://news.artnet.com/art-world/trash-artist-abraham-cruzvillegas-takes-on-tate-moderns-turbine-hall-230394

artnet news

Hyundai Motors will be footing the bill for the next 11 years, which represents "the longest upfront commitment Tate has ever worked with,» said Godfrey. Although Tate hasn't confirmed the exact magnitude of the sponsorship, the South Korean group is said to have pledged £6 million. If true, that is substantially more than its predecessor Unilever, which paid a reported £4.4 million for the privilege of having its name attached to the prestigious commission. This is no small feat, particularly considering Hyundai Motors' staggering profit decline in recent years.

While the arrival of the new sponsor might coincide with a slight shift in the kind of artists commissioned for the Turbine Hall, the core principle will stay the same. "Some of the artists that might have been selected during the 10 years of Unilever might not necessarily be the kind of artists we look to in the next 10 years, but there are overlaps as well,» Godfrey explained.

"With both Unilever and Huyndai, we look at artists who find new way of thinking about space, about the public, about experience, about material, and that will really continue with the Hyundai commissions,» he concluded.

Cruzvillegas's installation will open on October 13, 2015.

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Robert Preece. «A Conversation with Abraham Cruzvillegas», *Sculpture*, July/August 2014, pp. 26-31.

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Objects Are Alive

GENE PITTMAN, COURTESY WALKER ART CENTER

A Conversation with

Abraham Cruzvillegas

Robert Preece. «A Conversation with Abraham Cruzvillegas», *Sculpture*, July/August 2014, pp. 26-31.

Galerie
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Autoconstrucción, 2010. Installation of performance set and documentation, performance duration: 70 min. A project by Antonio Castro, Abraham Cruzvillegas, and Antonio Fernández Ros.

Robert Preece. «A Conversation with Abraham Cruzvillegas», *Sculpture*, July/August 2014, pp. 26-31.

Galerie
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BY ROBERT PREECE

***Autoconstrucción (resource room)*, 2010. Maps, drawings, photographs, text, and found furniture, dimensions variable.**

Abraham Cruzvillegas's *Autoconstrucción* works ricochet back and forth between categories, from intriguing, aesthetically constructed, found-object compositions to emotionally charged, socioeconomic/political statements. Rooted in the real world situation of Mexico City specifically, and to some extent of Latin America generally, this ongoing series builds on the art historical vocabulary of Duchampian readymades, Arte Povera, and assemblage. It should be noted that Cruzvillegas sees *autoconstrucción* ("self-construction") as "a way of making things," a methodology that "exists in many places and cultures with specific differences."

Cruzvillegas has exhibited around the world. A 2013 mid-career retrospective organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis continued on to the Haus der Kunst in Munich earlier this year and will be shown jointly at the Jumex Foundation in Mexico City and the Museo Amparo in Puebla in 2014–15. In 2012, he won South Korea's 2012 Yanghyun Prize, which awards 100 million won (approximately $88,000), and exhibited several works at the Gwangju Biennale in South Korea. Back in 2003, he exhibited at the Venice Biennale, in a presentation curated by Gabriel Orozco. Cruzvillegas lives and works in Mexico City.

Robert Preece: *What led you to work so intensively with found objects?*
Abraham Cruzvillegas: I started working with objects in 1987, experimenting with things from my parents' house. I wanted things to become "themselves" after my appropriation.
RP: *Could you explain what you mean when you say that the "objects are alive"?*
AC: A work from the early 1990s, *Objeto útil pero bonito,* is a good example of the evidence of life in objects. I used a stair railing from my parents' house and a painting by my father. I did nothing but put them together. I wanted to test my ability to allow things to have a dialogue among themselves, not really making any transformation or using any technique. There's no way of interfering in their relationship besides adding our own voyeuristic gaze and interpretation.

Previous to my intervention, the objects had a life of their own, separately; and since then, they share a diverse circumstance—being together, as a whole. I'm not necessarily a believer in animism, but I'm sure that matter, energy, things, and ourselves, we all never die—much less when we belong to a whole.

RP: *I've grown to appreciate vernacular innovations in "self-constructed" environments that I've seen in Caracas and Manila and in concrete workers' houses in Busan, South Korea. In particular, I was intrigued by narrow stairwells between houses, certain walkways, and molded forms for structures and courtyards along creeks. Are there any innovations that you've seen over the years that stick out in your memory?*
AC: I don't think that *autoconstrucción* is vernacular. That term applies to architectural analysis, and *autoconstrucción* is not architecture at all—or at least it can't be critiqued

GENE PITTMAN, COURTESY WALKER ART CENTER

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BOTTOM: ESTUDIO MICHEL ZABÉ, 2010 / ALL: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND KURIMANZUTTO, MEXICO CITY

Above left: ***La Familia*****, 2009. Coconuts, artificial hair, steel wire, and glue, installation view. Above:** ***Autoconstrucción: Fragment: Lattice Bureau*****, 2007. Bricks, iron, and wood, approx. 98 x 79 x 38 cm. Left:** ***Measure for measure*****, 2010. Wood, skateboard, brick, cotton, enameled acrylic, and nunchucks, 130.5 x 99.5 x 20 cm.**

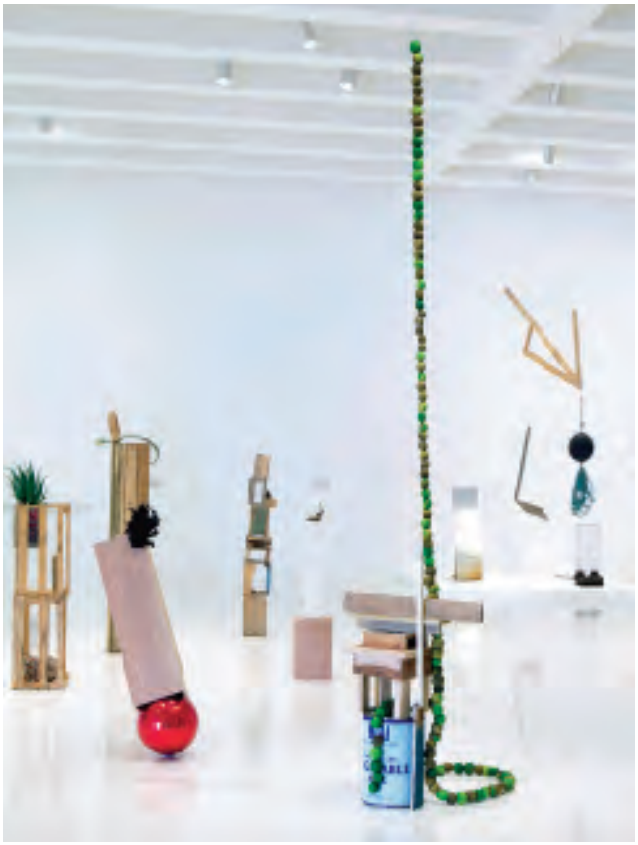
or understood within the categories or premises of architecture. For me, *autoconstrucción* is a way of making things. It's a form of understanding reality and of approaching things in a very specific economic, political, and social environment. It's not a technique, it is not a subject. For me, it comes from my own experience, and it became a platform for making projects. The work that I call *Autoconstrucción (resource room)* includes documents, books, references, and diverse information related to my experience. I didn't choose it from any agenda or catalogue.

On the other hand, I'm convinced that *autoconstrucción* exists in many places and cultures—with specific differences and with diverse names. For me, the concept refers not to building shapes—I'm not especially interested in architecture—but to the needs that produced those shapes. The context is also very important for me—the context in which certain needs become a determination for constructing, transforming, adapting, or destroying.

In my case, that context is called "solidarity." For me, approaching *autoconstrucción* is not to talk about my biography or about myself: memory exists in the shapes, materials, objects, structures, and in the other animals that inhabit them, as a whole, including myself.

RP: *How do you reconcile your approach and the resulting objects with the sociopolitical/socioeconomic context of self-constructed environments?*

AC: I don't need to reconcile anything, mainly because we exist in an ecosystem in which things fit together without exclusion, except when humans intervene. Struggle is everywhere, because we are ubiquitous. Then our eyes



Left: *Autoconstrucción Room*, 2009. Installation of 15 unique sculptures, dimensions variable. Right: *Chicas Patas Boogie (sweaty & needy)*, 2012. Rebar, fabric, feathers, chain, and meat, 100 x 80 x 93 in. Below: *An Affirmative Craft*, 2012. Folding bicycle, tools, extension cords, wooden ladder, wooden crate, coins, stainless steel, stones, acrylic sheets, ceramic dishes, cup and ashtray, rope, gloves, pillow, and mixed media, dimensions variable. From the Gwangju Biennale.

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TOP LEFT: GENE PITTMAN, COURTESY WALKER ART CENTER / TOP RIGHT: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND REGEN PROJECTS, LOS ANGELES / BOTTOM: COURTESY THE ARTIST

transfer our conflicts to other beings, things, and situations. On the other hand, pretending to be away from struggle is useless and a little bit naïve.

Beauty is also everywhere, and in my work as well, but not because of my intervention. This comes in part from my way of working: putting things together not because they are nice or ugly, but because they are useful. In the context of *autoconstrucción*, almost everything is useful, and people become resourceful and in solidarity. To make *autoconstrucción* yours, it's not necessary to take an introductory seminar or to immediately adopt an ideological position that doesn't fit with your own education, context, needs, or ideas; it's more interesting to think that the hermeneutics of *autoconstrucción* rest on these latent elements from any possible audience, rather than anything from me. It should be an open scaffolding to move through freely.

RP: *How political do you see your works in terms of supporting struggles to reduce corruption and inequality? Do you see the works as activist?*

AC: Like any other person, I believe that we must support the causes we identify with and fight against circumstances we don't agree with. But I don't believe in art as propaganda. Art produces knowledge, and that's politics. Beyond that, it's up to every person to add meaning to artworks. Artists just propose sentences to be completed.

Corruption and unfair distribution of wealth are some of the many factors that cause *autoconstrucción* to exist, but I don't address this content or put these messages forth to anyone. Instead, I like the idea of setting up optimistic exchanges in our society, and for this, humor is crucial. Everything fits together.

RP: *Could you explain your works in the Gwangju Biennale?*

AC: I can't explain, but I can describe. I used an abandoned house for some weeks as a studio and workshop, using only materials from the house. While constructing my sculptures, I organized meetings with people from the city—students, doctors, activists, artists, professors, curators, historians, and cultural agents—to learn about local history, life, religion, education, the economy, and culture. Those meetings were open to any audience and were recorded for a book that will be published soon. The sculptures remained in the house during the Biennale, after I left.

RP: *What did you learn from the process of developing these works? What did spending time in South Korea bring to your work?*

AC: I learned a lot from the people with whom I spoke in different public dialogues organized at the house, and I also learned a lot from life in the streets, from the specifics of everyday life, which is very effervescent and politically engaged. My mind is still organizing the many experiences that I took with me after my time there.

RP: *What are the things that you'd like viewers—art specialists and the general public—to walk away with after seeing your works?*

AC: One, a troubled mind. Two, a smile.

Robert Preece is a Contributing Editor for Sculpture.

Above: ***Communal and Democraticist*****, 2012. Wooden window panels, stainless steel, coins, tree branches, and beer bottles and caps, dimensions variable. From the Gwangju Biennale. Below:** ***A new self-portrait as a mismeasured punctuated lack of equilibrium (with denim)*****, 2011. Plastic boxes, paint, paper, aluminum paper, stainless steel, copper, iron, plastic, wood, denim, glass bottles, and masking tape, dimensions variable.**

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TOP: COURTESY THE ARTIST / BOTTOM: COURTESY THE ARTIST AND KURIMANZUTTO, MEXICO CITY

«Abraham Cruzvillegas: The Autoconstruccion Suites on view at Haus der Kunst», *Artdaily*, March 2014.
http://artdaily.com/news/67994/Abraham-Cruzvillegas--The-Autoconstrucci-n-Suites-on-view-at-Haus-der-Kunst#.U1JTvseCD-Z

artdaily.org

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MUNICH.- With this exhibition, Haus der Kunst stresses its continuing commitment to pronounced positions of sculpture in contemporary art. This exploration included "Sculptural Acts" (2011), a presentation of sculptural objects which were characterized by the acts executed during production: the enveloping, tearing, folding, bending and compressing of the materials involved. The installation by Manfred Pernice, installed in autumn 2013 in the middle hall (DER ÖFFENTLICHKEIT - VON DEN FREUNDEN HAUS DER KUNST. Manfred Pernice, Tutti IV) navigates in the ambiguous zone between stability and instability, combining pieces from earlier works. The "Autoconstrucción Suites" by Mexican-born artist Abraham Cruzvillegas presents an intriguing concept of thinking about sculpture in its urban and social context.

"Rather than simply presenting models of poor people's architecture, my main purpose is to generate knowledge and understanding of how human activity produces forms. Buckminster Fuller said that matter should be organized by sympathy, a concept that I apply to my collections of objects, images, and sounds as well as my three-dimensional work." – Abraham Cruzvillegas

Over the past ten years, Abraham Cruzvillegas (born in 1968 in Mexico City) has developed a compelling body of work that integrates his interest in form and matter within the physical landscape of Ajusco, a volcanic landscape just south of Mexico City.

The construction of a settlement there began in the 1960s. The building was a direct consequence of the migration from country to city caused by the state's neglect of agricultural issues in favor of industrial development, which was perceived as a recipe for progress. The numerous immigrants from the countryside found themselves in a precarious economic situation once they arrived in Mexico City. They therefore created their own dwellings with no funding and no architectural plan. The materials and techniques people used were almost entirely improvised and based on whatever was available in the immediate surroundings.

The self-constructed buildings in Ajusco reflected concrete needs in concrete family situations, like building an extra room, modifying a roof, improving, changing, or eliminating one space or another. The extended community of relatives and neighbors was involved in the building process. Autoconstrucción (self-building) is generally a process of human warmth and solidarity. Abraham Cruzvillegas lived in the Ajusco settlement and "for the first 20 years of his life he watched the construction of the house where his family lived and took part in the process.

" The video "Autoconstrucción: A Dialogue between Ángeles Fuentes and Rogelio Cruzvillegas" (2009) – the artist's parents – underscores the importance of securing basic rights like water and education alongside constructing urban space. Fuentes remembered different moments in these struggles, such as when the immigrants filled the street with dirty laundry to demand access to running water, or when they organized independent public schools. Under the slogan of "No somos machos pero somos muchas" (We're not men, but we are many), the women of Mexico City's working-class neighborhoods won basic rights.

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The exhibition concentrates on works that follow the principles of self-construction. The "Autoconstucción Suites" begins with a look at the house as a whole; its details and improvised techniques born of the organic need to create a human habitat by any means necessary, a space that becomes spontaneous, contradictory, and unstable as it progresses. Instead of emphasizing construction details, Cruzvillegas shows the dynamics of the building process, closely observing especially unstable elements like obstacles, debris, constraints, leaps and jumps, tremors and unevenness, falling materials, ricochets and cracks.

Between 2005 and 2012, the artist embarked on a series of artist residencies that enabled him to work within different environmental and ecological contexts in Europe, Asia, and the United States. "Bougie du Isthmus" (2005), for example, is inspired by an improvised device made by fishermen in Istanbul that is rigged to a tire, enabling no-hands fishing. The wine racks that support the rods refer to wine production in the Loire Valley where the Atelier Calder is located; while the colorful fabric flags recall traditional village festivals originating in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca, Mexico, where women

In 2010 Cruzvillegas began producing a series of standalone anthropomorphic self-portrait sculptures. The components are comprised of his personal belongings (shoes and tote bags appear often in these works) and carry complex, often humorous titles, like "Autorretrato jacarandoso con las manos ocupadas" (Merry Self-Portrait, with My Hands Busy), inferring a specific place and time. In this way, Cruzvillegas proposes that a true portrait is not the sum of an integrated whole, but is rather a collection of disparate "experiences, sensations, knowledge, and language."

Elements of composition are the disparate, cumulative, and affective search for expressive signs. A distinctive feature of Cruzvillegas's work is that it always possesses a consciousness of physical presence, immediacy, and urgency – as a result of an interaction with objects.

Abraham Cruzvillegas: The Autoconstrucción Suites is organized by the Walker Art Center Minneapolis, MN, U.S.A., where it was first on view from March 23 to September 22, 2013.

Gareth Harris. «Mexico's 21st-century Duchamp», *The Art Newspaper*, n°253, January 2014, P. 30.

EXHIBITIONS *Continental Europe*

Mexico's 21st-century Duchamp

Abraham Cruzvillegas brings his brand of autoconstrucción – self construction – from Minneapolis to Munich

CONTEMPORARY

Munich. With his vast range of dynamic assemblage sculptures meticulously built from found objects, the Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas has been dubbed the 21st-century equivalent of Marcel Duchamp. In the past decade, Cruzvillegas has developed a large body of ready-made work underpinned by what he calls *autoconstrucción*, or self-construction. Around 30 works exploring this aspect of Cruzvillegas's practice go on show this month at the Haus der Kunst in Munich.

The artist has used disparate materials – ranging from terracotta tiles to Coca-Cola bottles, sheep excrement and lumps of hair – to construct these sculptural installations. A piece entitled *Lattice Bureau*, 2007, is a crude composition of bricks, wooden frames and steel railings. Another work, *AC Mobile*, 2008, intricately melds diverse detritus such as a tea flask, car stereo and strips of cardboard. This predilection for natural materials and found objects means that visitors may also draw comparisons with the stripped-back, post-war Italian movement Arte Povera and the US-based 1950s Assemblage school.

> *"It's hard for me to relate my work to any particular aesthetic"*

Works in a variety of media draw on the artist's childhood experiences in Ajusco, a southern district of Mexico City. "Ajusco's landscape of volcanic rock remains a work in process, with structures in a constant state of transformation," the exhibition organisers say. This shifting terrain informs Cruzvillegas's vision, touching upon socio-political aspects of life in Latin America at the same time. Asked if Cruzvillegas is a political artist, the exhibition curator León Krempel says: "Not in the sense of someone instrumentalising art as a form of protest. I would say that he understands each work evolves out of a political/sociological context."

Cruzvillegas's *AC Mobile*, 2008, and (above) *The Autoconstrucción Suites*, as seen at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, in 2013

But the artist warns against connecting his canon too closely with his background or a particular artistic school. "I don't see my work as being related to a DIY aesthetic. In fact, it's hard for me to relate it to any particular aesthetic. I think it's fair to understand my work through the use of some materials in terms of local economic systems, depending on where I'm working and with whom," Cruzvillegas told *Museo* magazine, a New York-based web publication. "The most important thing for me is to make work independent of my biography; even when the prime matter of it is my own experience, thoughts and practice, it must be autonomous and free."

The show, which arrives from the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, travels to the Museo Jumex, Mexico City (9 October-2 February 2015), and Museo Amparo, Puebla (11 October-2 February 2015).

Gareth Harris

• *Abraham Cruzvillegas: the Autoconstrucción Suites, Haus der Kunst, Munich, 24 January-25 May*

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Frédéric Bonnet. "Abraham Cruzvillegas", *Journal des Arts*, Issue 401, November 2013, page 121.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

PAROLES D'ARTISTE **ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS**

« Toutes les œuvres se réfèrent à Artaud »

Inspiré ici par l'écrivain Antonin Artaud, Abraham Cruzvillegas (né en 1968 à Mexico) propose une brillante réflexion sur la construction à travers la destruction, et les liens entre la ville et le corps. À voir à la galerie Chantal Crousel, à Paris.

Vous vous référez dans ce projet à Antonin Artaud. Pourquoi lui, et quelle part de son travail a retenu votre attention ?

Il y a toujours pour moi une nécessité d'approcher l'histoire. Quand j'étais adolescent, je suivais vraiment Artaud, c'était important pour ma pensée. Je lisais sa poésie mais aussi sa théorie sur le théâtre. Après cela je suis allé plus profondément dans sa biographie et j'ai compris qu'il voulait, en fait, opérer une transformation du langage. Il a créé une sorte de littérature, une pensée, une philosophie qui détruit le langage ; la nécessité du discours est donc de détruire le discours. Il voulait aussi, dans sa vie, être cohérent avec sa pensée, et il s'est donc détruit lui-même, ne s'est pas arrêté au langage. C'est devenu pour moi très important et énigmatique. Comment une personne vit-elle de cette manière, en ayant véritablement cherché sa propre destruction ? Je suis retourné vers lui pour cette exposition en faisant des recherches à propos d'une période spécifique, lorsqu'il est allé au Mexique, dans le Chihuahua, en 1936. Je voulais savoir ce qu'il y avait fait et ce qui s'était passé après, la transformation de cette personne. Je voulais comprendre comment s'est déroulé ce processus, intellectuellement et physiquement, puisque le corps était important pour lui. Il s'est détruit lui-même pour devenir lui-même. Je trouvais cela très beau, même si je ne peux pas imaginer combien il a souffert dans sa vie ; il existe une sorte d'idéalisation de la souffrance, de l'addiction, de la folie… Toutes les œuvres de cette exposition se réfèrent donc d'une manière ou d'une autre à lui, à son œuvre ou à ses idées.

Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Autodestrucción 3 : Mots et choses*, 2013, fer, acier inoxydable, corde en nylon, bois peint, verre, papier, encre, peyote, caoutchouc, cuivre, fibre de verre, plastique, 540 x 306 x 100 cm. © Photo : Rebecca Fanuele/Courtesy Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

Expérimenter le corps est-il quelque chose d'important pour vous, à travers la sculpture et votre action de sculpteur ?

C'est très important. Je pense que mon travail n'est pas l'objet final que vous pouvez voir mais le processus de faire. Il est donc beaucoup question de l'activité, des relations avec les objets, la nature, les gens, la réalité, la société. Et je pense que cette activité est de plus en plus l'un des principaux éléments de mon travail. Pour cette exposition, je me suis rendu dans vingt-deux endroits dans Paris qu'Artaud avait l'habitude de fréquenter avant de partir pour le Mexique. J'y suis allé pour faire des sculptures dans la rue ; cela signifie que mon corps était le principal matériau. Cette conscience du corps est très importante pour moi. Je pense que le lieu, je veux dire l'usage de mon propre corps comme d'un matériau, n'est pas juste une métaphore de l'énergie ou du travail, mais qu'il s'agit d'une conscience du corps et de mon corps qui pense. Et je pense avec tous mes organes autant qu'avec des objets. Cette activité physique est pour moi le « vrai » art. Ces sculptures que j'ai faites dans la ville ne se trouvent pas dans cette exposition à la galerie, mais dans la ville ! Donc étendre pas seulement mon propre corps mais le corps de la galerie vers la ville est devenu très important pour ce projet.

Établissez-vous un lien direct entre deux œuvres qui évoquent visuellement la cartographie : un tracé gravé dans le mur (*Autodestrucción 3 : Actes et pensées*, 2013) et un ensemble de pièces de bois reliées entre elles (*Autodestrucción 3 : Une carte pour avant et après le voyage d'Antonin Artaud à la terre rouge*, 2013) ? Y a-t-il là un rapport avec vos déplacements urbains ?

La pièce murale est un bas-relief que j'ai fait en suivant Artaud dans Paris, c'est donc sa carte que j'ai reconstituée en me déplaçant d'un lieu à l'autre. Cette carte est présentée en miroir de la sculpture au sol composée de poutres de bois que j'ai collectées sur des chantiers en démolition, à Barbès ou sur le chantier de rénovation de la station Austerlitz. Chacune des vingt-deux pièces de bois correspond aux vingt-deux lieux de la carte. Les deux sont donc des cartes, d'une manière différente et identique à la fois. Les pièces de bois sont reliées entre elles par de petites perles sur un fil, afin d'essayer de rendre cette sculpture très douce et aussi de pouvoir modifier la carte si elle est présentée ailleurs.

Propos recueillis par Frédéric Bonnet

ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS. AUTODESTRUCCIÓN 3 : AVANT ET APRÈS LE VOYAGE DE AA À LA TERRE ROUGE, jusqu'au 23 novembre, galerie Chantal Crousel, 10, rue Charlot, 75003 Paris, tél. 01 42 77 38 87, www.crousel.com, tlj sauf dimanche-lundi 11h-13h, 14h-19h.

Gabriela Jauregui. "Abraham Cruzvillegas: Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City" *Frieze*, September 2013, p. 170.

ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS
Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City

At the entrance to the Museo Experimental El Eco, Matias Goeritz's small gem of a museum (and a prime example of what Goeritz called 'emotional architecture'), wooden beams frame a long hallway. The start to Abraham Cruzvillegas's exhibition, 'Autodestrucción 2' (Autodestruction 2, 2013), was discreet and yet compelling, present yet somehow disappearing.

The beams looked like they might hold together the structure of the building – either that or suggested that the building was falling apart, from earthquake damage or termites. The wood was raw and stained – old rafters from the artist's current home. After walking through this archway, a path of cracked cantera limestone tiles led us into the main exhibition space where a series of old window frames formed a tower, connected to another accumulation of wooden beams like scaffolding. In the middle lay some debris: red *tezontle* (volcanic rock) tiles. In the corner of the space, two beams sat atop a pair of *huaraches* (traditional sandals) like giant stilts.

'Autodestrucción 2' was a sort of epilogue to the various 'Autoconstrucción' exhibitions and books Cruzvillegas has been working on for the past several years, most recently his large show at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. If auto-construction is the art of renewal then it also implies destruction: it's reliant on debris from demolished buildings and leftovers from construction sites. Self-construction implies a pilfering of previous structures and materials in order to make them new. Specifically here, the artist took materials from the house he is currently remodelling and created a new home inside the museum: a rat's nest, a sculpture, a junkyard, a construction site.

Outside the large windows of the main exhibition space, the construction site looked as if it continued. The first time I visited, the outside space, which housed the *Pabellón* (Pavilion, 2013) – a series of architectural interventions on the patio – was under construction. Here, just as inside, Cruzvillegas used typical Mexican building materials; terracotta tiles were placed atop a plywood structure, and the pavilion seemed to extend the piece endlessly outwards. It even included a wheelbarrow and a half-empty bottle of Coca-Cola sitting in the sun, as if belonging to the absent-minded worker who also left his *huaraches* behind.

There are shows you want to see and there are rare exhibitions that you want to visit again and again. This was one of the latter. The second time I visited, I went to do a poetry reading. The third time, the museum had become Cruzvillegas's home. He had invited his closest family members for a series of talks, where they presented the work they themselves do: human rights, politics, activism. Thus the household became an agora, school, public forum.

The piece was successful in its balancing of private and public. Like other works by Cruzvillegas, often rooted in his childhood neighbourhood on the outskirts of Mexico City – a community that started more as a survival strategy and which is now well-established – this piece is no exception: the *huaraches* in the corner were, at the same time, a nod to the many impoverished rural migrants who built and keep building such neighborhoods. They also echoed the text that was part of the piece, *La pendiente* (The Slope): a short story that Cruzvillegas wrote from the perspective of a window, perhaps one of those very windows that are piled up in the museum, a window that witnesses the fall and self-destruction of a *huarache* repairman with a mangled leg.

In Cruzvillegas's installation – as the accompanying curatorial text by David Miranda claims – 'debris speaks', letting us guess at the many stories of places and people behind them and reminding us also of how Mexico City is multilayered – one layer of buildings serving as grounding for another and yet another, from the Aztec to the Spanish to today. 'Autodestruccíon 2', as memorable as it is, and as solid as its thick wood beams and its metal frames appear, speaks volumes about the fragility of everyday life.

GABRIELA JAUREGUI

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Summer 2013 Bomb Magazine

BOMB

Abraham Cruzvillegas

by Haegue Yang

Installation view of *The Autoconstrucción Suites*, 2013, dimensions variable, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Photo by Gene Pittman. Courtesy of the Walker Art Center.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel

Before I met Abraham Cruzvillegas, more than once I’d heard curator Clara Kim mention in passing that he was a special person. This piqued my curiosity. When I finally met him in Los Angeles in 2008, the rumors about him were confirmed. Five years after our first meeting, my sense of his uniqueness has not waned but rather continues to grow through our different interactions. We’ve introduced our respective home cities to each other and see each other’s shows whenever we can. So powerful are Abraham’s special qualities that they seem to be contagious—he influences people around him, alters their experiences and perception of what is possible in life.

As an artist, one may fall prey to feeling anxious, weak, and even terrified by a fear of failure, of falling short of one’s desire to be good to oneself and to share something with others. This pressure is self-imposed. Cruzvillegas’s body of work provides a daring and encouraging optimism. The physicality of his sculptures and works on paper can’t be considered without noticing how processes unfolding in time, commitment (togetherness), and a vital nature (spirit), give them shape. Like Duchamp, who was often praised for his modes and efficiency with time, Cruzvillegas exercises a specific mode of efficiency, even when it comes to emotion. The works grow out of fertile ground, from his being in this world, which requires a temporal engagement different from that of being in the studio. His thinking process accumulates depth while it takes inefficient, nonlinear paths. Yet the making of his works occurs in a miraculously swift and decisive manner—their graceful execution is full of wit and demonstrates respect for their materials’ origin.

—Haegue Yang

Visual Arts

Summer 2013 Bomb Magazine

HAEGUE YANG I remember your beautiful long hair when we met for the first time in LA in 2009. Don’t ask me why, but tonight in Dubai, this strange “island” in the gulf region, all of a sudden I found myself thinking about whether it meant anything to you to cut your hair.

In Korea, under Confucianism, hair was regarded as something inherited from your parents or ancestors. There were people who would rather cut off their heads than their hair. I guess it was about protecting their honor.

ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS When I cut my hair, there was no symbolic meaning. I had let it grow because when my wife, Alejandra, and I went to live in Paris in 2005, my head felt cold in Europe. Prior to that, I had shaved my head every other week for nearly 20 years. The change was good. When I moved to Berlin in 2010, shampoo was expensive and I wanted a change, so I cut my hair. Change is very important for all of us—it’s not just something that happens, it’s something we must provoke.

When you first wrote, I was installing some works from my series *Autoconstrucción* at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. *Autoconstrucción* means transformation to me. I apply the notion to houses being both built and destroyed simultaneously, according to the specific needs of their inhabitants. Change is the rule for the *Autoconstrucción* houses, and transformation of identity is behind my approach (or misuse) of the concept: self-construction is permanently unfinished. I love that idea.

And it so happens that hair affects people’s perception of us. Ah, yes—and the inventiveness of a new haircut. My haircuts can be a little Navajo, a little redneck, a little bit *microbusero*, a little bit *guama* . . . I like it when people don’t recognize me in the street—also when my work becomes something like a cumulative dialogue of inner identities that are constantly switching arrangements, opinions, and relationships. The exhibition at the Walker is like that: a sort of confrontation of groups of works that I get to witness.

Installation view of *Autoconstrucción*, 2009, Thomas Dane Gallery, London. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City.

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HY I wonder whether I am too Korean to be your Mexican sister. What do you think about coming from the Third World, from a nonindustrialized country? Are we similar to each other, since we share this experience of the Third World?

AC I like it. What does that mean? I’m sure there are more worlds in our world: a fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh . . . In Baja California shamans are called *guamas*; they sit in narrow caves, covered with other people’s hair. People cut their hair and attach it to the heads of the guamas (like bizarre extensions, similar to dreadlocks). They remind me of Cousin Itt from the TV series *The Addams Family*; a funny character similar to a large walking wig with John Lennon glasses. My mother used to say that our family was more eccentric than the Addams family because we lived in the so-called Third World.

Very often I put diverse objects from contradictory contexts together in one work. This is like an economic clash—it’s having things on top of each other that are organic matter, industrially made, or handmade. They can be made in Taiwan, Marrakech, New York, Paris, or Mexico City. These objects have an internal system, and I like witnessing how they come together. I become a voyeur of their relationships. Between them there might be a conflict, or physical or conceptual instability, but also love, hate, gossip, power, and sometimes friendship. It’s the same for all of us; sometimes we have to accept our own contradictions in order to develop friendships. Or not.

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Aeropuerto Alterno (Alternate Airport), 2002, machetes, knives, and wood, 67×39 3/8×47 1/4 inches. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City.

HY We are very privileged to work internationally and share friendships with people with various cultural and geopolitical backgrounds. However, it seems like we artists don’t hang out with each other so much. We visit each other’s shows less often than curators do. Are we hesitant to knock on each other’s doors? If we ever made an effort to stress the importance of the friendships among us, what would it be for? And why? I know of your friendship with Jimmie Durham, but also with your peers in Mexico, as well as of your activities with La galería de comercio.

AC I’ve cultivated strong friendships with some other artists who are like family now: Damián Ortega, Gabriel Orozco, Gabriel Kuri, and Jerónimo López, a.k.a Dr. Lakra. And, through them, extended relationships with José Kuri, Mónica Manzutto, and others. Also, teaching has provided me with many friends and accomplices. What I really like about these long-term bonds is that we can approach each other for advice, for help, or just to spend time together, without having any specific purpose or intention to plot something together. In Mexico everybody knows about our small community and our interests, since we’ve always been transparent and open. Our gallery, kurimanzutto, resulted from the development of our community. It is a commercial context and social sphere for the production of art, but also for the production of friendship. It has made our group bigger and more global. I would say—and maybe this is only my perception—that sharing experience, information, dialogue, time, energy, and love also leads to the production of knowledge.

In February 2010, when Nuria Montiel and I started La galería de comercio, my idea was to reconnect with some old students and friends to organize street events, essentially for the pleasure of working together. La galería de comercio is a nonprofit seven-headed entity—Alejandra España, Jimena Mendoza, José Luis Cortés, María Cerdá Acebrón, and Martín Núñez, in addition to Nuria and I—that presents free monthly events at the intersection of José Martí and Comercio streets, in the Escandón neighborhood. We’ve organized drawing, stamp, and sticker workshops, installations, performances, film screenings, demonstrations, and some other activities, but mostly what we do is channel the energy and collaborative force from the environment around us: school children, hobos, housewives, merchants, plants, roaches, and also some other artists. Edgar Arcenaux said that instead of fund-raising we do friend-raising.

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Martina Núñez reading texts by Alexandro Rodríguez that interweave probable tragic events and Mexican recent history in Wendy León, *TLQNSDEP*, 2011, at La galería de comercio, Mexico City.

HY Once we compared notes on our homelands’ recent histories. Astonishingly, there were lots of parallels concerning intense struggles and efforts for independence and democracy. I am curious about your own view of history after World War II and its impact on your upbringing, if it had one.

AC In my understanding of why I make things the way I do, not only as an artist, but also as a person and a citizen, history has been crucial. In Mexico, as in many other countries (now called underdeveloped, but when I was a child, President Luis Echeverría liked to use the concept Third World, accepting the exoticism associated with

belated development), we never encountered modernity proper, only its promise of consumption. The progress of Western civilization meant flattening every culture into the “American way of life.” In Mexico we missed the stage of producing our own scientific and technological languages almost completely; we simply became consumers of knowledge and industry. Of course we kept producing our own languages, but more as a means of survival in a never-ending economic, political, and social crisis. Ingenuity became the national currency, with occasional exemplary exceptions in art and culture that gave people abroad a reason to talk about the country. More recently, we’ve added new items to the possible conversation topics about Mexico: drug trafficking and the lack of public safety.

In your country you had many colonial interventions and, more recently, a dictatorship. The past has returned with the current presidency of Madam Park, daughter of the former military dictator. In my country we did not have a dictatorship, but a one-party system under the PRI—ridiculously named the Institutional Revolutionary Party—lasting over 70 years. After some struggles for democracy, thrown down the toilet by the PAN (the right-wing party that ruled Mexico for the last 12 years) the PRI has returned. So for both of us that past is still so present—we don’t have to feel sad that it’s behind us!

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HY I felt very frustrated when more than half of the population of South Korea preferred to “vote” for someone associated with political degradation and a violent totalitarian society, and no freedom of speech, instead of someone associated with progress and justice. What can we as artists do to get over such deep frustration with politics? I almost feel like my own people do not need or want my political activism. Would you help me analyze this feeling and give me some advice for getting over such pessimism?

AC What surprised me in the recent presidential election was that a lot of people voted mainly against the candidate of the old party (PRI), in favor of any alternative. There was a lot of enthusiasm, and we even witnessed something like a proto–youth movement (called “Yo Soy 132”) fighting for the right to have access to information, while officially controlled media manipulated everything to make the PRI candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, appealing and seductive. An extreme caricature of this was his marriage to a soap-opera actress. I personally find it very hard to sustain any kind of activism that does not just lead to cheap actions for good causes, or to propaganda. I think I can do more by discussing problems on a small scale, rather than trying to solve all of the problems in my city, country, world, and universe. If I can, I attend demonstrations, meetings, and public discussions because I’d like to become a political actor, but my art is not a political pamphlet.

Installation view of María Cerdá Acebrón, *Tapete*, 2011, a participative installation by the community residing and working near La galería de comercio, Mexico City.

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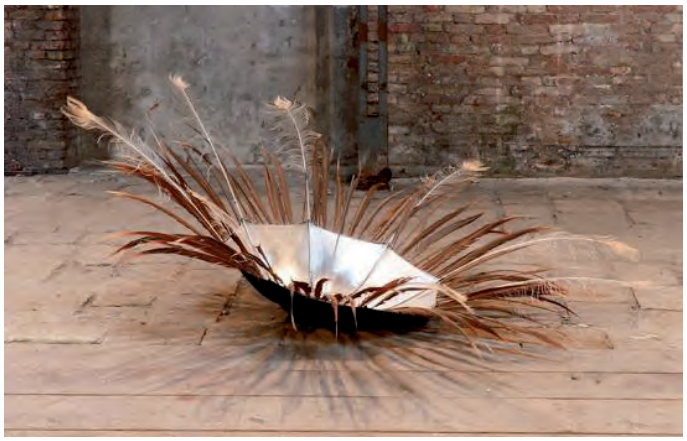
HY I got to learn about Juan O’Gorman in Mexico City when you brought me to the Museo Diego Rivera Anahuacalli, which was built by O’Gorman for Diego Rivera’s collection of pre-Hispanic art. After you guided me through O’Gorman’s early works, it seemed to me that he underwent quite amazing transformations, ranging from rational modernism to postprimitivism. I’d like to hear your thoughts about those artistic metamorphoses. Have you, yourself, also experienced them?

AC You might know the story of the last house O’Gorman lived in. It was more like a cave than a building, and he decorated it with mosaic murals whose syncretic iconographic motifs are like the ones at the library of the National University (UNAM), only wilder and rougher. When he was younger, he was the most important representative of modernist architecture in Mexico, as his Bauhausian constructions prove: the studios of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in San Ángel, lined with a beautiful cactus fence, for instance. I like his process, not only as an artist. He turned against himself—not only metaphorically—by erasing or destroying his knowledge of architectural language, condemning it as man’s erection on earth. I don’t feel I’m going in that direction, but sometimes I like making work that’s not necessarily supposed to be seen as art. In fact, I feel like I am naturally more primitive; I don’t have to try too hard. I like to think of myself as an intergalactic indigenous, chatting with you on a Korean cell phone.

HY The neighborhood you grew up in is close to O’Gorman’s Museo Diego Rivera Anahuacalli, right?

AC Yes, I grew up in the neighborhood of Ajusco, which evolved gradually in a nonplanned area in the southern part of Mexico City. Back then nobody thought that it could be inhabited. The people there took over plots of volcanic rock and started building their houses slowly over time. They had no money and no knowledge of architecture or engineering, but lots of needs. This fueled them to weave a strong social fabric and become a very politicized community. People would work together to build a new wall, or march together to claim ownership of the land and demand basic services such as electricity and running water. They would demand education and the right to live dignified lives. I grew up in that environment: chanting slogans against the government and its corruption, supporting student movements, socializing and partying while working, and becoming an optimist—someone willing to be happy, even in the worst circumstances.



La Polar, 2003, umbrella and peacock and pheasant feathers, 43 5/16×78 1/8 inches. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City.

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For many reasons, I remember the sentence “tomar el cielo por asalto” (to take the sky by assault), which I think Karl Marx said originally in German, but unfortunately my mother tongue is Spanish and, during the time I spent in Berlin, I never learned German. Maybe if I find the original quote it will mean something perfectly different from my version in Spanish; I prefer to keep it as I know it. Maybe you know it in Korean—I’m sure it comes across really different from the Spanish, not even considering how it is expressed in Hangul, the Korean written language (with its perfection and beautiful story). You and I both speak in English all the time, as we’re doing now, and, we can say whatever we want about agreeing or disagreeing, laughing or crying, being happy or sad, but if someone who wants to read about us doesn’t speak English, it doesn’t really matter. For some indigenous people from Mexico who have migrated to the US for economic reasons, it’s a tricky situation. They speak fluent English and their original language—Mixtec, Zapotec, P’urhépecha, or Hñhäñhu, for example—is not Spanish, which is the official language in Mexico. Interesting, isn’t it?

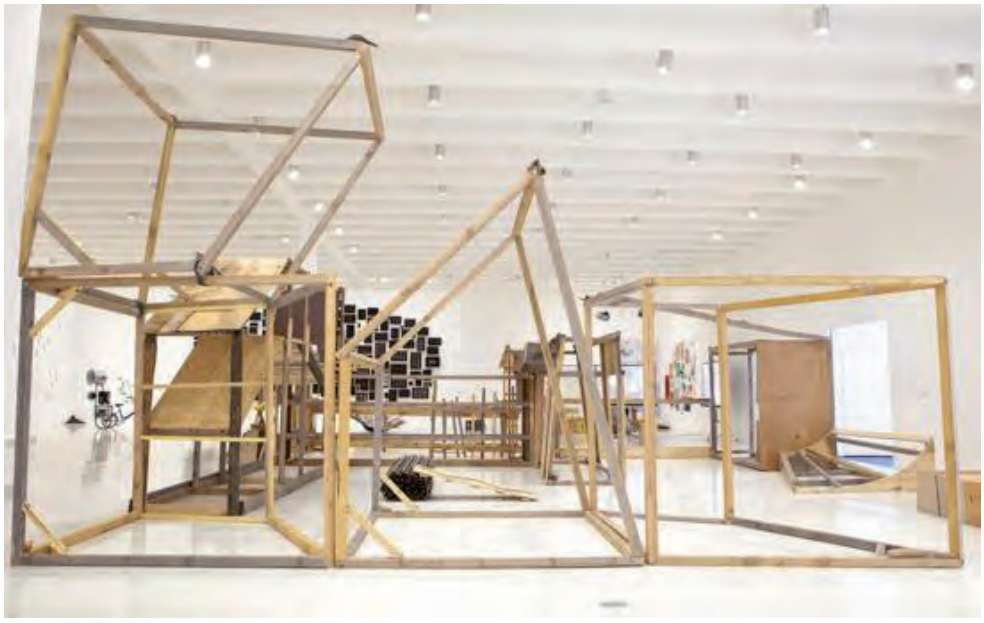
HY Back to the transformation of O’Gorman, it was reflected not only in his approach to formal language, but also in his use of materials. The “direction” of that transformation is also interesting. He seems almost against the modern idea of progress, which might be a paraphrase of what you said about him turning against himself by destroying his knowledge of architectural language. Here I have to ask you about the piece in dOCUMENTA (13) last year. Your piece was so radical that it fit what you said above: “I like making work that’s not supposed to be seen as art”—it was almost invisible.

AC Well, O’Gorman went really far: he killed himself. Me, I’m just in search of transformation as evidence of existence: nature and humans work together everyday on this with or without violence. For my project in Kassel, I made a project in a parallel environment to the main exhibition. I wanted to test if I was still able to make something without money or an audience, as I did when I was younger. I didn’t want to escape from myself. I made a set of rules out of ideas, intentions, and constant interests from my practice since I started working as an artist in 1987. I recovered notes and images from my notebooks to make a list of 34 concepts including the following: delirious, affirmative, sweaty, definitely unfinished, fragmentary, communal, empiric, coherent with the landscape, laughing, inefficient, unstable, happy, contradictory, generous, indecent, sensual, amorphous, warm, and blind date! Then I assigned a color to each concept, and I painted a bundle of pick-up sticks with those colors. Playing in the streets of Kassel with the sticks I would randomly select two colors/ideas and then improvise with materials

gathered from the surroundings. I documented some of my activities, but in the end decided not to have any register of them—it was too “efficient.” I’m still working on a book from that project, but I have nothing to show!

HY Speaking of big exhibitions, I was wondering about the show at the Walker right now. The exhibition’s complexity and scale make it seem like a survey show. Am I correct?

AC As I said before about my sculptures, I pile objects to create physical and conceptual instability, contradiction, fragility—everything is about to collapse. So the show at the Walker, organized by Clara Kim, is like piling exhibitions together. It gathers different projects I’ve been working on in recent years. All of them share the same title: *Autoconstrucción*. It was nice to see all of these installations in dialogue with each other, each saying their own thing. Now they are independent, and I like that.



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Installation views of *The Autoconstrucción Suites*, 2013, dimensions variable, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

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HY I am curious about all the vehicles in your work: they can be bicycles or carts. There is a mobile and romantic and humorous element in your sculptures. Are they vagabonds? I am also very curious about your sonic vehicles.

AC For me the vehicles are, first of all, objects. Because of this, they each have a specific weight, shape, texture, color, and size. Most of the time bicycles are industrially made, yet regardless, to me they are alive. When you buy one, you customize it according to your specific needs, adding a horn, a different saddle, a big mirror, a satchel, or a basket. Sometimes you can even paint or decorate it with a couple of tassels. In some extreme cases, you can turn it into a portable house, as some homeless people do. In those bikes people haul lots of bags and cases with things to protect them from the weather, other people, and other vehicles. I’ve seen customized bikes here and there, and I always wanted to have one.

In 2008 I was invited for a six-month residency in Scotland by Alexia Holt from Cove Park and Francis McKee from CCA in Glasgow. There I met John O’Hara, a wise man whose specialty is customizing bicycles. He works at the Common Wheel, an organization that runs workshops in which forgotten or destroyed bikes are salvaged. They also help people with disabilities by giving them related tasks as a form of therapy. With John’s help I made my dream come true: I used pieces of discarded bikes to make a portable sound system, like those from Jamaica I always liked, with lots of speakers to play music in the streets. Then I started thinking about writing lyrics for songs. I found that every Glaswegian is a musician, so I started asking local bands to create music for my lyrics. These lyrics tell stories about my neighborhood in Mexico City—very personal stuff became a music album. But it’s also a portrait of Glasgow as a city and the result of joyful, spontaneous collaboration.

By now I’ve made a group of four bikes. I developed a particular story for each. One I made with students in San Francisco when I was a visiting professor at the California College for the Arts. Another one I made when I was in Berlin on a DAAD—there I wrote a new set of songs with music by Gabriel Acevedo Velarde, Sebastian Gräfe, Valentina Jäger, and Maureen Tsakiris. We performed live in some of the city’s public spaces. Another I made in

Oxford. I appropriated some local music (especially from the collective called the Blessing Force) and some 1960s and ’70s protest music from Latin America, all of it whistled by me. This last bike was inspired by the motorcycles in the film *Quadrophenia*.

Performance view of *CRV: Collaborative Re-creation Vehicles*, 2009, parade and race, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, November 21, 2009, San Francisco. Photo by Johnna Arnold. Courtesy of the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts.

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HY There is one thing I unlearned thoroughly: how to draw. You seem like a genuinely talented draftsman. I have to think about your gorillas. They’re drawn eloquently, in an amazing variety of styles. They’re realistic but they also look like calligraphy or reliefs, like carvings on the wall! Do you think that’s just due to your talent or does this have something to do with the figurative tradition, such as mural painting in Mexico?

AC In the late ’80s, I worked as a cartoon artist. I’ve liked to draw since my childhood, as almost everybody else. I’ve unlearned the right way to draw, but humor is still a very important element in my work. Political cartoons have a strong critical element against state power, obviously not only in Mexico. Here we have an important tradition of newspaper cartoons that point to ridiculous attitudes and negative circumstances in politics—they become the opinion of the people. This has been a key factor in my education, not only as an artist, but also as a person. Recently, when I made a series of drawings of apes, I was also trying to highlight our genetic proximity to them; they’re our closest relatives. That’s why I gave the drawings the names of some family members: Ángeles, Rogelio, Jesús, Alejandra, Eréndira. I also wanted to remind myself that I cannot only hold something with my hand’s opposable thumb to make things, like a brush to make a drawing, but I can also destroy nature or myself with a gun, for example.

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above: *Nuestra imagen actual: Helena*; below: *Nuestra imagen actual: Alejandra*. Both images 2012, vinyl paint, ink, and water-based acrylic enamel on kraft paper, 118 3/25×157 24/25 inches. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City.

HY You are such a rich thinker; your thoughts have a high degree of complexity, fluidity, and vitality. That eloquence in thinking is also found in what you make. The first piece of yours I ever encountered was a sculpture—I double-checked the caption next to it to memorize your name, because I was so heavily impressed by its eloquence. Like everything eloquent, it looked so effortless. Is it really effortless? If it is not, what kind of struggle is behind your production in general?

AC When we find a way to communicate, eloquence happens. I like to use language as a live organism. It has its own existence beyond me. When I make a sculpture, I think it is alive as well. I see myself more as a matchmaker of sorts. Sometimes, when there are more than two objects in the sculpture, or project, or specific situation I’ve set up, it becomes an eloquent orgy in which I make no effort other than to play with the elements of the piece. I feel a bit like an animist voyeur.

HY Once you purchased books in Korean, which you can’t read. So what do books mean to you?

AC Yes, of course, I remember that visit to your studio in Kreuzberg very well. You shared some books on Rosemarie Trockel with me. Indirectly I understood your interest in her works. You also made some simple little dishes for dinner that were cooked easily: noodles and rice, a sort of quick *bibimbap* with some wine. We had some *makgeolli* to drink.

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The first time I went to Seoul, for the Media City biennial in 2010, I went out with Clara Kim, Doryun Chong, and Eungie Joo to sing karaoke and drink cheap beer and *makgeolli* all night long. I found some good books the next day walking around: one on Jogyesa (the chief temple of Seon Buddhism in Korea), and across the avenue, a nice bookstore with very beautiful handmade books. They all contained extraordinary drawings and texts, prayers, and other religious content. It was impressive to witness the long tradition in calligraphy that, as I’ve been told, is now in a sad moment, because younger generations are not so interested in it. The only problem I faced there was not being able to understand any of those exquisite signs and shapes, many in Korean but also many in Chinese.

I like books, as our dear friends the artists Mariana Castillo Deball and Manuel Räder do. Both of them make really good stuff, including that book he designed with you, with the twisted pages. I also like Damián Ortega’s generous project Alias, based in Mexico City, designed for sharing hard-to-find or out-of-print art books in Spanish. I also make publications myself. There’s a lot to learn through making decisions for a book: choosing fonts, images, captions, paper, ink, size, stitching, gluing . . . not to mention all possible textual content. I like books and magazines that are thought of as objects; the thingness of publications (including posters, flyers, stickers, album covers, boxes) is very important to me. As I feel them in my hands, I try to understand what they are saying. They have something that is absolutely beyond mere content, which ideally should cohere with their shape and materials, just like with any other artwork.

HY Are you a book collector?

AC I have no special criteria for acquiring books; I just let them seduce me. I prefer that they choose me by calling my attention. I almost never look for books; they find me. This happened during other trips to Korea, more recently in Gwangju, where I found some other books related to history, including one on the uprising of 1980 against the

dictatorship. In this case the content became more important than the object itself. Good books don’t necessarily have to be precious objects.

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Abraham Cruzvillegas. “Prime Matter: Abraham Cruzvillegas on ‘autoconstruccion’ ”, *Walker Art Center*, March 14, 2013.

http://www.walkerart.org/magazine/2013/abraham-cruzvillegas-art-autoconstruccion

WALKER

“I use ‘dead’ things, or materials people think of as garbage,” says Abraham Cruzvillegas, “and give them a new use by revealing instead of hiding their nature.” Over the past 10 years, the Mexico City–based artist has become recognized as a key figure among his generation, bringing a fresh conceptual strategy to the use of found materials and improvisational processes. The result is a riveting body of work that he calls autoconstrucción, or “self-construction,” made from found objects to which he’s given new life while working in urban and rural environments in Mexico City; New York; Paris and Saché, France; Glasgow, London, and Oxford, UK; and Gwangju, South Korea.

Abraham Cruzvillegas, *The Invincible*, 2002

Collection Craig Robins, Miami

Abraham Cruzvillegas, *The Simultaneous Promise*, 2011

Courtesy Thomas Dane Gallery, London

Each of these commonplace components contributes its own striking character and seemingly precarious form to a sculpture or installation. Here, the artist sheds light on his practice and how it underpins his artistic vision while also serving as a metaphor for the construction of his own identity. Abraham Cruzvillegas: The Autoconstrucción Suites is the first major exhibition to focus on this multifaceted project.

Origins

The autoconstrucción concept comes from a building technique that is led by specific needs of a family and by the lack of funds to pay for constructing an entire house at once. People build their own homes slowly and sporadically, as they can, with limited money, with the collaboration of all family members and the solidarity of neighbors, relatives, and friends. Houses show the autoconstrucción process in their layers, through which it is possible to experience their transformations, modifications, cancellations, and destructions; they evolve according to changes in the lives of their residents.

Aesthetic decisions are intertwined with the ability of the builders to use anything available or at hand, depending on place, circumstance, or chance. The combinations of materials and hybrid construction strategies are very rich and diverse. Autoconstrucción is not a weekend hobby; it’s not bricolage or DIY culture—it’s a consequence of unfair wealth distribution. As opposed to massive building projects, it points to an autonomous and independent architecture that is far from any planning or draft: it’s improvised.

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While this kind of building happens all around the world, as in Brazilian favelas or South African shanty towns, in my personal experience I lived with autoconstrucción during the first half of my life, witnessing the evolution of my parent’s house in Ajusco, south of Mexico City. This is a land of volcanic rock that was settled starting in the early 1960s by immigrants from the countryside looking for a better life in the big city.

Bit by bit, they started building houses with lava stones and recycled materials gathered in other neighborhoods. For years there was no water and in general, no services at all. Fighting for this land to become property, as well for streets, access to electricity, etc., became an everyday activity. Women became leaders in those movements, along with young guys and children, while men were working, many of them as construction workers in so-called modern Mexico.

When I Started to Use It

I have appropriated the term “autoconstrucción” as a name for all my work since 2007, when I improvised a whole exhibition in New York, working only with materials found around a gallery. I was attempting to reproduce the dynamics of autoconstrucción—rather than represent the results, I wanted to activate the process. I started working with the idea as a personal fact (and not as a chosen subject matter) that had been underlying my work since 1999, when I took many pictures of the houses in my neighborhood, the volcanic rock there, and details of my parents’ house.

Then I wrote the story of my own experience, what I witnessed all those years, without nostalgia— just facts. This text became a book accompanied by many images, including some lent by neighbors, captured during the early years of the autoconstrucción. It was published in Glasgow, where I was invited by Francis McKee to do a project at the Centre for Contemporary Art. At this point I’ve made autoconstrucción sculptures, drawings, paintings, videos, a theatrical play, and a film. Maybe it’s time to move to “autodestrucción.”

What It Means

As a structure in which everything is possible, autoconstrucción can take shape in infinite and diverse ways. It is a way of thinking more than a method or a technique; it’s

Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Bougie du Isthmus*, 2005

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Restricted Gift of Collector’s Forum in Memory of Phil Shorr, 2006

Abraham Cruzvillegas, *La moderna*, 2003

Collection Eva Pressenhuber, Zürich

a way of life. Improvisation and testing all kinds of combinations according to specific needs (like expressing oneself) are rules of autoconstrucción, rules that provide absolute freedom. For me, autoconstrucción is the most authentic type of creativity, because it blooms in the most adverse circumstances. It’s pure ingenuity and will, fueled by hermeneutics, use, function and/or contradiction. It is transparency, simplicity, and change.
System of Production/Ideological Framework

It’s easy to perceive the economic and cultural origins of the materials composing an autoconstrucción; and this evidence produces complex readings for both viewers and inhabitants. The will to construct is more important than the aesthetic or economic value of any or all of the materials that might be used. When an object is discarded by a person, it’s valueless; for autoconstrucción, it could be seen as prime matter. Autoconstrucción does not deal with garbage, but with prime matter.

Recycling has only recently become a widespread practice, but for centuries in so-called underdeveloped countries, scavenging and harvesting used materials and objects has been an activity. Pepenadores in Mexico pick cardboard, metals, discarded furniture, cans, bottles, paper, and other materials from the garbage in order to give them a new life. They collect, classify, accumulate, resell, and transform these goods. Then a new cycle starts. When I make an artwork with found objects or materials—i.e., aluminum, wood, a forgotten bicycle, my own hair, shark jaws, a cowbell, teeth, a chair, wax, coins, plastic, or sheep dung—they retain their original qualities and defects.

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Even if the piece is later dismantled, its fragments remain as they were before they were incorporated: there is no alchemical transformation, there is no trick or magic. Transformation occurs only in the viewer’s mind. And in my hands, of course. So, a stone is a stone before, during, and after the art/architecture approach; it does not represent anything else but a stone being a stone as a stone. When the same stone is removed from the pavement to be thrown over a police barricade, or through the window of a government office, it will still be a stone. But a happy one.

Autoconstrucción meant for me, for many years before making art, a constant struggle with authority, and not only because of growing up in a challenging situation, learning to deal with scarcity, solidarity, roughness, and resistance to the environment, to the local governors, to self-indulgence. Now it’s more an ideological consequence in which all my acts involve my genealogy and my future as trying to arrive to a certain degree of consciousness based in all that I’ve mentioned above. Autoconstrucción is not biographical or anecdotal, is not narrative, it’s not thematic or communicative. It is the very expression of survival and work. It’s also humorous, ironic, paradoxical, and delirious.

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Abraham Cruzvillegas

For the Mexican artist, the term 'autoconstrucción' has referred to a series of projects rooted in the ad hoc, self-built homes of his native Ajusco. What does it mean, then, that he's referring to his latest work as 'autodestrucción'?

By Chris Sharp

There is a fine line between what Abraham Cruzvillegas calls *autoconstrucción* and *autodestrucción*. Somewhat grammatically awkward, the former proposition (which might seem like, but isn't, a synonym for DIY) is the umbrella term under which the Mexico-born, Mexico City-based artist has been presenting and developing his rich and varied production since 2007 (he has been working as an artist since the 1990s). Seemingly a bit more linguistically at ease with itself, the latter proposition introduces a new phase in the artist's practice, inaugurated with his December exhibition at Regen Projects in Los Angeles, titled *Autodestrucción 1*. However, whether the work created under the prefix *de* radically differs from that created under the *con* remains to be seen. And that may be the point. Or one of the points. But before getting stuck in the koanlike matter of that philosophical conundrum, perhaps it would be useful to clarify our terms and ask just what *autoconstrucción* is. And where it comes from.

Autoconstrucción, for Cruzvillegas, refers to his parents' home in Ajusco, a neighbourhood to the south of Mexico City, and to the ad hoc method by which it was built. Constructed on notoriously inhospitable volcanic rock, Ajusco was originally settled by squatting families (Cruzvillegas's included) during the 1960s. These early settlers built their homes not all at once but in phases, adding parts and whole rooms when finances and material circumstances permitted, and with neighbours helping neighbours as needed. Such a progressive, collective and organic way of building ensured that the homes and neighbourhood in which they evolved were (and still are) 'definitively unfinished' – to use a favoured Duchampism of Cruzvillegas. Essentially unplanned, in a permanent state of flux, made with local and/or found materials and rooted in community, this style of architecture was the source of inspiration for Cruzvillegas's *autoconstrucción*.

If the political position behind *autoconstrucción* ever seems unclear, it is because the artist's dialectical attitude is fully present on every level of the work conceptually, politically and materially. Where most privileged Westerners, who have been culturally trained to condemn poverty, might perceive such conditions as nothing more than an affliction to be endured by the poor, Cruzvillegas sees extraordinary ingenuity, methodology and community-building through building. This, however, does not imply an uncritical embrace of these conditions. Rather, he seeks organically to account for the complexity, ambiguity and potential contradiction contained in any sociopolitical problem. All of which is to say, akin to Ajusco, that the so-called definition and even meaning of *autoconstrucción*, as well as the kind of work generated under its aegis, is in a continual state of expansion.

This is precisely why and how, under Cruzvillegas's auspices, *autoconstrucción* has been able to manifest in so many guises, places and modes: from small autonomous sculptures to large sculptural-cum-architectural installations; from mobile musical collaborations to an hourlong film, even a >

Autodestrucción 1, 2012 (installation view). Photo: Brian Forrest. Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles

Chris Sharp. «Abraham Cruzvillegas», *Art Review*, n°65, January - February 2013, p81.

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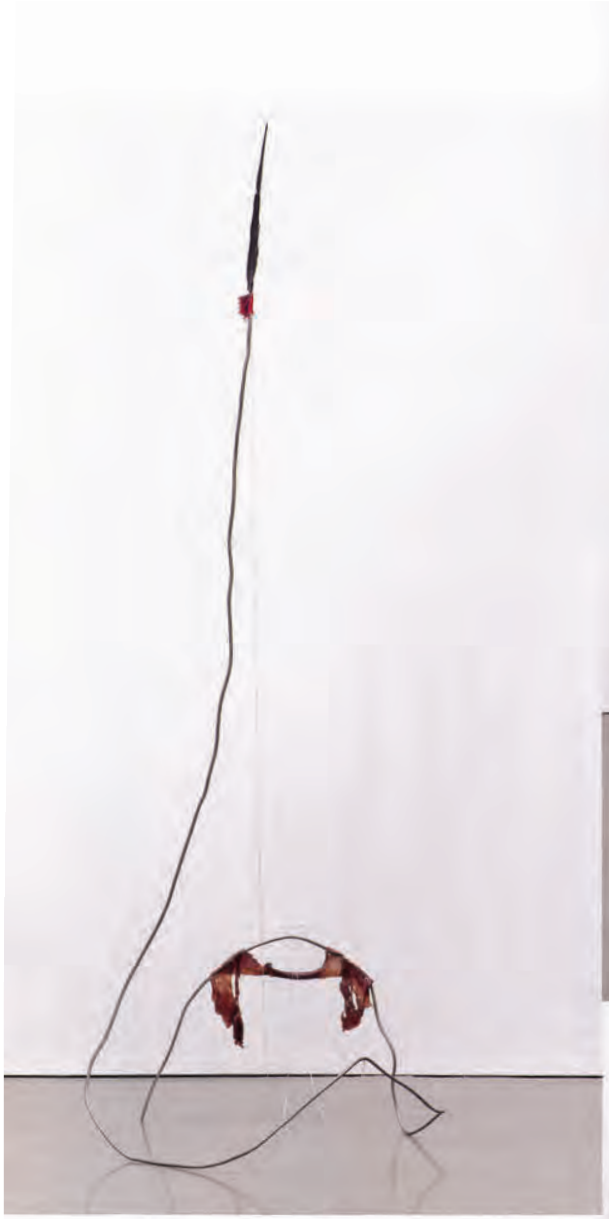

this page, clockwise from above: *El Travieso (An Emotional Craft)*, 2012, copper rod, fabric, jewellery chain, feathers, meat, 201 x 81 x 81 cm; *April in Paris (Brief & Delirious)*, 2012, rebar, fabric, feathers, chain, meat, 292 x 203 x 213 cm; *Chicas Patas Boogie (Sweaty & Needy)*, 2012, rebar, fabric, feathers, chain, meat, 254 x 203 x 236 cm. All three images: © the artist, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles

facing page, first three images, clockwise from left: *Preso Me Llevan (An Affective Blind Date)*, 2012, iron rod, feathers, chain, fabric, meat, 325 x 147 x 97 cm; *Vendredi 13 (Affirmative, Written & Told)*, 2012, rebar, fabric, chain, feathers, meat, 381 x 234 x 165 cm; *Boogie Woogie (Handmade & Sensual)*, 2012, rebar, chain, fabric, meat, 381 x 353 x 203 cm. All three images: © the artist, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles

facing page, far right: *Autoconstrucción: Departamento de Defensa*, 2007, wood, bricks, glue, broken glass bottles, 120 x 80 x 60 cm. Courtesy the artist and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City

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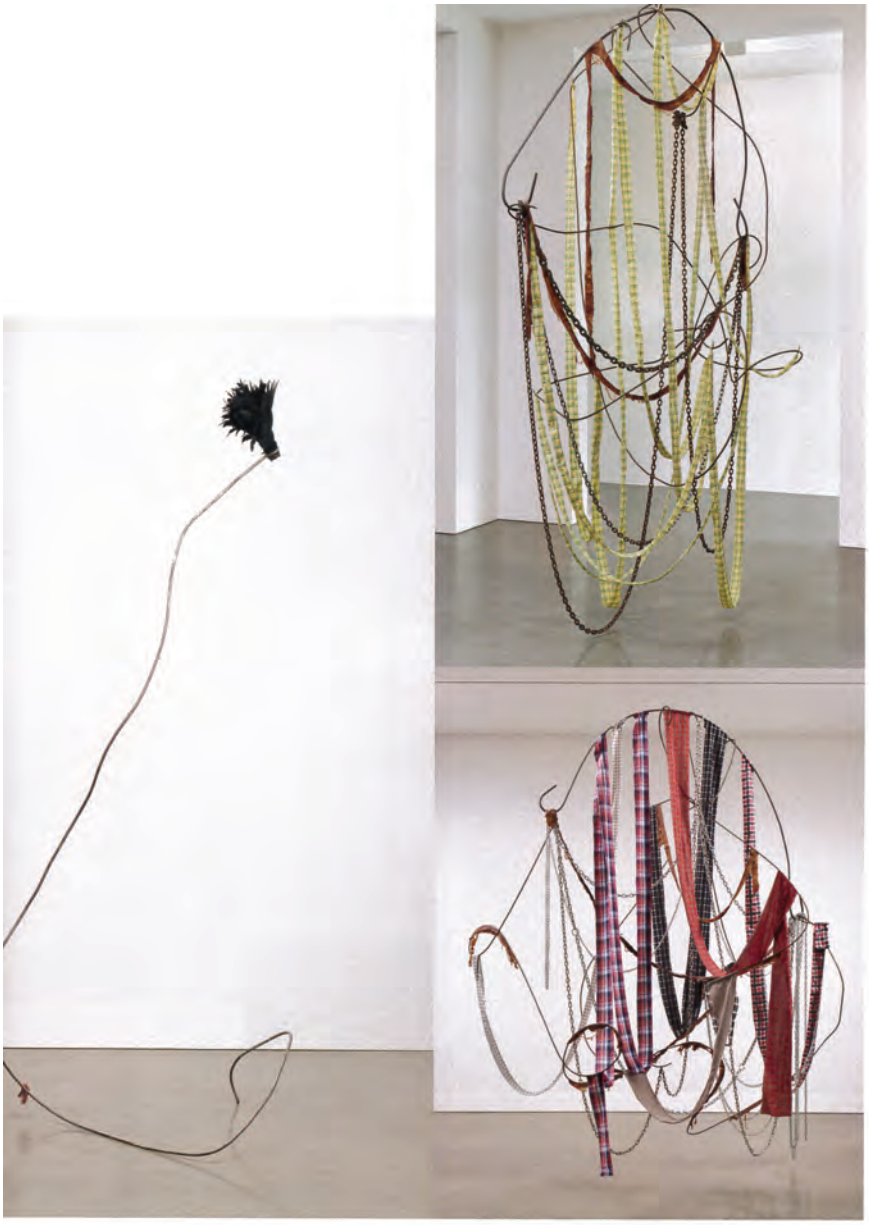
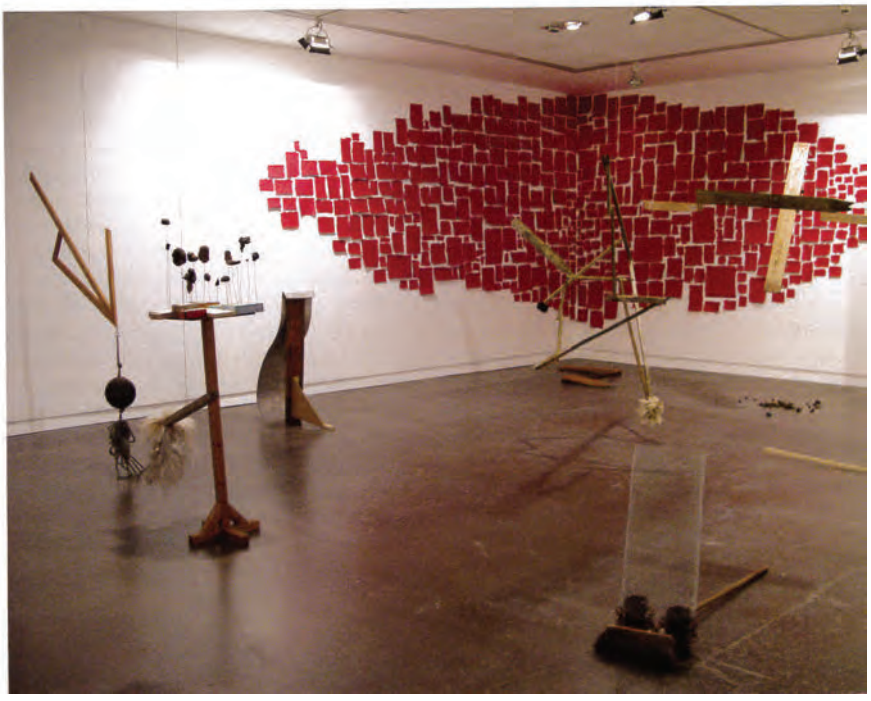


play. *Autoconstrucción* is multiplicity incarnate. Indeed, the term could be said to designate more of a spirit and an ethic than, say, a theory-driven aesthetic. And yet his works are often united by an identifiable formal sensibility, whose predominantly found-object or poor-material aesthetic influence is as indebted to Robert Rauschenberg, David Hammons and Jimmie Durham as it is to Gabriel Orozco. The difference between them and Cruzvillegas, however, is the highly personal, specific and inherently protean programme to which his cultural and material universe adheres. Thus does the freestanding sculpture *Autoconstrucción: Departamento de Defensa* (2007), which consists of a diminutive totem of wedges of wood stacked one on top of another, with a series of broken bottles glued to the summit, deploy such found aesthetics towards the end of representing homemade security devices as seen atop the outer walls of economically challenged neighbourhoods. Neither a condemnation or affirmation of poverty, such a work celebrates the ingenuity people are liable to bring to such circumstances. The spirit of collaboration and hybridity that informs the artist's evolving method can be seen in his musical projects titled – any guesses? – *Autoconstrucción*, at the CCA in Glasgow in 2008, and later, at the end of his DAAD residency in Berlin, *The Self Builder's Groove* (2011). At the core of both projects were songs the artist had written primarily about Ajusco, produced, in the Berlin project (in collaboration with Gabriel Acevedo Velarde and Sebastian Gräfe), 'in the space', to quote Cruzvillegas from the attendant publication, 'between a punk three-chord strategy, sample dub tradition, rebajada's slow motion earsplitting, hip-hop appropriation and Tyrolese-Tibetan electro-digital tunes'. In the Glasgow version, a pedal-powered vehicle (evolved from a bicycle) with speakers attached to it, made in collaboration with Glaswegian John O'Hara, roamed the city and broadcast the songs. In Berlin a band was formed by the artist, giving three concerts in different parts of the city (as is often the case with Cruzvillegas's projects, both incarnations were accompanied by publications, which are not so much catalogues as they are documents of the process, inspiration and community generated by and generative of each manifestation of *autoconstrucción*).



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Autoconstrucción, 2009, HD video, colour with sound, 1 hr 3 min; *The Self Builder's Groove*, 2011, mobile soundsystem, 170 x 130 x 400 cm; *Autoconstrucción*, 2008, mixed media, dimensions variable.
Images: courtesy the artist and Kurimanzutto, Mexico City

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this page, both images:
Untitled, 2010, wood, beer caps, bulbs, roots, fabric, iron, dimensions variable.
Photo: Florian Kleinefenn.
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Cruzvillegas directly portrayed Ajusco in *Autoconstrucción* (2009). Inspired by a childhood memory of witnessing his parents having sex, the artist created a 62-minute pornographic portrait of his neighbourhood which features four heterosexual couples of varying ages engaged in explicit indoor and outdoor sex, intercut with pans and shots of the buildings, textures and colours that make up Ajusco. Little or nothing to do with a drive to shock, its desire to portray sex links up with the artist's holistic and inclusive attitude, which registers elsewhere in his irrepressible embrace of marginalised or dissident subcultures.

All but returning to the inspirational roots of *autoconstrucción*, the most spatially expansive embodiment of the ever-mutating term took place in 2010 at Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris. Titled *La Petite Ceinture* (after the wall that formerly surrounded Paris and that geographically, economically and culturally delineated an inside and out), the plastic aspect of this exhibition comprised a large, architectural, circular structure that, made exclusively of found materials such as scraps of wood, was reminiscent of a skeletal favela and filled the entire main gallery space. This unruly object was complemented by a photocopied publication, which featured interviews (conducted by Cruzvillegas) with knitters, community gardeners, slam poets and other figures who issued from a cultural space that was alien to clichés of Parisian identity.

Questions of identity, its relationship to sub- and counterculture, and how it is constructed, inherited and displayed through fashion and subculture have played an important role not only in *autoconstrucción* but also, it seems, in the dialectical shift to *autodestrucción*. The first manifestation of it, at Regen Projects at the end of 2012, consisted of a series of hanging and freestanding sculptures made of rebar, wire, feathers, jewellery chains, textiles and curing strips of beef, and was heavily informed by the artist's interest in zoot suiters (or *Pachucos*, as they are known in Mexico) and their Second World War French counterparts, *Zazous* – subcultural groups whose rebellious nonconformity was made to visibly register in sartorial excess. As is often the case with Cruzvillegas, the interest has autobiographical roots: his great uncle, who might have been a character in a Julio Cortázar story, was a zoot-suiter jazz musician who ended up in France during the war. For Cruzvillegas, the formation of identity is the product of a complex exchange of paradoxical forces that bring into play both construction and destruction, separation and inclusion, a departure and ultimately a return, full of affirmation, negation and contradiction. This being the case, *autodestrucción* promises to be as much about creation as it is about destruction, and as such underlines the overall exemplary – to my mind – dialectical complexity of Cruzvillegas's practice.

While researching this article and reading through the abundance of material and artist writings, I was struck by the following handwritten quotation from Robert Smithson's *Hotel Palenque* (1969–72) in the Mexican artist's Documenta notebook (you may not have noticed him, but he was a 'participant', surreptitiously composing colour-coded, ad hoc sculptures every day from on-hand material on the streets of Kassel): 'Buildings being both ripped down and built up at the same time.' It seems like a note to self, a sage and compact reminder of the paradoxical nature not just of Cruzvillegas's work, but of the world in general.■

Andrew Berardini. "A Fortuitous Encounter with color in the street: interview with Abraham Cruzvillegas," *Mousse Magazine* N° 34, Summer 2012, pp. 214-219.

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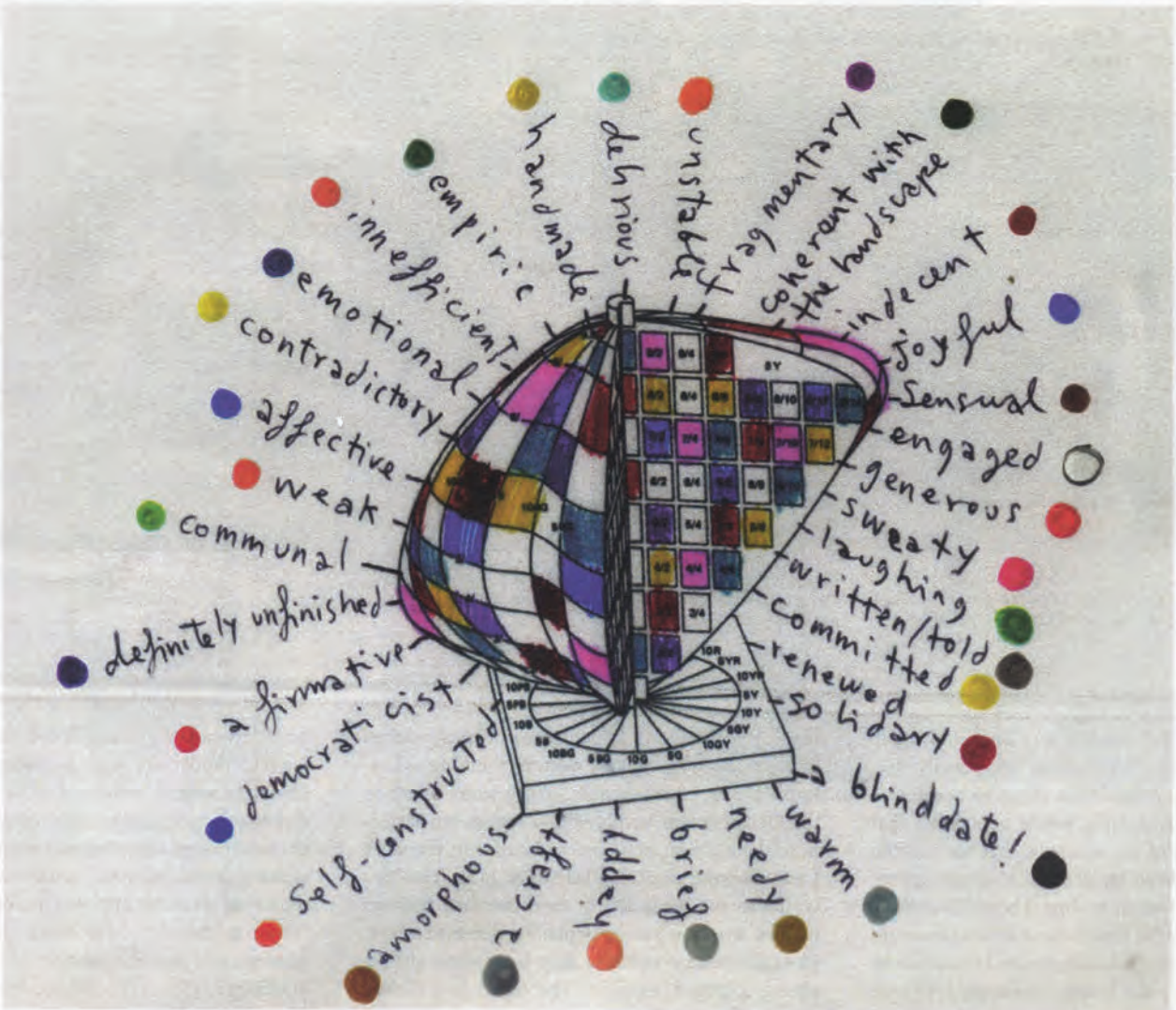
A FORTUITOUS ENCOUNTER WITH COLOR IN THE STREET: INTERVIEW WITH ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS

BY ANDREW BERARDINI



Abraham Cruzvillegas arrives in Kassel with a suitcase full of questions: "How to generate a living sculpture nowadays? A sculpture without a fixed form/shape? A self-constructed sculpture? A no-budget sculpture? A happy, joyful, indecent, sensual pleasure, pleasant, sexy, brief, generous sweaty, sculpture? A sculpture made with nothing? A tale that is being written/told as sculpture? A space for sharing, working, playing, loving? How?"

Andrew Berardini. "A Fortuitous Encounter with color in the street: interview with Abraham Cruzvillegas," *Mousse Magazine* N° 34, Summer 2012, pp. 214-219.

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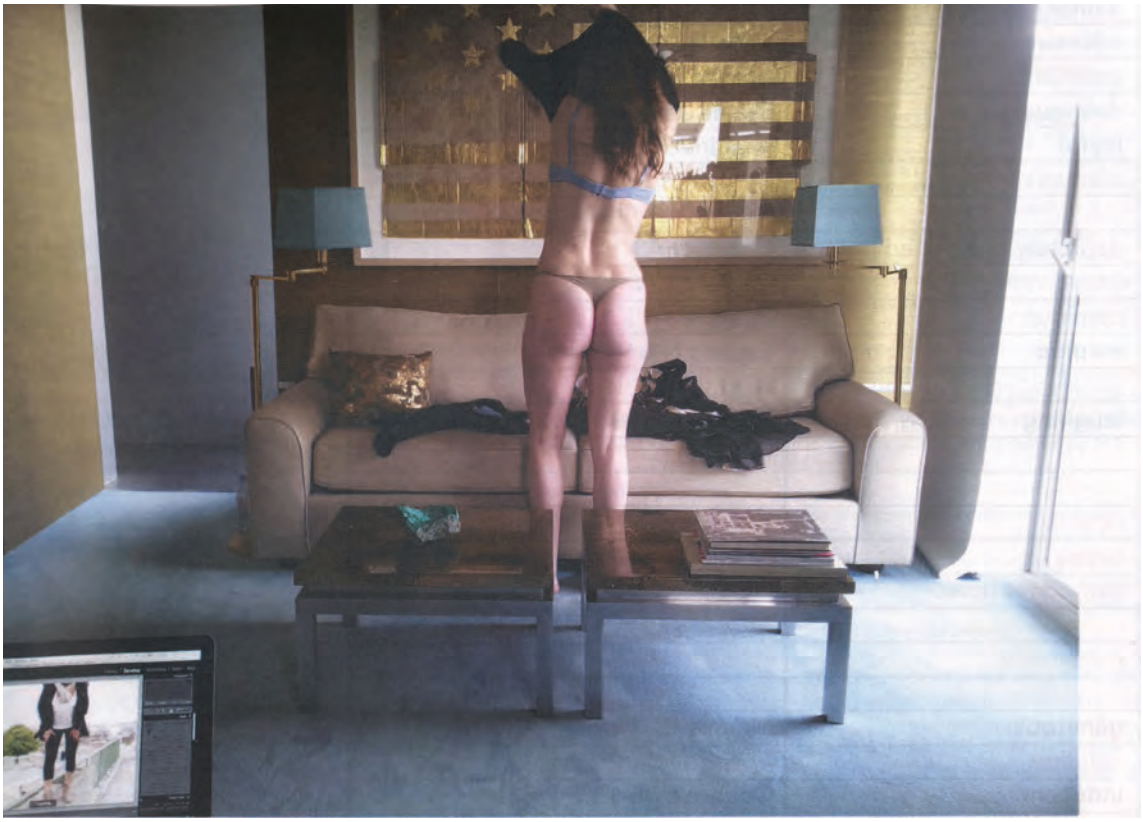

Andrew Berardini. "A Fortuitous Encounter with color in the street: interview with Abraham Cruzvillegas," *Mousse Magazine* N° 34, Summer 2012, pp. 214-219.

Cruzvillegas' work as an artist has always found a way to make-do with the materials at hand, arranging the accidental and the everyday in graceful systems of color and meaning, finding and fulfilling the need to make art, in any circumstance, no matter what resources are available. His large projects, regularly repeated and constantly evolving, go under the name "autoconstrucción" (or self-construction), an artistic self that through objects and actions is in a constant state of becoming.

We spoke with Cruzvillegas when he arrived in Kassel in May, 2012.

`andrew berardini:` I was wondering if you could describe the concrete details of your project for dOCUMENTA (13).

`abraham cruzvillegas:` I will make a series of improvised events—so they will not be announced—in different places in Kassel (and some other cities where I may travel). The nature of these activities will be decided using a device designed by me, through which I assign a color to thirty-four different ideas that have been symbolic, formal or conceptual intentions or constants in my work for twenty-five years, many of them related one way or another to my working platform named "autoconstrucción", which forms the material and structure of almost every exhibition or project I've done in recent years.

Comparing the colors in a catalogue for house paint with the names they give them, each concept could be renamed by chance, i.e. my concept "democraticist" was attributed to a kind of blue, which in Spanish is named "constelación" in the catalogue. My "communal" becomes "picnic," a shade of green at the paint store. One of my two pinks—"affirmative" in my list—is named "rehilete." "Unstable" is now "cidro," a type of orange. "Autoconstruido" is "golden" and "definitely unfinished" is "carrusel," and so on... authentic abstraction.

After this, I painted a modified "Mikado" set (the German name for pick-up sticks) with every color in my list, so I will use them, throwing them in the street or wherever I might randomly be, patiently removing all the sticks but the last two (or three), in order to combine the two (or three) remaining ideas to determine an action to be done, using only materials I can find in the very place where I find myself in that moment.
For instance, if after playing with the pick-up sticks I end up with one pink and one green, I will choose between making an action/sculpture that could be an affirmative picnic, a communal pinwheel (rehilete), and/or other possible combinations.

I can also activate my everyday program of non-productive actions without using the "Mikado" game, though still following the indicated chromatic index. For example: if I find a person with a purple sweater, leaning on a red wall, or if I see a gray vehicle passing fast in front of a green landscape, or a yellow balloon against the blue sky, an orange being eaten by a brown animal, anything on a blank space... Then I can plan my actions.

I will ask any possible passerby to take a picture with a mobile phone, and the sum of these records will be available in a book to be published at the end of this part of the project, and in a blog that has been online since the start of my activities for dOCUMENTA (13).

My aim is to generate a deliberately subjective and self-sufficient project, without a production budget, without plans or structures linked to an exhibition space, trying to bring my own gaze to the question of making an art project without resources, with resources and in spite of resources.

`ab:` There's a lot to talk about there, but to begin, I am very moved by the idea of non-productive activities. Often in a drive for efficiency all the things that make up life (or the most important parts, by my lights) become inefficient,

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Andrew Berardini. "A Fortuitous Encounter with color in the street: interview with Abraham Cruzvillegas," *Mousse Magazine* N° 34, Summer 2012, pp. 214-219.

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like love, family, self-reflection, poetry, art and on. I was curious if you could talk about what makes up a 'non-productive activity' in the context of dOCUMENTA (13)?

ac: The question nowadays—talking about economics—could be "what is production?" or "what is productive?" In my mind I want to produce knowledge, language, some educational processes, which means—hopefully—that I can learn. I don't want to teach anybody anything. I don't want to provide any kind of service, because I can't, not even a message. I'm not against the productive sphere of contemporary art, in terms of money, budgets, plans, funding, patrons and so on. I'm just trying to test myself in a different environment, in which production occurs as an impromptu, as David Medalla puts it.

ab: You're in the middle of these activities, I believe (having a good conversation I hope constitutes a non-productive activity). How's it going so far? What discoveries have you made?

ac: For me, understanding the city where these events are taking place is crucial, but the actions are not about the city. In fact they are about nothing. Conversing takes people to different places, beyond the site where the conversation happens. I'm taking my own experience as a reference, to activate in any other place, which in this case is Kassel; so I'm discovering very diverse things about Kassel, such as the fact that many people here don't like documenta…

ab: Lately I've been thinking a lot about Allan Kaprow and his notion not only of art having a more authentic relationship to life, but also of the dissolving of the boundaries between art and life. So many of your actions are untimed here... do you think the fact that Kassel is entangled in documenta is the frame to the picture, so to speak, or do you think these actions will just seamlessly blend with the practice of everyday life?

ac: Kaprow is a great reference, but there are some others, like Melquiades Herrera, who lived a permanent performance, in which there was no real difference between his life and his work. He mastered the art of everyday life as art, not as a metaphor, not as subject matter for art, not as an action that happens only for an art audience. There's almost no documentation of his work/life, and he never claimed to be making an artwork. For him it was evident, by itself.

ab: On some level, a permeability between art and life almost makes a moment where art dissolves into life. So many visionaries maybe start out in art and end up somewhere far away or leave art altogether. Even Kaprow, at some point, called himself an un-artist. Why continue in the system of distribution called art? Why not dissolve into the landscape of the everyday, without the framing word of 'art'?

Andrew Berardini. "A Fortuitous Encounter with color in the street: interview with Abraham Cruzvillegas," *Mousse Magazine* N° 34, Summer 2012, pp. 214-219.

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ac: I'm an artist, and I have the will to make art, whatever shape it takes, according to specific needs (my needs), even when it does not look very much like artwork. But I think these days it is hard to find something you can't use, abuse or misuse in an art project. I'm not looking for new ways of making art, or trying to escape from art, I'm just trying to understand things, to ask questions, and it happens that now I need to make things in the street, not necessarily as performances or events, just simple actions that may not lead to anything productive. But who knows?

ab: Some of my all-time favorite sculptures have been made out of almost nothing (or perhaps nothing, in some cases). I came out of the punk/indie music scene as a teenager, and the two things that most attracted me to it were the community that it gave me as a weirdo kid, and the economy of means that went into making the music. I was curious: you could talk a little about the economies of making art? Out of nothing, out of something, out of a community or just by one's self?

ac: My desire to make something out of nothing doesn't come from art—even if I'm aware and proud of my artistic genealogy and vocabulary—but from my own experience. The concept at the center of my long-term project, tautologically named "autoconstrucción," is about the fact of constructing a house—many times, or almost always, in a collaborative way, in the most correct use of the word "community"—after identifying specific needs, apart from scarcity. Then you have no choice but to make things with what you have at hand, which in some cases might only be the dirt under your fingernails, or nothing at all. Then, in my case this would be the material for any artwork or project. Now, in Kassel I'm attempting to extend my practice, standing on that mobile structure for making things here in the same way. But autoconstrucción works for me in different simultaneous ways, like appealing to the construction of one's own identity as an individual. This way, by making things during dOCUMENTA (13), I'm still changing myself. As I try to do permanently.

his newfound skill to create porny, perspectivally crude embroideries of writhing pinups, as well as an *Alice in Wonderland* tapestry cycle specifically commissioned by Blake. Alice's brief appearance gains more resonance toward the exhibition's conclusion, when viewers enter Walter Potter's extraordinary world of Victorian animalia. Potter twisted taxidermied animals into absurd anthropomorphic scenarios: In *Athletic Toads*, ca. 1850, for example, the amphibians enjoy a sunny English afternoon, exercising on swings and seesaws. Potter's work even explores class politics: In *The Upper Ten*, date unknown, squirrels play cards, smoke cigars, and drink port in a gentlemen's club, while directly opposite them, in *The Lower Five*, ca. 1860, working-class rats carouse in a drinking den, getting trashed and playing dominoes.

Above *The Upper Ten*'s fireplace is an eerily Damien Hirst–like butterfly display. In fact, Hirst lent a work by Potter for the installation. He also gave an interview for the accompanying publication in which he acknowledges the impact that both Blake's work and Victorian taxidermy had on him. This is arguably the most important thing about "Exhibition #3." Instead of belaboring a point about outsider art's overlooked qualities, Blake has created a compelling case for viewing British Pop artists (like himself) and their YBA offspring as part of a long, carnivalesque tradition, as contemporary contributors to a bubbling history of British humor and fantasy that occasionally boils over, with remarkable results.

—*Anthony Byrt*

PARIS

Abraham Cruzvillegas

GALERIE CHANTAL CROUSEL

"I'm very interested in the idea of what happens in the border, in the space in between. What happens when you cross the street? Or when you cross the *périphérique*?" Having lived in Paris from 2005 through 2008, Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas recently returned to that city to examine its borders and his own identity in relation to them. *La petite ceinture*, the "little belt" made of nineteenth-century train tracks that encircled the city just inside its nineteenth-century fortifications, still marks the boundary of central Paris. The system of defensive walls, built in response to France's defeat by Prussia in 1815, was demolished following World War I; the tracks were largely out of use by the 1930s. But the Boulevard Périphérique, a ring road that now separates Paris from its *banlieues*, was built along much the same route. Drawn to the physical manifestations of liminal spaces, photographs of remaining petite ceinture train tracks, and the modern freeway, Cruzvillegas also turned toward the people and local initiatives that exist in such boundary zones.

From the street, an untitled construction (all works 2010) was visible through the gallery's glass front door: a tall half-cylinder of reconstituted wood chips blocked visitors from walking straight in, forcing them immediately left or right or even back outside. Made of salvaged materials, wooden planks, and boards, Cruzvillegas's structure wrapped around the inside of the gallery, recalling la petite ceinture but also a skateboard ramp or a tower block. Reminiscent, too, in its rickety construction, of the unplanned developments in the area around Ajusco, in Mexico City, where Cruzvillegas grew up, the work alludes to the rough shacks erected in peripheral communities in his own country as well as their equivalents in and around Paris.

Situated in the small space at the back of the gallery was *Study Room*, an installation comprising twenty-eight drawings, a table and chairs, a wheelbarrow, a canvas tote bag filled with beer-bottle caps,

Abraham Cruzvillegas, *Study Room*, 2010, mixed media. Installation view.

and a bookshelf lined with photocopied guidebooks to Paris and other volumes about the city, along with a collection of bulbs and root vegetables. Tubers were also balanced at various points around the wooden construction in the main space, some slowly sprouting, others drying out as the exhibition progressed. Many of the bottle caps—including an impressive collection popped off bottles of the French beer Kronenbourg 1664—were also incorporated into the untitled construction, hammered into joints with nails.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Cruzvillegas produced a book of interviews, images, and collages. In eight lengthy interviews (in English, French, and Spanish) with people such as Maroussia Rebecq (the artist behind the fashion and nightlife brand Andrea Crews), the slam poet Pilote le Hot, and urban gardeners Cécile Bourne-Farrell, François Lemaire, and Rosanna del Prete, Cruzvillegas distilled a nuanced vision of the French capital. For example, Lemaire explained that in the public gardens at Saint-Ouen, "You can't have potatoes . . . because between the level here and the level forty centimeters underneath, there is a plastic sheet to separate the contaminated ground and the new ground. And the potatoes have roots that could penetrate the plastic sheet." Here, la petite ceinture becomes analogous with the plastic sheet, and Cruzvillegas's wanderings and conversations are symbolized by the potato's rhizome. The book is also filled with images of train tracks, root vegetables, a sculpture by Alexander Rodchenko, and one of Hélio Oiticica's "*Parangolés*" from 1964—a web of historical and visual references. Formally, Rodchenko's sculpture echoes Cruzvillegas's untitled construction, while the Russian's socialist agenda connects with the contemporary artist's Parisian social portrait. Likewise, Cruzvillegas's reference to Oiticica is not surprising. By contrast, Oiticica's "*Penetrables*," 1961–79, offered a study of Brazil brought to a European capital when the series was presented at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in 1969. Cruzvillegas's project uncovered an exotic zone within the metropolis itself.

—*Lillian Davies*

Marlie Mul

GALERIE LUCILE CORTY

Marlie Mul's exhibition "Your Wet Sleeve in My Neck" had something green and full of potential about it. In the gallery's street-level space was a low-lying sculpture diagonally laid out in serpentine form. This piece had the smack of an extravagantly long wind