

ID-entity September 12 – October 18, 2008

Seeking to further international contemporary art dialogue, build alliances for artists, and promote cultural exchange, in Spring 2008 Transformer began developing a relationship with The Mexican Cultural Institute in Washington, D.C. Interested in better understanding the emerging contemporary art of DC's sister federal city, Transformer staff and board traveled to Mexico City in April 2008 to attend the FEMACO art fair. During our visit, we had the great pleasure of meeting with many of the artists, gallerists, and curators who are creating, supporting and presenting Mexico City's contemporary expressions.

Co-curated by Victoria Reis and Mexico City based independent curator Giovanna Esposito Yussif, *ID-entity* highlights the work of ten young artists that live and work in Mexico's capital - **Domestic Fine Arts, Gilberto Esparza, Saúl Gómez, Ricardo Harispuru, Mauricio Limón, Edith Pons, Xavier Rodríguez, Marco Rountree Cruz, Amaranta Sánchez and Joaquín Segura**. Transformer is honored to share the work of these distrito federal based artists with Washington, DC audiences.

In an era of globalization, and the many questions, opinions and consequences that the integration of economic, political, and cultural systems raise, as well as effects on the environment, the developing world, and human rights, the concept of "identity" and the range of meanings that can be applied in defining it, became an exciting starting point in organizing the *ID-entity* exhibition. The participating *ID-entity* artists pose questions and share reflections about living within a capital city, urban life, consumption, consumerism, politics and culture among other themes related to how "identity" is not only defined by community, culture and country, but also by the Self.

The exhibition also plays with deconstruction of the word "identity" and its multiple meanings: ID can stand for the state of being identified (*Ladrón que roba a ladrón* performance by Xavier Rodríguez); is an abbreviation for Identification, Intelligent Design or Infectious Disease (Amaranta Sánchez's *Mounstro*, which explores humanity as a monster that wounds itself and its environment). ID also references Freudian theory, and the unconscious psyche that serves as the source of instinctual impulses and demands for immediate satisfaction of primal needs (Mauricio Limón's psychotropic trips, or Edith Pons' reflection on the craving for comfort through food). Entity can stand for an alter-ego; a self contained existence; an essential nature; for something that has separate and distinct existence, and objective or conceptual reality (*Área del avestruz* by Ricardo Harispuru); or an organized array of individual elements and parts forming and working as a unit (Gilberto Esparza's inorganic autotrophs).

Featuring photography, video, painting, drawing, and mixed-media work presented in site-specific and site-responsive installations throughout Transformer and the public rooms of the Mexican Cultural Institute's historic mansion, *ID-entity* celebrates the work of a group of artists that share a common culture but different identities.

Many thanks to Juan García de Oteyza, Mexican Cultural Institute Executive Director Alejandra de la Paz, to Claudia Keller and all of the Institute's staff, Transformer's Board President James Alefantis and Board Member Izette Folger, all of the artists and their Mexico based galleries, and the many people who assisted Transformer along the way for making this exhibition possible.

transformer is a Washington, D.C. based 501(c) 3 non-profit, artist-centered visual arts organization that connects and promotes emerging artists locally, nationally and internationally. Partnering with artists, curators, art spaces and other cultural entities, Transformer serves as a catalyst and advocate for emergent expression in the visual arts. www.transformergallery.org

Transformer's 2008/2009 exhibition series and programs are supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, The Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, and The Visionary Friends of Transformer.

The Mexican Cultural Institute in Washington, D.C. is one of the most important artistic and cultural centers established outside Mexico. Its primary mission is to promote and disseminate among the local community, the vast and rich traditions of Mexico's cultural past and present. Situated on a magnificent mansion on 16th Street, N.W., the Institute has become an important meeting place for the intellectual and artistic minds on both sides of the border. It has developed a close relationship with key cultural and academic institutions of the nation's capital aiming at increasing the mutual understanding between our countries, while supporting and promoting the rich manifestations of the human spirit. www.instituteofmexicodc.org

Artworks courtesy of:

Arena México, Arte Contemporáneo; Garash Galería; Galería Hilario Galguera and Proyectos Monclova.

ID-entity is supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Mexican Cultural Institute, Fundación/Colección Jumex, The Boden Group, The DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities/NEA, The Washington Plaza Hotel, the Inter-American Development Bank Cultural Center, and The Visionary Friends of Transformer.

EXHIBITION HOURS – TRANSFORMER: Wednesday – Saturday, 1–7 pm & by appointment

EXHIBITION HOURS – MEXICAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE: Monday - Friday, 10 am – 1 pm and 3 – 6 pm

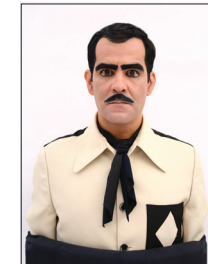
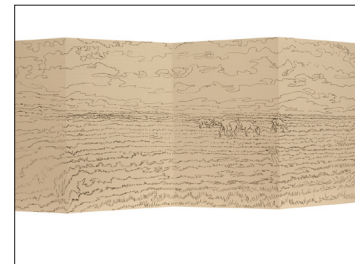
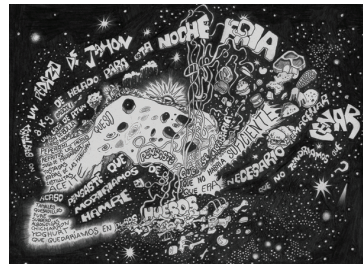
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FUNDACIÓN/COLECCIÓN JUMEX

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Domestic Fine Arts

Mexico City. 2004 - present.

Domestic Fine Arts is the project of a self-taught artist obsessed with the registry of his own person and his surroundings. Jesús León (Mexico City, 1975) has been taking photographs of the underground society of the Distrito Federal for approximately ten years: artists, trendsetters, musicians, DJ's and diverse characters of the cultural environment and the urban fauna. From the beginning, his work has been distributed via the Internet, making him one of the most interesting and recognized photo-bloggers from Mexico City.

His images portray the glamour, extravagance and decadence of the most intense side of the city's night life: men, women, transvestites and homeless are shot in provocative poses; they show their charms to an eye and a camera that seduces them and makes them the stars of the night. His photographs crystallize the mediated world that has penetrated so intrinsically into our lives, through fashion magazines, movies, television, and other media, but which are appropriated and transformed by each individual.

Gilberto Esparza

Aguascalientes, 1972. Lives and works in Mexico City.

One of the central themes revolving Gilberto Esparza's recent work is the analysis of technology as an instrument of social, economic, and political power, and its effect on the transformation of urban landscape. Esparza's work seeks to point out the alienated process that so often detonates uncontrolled situations: urban metastasis, excessive growth or absurd systems and infrastructures - that reflect chaotic urban sprawl as a consequence of neo-liberal economic strategy.

Esparza creates kinetic beings that, through various forms of energy and mechanical elements, intervene and dialogue with the city. Examples of this are his "inorganic autotrophs" - organisms that use electric and solar light variations to translate into sonic landscapes - that in an aleatory way, musicalize the atmospheric conditions of the places where they exist.

Saúl Gómez

Mexico City, 1980. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Most of Saúl Gómez' work deals with examining how we conceive, perceive, and configure landscape outside of traditional artistic models. Through his continuous and rigorous observations on the transformations of the physical conditions within his daily surroundings, Gómez creates highly detailed "meta-compositions" that summarize - to his eyes - the universe.

His drawings, paintings and installations reverently highlight everyday elements: meat in the roaster, beer bottles, a fried egg, cigarette butts, a cartoon mushroom, old snickers, a tape recorder, the field that he sees on his way home. Through the decay and organic alteration of these elements, Gómez' work shows a multiplicity of implosions that lead to other materials, other scenes, generating a narrative discourse that implies what will happen to matter and its integration with the absolute.

Ricardo Harispuru

Mexico City, 1971. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Ricardo Harispuru's work is in continuous disagreement with the market and the common parameters that exist in the commercial art circuit. His production revolves around inter-referentiality and critique, which can be personal, social, political or artistic, with the

intent of generating provocations and questions as to what is socially accepted in the artistic field. He portrays aspects of helplessness, instability, humor, chance and contradiction, under the premise that: "All tangible interpretation comes from the conscience of limitation."

With *Ostrich Area* he presents a series of soft mannequins that stage men within the ostrich myth of hiding or burying its head. Commenting on the freedom of the contemporary conscience - examined from evasive and alienating points, Harispuru puts in conflict the individual and social identity protected by a cynical, doubtful, and schizophrenic culture.

Mauricio Limón

Mexico City, 1979. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Mauricio Limón's multidisciplinary works are recognized by an experimental style and subtle poetics; he uses classical formats like portraits and landscapes to explore the human flesh, the beauty ideals imposed by fashion magazines, and the sexual paroxysms that exists in the initiation rites of tribal cultures.

Interested in diverse states of consciousness and their respective sensory experiences, Limón uses different plastic and innovative visual techniques - like the mixture of the mesoamerican's resins ocote and copal with oil painting - to translate his feelings to the viewer. His illustrated notebooks present sprawling cartographies that narrate his mental journeys, creating with line and color, characters and mental landscapes that invite the spectator to go deeply into these surreal worlds.

Edith Pons

Mexico City, 1978. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Edith Pons' sculptures, installations and environments invite the viewer into a sensual and aesthetic experience, where reality and fantasy are intertwined to allude to the magical world of childhood innocence. Using resin as her primary material, she creates organic and amorphous works influenced by the memories of her youth, such as candies, toys, and cartoons. Part of her work is founded in the kawaii (cute) aspect of Japanese culture. Found mainly in fashion, design and animation, these visual elements of cuteness and innocence have been exported to the rest of the world.

Through mushrooms, pancakes, cakes, pudding or fruits, Pons' work references the comfort, joy and hope of childhood. It also criticizes the world in which the contemporary adult lives, where superficiality, artificiality, the ephemeral of massive industrial production, the massive consumption of junk food, and the search for mundane pleasure are established as precepts to obtain happiness.

Xavier Rodríguez

Mexico City, 1971. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Xavier Rodríguez uses the body as his primary tool to research the repercussions of the individual impact on physical and social environments. His work seeks to cause absurd and unsuspected reactions, and at the same time reflects on the relationship between object and subject. During the last few years, he has focused on what he calls "performative objects" which are sculptures, interventions or installations that are put into action by either the performer or the viewer.

An example of this is *Ladrón que roba a ladrón* (thief that steals from a thief), a work that consists of three representations of Jesus Malverde. Rodríguez uses this mythic avenger from Mexican subculture - sanctified by socially marginalized communities and drug dealers - as a representation of the post-revolutionary Mexican physical archetype that lives in the collective imagery, questioning what defines national identity.

Marco Rountree Cruz

Mexico City, 1982. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Rountree Cruz is a self-taught artist that from early in his career has explored the definitions and boundaries of the "line" by prioritizing time and movement involved in both subtle and strongly charged socio-political images. Rountree Cruz's inventive constructions include drawings, sculptural objects, installations, videos and diverse interventions on walls, which generate new dimensions in a spatial context.

While making use of diverse materials such as ink, tape, wire and wood among others, he creates varied aesthetic solutions that regularly evidence his recurrent interest in graffiti-art. His work shows the artist's highly elaborate exploration of geometrically-linear forms, bringing into consideration contemporary discussions about the representation of perspective in various conceptual levels.

Amaranta Sánchez

Mexico City, 1976. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Amaranta Sánchez uses video and more recently photography as mediums to comment on self-portraiture. Her project *Monstruo*, presents a series of self-portraits constructed by accidents and distortions of the body. Monster is generally subjected

continual infliction of wounds as an organic action where the camera functions as the only witness of the incidents.

Cuatro de cuatro (four of four), video in four movements, is a portrait that employs video as a narrative space for the digressive transformation of the urban landscape. A soundtrack created by Jorge Bolado alludes to the physicality and emotion of the monster. It is composed by four pieces, each of four parts and four notes generated by the voice, the body and toys as instruments.

Joaquín Segura

Mexico City, 1980. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Joaquín Segura's work revolves around themes such as violence as an omnipresent motif in contemporary life, the crisis of institutions, and the possibility of provocation. He deliberately incorporates acts of apparent violence, sensitive issues, direct confrontation of established references, caustic themes, and an amusing cynicism, to emphasize the impotence, denial and deception of contemporary life. His practice aims to reach the art of destabilization and the poetics of sabotage, making a sharp commentary on the ethics and the existing or non-existing limits of today's art practice.

Feelings re-signifies the imagery of the separatist Basque Homeland and Freedom Organization, or ETA, by hybridizing its ideological contents within nineteenth century decorative tradition and the tune "Feelings" by Morris Albert. The result is a fully functional music box, which uses as visual references the aesthetics of fear, hate crimes and recalcitrant nationalism, to enunciate the feeble presence of tolerance in contemporary society.