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 **LACE** LOS ANGELES CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

LACE  EMERGING CURATORS

C O S T M Z N G

L O N G O P G (CUSTOMIZING LANGUAGE)

An exhibition curated by Idurre Alonso and Selene Preciado
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
January 6 – February 14, 2016

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Customizing Language: The Inaugural Presentation of the Emerging Curator Program at LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions)

Sarah Russin, Executive Director | Shoghig Halajian, Assistant Director

Customizing Language opened at LACE on January 6, 2016. In many ways it was the ideal exhibition to launch the year, and to serve as the first presentation of LACE's annual Emerging Curator Program. The project explores a range of ideas around language, identity, and power that continued to resonate throughout the year, in the arts and beyond. *Customizing Language* curators Idurre Alonso and Selene Preciado astutely brought together a diverse group of artists who explore timely and critical issues at stake within Los Angeles's cultural landscape.

LACE's Emerging Curator Program aims to understand the prominent themes within the arts, and to reflect the diversity of perspectives of the arts community. By discovering curatorial talent in Los Angeles, LACE gives emerging practitioners an opportunity to produce a large-scale exhibition in its 3500 sq. ft. gallery.

The inaugural Emerging Curators Idurre Alonso and Selene Preciado are prolific curators who have collaborated on several exhibitions. They were selected by a jury from proposals from throughout the Los Angeles region. Invited jurors Connie Butler, Chief Curator, Hammer Museum; Nery Gabriel Lemus, artist, curator and educator; and Matias Viegner, artist, critic and curator; unanimously selected the project on the basis of its artistic merit, experimental spirit, and critical perspective.

According to juror Matias Viegner, "With a history of presenting experimental work that often uses language as a critical wedge, LACE has demonstrated how language is always political, and can be deployed to reveal truth as often as to tell lies. *Customizing Language* is a linguistic hypothesis in which a group of South, Central, and

North American artists critically engage language to investigate local, historical and transnational issues. The predominance of Spanish-speaking artists in this exhibition testifies to LACE's long-term commitment to the diversity of a city in which more than half the population is of Latin American origin."

Customizing Language takes risks and raises questions that are not easy to resolve. In doing so, it furthers LACE's mission to promote freedom of expression, experimentation with ideas, materials, and new forms, and content that is challenging and socially engaged. A site-specific installation created for LACE's Storefront space by artist Marcos Ramírez ERRE especially engaged the Hollywood public. This artwork exemplifies LACE's mission with its arresting arrangement of police shields displaying contrasting carved-out messages reading *Tolerancia, Confianza, Respeto*.

The LACE team was thrilled to work with curators Selene Preciado and Idurre Alonso, and continues to be inspired by the participating artists: Alexander Apóstol, Mely Barragán, Beatriz Cortez, Regina José Galindo, Luis G. Hernández, Camilo Ontiveros, Rubén Ortiz-Torres, Gala Porras-Kim, Marcos Ramírez ERRE, and Clarissa Tossin.

Introduction/Acknowledgments

Idurre Alonso | Selene Preciado

Customizing Language is an exhibition conceived after an ongoing dialogue on concerns about the use of language and written text as a conceptual strategy in contemporary art. The artists whom we invited to participate explore these concerns. In bringing them together, we hoped to establish a discourse and generate connections for their pieces to be in conversation. Most of these artists are “local”—our idea of locality encompasses the inclusion of artists whose first language is not English who work in the greater Los Angeles but are part of a diaspora that extend beyond the border to Tijuana and Mexicali. Regina José Galindo and Alexander Apóstol, two artists included in *Customizing Language*, do not belong to this local context. They work in Guatemala and Madrid, respectively, yet are part of a wider exchange around post-colonial and gender issues that affect the “local” region. While most of the artists presented previous work, Beatriz Cortez created versions for this presentation at LACE; Rubén Ortiz-Torres and Gala Porras-Kim produced new works that are part of a series; and Camilo Ontiveros and Marcos Ramírez ERRE developed original installations exclusively for *Customizing Language*.

There are two collaborations that we would like to acknowledge as intrinsic part of this project. First, the graphic identity of the exhibition, developed by José Manuel Cruz Vázquez from Estudio_ChP+, which was born out of conversations about the concept of the exhibition and the works of the artists, and his own knowledge and research. His graphic identity is more than a logo—it contains our ideas and it is at the same time a performatic exercise. The “logo” used in the wall text, the brochure, and this catalogue,

is a graphic abstraction of the movement of the mouth in pronouncing the five vowels (a, e, i, o, u) in Spanish. This identity echoes Clarissa Tossin's sugar casts as well as a similar aesthetic present in the works of Luis Hernández, Ortiz-Torres, and ERRE.

The second intrinsic part of this project is a text piece made for this catalogue. We invited curator and author Raquel Gutiérrez to write a text from the perspective of her own writing and artistic practice that would complement the ideas and artworks in the exhibition. Her text fills a space that was lacking in the exhibition—a piece that is an actual literary work. *Twice as hard, half as far* is a conceptual text that does the opposite of some of the works in the exhibition—instead of turning words into images or objects, she makes images with words, recovering and remixing the histories of iconic popular and pop figures, past and present.

Lastly, but not least importantly, we would like to acknowledge and thank all the participating artists in *Customizing Language*; Artist Pension Trust, Los Angeles and Gallery Services, Los Angeles, for lending the works for the exhibition. Our deepest gratitude is extended to Edwin Hill, Associate Professor of French and Italian and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California, who graciously accepted our invitation to contribute an essay to the catalogue. The exhibition and catalogue would have not been possible without the staff at LACE: Sarah Russin, Shoghig Halajian, Melissa Castellano, Fiona Ball, and Margaret Reeve, LACE board member who served as copy-editor of this catalogue. Special thanks to interns Andrew Freire, Anastasia Kahn, Soomin Kim, Crystal Liu, Neven Lochhead, Emilio Luarca, Jayne Manuel, Annie Martens, Moi Mehr-Assa, Savannah Mora, Jason Park, Stephanie Sleiman, Cindy Vallejo, and Sophia Zanders, who helped during installation and de-installation. We thank LACE and the jury for the Emerging Curator award for believing in our proposal, as well as The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts for their support of LACE and this project.



Curatorial Statement

Idurre Alonso | Selene Preciado

Language is defined as a verbal communication system that articulates thoughts. Far from being an objective system of structures, language can reflect power relations, hierarchies, social differences, and historical problems. It works simultaneously as a cultural system of belonging that can indicate the loss or reconfiguration of certain kinds of identities. Quoting Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar in reference to his work *A Logo for America* (1987), “language is not innocent and reflects a geopolitical reality.”

This exhibition presents the work of ten artists that investigate an array of contemporary issues through the use of language, focusing on subjects such as gender issues (Mely Barragán and Regina José Galindo), immigration problems (Camilo Ontiveros, Luis Hernández, and Beatriz Cortez), power relations and deficiencies (Marcos Ramírez ERRE), fissures of utopian ideals (Alexander Apóstol and Rubén Ortiz-Torres), epistemological issues (Gala Porrás-Kim) and imperialism and postcolonial effects (Clarissa Tossin).

The artists in *Customizing Language* engage critically with local and historical issues using language as a strategy for creation, experimentation, and constructive dialogue. The title of the exhibition is a play on words that alludes to familiar terms addressed as topics such as “custom” (cultural traditions), “us Customs” (immigration issues), and lowrider “customization,” (LA popular culture) inviting the viewer to understand the works as adaptations of texts and language that open up a space for dialogue and understanding.

中 印 中 日

A (Brief) History of Art and Text (from Latin America)

Idurre Alonso

When we pulverize words, what is left is neither mere noise nor arbitrary, pure elements, but still other words, reflection of an invisible and yet indelible representation: this is the myth in which we now transcribe the most obscure and real powers of language.

Leandro Katz, decoding of *Lunar Sentence II*, 1978-1979

While text and language tap into the world of description and evocation, art has been traditionally tied to representation. Thus potential tensions and contradictions exist between the linguistic and the pictorial realms, two separate universes that started to collide and be explored and experimented with as the first modernist movements occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century. Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism, Surrealism and Symbolism utilized language with different purposes, including introducing printed words as a symbol of modernity, creating unexpected associations, and disrupting traditional representations.

At the same time and within the area of literature, Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro (Chile, 1893–1948), associated with the avant-garde literary movements in Europe and Latin America, experimented with calligrams as early as 1911, preceding Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes. Poems of Peace and War* 1913–1916 publication. A calligram is a word or piece of text in which the design and layout of the letters creates a visual image related to the meaning of the words themselves. These literary forms represented

a bridge between descriptive and representational forms, erasing the limits between text and image, and creating new approaches of hybrid nature. Other Latin American poets such as César Moro (Peru, 1903–1956), Carlos Oquendo Amat (Peru, 1905–Spain, 1946) and José Juan Tablada (Mexico, 1817–US, 1945) and literary movements including *estridentismo* in Mexico with Manuel Maples Arce and *La Mandrágora* in Chile, dabbled in avant-garde written forms that play with language as a form of visual representation. These modern experimentations were essentially based on formal and aesthetic approaches, however, they became the first steps towards the use of text in the visual arts.

There is a significant link, yet to be further analyzed and researched, between experimental poetry and literature generated in mid-twentieth century and beyond, and the emergence of conceptual practices in Latin America. As the scholar and curator Zanna Gilbert points out, “in Latin America experimental poetic networks contributed greatly to the aesthetic of conceptualism because of the artists’ shared interest in investigating established linguistic and social structures, experimenting with participation, and pursuing an expanded understanding of poetry.”¹ Concrete poetry in Brazil, *nadaísmo* in Colombia and *El techo de la ballena* in Venezuela, for example, were some of the subversive and irreverent literary movements that appeared during the 1950s and 1960s with the intention of generating a break not only with traditional literature but also with conventional society and its aesthetics. In their first manifesto the *nadaístas* stated that “nadaism is a very limited concept. It is a revolution of the form and content of the spiritual order in Colombia. For the youth is a conscious schizophrenic state between the passive state of the spirit and the culture.”² Their writings often targeted traditional education and the conservative and conventional positions of the church, the press, and the most significant thinkers. Moreover there was a direct connection, in terms of their radical ideas, with the political conditions that occurred during the period such as the years of the Violence in Colombia (1948–1958) and the political unrest in Venezuela with the activities of the guerrilla Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN) (1960–1969).

As with these literary groups, conceptual art in Latin America a decade later was often centered on breaking with traditional conventions and rebelling against the artistic establishment. In some instances artists used text as part of their artistic strategies. In fact, several of the conceptual artists from Latin America were part of experimental poetry and literary movements prior to or while they worked on conceptual artistic practices. Edgardo Vigo (Argentina, 1928–1997), for example, became one of the most prominent proponents of *poesía visual* (visual poetry) with his magazine *Diagonal Cero* (1962–1969) and later on of *poesía y/o para realizar* (poetry to be and/or realized) with *Hexágono 71* (1971–1975). In his journals Vigo presented the experimental poetry work of international authors as well as his own, and in later issues of the magazines he transformed the poems into objects to be built by the reader, thus the reference to the term “to be realized” as a seminal part of the concept of poetry. As it happened with

1 Gilbert, Zanna. *Genealogical Diversions: Experimental Poetry Networks, Mail Art and Conceptualisms*. Caiana #4, Primer semestre, Buenos Aires, 2014.

2 Arango, Gonzalo. *Primer manifiesto nadaísta*. Ed: Tipografía Universal, Medellín, 1958. p 12.

other artistic practices of the time period, such as kinetic art and performance art, the participation of the viewer or the reader became an intricate part of the pieces as a way to act against passive and contemplative attitudes. With his innovative approach to poetry, Vigo was able to transform the reader, or the consumer as he called it, into the creator. Throughout his career he oscillated between his interest in experimental poetry, participatory practices and conceptual approaches erasing traditional genres and generating links among the three. His piece *Poemas matemáticos (in)comestibles / (Un)eatable Mathematic Poems* (1968), for instance, was formed by two joined cans with an object inside that made noise when it moved. With this piece Vigo created an invisible, quasi-sound poem transformed into a conceptual object that required the action of the observer.

In South America as well, Clemente Padín (Uruguay, b. 1939) edited the seminal journals on experimental poetry *Los huevos del Plata* (1965–1969), *OVUM 10* (1969–1972) and *OVUM* (1972–1975) while he also worked on mail art and performances. Padín created what he coined as *poesía inobjetal* (unobject poetry). Based on the idea that traditional art produced a substitute of reality to allow an escape, he suggested “to act into the reality itself and not into substitutes [that were] representative of the reality such as [the ones used by the] known artistic languages.”³ Through his magazines and mail art he presented instructions for actions such as opening a folded paper with the word “forbidden” in different languages (*Inobjetal 2*, 1971), thus creating an art without objects and without works of art⁴.

Outside of their countries of origin, Felipe Ehrenberg (Mexico, b. 1943) in England, Leandro Katz (Argentina, b. 1938) in the US, and Ulises Carrión (Mexico, b. 1941) in Holland, worked with literature and language as an essential part of their production. Ehrenberg was a founding member, together with Marta Hellión and David Mayor, of the independent *Beau Geste Press* (1970–1974) focused on publishing artist books, flyers and magazines by experimental artists, several of them linked to the Fluxus movement. When in Mexico, he was involved with *El corno emplumado* (1962–1969) a magazine devoted to experimental writing, primarily from Latin America and the US. But at the same time text was also an important element of several of his art works such as in *El arte según yo / Art according to me* (1979), a performance piece in which Ehrenberg presented the sentence “art is only an excuse” with each of the letters tied to strings held by the artist and also by the viewers. The work posed questions about the definition of art by introducing the artist and the viewers as fundamental components of its meaning.

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, the suppressive and convulsive situation in Latin America with dictatorships in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Chile impacted the production of numerous artists who moved towards political approaches in their productions. Language became then an effective tool to challenge the difficult reality and create a critical conscience in the viewer. Edgardo Vigo, whose son was kidnapped and disappeared during the dicta-

3 Padín, Clemente. *Inobjetal 2*. Mail art piece, Montevideo, May 1971.

4 Padín, Clemente. *Inobjetal 3*. Mail art piece, Montevideo, June 1971.

torship in Argentina, started using in his mail art a stamp that read “set free Palomo” [sic] in reference to his son, while the experimental poetry presented in Clemente Padín’s OVUM magazine increasingly began to show political overtones. Padín was incarcerated in Uruguay from 1977 to 1979, accused of making derisive remarks about and contempt for the armed forces. Six documents from his mail art work were used to accuse and sentence him.

The multi-disciplinary experiences of the past and the erasure of traditional genres set the ground for the creation of unorthodox forms of art, including, as mentioned before, the emergence of mail art and Xerox art. In both cases language and text were a vital part of the creative process, and several of the artists working within conceptual and linguistic approaches such as Paulo Bruscky (Brazil, b. 1949) and Horacio Zavala (Argentina, b. 1943) together with Vigo, Ehrenberg, and Carrión, became significant participants of a network of artists that exchanged and disseminated their art pieces internationally by mail. This circulation of art outside of the traditional art system allowed them to evade the prevailing censorship.

In this same vein of unconventional and nonconformist trends, language was utilized by several women artists during the 1960s and 1970s as a focal element to reveal patriarchal power relations and hierarchical orders. In *Limitada / Limited* (1978), a performance by Marie Orensanz’s (Argentina, b. 1938), the artist wrote on her forehead the word “limited” as a reference to a term used as a derogatory comment on women’s intellectual abilities. The action effectively highlighted the nonsensical idea of gender inequality itself. At the same time the consumer society, capitalism and the economic hegemony of the us also became sources for several visual artists that worked within the intersections between text and art. In 1970 Cildo Meireles (Brazil, b. 1948) created *Insertion into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola project* in which the artist modified Coca-Cola bottles by adding political statements or directions to transform them into Molotov cocktails. The bottles were then put back in normal circulation. The piece confronted the regular exchange of information, creating a new anonymous system that could disseminate information and avoid censorship. Using once more the American brand, Antonio Caro (Colombia, b. 1950) produced *Colombia* in 1977, a painting of the Colombian flag that included the word Colombia written with the typography of the Coca-Cola logo. The piece referred to the commercial and economic power of the us in Colombia and its effects on the local identity.

Other more traditional genres, such as photography, offered a space for experimentation with text as well. With a direct allusion to the subjacent ideology under language, in 1980 Carlos Ginzburg (Argentina, b. 1946) created *Le Dentier Occidental A Fés*, a photographic work based on a quote by Marshall McLuhan in which he addressed the hegemonic power of Western civilization through language. The artist placed a fake denture with the alphabet in different locations in Fez, Morocco. The quote - “[...] teeth are emphatically visual in their lineal order. Letters are not only like teeth visually, but their power to put teeth into the business of empire-building is manifest in our Western history”—added to the back of the photographs, was visually transformed into a performatic action that alluded to post-colonial problems.

Artists today continue to use language to analyze and expose contemporary issues, while they employ artistic strategies embedded in the experimental practices of the past. Rubén Ortiz-Torres' *Ceci n'est pas une Machine that Kills Fascists* (2015), for instance, combines modern and conceptual aspects with participatory elements, pop art and low rider overtones, together with references to popular culture. In his piece, the artist blends shiny red car paint and Magritte's iconic sentence with the slogan American singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie used to refer to his guitar. The mostly modern utopian idea of art as a tool to fight evil is in this case negated by the words in French ("this is not") appropriated from a modern artist himself. The text needs to be touched in order to be read, adding the participation as a key element of the work, as if the involvement of the viewer could activate the idealistic mechanism of the painting. Either referring to gender issues through the presentation of pop-like graphic installations (Mely Barragán, *Macho*, 2009), generating epistemological explorations with undeciphered languages (Gala Porras-Kim, *Rongorongo Text* series, 2013–2015) or provoking the viewers by using real testimonies of an armed conflict (Regina José Galindo, *La verdad / The Truth*, 2013), the works of art presented in *Customizing Language*—drawings, paintings, video art, installations, performance and sculptures—are a testimony of the different ways in which language and text can be transformed into powerful tools to question local and universal topics.

中 國 電 訊

Flags, Words, Monochromes, and Other Abstractions

Selene Preciado

Recent studies of Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*, 1915, have unveiled "secret" paintings underneath. The practice of reusing supports since the Renaissance was not uncommon, and with modern x-ray technology we marvel at the "original" works often found beneath masterworks. However, the Malevich case is an interesting one, because one of the images found underneath the monochrome *Black Square* is none other than a handwritten inscription that references French poet and humorist Alphonse Allais's *Combat de Nègres dans une cave pendant la nuit*, a print from 1897. This print reproduced a black monochrome painting from 1882 by Paul Bilhaud with a similar title.¹ Both images represented a racist joke in the vein of the French art movement Les Arts Incohérents (1882–1896), to which Allais was connected. Curiously enough, some of the works produced by this group predate Dada attitudes and even Duchamp's satirical appropriation of the *Mona Lisa*,² but perhaps more interesting is that Allais himself predated Fluxus and Cage's conceptual sound works with the first ever silent musical composition, titled *Funeral March for the Obsequies of a Great Deaf Man*, from 1897. But Malevich's 1915 *Black Square* is not a reference to the humor or the racism of a joke. The significance of the underlying phrase is Malevich's own thought process in discovering the power of the monochrome, of how something and nothing could be packed in the use of a single color contained in a flat geometric shape.

1 Paul Bilhaud's 1882 work was titled *Combat de nègres dans un tunnel*.

2 Eugène Bataille's contribution to the exhibition of Arts Incohérents, in 1883, was a work titled *Le rire* (The Laugh), which pictures the *Mona Lisa* smoking a pipe.

Just as this [art] historical reference reveals itself underneath *Black Square*, pointing at a legacy while also referencing itself, the works of three artists in *Customizing Language*—Rubén Ortiz-Torres, Marcos Ramírez ERRE, and Luis G. Hernández—offer similar revealing effects through the use of language in (and as) abstraction. Ortiz-Torres's *Bandera magonista* (Magon's Flag), 2013, and *Ceci n'est pas une Machine that Kills Fascists*, 2015, have underlying text that “magically” appears, due to the technique and the specific material used, but also by the interactive element of touch. These works embody accessible monochromatic abstractions that represent different high and low lineages. On the one hand, the materials used—urethane and chromo-luminescent paint on aluminum panel, reference both traditional oil painting and car customization painting, specifically that of lowrider cars. Secondly, both works “hide” phrases drawn from history (the motto “Tierra y Libertad” in *Bandera magonista*, which has its origins in a Russian revolutionary organization³), art history and popular culture (René Magritte's famous painting of a pipe with the inscription “Ceci n'est pas une pipe” or “this is not a pipe” in French, and a political slogan sticker affixed to Woody Guthrie's Gibson guitar). In these works, the message is only partially hidden until interaction occurs, thus both works appear to be red rectangular monochromes. Although the words Ortiz-Torres has chosen for his underlying paintings are not cryptic in any way, the composition of the elements of monochrome + text is full of symbolism and meaning. In the choice of the color red, for example, we can find historical, political, and poetic connotations associated with values and ideas such as blood, communism, or love. At the same time red occupies values and hierarchies in the art historical canon, as a primary color favored by the abstractionists, including Mondrian, Ellsworth Kelly, or Malevich himself. Even though these interactive paintings are inviting, and have a certain sense of intimacy via the familiarity of the phrases or the action of touching, these feelings contain simultaneous elements of subversiveness and violence, as they not only disrupt the medium of painting with the technique, but also use touch to subvert the medium and the sacredness of art. Ortiz-Torres's *Bandera magonista* belongs to a series of paintings subverting national emblems and iconic art historical images, begriming them by transforming them into monochromes (or almost monochromes) and which titles are plays on words. For example, a black monochrome rectangle is titled *Bandera negra* (Black Flag), while a red monochrome square is *El grito* (The Scream), referencing the declaration of Mexican Independence by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla in 1810 and the painting by Edvard Munch from 1893.

The symbolism of colors present in flags transcends and transmits political meanings to works of art. Throughout (art) history, the monochrome has been understood as an exercise in color theory or in abstraction. In a statement accompanying the work *Forbidden Colors* (1988), concurrent to his *Bloodworks* series, artist Félix González-Torres explained how this work, consisting of four canvases, each one painted in a different color—white, green, red, and black—would “speak to everyone,” but

3 Ricardo Flores Magón coined the motto in Spanish in the weekly Mexican magazine *Regeneración*, but this phrase became attributed to Emiliano Zapata. However, “Land and Freedom” was originally “Zemlya i Volya,” the name of a middle-class organization of revolutionaries who aimed to spread socialism in rural areas in Russia during the 1870s.

emphasized that they had a specific context.⁴ From 1967 ending with the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993, the Israeli occupation in Palestine forbid any display of Palestinian national identity and symbols. It was illegal to use the word “Palestine” in speech or writing in any of their three official languages, as well as the use of the four colors of the Palestinian flag in any activity, including art, officially implemented with a 1980 forbidding of “artwork of political significance,” and leading to civil arrests, beatings, and shootings.

Violence and destruction are concepts that are intricately interconnected with the legacy of abstraction and the monochrome. The infamous knife attacks on Barnett Newman’s *Who’s Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue III* and *IV*, reveal the effects of the “offensiveness” of monochromatic abstraction on viewers. The attacker of *IV* in 1982 claimed that he destroyed the painting because it was a “perversion of the German flag,” while the attacker of *III* in 1991 was evidently emotionally and mentally shaken by the mysticism and mystery of the tricolor painting. These examples are not of mere vandalism but of a deeper and more profound reaction connected both to political values and emotion. Historically, words have triggered this type of reaction, but what happens when they are hidden away under a monochromatic abstraction and never come to the surface like the words appropriated in Ortiz-Torres’s chromo-luminescent paintings? What happens when the viewer is defeated in the understanding of meaning?

Hernández’s pencil “drawing” *Untitled (Understanding the Immigrant Situation)*, from 2011, is another work that contains words—the phrase “understanding the immigrant situation”—written letter by letter on the entirety of the paper, until the image and the words become abstracted in a silver/gray graphite monochrome. The metaphor of the action, of spelling out each letter points to the intention of trying to “understand the immigrant situation” and also the inability to do so, even when the situation is experienced by the artist himself. The poetry of this intention becomes aggressive in its concealment, because the phrase is not a secret that wants to be kept, but a reality that demands to be uncovered. The viewer also confronts the failure of not understanding the situation. In a way, reading the parenthetical subtitle of Hernández’s piece reveals not only what the monochrome hides underneath and its illegibility, but also a visual translation of the abstraction, in a similar way as for instance, one of Faith Ringgold’s seminal text works from 1969 which is “coincidentally” a flag—*Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger*, from the series *Black Light*. This painting is read as an American flag from afar, although the artist replaces the color white with silver paint. But other meanings and words are hidden to the quick eye. The blue field containing the 50 (silver) stars encloses the word “DIE” in capital letters, while the silver lines of the striped field in fact represent each letter of the word “nigger” with the red stripes as their negative space. In both of these examples, words are made invisible and visible through the code of abstraction, but this is a code that wants to be decoded, read, and understood. Ringgold alludes to the erasure of blackness, a black-

4 From the exhibition statement for Félix González-Torres’s installation at The New Museum, New York, September 16–November 20, 1988. Included in Ault, Julie. *Félix González-Torres* (New York/Göttingen: Steidl, 2006), 121.

ness that is visible but unseen by racist hegemonic structures in the United States, and the words cry out for recognition of this issue. In Hernández's case, his words are also pointing at an erasure of something visible and latent, also hidden underneath several layers within our hegemonic order. However, in the case of his abstraction, he also forces (the viewer, or even himself) to think about the implications of border policies—even if with his repetition he is also suggesting a Sisyphean task—demanding inclusion in the conversation, and his own inclusion as a political being due to his own immigrant condition.

In ERRE's work, the power and hierarchy of words is particularly important, because they often substitute for and become the image. His *Eye Charts* series (2003–on-going) are metal panels serigraphed with famous quotes arranged as in a Snellen chart that measures visual acuity. For ERRE, the exercise of looking or reading is also an exercise of comprehension, which he explores by instigating in the viewer the need to understand what she is seeing, codified with the familiar device of a vision test, and align herself with or separate her from certain political stances in the quotes. One of them reads: “We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are,” a quote by Anaïs Nin that implicates the viewer and gives her the responsibility of processing the message according to her own experience. Through the use of codified messages, ERRE compels the viewer to become an active participant in the deciphering of the meaning and intention of his work, thus completing it via the processing of the written message. Another tool present in ERRE's work is the abstraction of language through translation or the presence of a language that is not English. The performativity of written or spoken language is also part of this abstraction. When the same message is repeated identically in a different language, bringing to mind Renée Green's *The Flag is a Symbol...* (2005), it is a political act of repetition and reaffirmation through the translation or presence of a foreign (ineligible, incomprehensible) language. While Green's banner contains English and Esperanto⁵, ERRE's installation is in Spanish only. The poetic gesture of doubling of the message in a language that is not ours might function as an abstraction that forces us to “want” to understand, it is also a political act of inclusion. ERRE's *Tolerancia, confianza, respeto, (y una definición de represión)*, 2015, a site-specific installation for *Customizing Language*, contains written text in Spanish with its translation only present in the wall label with the work's tombstone information. The words *tolerancia*, *confianza*, and *respeto* (tolerance, trust, and respect) were peeled off the gallery drywall. The three words are the background image, almost illegible, and they work as the support for the eight steel shields that contain another phrase that defines what “repression” means to the artist. These two phrases are superimposed, not as a contradiction but an invitation (or demand) for dialogue. Because of the specific circumstance of the presentation of the work in a US museum context, the representation through language—Spanish—becomes an abstraction since it needs to be translated. Nonetheless, the phrase that defines repression as “Repression is the violence of power

5 In 1949, as McCarthyism and suppression of civil liberties were rapidly subverting America's freedom, Einstein, in a little-known statement, declared: *The flag is a symbol of the fact that man is still a herd animal.* Jerome, Fred. *The Einstein File: J. Edgar Hoover's Secret War Against the World's Most Famous Scientist* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003), xvii.

when defending what has been lost” functions as an interpretation of meaning and a poetic political message. The “destruction” of the drywall at LACE in ERRE’s piece continues his ongoing exploration of violence in his work, but the words that damaged the drywall are positive values—Tolerance, Trust, and Respect. In an interview from 1989, artist Bruce Nauman stated that “[w]hen language begins to break down a little bit, it becomes exciting and communicates in the simplest way that it can function: you are forced to be aware of the sounds and the poetic parts of words.”⁶ In this case *Tolerancia, confianza, respeto, (y una definición de represión)*, 2015 contains a very direct message that is not quite abstracted but broken down literally and metaphorically, which forces the viewer to digest the meaning of each word as well as their juxtaposition, and to ponder our current reality in which language is a tool that can be used to our advantage or disadvantage, depending on which side of the wall we’re on.

While abstraction is the abandonment of reality, language is a set of signs and symbols that represent it, and the visual representation of these signs is an abstraction of language itself. In the works of Ortiz-Torres, ERRE, and Hernández, the question of language is not a semiotic one as in language art from the 1960s or 1970s, but a political one. To them, abstraction—not language—is a tool in which meaning is spelled out through the use of words, and these words become the image in its absence.

6 Christopher Cordes, “Talking With Bruce Nauman,” in Bruce Nauman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 285.

回 中 口 号

Uncanny Correspondences

Edwin Hill

*La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.*

Charles Baudelaire

Customizing Language, with its uncanny echoes and alternating artistic and linguistic dynamics of antipathy and attraction, brings to mind the “Correspondences” Baudelaire crystallized in *Flowers of Evil* (1857), for these works reveal how “Our Landscape is a temple where living pillars/Often times let loose obscure and indistinct words,” and, like Baudelaire’s poem, they reflect on the ways in which “Humanity crosses through forests of symbols / that observe us all with a familiar gaze” (my translation). Perhaps Baudelaire’s poetic and artistic critiques of modernity seem like a far cry from these postmodern artistic texts. But there remains a certain uncanny correspondence between the slow stroll through the city that characterizes the Parisian *flâneur* and the LA lowrider, both calling attention to unsuspected and revolutionary beauty and suffering that surround and cut through us as we traverse our ever-changing urban landscapes. Moreover, if we can consider Baudelaire’s influential texts on modern painting as a form of “artwriting” (as the critic David Carrier suggests), then we must consider this collection as a powerful poetic-artistic intervention in histories of speaking, writing, and reading in everyday life.

Creating correspondence between the image and the word, the “artwriting” in *Customizing Language* fulfills a classic definition of the poetic: that which makes language strange. In the spirit of lowrider customization, this collection slows language down. Whether in Mely Barragán’s *Macho*, Luis G. Hernández’s *Inaction*, or Marcos Ramírez ERRE’s *Tolerancia, confianza, respeto. (y una definición de represión) / Tolerance, Trust, Respect. (and a definition of repression)*, these works interfere with our normal processing of words and texts through inventive play with media, texture, color, spacing, and size. They transform the communicating streets of language into spaces for stylistic play, and in the process they open up room for subversion and difference. As much as they intellectually or emotionally move us, these “artwritings” command our attention as reading subjects, acting upon our eyes but also our tongues, throats, skins, and stomachs. In other words, the works in *Customizing Language* put into motion our reading apparatuses—the set of embodied and cerebral mechanisms that make reading possible. Linguists and reading educators call the interior speech that takes place during reading “subvocalization,” the minute and often involuntary movement of our speech muscles and organs in the act of silent reading. This process provides the sound of the written word to our mind as we read and helps us understand the word while reducing the cognitive processing load of reading. The works in *Customizing Language* trigger our subvocalization, but they simultaneously disrupt its smooth functioning and thus refuse to reduce the cognitive processing load. In the highly charged political contexts of this collection, by tapping into the involuntary, reflex-like ways in which we function as reading subjects, these artists are able to make profoundly felt statements about the functioning of power. Cutting into words as well as our processes of reading, the works in this collection seize us, process us as much as we process them, and thus they put into deep artistic relief the play of language in structures and practices of ideological domination.

Corresponding but never conforming, these works produce and are the product of double-takes. In this way, they all involve dimensions of the performative—“restored” or “twice-behaved” (reading) behavior, as Richard Schechner defines it—a key element in their uncanny beauty. The artists rework text, speech and other media, transforming the old and the (un)known, for example the banned and burned book, in the case of Beatriz Cortez’s *The Books of Memory / Los libros de la memoria*, into organic sites for the (re)birth of memory and of the new. Camilo Ontiveros’s installation *Refugees. Welcome Signs* refashions cast-off and discarded welcome signs into a powerful assemblage that plays on the uncomfortable proximity of the homely (*heimliche*) and the unhomely (*unheimliche*). His piece makes manifest what Sigmund Freud famously pointed out: the etymological and psychological confusion of the homely and unhomely. Freud notes the ways in which *heimliche* (the known or remembered) also became employed to signify *unheimliche*: a family secret or something that remains concealed in the home (the unknown or unremembered). For Freud, dynamics of doubling and repetition are part and parcel of the process that renders the familiar strange and mysterious, but also terrifying. In Ontiveros’s installation, the welcome signs, despite and because of the sheer number of times they repeat the word “welcome” with their

smiley faces and playful figurations of animals, come to signify their opposite. Rather than neighborly openness, they form a guarded wall. We feel their function as one that demarcates boundary lines, separation, and ownership. Together they say, 'this is ours, not yours; do not pass.' In the process the word "welcome" becomes itself a concept without home. It fails to signify and instead marks the location of dreadful excess. Freud articulates the uncanny as "that class of terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar." It is "an involuntary return to the same situation" that "forces upon us the idea of something fateful and unescapable," and leads us to search for meaning within an obstinate repetition. Ontiveros's work in this collection and elsewhere customizes signage and found objects to interrogate the seemingly intractable, dynamics of imperialism and neoliberalism that create demands of migration across the globe while simultaneously militarizing national borders and designating immigrants as criminals.

The works in this collection do not just performatively customize text, they customize and defamiliarize speech as well. This most powerfully comes through in Alexander Apóstol's *Yamaikaleter* and Regina José Galindo's *La Verdad / The Truth*. *Yamaikaleter* is a Spanish-accented pronunciation of the so-called "Jamaica Letter," correspondence between the 19th century military and political leader Simón Bolívar and Henry Cullen, an Englishman who was living in Jamaica at the time and was interested in Bolívar's cause. The letter, sent from Kingston Jamaica in the fall of 1815, outlines Bolívar's denunciation of the history of Spanish imperial atrocities in the New World, and articulates his political and philosophical vision of the future of the Americas. While considered by many a prophetic and inclusive vision of the New World, the letter, now considered a foundational text of anticolonial independence movements in South America, betrays the privileged and exclusive position from which Bolívar wrote. In Apóstol's video, non-English speaking leaders of working class political organizations read the "Jamaican Letter," written by Bolívar in English. As the readers struggle through the letter aloud, Apóstol's work makes evident the limitations of conceptions of "freedom," "America," and "American people," that have been articulated from the vantage point of those who embody positions of power, in Bolívar's case the small, elite, white landowning population that dominated the caste-like colonial societies of the New World. This embodied position is especially meaningful when one considers the ways in which Bolívar, also known as "el Libertador de América," adopted patriarchal and familial metaphors to describe the situation of the Spanish colonies in the New World, imagery that remains inscribed in the foundational texts and legal codes of South America. For Bolívar, the American people, while deserving independence from Spanish imperial power, were not ready for more liberal forms of democracy because these newly emergent countries were akin to "the infancy of humanity (*in-fans* meaning not speaking, or without speech)," as Catherine Davies astutely notes. *Yamaikaleter* points up the ways in which the supposed infant-like lack of speech that Bolívar cites as justification for the forms of government he envisaged for South America more accurately constitutes a denial of voice to the majority population. Apóstol's video piece highlights the powerful disconnect between the past

and present lives and voices of everyday Venezuelans on one hand, and, on the other hand, the mythologies built around foundational patriarchal figures and their texts, words, and persona in dominant discourse. *Yamaikaletter* reenacts the exclusionary practices of the “Jamaica letter,” but, at the same time, Apóstol flips the script through the physical presence of the performers—people of color, men and women, with their animated intonations, clear voices, and rolling Rs. In short, he employs their natural customization of the words to give us a better feel for the energy and determination of the people than this famous letter that historically purports, but fails, to speak to or speak for them in the past or today.

Regina José Galindo was a written poet before she became a visual one. Galindo was born in the midst of Guatemala’s thirty-year civil war opposing the government (backed by the CIA) and leftist rebels whose numbers importantly included the indigenous Mayan populations and Ladino peasants living in the countryside. Galindo dares to register in her own body the legacy of the systematic emotional, psychological, political, and physical violence against women that took place during the war and continues to take place today. She takes to her body like protesters take to the streets. As she writes in one of her poems, she locates her body as a “Lugar Común,” the embodiment of the history of a people but also a rhetorical figure of speech (*lieu commun*) provocatively deployed to testify to histories of gender-based violence. Her *lugar común* opens up the possibility of critical association, and it moves from the particular to the general. As an embodied and poetic commonplace, her work functions through direct and indirect modes of citation and repetition. In *La Verdad / The Truth*, Galindo spends an hour reading aloud testimonies of gender violence and femicide committed by government soldiers during Guatemala’s civil war while a dentist periodically interrupts her, often mid-sentence, to inject her mouth with anesthesia. Galindo reels momentarily after each shot. By the fourth one her upper lip is barely moving. By the fifth, her bottom lip is puffy and stilled. Both lips are dried and cracking from being stretched and held by the physically imposing dentist, as he puts a figure or thumb in her mouth, or holds her tongue to the side, with his rubber-gloved hands. The silences of the interventions are the most difficult moments, echoing the unspeakable violence narrated as well as their subsequent denial of voice or justice. As Galindo struggles from the injections she also tires physically from the long reading, and emotionally from the scenes these testimonies recount, with their own interjections of dismay and sorrow. Galindo’s writing (including *Perra / Bitch* in this collection) and her readings hauntingly echo past, present, and future acts of femicide and erasure. Through her performance, Galindo interrogates the conditions of possibility for us to hear these testimonies, to register their terror and sorrow, and most of all to react.

Customizing Language takes us on a journey that makes palpable the historic and material value of words and the political economy of speech, as exemplified in Clarissa Tossin’s *Vogais portuguesas/Portuguese Vowels*. Its collection of works explore the beautifully undeciphered, hidden, indistinct presence and power of messages in historic texts, as in Gala Porrás-Kim’s *Rongorongo* series and Rubén Ortíz-Torres’s *Bandera magonista / Magon’s Flag*. Like Galindo, all the artists in *Customizing Language* make their artwrit-

ing performatively do things: they denounce and testify, they reclaim and re-use, they transfix and transform, research and experiment, and play. Their uncanny correspondences between word and image, and body and text, create cross-associations, confuse and confound boundaries, and open up common spaces for the meeting of others.

印 等 中 口

Twice as hard, half as far; work is a song of lament

Raquel Gutiérrez

This text takes liberal amounts of inspiration and rearranges text+images from the lives of Bob Morales, Ritchie Valens, Luis Valdez, *Lowrider* Magazine, the film “La Bamba,” the essay “But we have to, so we do it real slow” by LA Onda collective, and “Work” by Rihanna to produce an immersive textual experience.

What
enhances our understanding of language
as a verbal communication system
that expresses thoughts and ideas
by presenting labor that explores the presence of
the geopolitical power that lives in the crux of language. But what of the power in the
sonorous; in the ways we try to expand and

make visible

the spectrum of the verbal and undichotomize between verbal and non-verbal? The richness and fullness of sound enable a language, too. The language of mind, in body; ephemeral textual experiences. The temperamental utterance of utter decay and so we delay production and productivity.

Sometimes I think about the gesticulatory power in the way we roughen our voices to sing songs we have heard in the private sphere of bedrooms and collectively-run households to name a few of the ways we arrive at language individually.

How do we know the pause and snap in Cheech Marin's discordant stoner chuckle when he sings as a one-man cacophony lead on the Chicano schtick critique of late capitalist classic "Mexican Americans"?

How do we arrive at recognition in the moments following our abilities to coauthor non-verbal cues when we rehearse these moments of self-making to others? How do we become a good captive audience in the other's rehearsal of self-making moments?

Sometimes I hear so much through the walls along the tiny borders in my neighborhood. The parrot next door says **HELLO** and follows that utterance with the aural symbol for question—"?" This **HELLO** hovers in mid-air, text seeking its bubble. But I see it. The parrot next door doesn't know to summon me but the parrot next door has. I stay silent. Listen.

You stay with mom or you stay with grandma.

No, you stay with grandma right now, you're not coming back.

I can hear the grizzle in my neighbor's voice—a man who's had to take orders and swallow rabia like a shot of Centenario; one luxury he takes come payday.

He's home on Wednesday; an extended lunch at home? A young boy besought his attention but the man just wants to be alone.

If language is not innocent and reflects a geopolitical reality then what is the geopolitic of Otis Avenue in Huntington Park, California?

I want to continue probing a panoply of contemporary issues through an abstracted linguistic prism. Or maybe I just want to talk about "La Bamba" and the ways labor constitutes good brown subjectivity as it contrasts the trappings of brown worker mythologies. Or maybe I just I want to tell you a story about Bob:

Almost three years had passed
and Bob hadn't received notice
of his release date or even a visit
from a family member.

*I was in there for three years
when I got the news that my dad
had passed away. Bob was given permission
to attend his stepdad's funeral*

where he would see
his mom and brother, Ritchie.

The funeral took place on Thursday, January 31st, 1957.
That same day a Douglas DC-7 and a Northrop F-89 Scorpion collided in mid air and debris from the wreck fell into the schoolyard of Pacoima Junior High

the flaming detritus kills three students; injures seventy-four
the same school Ritchie went to

but had the excused absence to attend
his father's funeral. Después, Bob spent three more months
at Rancho San Antonio before he was allowed
to go back home.

*Once I came home, I found out that I had two new sisters. (He holds up three fingers).
I assumed that my mom had an affair and sent me away to the boys home so she wouldn't have to explain.*

Navigating his way back to a more correct path,
Bob registered for school. On his way home,
the president of the Galloping Goose Motorcycle Club pulled
up next to Bob and offered him a ride

on his motorcycle. That was Bob's first time
and the day he became enamored with riding.

*He was a friend of the family. His girlfriend lived with us.
Two months after that ride, he came by the house and asked if I
wanted his motorcycle. I said yes, but I had no money.*

The president didn't want money; he wanted to charge Bob
with a task.

He asked teenage Bob to keep a Union member from
attending
a meeting and the bike would be his. Bob risked it all for
love so he wouldn't have to
Work.

Work.

Work.

Work.

with higher wages; promotions; all the ways work separates us again and again

Work.

Work.

Work.

Work.

Work

work

work

work

work

work

He said me hafti

work work work work work work!

He see me do mi

dirt dirt dirt dirt dirt dirt!

And so me put in

work work work work work work!

When u ah guh

learn learn learn learn learn learn

The brothers are running up a hill overlooking the encampment.

Bob is impressed with how big Ritchie is for sixteen. *Have you been laid yet, cabrón?*

But all Ritchie wants is for Bob to not hurt his guitar. *Be careful, Bob!*

This is what is going to get us out here one day. Their muscles ripple when they embrace.

That dream is a dream

that has long been lost

con trabajo se hace,

con movimiento se deshace

work

work

work

work

work

That dream is a dream

that has long been lost

en los barrios de Pacoima

y Huntington Park, en el sur no hay

work

work

work
 work
 work
 y en el norte hay más
 work
 work
 work
 work
 work
 work

This was where Bob had always ever lived.

One day I got off the couch, got on my bike and went to Rosie's job and told her that I was leaving for Watsonville.

Towards a detox center to see friends.

When I was there, they offered me a job as a substance abuse counselor. I thought to myself 'I can't pull this off' but I took the job anyways.

Ritchie. I don't want to work twice as hard to get half as far,
 Ritchie. I don't want to work twice as hard to get half as far,
 Ritchie. I don't want to work twice as hard to get half as far,
 far, Ritchie. I don't want to work twice as hard to get half as

Twice as hard
half as far
Twice as hard
half as far

Pedro de Pacas, from the dirt and concrete that spat Bob out at us and blessed the American Bandstand with Ritchie, sings a song trying to upend notions of popular a Mexican-American identity that admits just how Mexican-Americans don't like to get up early in the morning but they have to so they do it real slow.

Because

Work.
 Work.
 Work.
 Work.

Work

work

work

work

work

work

Back on Otis Avenue, my neighbor doesn't want to be bothered in the little shed he keeps behind the family's house. Tiene su puesto allí; tiene sus herramientas en su lugar. He may be waiting to hear on more work to keep him out of his mother's hair, his wife's kitchen, his son's life. Se apaga la luz en la mente each Saturday with roaring rancheras coming out of crackling speakers; I can see the dents inside the plywood speakerbox where the bass and treble should meet gently. Not everything should be a violent collision between dichotomies and other points on opposite sides of the spectrum.

Twice as hard

half as far

Twice as hard

half as far

is a geopolitical reality



Works in the Exhibition

Alexander Apóstol

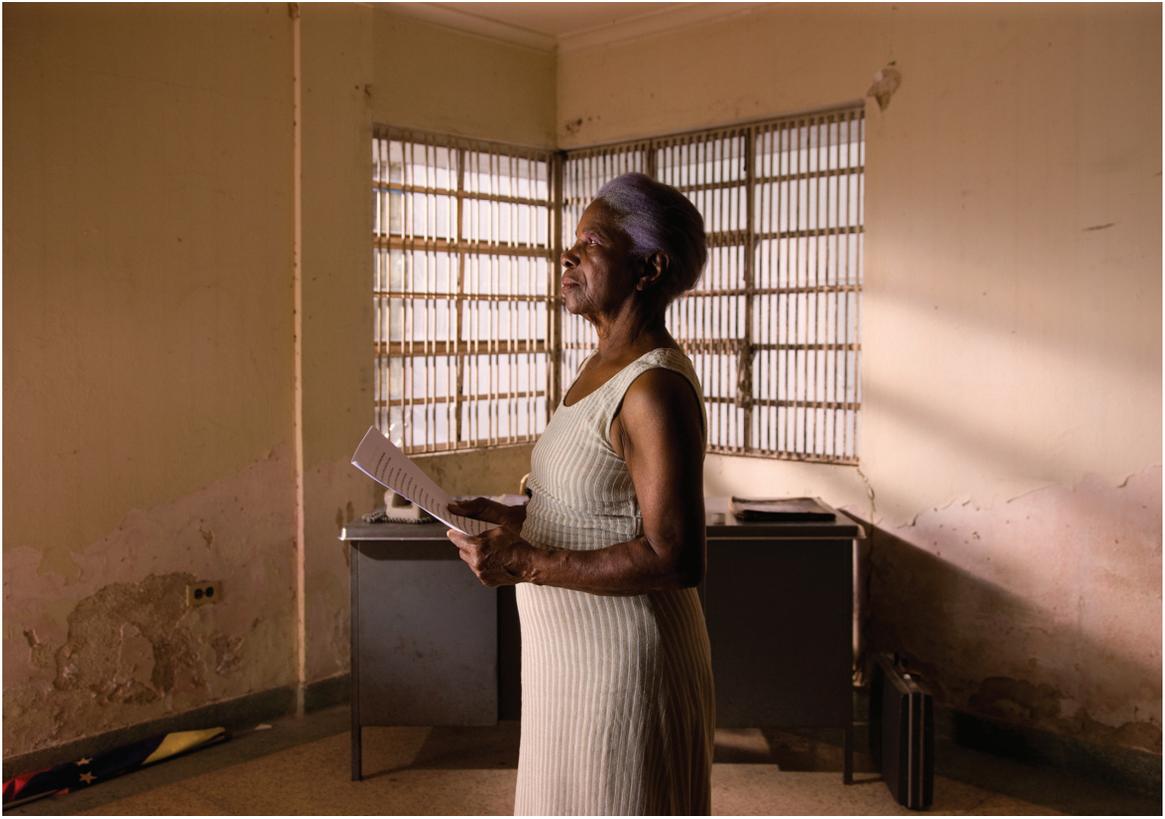
Yamaikaleter | 2009

16mm transferred to HD video, color, sound, 8:15 min.

Courtesy of the artist

Alexander Apóstol has been interested in addressing the fissures of modern utopic political ideals in Latin America and more specifically in Venezuela. His work often investigates the relationship between history, art, and power pointing out to hidden ideological discourses. Apóstol started his career in the 1990s focusing his production on photography to then move into complex projects that involved extensive research and a combination of media including photography, video and installations.

In the video *Yamaikaleter*, “The Jamaican Letter,” a pivotal document written by the liberator Simón Bolívar in 1815, is read aloud by a series of leaders from working classes in Venezuelan political organizations. The original document was written in English and outlines Bolívar’s ideals for a united Latin America. The readers, who do not speak English, “read” the letter phonetically, but really cannot understand what they are reading. The viewer is thus also excluded, as the document’s reading is “lost in translation.” Paradoxically, Bolívar’s text refers to ideas of inclusion. The artist states that this exercise demonstrates how “everyone is excluded” yet still is a part of what he refers to as an “empty discourse.” He asserts that this video “exemplifies what Latin America is today.”



Mely Barragán

Macho | 2009

Soft sculpture (black felt and stuffing)

Courtesy of the artist

Mely Barragán uses graphic elements and images from mass media, pop art, and popular culture to address gender issues, particularly imposed feminine archetypes by our patriarchal society. She utilizes various media including collage, painting, printing, and sculpture, such as in her most well-known work from 2004, *La cadena* (The Chain), in which a plaster sculpture of bride and groom multiplies in a row of eleven, but the top of the figure of the bride is gradually shaved off from sculpture to sculpture until she almost completely disappears. This work reflects her preoccupation with the role of women in contemporary society, which publicly promotes and encourages an image of a strong, independent, woman, especially in the workforce, while the economic system is not yet balanced in terms of equal pay or fair treatment of working mothers, and in the private space often traditional gender roles persist.

The use of specific materials plays a key part in Barragán's work, for example wallpaper prints, or those traditionally associated with domestic and female use, such as sewn felt, in the case of *Macho*, 2009. This work simultaneously alludes to the issue of machismo—defined as a strong sense of power or entitlement to dominate in males—while emphasizing the contradictions of an exaggerated masculinity with the use of the material and the cursive typography, both associated with female qualities.



Beatriz Cortez

La máquina de la fortuna / The Fortune Teller Machine (Kaqchikel edition, made in collaboration with the Kaqjay Moloj collective) | 2014

Multimedia

Courtesy of the artist

La máquina de la fortuna / The Fortune Teller Machine (Nomad edition) | 2014

Multimedia

Courtesy of the artist

The Books of Memory / Los libros de la memoria

2012–2015 · pp 48–49

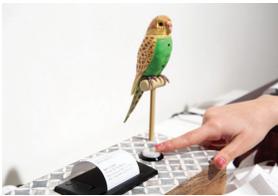
Mangled Book (Burned book, cornstarch paste); *Burned* (Burned book); *Clandestine Garden* (Book, soil, cornstarch paste, grass seeds, water)

Courtesy of the artist

Beatriz Cortez is an artist, writer and professor at California State University Northridge. By utilizing a wide array of media her work explores themes such as memory and loss, immigration issues, and the use of technology as new versions of modernity.

Based on the idea that words have power and can will the future into being, Cortez created two editions of fortune-teller machines. For the Kaqchikel edition the artist worked in collaboration with the Kaqchikel Maya collective Kaqjay Moloj to create a list of desires that the interactive sculpture prints out in Kaqchikel and Spanish. The nomad edition of *The Fortune Teller* is based on the ideas of collectivity and nomadic subjectivity by the Italian philosopher Rosi Braidotti. Cortez asked friends, contacts and collaborators, who were immigrants themselves, to dream collectively about what they would have done together in order to have a different future. The machine prints those collective desires.

The Books of Memory series explores censorship, persecution and violence addressing the power of written ideas. The series presents books that have been censored during specific historical moments altered by the artist. While the burned books represent a clear reference to repressive moments in history, the *Clandestine Garden* piece presents a hopeful and metaphorical concept by transforming a book into a living garden that keeps growing and evolving.







Regina José Galindo

Perra / Bitch | 2005

Video, color, sound, 5:30 min.

Courtesy of the artist

La verdad / The Truth | 2013

Video, color, sound, 70 min.

Courtesy of the artist

Regina Galindo uses her own body to test her mental and physical limits, seeking to provoke critical thought and reaction in the viewer. Through her performances, Galindo responds to socio-political issues, focusing on political crimes, social hierarchies, segregation and the oppression of women. Although most of her performances refer directly to issues specific to Guatemala, her work incorporates a universal component that alludes to fear, inequality, repression and vulnerability.

In 2005 several bodies of tortured women appeared in Guatemala. Their bodies had been marked by utilizing knives with words such as *malditas perras* (damned bitches) and *muerte a todas las perras* (death to all bitches). Based on these events Galindo created the performance *Perra*, in which she carved the word bitch on her leg with a knife. The artist adopted and marked the word on her own body as a form of resistance highlighting the recurrent violence against women in her country.

In *La verdad*, Galindo read during an hour testimonies of survivors from the armed conflict in Guatemala while a dentist injected her mouth with anesthesia. As the performance progressed and the mouth of the artist was numbed, the testimonies became less comprehensible. *La verdad* was a direct reference to the attempts to silence the crimes perpetrated during the war in Guatemala.

A photograph of the same art installation. A woman with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, is sitting at a desk. She is looking down at a laptop. A microphone on a stand is positioned in front of her. The scene is projected onto a large screen in a dark room. Two black speakers are visible on the wall, one on each side of the screen, with cables running down to the floor.

Oh, God! In the village 95 men,
41 women, and 47 children died,

Luis G. Hernández

Untitled (el otro lado) | 2007

Plexiglas, wood, graphite, paper
Artist Pension Trust, Los Angeles

Untitled (Understanding the Immigrant Situation)

2011 · pp 54–55

Graphite on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Inaction | 2010 · pp 54–55

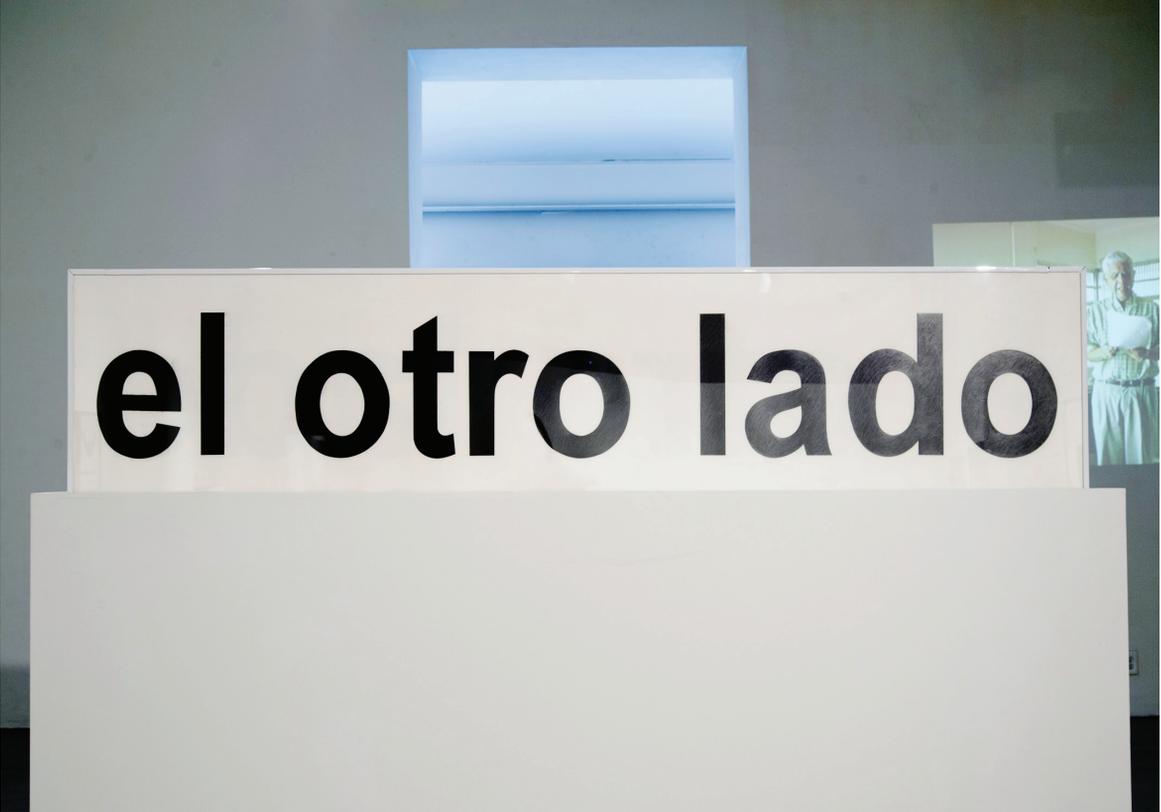
Acrylic on canvas
Artist Pension Trust, Los Angeles

Inaction | 2010 · pp 54–55

Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist

Luis G. Hernández’s work is informed by his personal transcultural experience living between Mexico and the U.S. Staying in a muted palette, the artist uses collage and text that at times are tongue-in-cheek commentaries on the real political value of art and the museum space. His ongoing series *Inaction* consists of paintings of the word “inaction” that comment on the act of endless repetition, being both useless and symptomatic of our current times.

At other instances, the text included in his works are more ambiguous and subtle phrases that nevertheless point directly at political problems such as border issues and bilingualism. For example, the sculptural installation *Untitled (el otro lado)*, is a freestanding wall with two identical “drawings” of a phrase in Spanish that translates to “the other side,” readable from both sides of the wall and being possibly lost in translation. According to the artist, this piece points to the similarities and differences on both sides of the border, and the bizarre but familiar feeling of being so used to navigate both places. This topic becomes more evident in *Untitled (Understanding the Immigrant Situation)*, where Hernández draws each letter in the phrase “understanding the immigrant situation” on the piece of paper, superimposing each letter until it has become an abstract, illegible drawing, just as the situation itself when it comes to border policies and the understanding of our neighbors.



el otro lado





Camilo Ontiveros

Refugees. Welcome Signs | 2015

Welcome signs installation

Courtesy of the artist

Camilo Ontiveros is a conceptual artist whose work reflects his interest in sociopolitical themes such as immigration, power relations, underground economies and recycling. He often exposes the scarcities, tensions and inequalities within power systems. His work involves the intervention of found objects as well as installations, whose conceptual nature is revealed through research and challenging proposals that are practically utopian.

For his *Refugees. Welcome Signs* installation the artist collected different types of signs from thrift stores that contained the word welcome. Interested in issues of value raised by the discarded objects, with this piece Ontiveros questions the meaning and ambiguity of the word welcome in relationship to immigration issues in the US as well as in Europe with the recent crises of the Syrian refugees. Throughout his career, Ontiveros has produced several works on the subject of immigration, including an ongoing project on altering the caution sign of the immigrant family crossing the freeway titled *Caution Project: Wanted*. The artist states: “most of my work focuses on migration because it is a theme that is close to me. I am in an emigrational situation that I share with millions in this country and around the world; a reality that has been and will continue to be problematic.”



Rubén Ortiz-Torres

Bandera magonista / Magon's Flag | 2013

Urethane and chromo-luminescent paint on aluminum

Courtesy of the artist

Ceci n'est pas une Machine that Kills Fascists

2015

Urethane and chromo-luminescent paint on aluminum

Courtesy of the artist

Formally trained in painting, Rubén Ortiz-Torres is well versed in different media, including photography, video, and installation. His work addresses popular culture and subcultures, and the complex and aesthetically curious objects these produce. Ortiz-Torres is particularly interested in Los Angeles' lowrider culture. In the last few years, he has been developing a painting technique stemmed from his realization that car painting shares the same preparation process with that of classical oil painting, fusing both and working on metal panels sprayed with car paint.

Bandera magonista (Magon's Flag), 2013, belongs to a recent series of paintings that addresses how the destruction of symbols and iconography have a strong political meaning. The flag reads "Land and Freedom," the motto of Ricardo Flores Magón, more known as a Zapatista ideology. However, the phrase is almost invisible, making the painting read as a red monochrome at first sight. This sort of abstraction or invisibility becomes part of the politization of the piece. Albeit aligned with anarchist and punk ideology, Ortiz-Torres understands the impossibility of art to transform society, and he comments on this matter through the work *Ceci n'est pas une Machine that Kills Fascists*. The work alludes to Magritte's "Treachery of Images" (1928–29) and a sticker with the slogan "this machine kills Fascists" that protest singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie put on his Gibson Southern Jumbo guitar in the early 1940s, believing that his music had the power to fight this evil.



Gala Porras-Kim

Rongorongongo text L (RR21), holding hands | 2015

Graphite on paper, adhesive, artist's frame

Courtesy of the artist

Rongorongongo text S (RR16), by appendages | 2013

Graphite on paper, adhesive, artist's frame

Courtesy of the artist

Rongorongongo text X (RR25), animate to inanimate

2015

Graphite on paper, adhesive, artist's frame

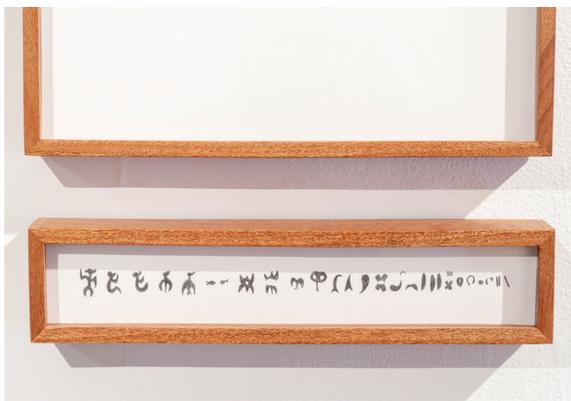
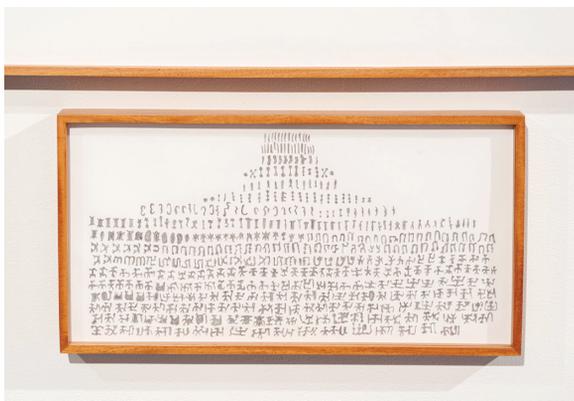
Courtesy of the artist

Gala Porras-Kim has been interested in exploring the use of the potential of art objects as epistemological tools. In most of her projects, Porras-Kim researches the political implications of language, using it as the ultimate and literal signifier of culture, and revealing it as a tool of resistance within postcolonial power systems. Her work implies extensive interdisciplinary research, sometimes including collaborations with different Los Angeles immigrant communities such as Zapotec and Korean.

The Mute Object and the Ancient Stories of Today series is comprised of hand-drawn diptychs in which the artist presents artifacts containing undeciphered scripts. In addition to Mesoamerican writings, the series include the Rongorongongo system of glyphs discovered in 24 wooden objects in Easter Island during the late nineteenth century. Although several attempts to decipher the language have been made, this linguistic system remains undeciphered. Porras-Kim rearranges the symbols, breaking down the language by utilizing different grouping methodologies such as size or shape of the signs. The new arrangements project new personal meaning onto these unknown linguistic systems while at the same time engaging the viewer in thinking about their decoding possibilities.







Marcos Ramírez ERRE

Tolerancia, confianza, respeto. (y una definición de represión) / Tolerance, Trust, Respect. (and a definition of repression) | 2015

Eight riot squad shields (steel, black polychrome paint)
with vinyl text on drywall

Courtesy of the artist

The work of Marcos Ramírez ERRE focuses on contemporary concepts of war, nation, foreign policy, imperialism, globalism, and identity, relying on the use of written language borrowed from mythology, bible passages, historical or personal quotes, and familiar symbols such as road signs and flags, in a critical and humanistic way. Often addressing the complexities of the border, he also focuses on international and cultural issues. In installations such as *The Multiplication of Bread*, 2003, which explores the value of war, ERRE includes an element consisting of two lightboxes, each with a pair of eyes—of an American boy in one, with a quote in English, and in the other those of an Afghan girl with a quote in Arabic—confronting each other with a message of love and rejecting violence as an answer to political conflict.

In works such as the one ERRE created for this exhibition, text replaces the employment of images, as the artist believes that written language is a powerful aesthetic and political vehicle in art. The text in *Tolerance, Trust, Respect. (and a definition of repression)*, 2015, reads: “Represión es la violencia del poder al defender lo ya perdido” (Repression is the violence of power when defending what has been lost), a personal definition of repression to the artist that also speaks to our current political foreign policy and reactions towards conflict through prejudice and repression.



Clarissa Tossin

Vogais Portuguesas / Portuguese Vowels | 2008

Five sugar casts

Courtesy of the artist

Clarissa Tossin's practice addresses politics of space—geographical and cultural—exploring failures of modern history and engaging in a critical and poetic dialogue with power, desire, utopia, identity, and invisibility. She does so exploring the concept of place as part of personal memory and collective history, particularly in connection to Brasília, the city she grew up in, known to have an urban plan conceived to be transited by vehicles instead of bodies. Thus, Tossin's objects often have the performative presence of her body, tracing history through gesture and using materials that are always connected to the place and situation.

Her recurrent creation and use of the interiors of objects or bodies, including her own mouth—as in the case of *Vogais Portuguesas*—reflects a preoccupation for inserting the presence of the body in space. In *Vogais Portuguesas*, language functions as a marker of collective history and personal identity, since the material used, sugar, is a symbol of Brazil's colonial past and post-colonial present. The material employed symbolizes Brazil's sugar cane trade since the 15th century and works here as a metaphor of the Portuguese language and post-colonial identity in Brazil. A remnant of her body in the act of speaking—pronouncing each vowel in her native language—this work is also a reference to translation and the artists' own identity as a transplant to the United States since 2005.



Installation Images

LOS ANGELES



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ES CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS



















Biographies

Artists

Alexander Apóstol (Barquisimeto, Venezuela, b. 1969) studied Art History at Universidad Central de Venezuela, and Photography with Ricardo Armas. Selected exhibitions include 10th Mercosul Biennial, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2015; *Geometría, acción y souvenirs del discurso insurgente*, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico, 2015; *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2014 (traveled to Museo Jumex, Mexico City, 2015; and South London Gallery, UK, 2016); *Another Part of the New World*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Russia, 2015; *Beyond the Supersquare*, Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, 2014; *El teatro del mundo*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, 2014; *En suspensión*, Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castello, Spain, 2012; *Situating No-Land: Videoart from Latin America*, Slought Foundation, Philadelphia, 2011; and *Changing the Focus*, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA, 2010. Apóstol lives and works in Madrid, Spain; and Caracas, Venezuela.

Mely Barragán (Tijuana, Mexico, b. 1975) studied Graphic Design with a focus on Visual Arts at Universidad Iberoamericana in Tijuana, Mexico. During 2011–2012, she ran the independent space TJINCHINA Project Room in Caochangdi, China, with co-founder Daniel Ruanova, then relocated the concept to downtown Tijuana during 2014–2015. Selected exhibitions include *La Colección Elías + Fontes: Historia/Relato*, Centro Cultural Tijuana, Tijuana, Mexico, 2015; *Tijuana to Brownsville: Contemporary Art Along The Border*, III Bienal Ciudad Juárez-El Paso Biennial, 2013; *Bipolar Order*, Creative Fusion International Artist in Residence, Zygote Press, Cleveland, OH, 2013; *DANGER!*, MOLAA at The Collaborative, Long Beach, CA, 2012; and *Qui Vive?*, II Moscow International Biennale for Young Art, Moscow, Russia, 2010. She lives and works between Tijuana and Beijing.

Beatriz Cortez (El Salvador, b. 1970) obtained an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts (CALARTS), and a Ph.D. in Latin American Literature from Arizona State University. She teaches in the Central American Studies Program at California State University, Northridge. Recent selected solo exhibitions include *Los Angeles Vernacular: Space Capsule Interior*, Monte Vista Projects, Los Angeles, 2016; *The Cosmos*, CALARTS, Valencia, CA, 2015; *Quema*, Centro Cultural de España de El Salvador, El Salvador, 2014; and *The Time Machine*, Grand Central Arts Center, CSU Fullerton, 2013. Recent group exhibitions include *A cielo abierto*, Sala Nacional de Exposiciones Salarrué, San Salvador, El Salvador, 2016; *The 3rd Los Angeles SUR Biennial*, Cerritos College Art Gallery, Los Angeles, 2015; *Guatemala después*, Centro Cultural de España, Guatemala City, Guatemala, 2015; *Time / Memory*, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, CA, 2014; and *Mourning and Scars: 20 Years After the War*, SOMArts, San Francisco, CA, 2013. Cortez lives and works in Los Angeles.

Regina José Galindo (Guatemala, b. 1974) is a performance artist and poet who has received many prestigious recognitions, including the Golden Lion award at the Venice Biennale in 2005. Recent solo exhibitions include *Mechanisms of Power: Regina José Galindo*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Germany, 2016; *Piel de gallina*, Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Gran Canaria, Spain, 2013; *Hilo de tiempo*, Centro Hemisférico de Performance y Política, Chiapas, Mexico, 2012; *Vulnerable*, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA, 2012; and *Cuerpo social*, Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Recife, Brazil, 2011. Recent group exhibitions include x Bienal Centroamericana de Artes Visuales, Costa Rica, 2016; *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2014 (traveled to Museo Jumex, Mexico City, 2015; and South London Gallery, UK, 2016); *Good Girls. Memory, Desire, Power*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest, Rumania, 2013; 54 Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy, 2011; and *Unresolved Circumstances*, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA, 2011. Galindo is based in Guatemala.

Luis G. Hernández (Mexicali, Mexico, b. 1975) obtained his MFA from the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, CA, and a BFA from Cal State University, Long Beach. He is the co-founder of the Mexicali Biennial with Ed Gomez. He has participated in numerous exhibitions including *La Colección Elías + Fontes: Historia/Relato*, Centro Cultural Tijuana, Tijuana, Mexico, 2015; III Bienal Ciudad Juárez-El Paso Biennial, 2013; 4 *Projects in Mexico*, Kunstverein München, Germany, 2013; *Perspectives*, Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art, San Bernardino, CA, 2012; *Between a Run and a Cascade: Constraint, Desperation, and Optimism in Water*, CA, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA, 2012; and *MexiCali Biennial 09/10*, Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, 2010; Hernández resides in Mexicali.

Camilo Ontiveros (Mexico, b. 1978) obtained an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles and a BA in Visual Arts from the University of California, San Diego. He has co-founded various alternative art spaces and collectives including NOMART, a mobile performance art space, Lui Velázquez, a space in Tijuana that was dedicated to international and cross-disciplinary residencies, and Imprinta, an art and social services space in the MacArthur Park area of Los Angeles. Selected exhibitions include *Travelling Dust*, 18th Street Arts Center, Los Angeles, 2014; *Home Away*, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA, 2013; *Made In L.A. Biennial*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2012; *Camilo Ontiveros: In the Ring*, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA, 2012; *A is for Zebra*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2011; the 2010 California Biennial, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA, 2010; and *Never Very Far Apart*, REDCAT, Los Angeles, 2010. He lives and works in Los Angeles.

Rubén Ortiz-Torres (Mexico City, b. 1964) obtained a BA in visual arts from the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, UNAM, Mexico City, in 1986. In 1992, he received his MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA, and currently teaches in the Visual Arts Department of the University of California, San Diego. Recent solo exhibitions include *Post Neo Mexicanismos*, Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico, 2016; *Bandera Negra*, Proyecto Siqueiros: La Tallera, Mexico, 2014; *Retrospective in a New York Minute*, New York University, New York, 2012; and *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, 2011. Recent group exhibitions include *Displacement: Symbols and Journeys*, The Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, FL, 2016; *Monochrome Undone*, SPACE Collection, Irvine, CA, 2015; *Home Away*, Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, CA, 2013; *Registro 03. Espejo/Reflejo*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, 2013; and *Changing the Focus*, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA, 2010. Ortiz-Torres lives and works in Los Angeles.

Gala Porras-Kim (Colombia, b. 1984) holds an MFA in Art from the California Institute of the Arts (CALARTS), as well as a BA in Art and Latin American studies and an MA in Latin American studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her work has been included in several exhibitions including the recent *CURRENT:LA*, *Water*, Public Art Biennial, Los Angeles, 2016; *Habitación abierta*, GNF Arte Cayeres, Jalisco, Mexico, 2016; *Made in L.A. 2016: a, the, though, only*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2016; *For Prospective Rock/Artifact Projection*, Commonwealth & Council, Los Angeles, 2015; *Acciones Territoriales*, Ex Teresa Arte Actual, Mexico City, 2014; *Prospecting Notes About Sounds*, 18th Street Arts Center, Santa Monica, CA, 2012; and *After The Gold Rush: Reflections and Postscripts on the National Chicano Moratorium of August 29th, 1970*, Vincent Price Art Museum, Monterey Park, CA, 2011. Porras-Kim lives and works in Los Angeles.

Marcos Ramírez ERRE (Tijuana, Mexico, b. 1961) holds a Law Degree from Universidad Autónoma de Baja California. Recent solo exhibitions include *DeLIMITations: A Survey of the 1821 United States-Mexico Border*, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, CA 2016; *A Game of Deception: Of Oil, Soccer and Other Bets*, Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA, 2014; *Retratos de Ciudad*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Latinoamericano (MACLA), Argentina, 2012; *La reconstrucción de los hechos*, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, 2011; and *Marcos Ramírez ERRE: How Many Revolutions?*, LA><ART, Los Angeles, 2011. Recent group exhibitions include *La Colección Elías + Fontes: Historia/Relato*, Centro Cultural Tijuana, Tijuana, Mexico, 2015; *Sportsmanship under Surveillance*; Sur Gallery - LACAP/Toronto, Canada, 2015; *El derrumbe de la estatua hacia una crítica del arte público (1952-2014)*, Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC), Mexico City, 2014; *Fronteridad, Migración, desplazamiento y nomadismo artístico*, Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Spain, 2013; and *Registro 03. Espejo/Reflejo*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, 2013. ERRE resides in Tijuana.

Clarissa Tossin (Porto Alegre, Brazil, b. 1973) received an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts (CALARTS), Valencia, CA, and a BFA from the Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado in São Paulo, Brazil. Recent solo exhibitions include *Brasília Teimosa*, Galeria Baobá, Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Recife, Brazil, 2015; *Brasília, Cars, Pools & Other Modernities*, Artpace, San Antonio, TX, 2013; and *On Brasília*, Centre 3, Hamilton, Canada, 2012. Recent group exhibitions include *United States of Latin America*, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, MI, 2015; *In Search of an Exit (or Eight Characters in a Parlor)*, Heritage Square Museum, Los Angeles, 2015; *After Lanscape: Copied Cities*, Fabra i Coats Centre D'Art Contemporani Barcelona, Spain, 2015; *Unsettled Landscapes*, SITE Santa Fe, NM, 2014; *Made in L.A.* 2014, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2014; *Bringing the World into the World*, Queens Museum, New York, 2014; and *When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes*, cca Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, 2012 (traveled to Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, MI). Tossin resides in Los Angeles.

Curators

Idurre Alonso (Bilbao, b. 1979) obtained her BA and MA in Art History from Universidad del País Vasco, Spain. Her Ph.D. dissertation (in progress) focuses on conceptual photographic practices in Latin America. Alonso's research interests include experimental practices in photography from Latin America, the intersections between art and experimental poetry, the iconography and development of national narratives since nineteenth century, and issues of power hierarchies in emerging art from Latin America. Since 2015 Alonso has been Associate Curator of Latin American collections at the Getty Research Institute. Previously she was Assistant Curator at the Department of Photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum (2014–2015). Prior to that, she was Curator at the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) from 2003 to 2014, where she organized numerous exhibitions including *Regina Galindo. Vulnerable*, 2012; *Descartes*, 2011; *Unresolved Circumstances. Video Art from Latin America* (co-curated with Cecilia Fajardo-Hill), 2011; *Changing the Focus. Latin American Photography, 1990–2005*, 2011; and *LA Presencia. Latin American Art in us Collections*, 2007. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

Selene Preciado (Tijuana/San Diego, b. 1982) obtained her MA in Art and Curatorial Practices in the Public Sphere from the University of Southern California. Preciado's research interests include contemporary art and post-1960s conceptualist vanguards such as feminist art and performance art, with a special focus on Latin American art and its diaspora in the United States. Currently, she is a program assistant at the Getty Foundation, providing support for the Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA grant initiative. Previously, she worked as a curatorial research assistant at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2013–2015); and as assistant curator at the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) from 2009 to 2015. Selected projects include *José Montoya's Abundant Harvest: Works on Paper/Works on Life*, Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2016, co-curated with Richard Montoya; *In Search of an Exit (or Eight Characters in a Parlor)*, Heritage Square Museum, 2015, co-curated with the USC MA Class of 2015; and *MIXTAPE*, 2013 and *Marco Maggi: no idea*, 2012, both at MOLAA. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

Contributors

Raquel Gutiérrez (Los Angeles, b. 1976) obtained an MA in Performance Studies from New York University, and a BA in Journalism and Central American Studies from California State University, Northridge, and is currently an MFA candidate at the University of Arizona's Program in Creative Writing. Gutiérrez is a writer, live performer, film actor, curator, publisher (Econo Textual Objects, established in 2014), playwright, arts administrator, and community organizer, as well as co-founding member of the now retired performance ensemble, Butchialis de Panochtitlan (BdP), a community-based and activist-minded group aimed at creating a visual vernacular around queer Latinidad in Los Angeles. Her professional experience includes working as Program Manager at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA; Manager of Community Partnerships, Cornerstone Theater Company, Los Angeles; Assistant Director, Center for Feminist Research, University of Southern California, (2005–2010); and Adjunct Lecturer at California State University, Northridge. She writes about art, culture, music, film, performance and community building and creates original solo and ensemble performance compositions. Her work has been published in *Los Angeles Weekly*, *Artbound*, *The Portland Review*, *GLQ*, *Raspa Magazine*, *RECAPS*, *Make/Shift*, *SUR Biennial 2013*, and *Ambientes: New Queer Latino Writing* (edited by Lázaro Lima and Felice Picano), and has written catalog essays for visual artists Hector Silva, Shizu Saldamando, Wu Tsang and Rafa Esparza for *Made In L.A.* 2016.

Edwin Hill holds a Ph.D. in French and Francophone Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, an MA in French Literature from the University of Iowa, and a BA in Music Performance (Percussion) from the University of Iowa, and is currently Associate Professor of French and Italian and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California (usc). His research interests include Francophone poetry and music, representations of post-colonial desire and romance, exchanges in Caribbean and black Atlantic identity formations and cultural discourses, Cultural studies, performance studies, and musical discourses on gender and race, as well as technology and post-colonial discourse. Hill has published and/or presented on contemporary Caribbean writers, Sub-Saharan francophone literature, African-American popular music, French chanson, and francophone hip hop. Recent publications include *Black Soundscapes, White Stages: The Meaning of Sound in the Black Francophone Atlantic*. Callaloo African Diaspora Studies Series (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013); *Monnaies Mythiques: Métissage* and *A Woman's Worth* in Suzanne Dracius's *Sa Destinée Rue Monte au Ciel* (Paris: Harmattan, 2010). Hill lives and works in Los Angeles.

Credits

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