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Federico Solmi

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Federico Solmi, *The Bathhouse* (detail), 2020, acrylic paint, wood, gold and silver leaf on Plexiglas, 5 LED screens, video, 6' x 20' x 5'.

GLASSBORO

Federico Solmi

ROWAN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY
 301 West High Street First Floor
 November 2, 2020–January 9, 2021

Federico Solmi's timely solo exhibition here, "The Bacchanalian Ones," interrogates the greed and corruption of world leaders both past and present. The artist's paintings and multimedia installations caricature his famous (and often infamous) subjects—from the realms of politics, religion, the military, and the aristocracy—by combining digital technology with the most traditional of media. Solmi's acidic portraits reveal these renowned figures for what they really are: soulless prevaricators crazed by power.

The centerpiece is *The Bathhouse*, 2020, which comprises five LED screens set in a frame that's six feet high and twenty feet wide. The video was painstakingly created using digital modeling, motion capture animation, gaming software, and scans from original paintings created by Solmi. Here the artist presents an episode of kaleidoscopic excess featuring a crowd of preening, vainglorious icons—including Idi Amin, Pope Benedict XVI, Christopher Columbus, Napoleon, and Ramesses II—who gorge themselves on a whole roasted pig and an endless supply of cocktails. This gluttony takes place in a grand hall full of fountains and statuary festooned in green, gold, and crimson, as if it were a Sadean Christmas scene exploding in gloopy slo-mo. The installation's chilling orchestral score, composed by KwangHoon Han, heightens the work's strange claustrophobic tone and overall sense of drama.

More immersive yet is *The Dreadful Ones*, 2017, a fictionalized romp through Donald Trump's extravagant inauguration ball, which viewers experience by wearing painted, 3D-printed masks of George Washington or Empress Theodora, that contain VR headsets. The adventure begins in a limo carrying the newly-elected president, Robert E. Lee, Benito Mussolini, and other "dignitaries" to the White House, where we're greeted by applauding supplicants, balloons and bowing staff, before the leaders guzzle champagne and dance to triumphal music. It's a dizzying experience of metaphoric cock worship and patriotic overkill—Trump's wildest dream, and a collective nightmare.

—Darren Jones

FEDERICO SOLMI: MUNDUS NOVUS

por Artishock | Ago 7, 2019 | NOTICIAS |



ADN Galería presenta *Mundus Novus*, la tercera exposición individual de **Federico Solmi** (1973), artista de origen italiano afincado en Nueva York que, usando el dibujo como punto de partida, crea un medio artístico híbrido con el que critica la sociedad actual. Para ello, el artista hace uso de una variedad de medios que llevan al dibujo a un nuevo estado de movimiento y teatralización, mediante el uso de tecnología 3D, motores de videojuegos, captura de movimientos, pinturas y pantallas.

Los trabajos presentados en esta ocasión están centrados en la colonización de América. Exploradores, colonizadores, guerreros, nativos, villanos, pícaros y estafadores pueblan las escenas fantásticas de esta comedia grotesca que degrada el mito de la conquista del Nuevo Mundo. Saltándose la cronología histórica, los colonos hacen su entrada como estrellas de la alfombra roja mientras los nativos los reciben entusiasmados, todos ellos rodeados por masas de paparazzis, vitores y aplausos.

Las narraciones de los libros de texto se ponen a prueba en el mundo de Federico Solmi, donde las historias aprendidas de los héroes euroamericanos son expuestas como una manipulación del pasado para propagar una ideología. Los hechos se desmantelan en un circo irónico de colores saturados y marcas comerciales que se unen para construir una crítica de los consumistas y nihilistas valores occidentales.



El lenguaje visual que hace reconocibles las obras de Federico Solmi se caracteriza por una reinterpretación de figuras clásicas en el entorno de un mundo digitalizado y extraño. Su narrativa integra iconos de la cultura occidental para reflejar una sociedad ridícula y disfuncional que resulta tan seductiva como dantesca.

El uso de las nuevas tecnologías de animación proporciona a Solmi la capacidad de revalorar y reescribir continuamente la historia a través de formas dinámicas y dramáticas de narración. Sus personajes-títeres toman vida a partir de la captura de movimientos para representar un profundo drama político en el absurdo teatro del mundo.

A través del dibujo y la video-pintura, la revisión histórica refleja la realidad actual donde líderes políticos y religiosos disfrutan de riqueza e influencia a pesar de ser legados de corrupción, manipulación y genocidio.

Esta herencia cultural hipócrita de Occidente, avalada por historiadores y gobiernos, es la que Solmi pone de relieve en sus obras, ofreciendo una perspectiva sorprendentemente distópica del pasado y el presente.

Por medio de esta obra se hacen visibles las conexiones inextricables entre nación y religión, consumismo y capitalismo. Ceremonia, pompa y circunstancia se vuelven grotescas, desafiando las ideas habituales sobre el desempeño del nacionalismo.

El artista satiriza al mismo tiempo que evidencia la capacidad de influencia de los medios de comunicación de masas en los procesos de validación y reconocimiento del poder. De la representación del poder en su obra se deduce, pues, una identificación de la sociedad actual como prisionera de su propio espectáculo egocéntrico.

Al colapsar el tiempo y la geografía en sus obras, Solmi subraya poderosamente las formas en que el poder estatal, el colonialismo y el imperialismo tienen una relación simbiótica con las ambiciones capitalistas.



MUSÉE

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

JUL 12

Art Out: American Circus

By Campbell George

Times Square. Few other places in New York conjure up such strong feelings. For residents, those feelings range from irritation to revulsion. For tourists, it's a must-see falling somewhere on their itinerary between the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State building. From the unwashed hordes to stores that can be found in any mall to the neon sorcery decking every block, there's no question that Times Square is a repository of excess in every way. Whether you find it distasteful or endearing, there's no denying its pull, even if your personal contact with it is limited to TV on New Year's Eve or, for locals, a train transfer on its many platforms. For better or for worse, Times Square is here to stay. Fortunately for this institution, artist and satirist Federico Solmi believes it can be used for better.

Armed with an LED and a diagnosis of American excess, Solmi partnered with Times Square Arts to capture the symptoms of a nation's collective malaise in a stunning collage he calls *American Circus*. Lights play a primary part in this piece, the more neon the better. Colors of all shades are lit up to reveal a psychedelic dreamscape of Eiffel towers, clowns, 99 cent bargains, and more on a screen that never sleeps and yet is only awake three minutes a day. That's right, Solmi's *Circus* takes to the Jumbotron of Times Square for a mere three minutes a day, from 11:57 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. all throughout July.



It's a strange hour, to be sure. A crowd composed of Broadway enthusiasts waiting for Ubers, shopping stragglers, tourists determined to squeeze every drop from their vacations, and all the rest, dressed up with nowhere else to be. What else is there in New York at midnight? If they knew, they wouldn't be there. A captive audience baited to Times Square by the very electronic delights caricatured so garishly in Solmi's display. After hours of commercials on every side, plying exactly what you'd expect, the show begins. Walls of color swirl around the square, relieving the omnipresent advertisements from their duties, at least for a few minutes. The effect is not immediate, but, like the wave at any sporting event, it catches up to everyone. Some stop and stare. Others keep walking but continue to glance upward, hoping to catch any updates. Those most taken by the piece pull out their phones and take pictures and videos to share with their friends and family who didn't have the privilege of being there themselves.

As the world premiere in a series called *The Great Farce*, Solmi's *American Circus* could not have found a better place to make its debut. The crowds may have some catching up to do with their ecstatic doppelgängers who fill the *Circus* bleachers, but that may be the point. We haven't yet reached the complete chromatic saturation suggested by *American Circus* but by following the pretty colors of the lights, we'll surely get there. The question Solmi asks us is: do we want to?

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Interview with Artist Federico Solmi

27/6/2019



5 MINS AGO by **JAMIE MARTINEZ**



"The Great Debauchery", 2019 installation view at The Armory Show, courtesy Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York: acrylic paint, gold and silver leaf, pen and ink and mixed media on three wood panels with shaped wood relief, 72 x 240 x 4 in.

Jamie Martinez: Congratulations on your recent shows, especially the solo booth with Ronald Feldman at the last Armory. It was one of the top booths in many publications. We'll have to get back to that. Can you first talk about your background in the arts and your journey to becoming an artist in New York? Where did it all begin?

Federico Solmi: Well, it's a long story. It all began almost 20 years ago, when I left my hometown: Bologna, Italy, and I decided to move to New York to pursue a career in the arts. It was the best decision of my life, of course; not an easy decision, but it proved to be the right one. I knew immediately that this was my city, I guess I felt great chemistry. I would say that I have a very unconventional background if compared to my peers. I never really attended any art school, colleges, or MFA programs. I am a self-educated artist; I simply wanted to be an artist on my terms, and I thought the best way to educate myself in the arts was to move to NYC, then get a studio and simply to visit as many galleries, museums, exhibitions as possible, and to try to meet artists, curators, and art professionals... to learn directly from the people that were making and exhibiting important art. It was a wonderful way to educate myself. I met amazing artists from everywhere; I learned so much from them, from their careers, their successes and their failures. It was real... no classroom, no theory, it was a debt-free art education, and it worked!

The Armory Show was so exciting for me, so many people stopped by at the booth. Now that the pressure is off, I can enjoy the success for a few minutes. Once in a while, it's good to take it easy, it does not happen that often, but I'll keep my feet on the ground. We had some great feedback from the press, art collectors, curators, and we had museums acquisitions, a fantastic response from the public. People really connected with my works, and Ronald Feldman and his staff were very pleased.

JM: How did you arrive at the style you are so well known for in your paintings, drawings, and videos?

FS: When I moved to New York, I was very interested in developing drawing, painting, and sculpture installation, often with all these three media blended into the same projects. It was an exciting time of discovery for me, and I was absorbing all the great vibes of the city. Brooklyn was becoming the center for all art production in the city; there was a great energy and a sense of an art community. At the time, my heroes were painters like Francis Bacon, Anselm Kiefer, Leon Golub, and Spero—I admired them tremendously because they were expressing themselves in a very visceral and unconventional style, disregarding any fashionable trends. I was very interested in the existentialist messages their art communicated to me. Later, I discovered artists like Jacob Lawrence, Henry Darger, William Kentridge, and many others— I was struggling to find my way but I felt like I was in Heaven— so many talented artists were out there, it was a great relief for me. Just a few months after my arrival in New York, I began to feel very isolated and alienated because I really had very little dialogue going on with any other artists until I started to exhibit a few years later... it was initially a very lonely path. Art books and books in general were my mentors and companions, galleries and museum exhibitions were my only source of connection to the contemporary art scene. In the meantime, I became very interested in early cinema, and in particular, German Expressionist film and the movies of Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini. Simultaneously, I became very curious in the development of the video game industry, not as a game player, but as a voyeur. I was fascinated by the increasing realism of the games' graphics and very intrigued to see how gaming companies were creating these environments that were a sort parallel universe, very similar to ours through the use of 3D graphic and digital technology. It was a great way to escape from reality and to enter into a metaphysical space, so I began to think that one day I could create my artificial archetype and to build my narrative, plots, in a virtual stage.

Around this time, the year 2003, I made my first experiments with video animation using a combination of drawings and digital sources. At the time, I had no experience and training with video-making, but I knew that I was interested in experimenting with moving images and not in a traditional and conventional way. My first one-minute drawing animated video entitled "Another Day of Fun" was my first attempt, this piece was part of an installation called Ideal City; I rotoscoped 3D digitally generated sequences from the popular video game, *Grand Theft Auto*, and combined it with drawing. This piece was a real turning point for me. For the first time, I understood that I could combine two very different mediums and blend them in a very organic way. I came to the conclusion that what I was really interested in was not just painting and drawing as artistic mediums, but the creation of narrative work, and in particular, social commentary. I was determined to create work that engaged with the problems of the society in which I was living and try to engage with my generation and my community. Moving images were my media, and that's how it all began.

JM: How is the rapid change in technology affecting your work? Does it make it easier for you to fabricate pieces whether it's digital or physical?

FS: I think technological innovation represents simultaneously a great stimulus, and a great challenge for my work. As you know, gaming and digital technology are a big part of my process, and these media and tools are evolving daily and require constant updates. I think they have a very positive effect on my artistic practice; changes always force me to question myself, they force me to look at the work from a different angle. I believe the speed of change and evolution of technology has helped me to be sharper because, in a way you can never relax, you can't always play the same tricks as many artists do with paintings and sculptures. In all these years of research, success and failure, I think I learned how to domesticate the technology I use. I learned how to humanize these great tools, to create a very unique work of art and I did it with a very simple solution by blending digital technology with traditional techniques that have been around for centuries. Drawings and paintings are texture mapped on top of the digital structure of my video sequence; the 3D models of the characters I use in my narrative are animated by capturing actors' body movements using motion capture. It is true that digital technology becomes obsolete quickly and does not age very well. However, I feel that today, when I look at the pieces I did 15 years ago they look better than ever, because despite the dependence on digital tools— what people see on the screen is animated paintings—the technology is never in the foreground. There is a large presence of it...but paintings and drawings are the protagonists.

When people look at my work, they can't imagine how many hours it takes to make a short piece; they often don't realize that besides all the digital animation, 3D modeling, scripting, filming, editing, motion capture recording, each square inch of the footage on the screen is hand painted, and each painting is scanned and texture mapped onto the digital skeletons of each character, environments, props that I created at the studio with my assistants. Making my work has always been a big challenge, an epic effort, a struggle, but it is also very rewarding.

JM: Looks like your dreams are coming true. I respect the subject matter in all your work. It's very honest and non-vanilla. Back in 2009, you were charged with obscenity in Italy due to the showing of your video, "The Evil Empire". Can you elaborate on this incident?

FS: Yes indeed. I feel very fortunate, it is a wonderful moment, but it's also the fruit of hard work, determination, good intuition, and devotion to my craft. Since I arrived in New York almost 20 years ago, I always felt very committed to developing a unique body of work. I never worry about trends. To me, it was very important to be true to myself. I always wanted to make it on my own terms, far away from the latest fashion in the arts. The Evil Empire is one of my strongest videos, it examines with a satirical lens and a fictional narrative some of the darkest pages of the history of the Catholic church, from crusade to the abuse of power committed by popes and the ecclesiastic circles. Unfortunately, due to the visceral and controversial contents, it has been in the dark for a while. This happens simply because these days people are afraid to let the artists speak out about certain obvious truths. To make the story short, in 2009 a notorious conservative prosecutor from my hometown of Bologna ordered the Italian police to take into custody a series of paintings and video animations from "The Evil Empire" series that were exhibited at a local art fair in Italy.

This unfortunate and shameful episode became a media sensation in Italy, Spain, Latin America, and here. In the U.S., you can still find plenty of articles on the web. My case was compared in the major newspapers to the scandal and accusation of the Church to directors such as Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Bernardo Bertolucci. It was a very strange and scary situation. I got a lawyer, I went to trial with the accusation of making obscene objects— not art— and I won. While in Italy, I was accused of being a degenerate artist of the worst species. In New York, in the same year, I was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for video.

JM: Congratulations on the victory, I am sure you were very relieved once it was all over. Enough about the past, let's chat about the future. What projects/shows do you have coming up?

FS: I have several exciting museum exhibitions and public projects coming up in the U.S. and Europe. On July 2nd, 2019, there will be the inauguration of my video installation "American Circus" in Times Square in New York City, for the Times Square Art Midnight Moments. I can't wait! In September 2019, I will have my first museum survey exhibition in the U.S. at the Tarble Art Center, Charleston, Illinois and in October I will part of a group show at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. At the studio, I am currently working on several new pieces that will be presented at Expo Chicago plus I am also working for an upcoming group and solo exhibition for The Block Museum of Northwestern University, Kunstkraftwerk in Leipzig, Germany...Life is busy, intense, I could not ask for anything better, being super busy in doing what I love....

JM: Looking back now at your career, what is the major break that helped you get to the next important level and what advice do you have for other artists?

FS: I believe that my major break came approx 15 years ago, after spending a few years in New York and observing very closely the New York gallery scene. I finally found the courage, the determination, and the stubbornness to pursue my unconventional ideas about making art, disregarding completely what people would think about my experiments. This was really my major turning point, to make a work of art and to be true to myself, to put the fear aside. Of course, at the time, I felt that since my work did not belong to any movement or the latest trend, I will be left out. Then, I came to understand that artists that inspired me, which I admired greatly, were always pursuing non-conventional paths, aesthetics. I understood that I had to go through exactly the same thing. It is very hard to give advice to young artists because there is no specific recipe, each career is different, and I can only speak for myself, from my experience.

I think that is a wonderful thing, to make a living as an artist, and I wish to all our young readers to be able one day to make their dream to come true, but expect some serious work ahead of you. The best advice I could give to a young artist today is, first of all, to listen to their intuitions no matter how odd they are. Initially, people tend to not support the innovative approach of any kind. They will tell you that what are you doing is wrong and does not make any sense.

Don't get discouraged, push even harder, listen to your guts, go ahead and search where people are afraid to go. Keep in mind that it's always been like this. In order to achieve success you need to take great risks, you need to go and explore outside your comfort zone, and once you are in control and you believe that your work is great, don't wait to be discovered. Figure it out how to show it, figure out a way that people can see your great achievement. Don't complain. If you are truly good, people will see it. Your work will stand out.



The Video Paintings of Federico Solmi

by Andy Smith Posted on March 17, 2019



In Federico Solmi's "video paintings," the artist's electrifying style comes to life, as he scans his paintings into a game engine. During Armory Show's 2019 edition, these particular works garnered much attention from passers-by who gravitated toward his political works. The artist's practice also includes acrylic painting, gold and silver leaf, and other materials.

"Solmi exploits emerging technologies to reveal the hypocrisies in contemporary society, making art with political and social commentary as a means to disrupt the power structure of our technological age," the Italian artist's site says. "... Solmi confronts the audience with his own absurd rewriting of past and present-day events. Solmi stages a virtual world where our leaders become puppets, animated by computer scripts rather than strings."

CITY NEWSPAPER

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April 18, 2018

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Federico Solmi's video paintings stun at RoCo

By Rebecca Rafferty @rsrafferty

The current exhibit at Rochester Contemporary puts viewers in the same deer-in-headlights state that the political spectacle has had us in as of late. Italian-born, New York City-based artist Federico Solmi's overwhelming video paintings depict powerful world leaders and historical figures on parade, debaucherously reveling, and accepting adulation from the worshipful masses they've conquered.

There's an all-too familiar element of celebrity in their treatment, and an equally familiar vacant adoration in the faces of the crowds. But the narratives presented in "The Good Samaritans" are filled with falsehoods and farce, a fact initially obscured by Solmi's bombastic, horrifying aesthetic.

A streaky texture of garishly saturated colors coats everything in Solmi's work, flickering and shifting slightly, creating a nervous jumping motion as the figures move through space. Although it sort of resembles stop-motion animation, it's not. RoCo Executive Director Bleu Cease explains that each element in the scenes is hand-painted, from the figures themselves to the streaming American flags, wine glasses at a lavish banquet, or the ships bearing cackling conquistadors.

"Then those paintings are scanned, in multiple versions, and wrapped around a 3D environment and animated through gaming engines," Cease says. "It's laborious."

Time and history are collapsed within the hand-painted, crest- and seal-spangled frames that enclose Solmi's video screens. Visitors first encounter a work titled "The Loving Trickster," which shows Donald Trump flanked by Benito Mussolini and Otto von Bismarck, sucking on cigars and arriving via limousine for the inaugural ball at the White House. While the fiction is obvious, the vision of soulless demagogues past and present keeping company is on point.

"It's all this incredible anachronism, just mashing together all these different figments of inaccurate and accurate history," Cease says of Solmi's work. "And it starts from this irreverent, punk rock kind of vibe he has. He's critical about the way history is taught, thought about, and whitewashed. And he's super critical of power and authority. So in a very simplified way, he's saying, 'OK, you're going to whitewash what George Washington was all about. You're not going to look at the nuance of what he was. I'll raise that lie with a tenfold lie. I'm gonna have Washington drunk-dancing, with Julius Caesar passed out on the table.'"

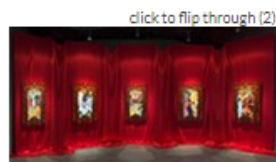


PHOTO PROVIDED

Installation view of Federico Solmi's satire-soaked video paintings. "The Good Samaritans" is on view at Rochester Contemporary through May 12.

Through May 12

Rochester Contemporary,
 137 East Avenue

Wednesday through
 Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.;
 Friday, 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

\$2 | 461-2222;
rochestercontemporary.org;
federicosolmi.com

Solmi is an outsider artist: he never went to college yet he's significantly self-taught. He moved from Italy to the US at 25 to make it in the art world in Manhattan, and now he teaches at Yale University. His work has been widely exhibited and screened at galleries, art centers, and festivals around the world, and his star keeps rising — he's currently working on a major piece for the new Kansas City Biennial and recently gained representation at Ronald Feldman Gallery in NYC.

Cease spied Solmi's five-channel orgy of opulence, "The Ballroom," at an art fair and says he was immediately transfixed. "The Ballroom" is included in this exhibition along with several other pieces, including new works never before shown. The exhibition is accompanied by an excellent essay about Solmi's work by Larry Ossei-Mensah, a Ghanaian-American independent curator and cultural critic currently based in NYC. And an audio tour led by Solmi is up on RoCo's website.

In the work "The American Fabius," George Washington — his face plastered with the same razor smile and unblinking, menacing eyes that many of Solmi's characters have — shoots pistols into the air while riding a horse through a crowd of thousands of cheering Native Americans. The background is filled with flags, layers and layers of them hanging in the air and floating down like ticker tape confetti, completely obscuring from view any sky or other hint of environment. And then Washington absurdly rides that horse through a portal into space.

The body of work is maximal and grotesque and off-putting, but at the same time viewers can't look away, Cease says. "There's a complex push-pull and a cinematic character to them. They pull you in, they're transfixing. And then you realize what you're looking at. There's an implication, for sure, it's not just skewering the powerful leader, it's also pulling us in and then we realize, 'Oh wait, we're really just sitting back watching this happen.'"

The viewers are placed inside the chaos, given the perspective familiar from first-person shooter video games, and in a way are complicit in the scene; we're passive actors in the satirical dystopia.

Solmi's soundtracks are a combination of bombastic, parade pomp and cheering crowds, and the tone and pacing of the music also indicates that something is off. "It puts you on edge," Cease says. "But you keep watching and you go back for more — it's gluttony on our part also."

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arti visive arte contemporanea television

The Great Farce. L'opera monumentale di Federico Solmi a Francoforte

Una video-installazione lunga più di cento metri piazzata nel bel mezzo della città, sulla facciata del teatro Oper / Schauspiel di Francoforte. Una commissione della Biennale delle immagini in movimento Frankfurt B3 ...

By Redazione - 4 dicembre 2017

Dal 28 novembre al 3 dicembre Francoforte ha ospitato *The Great Farce*, un'opera video monumentale firmata dall'artista italo-americano **Federico Solmi** (Bologna, 1973; vive a New York). Il lavoro, commissionato dalla Frankfurt B3 Biennial of the Moving Image, unisce in un'unica entità ben nove diversi video, andando a formare un affresco in movimento di grande potenza. Il tema, *come sempre nei lavori di Solmi*, è di ascendenza politico-sociale: un grottesco e coloratissimo gruppo di leader politici viene rappresentato all'interno di un parco dei divertimenti dove lo svago consiste nel godere dello spettacolo offerto dal re-enactment di alcuni avvenimenti storici.

"L'arte per me è una piattaforma per esaminare i fenomeni sociali e per richiamare l'attenzione sulle contraddizioni e sulle ingiustizie", ha commentato Solmi. "Qualcuno potrebbe obiettare dicendo che l'arte non dovrebbe essere didattica. Ma in tutte le epoche ci sono stati degli artisti i cui lavori hanno rappresentato uno specchio del loro tempo raccontato con sagacia. Questi artisti sono i miei eroi"

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At Volta and Nada fairs, two takes on politics

Artists respond to the new global order with works that range from amusing to acidic

By **GABRIELLA ANGELETI**
3rd March 2017 00:00 GMT

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The effects of fractured political systems are looming themes at Armory week satellite fairs geared toward younger dealers and artists. At Volta, running 1-5 March at Pier 90, the centerpiece is a curated section, organised by the Brooklyn-based curator Wendy Vogel. Titled *Your Body is a Battleground* after the famous Barbara Kruger photomontage, created on the occasion of the 1989 Women's March on Washington, the mini-exhibition comprises works by eight artists dealing with the idea of resistance, including a colossal installation titled *PATRIOT* (2017) by the Kentucky-based artist Melissa Vandenberg that spells out its title with sewn and stuffed



Two new videos by the Brooklyn-based artist Frederico Sciaky, showing with icons de icons of Los Angeles, feature Donald Trump being applauded by a sea of fans before entering a barroom and dancing the waltz with Napoleon Bonaparte

Political critique abounds in the aisles as well, which host 96 solo presentations by international galleries, non-profits and artist-run spaces. Returning dealer Luis de Jesus of Los Angeles is showing videos by the Brooklyn-based artist Federico Solmi that show historical figures (from Marie Antoinette to Stalin) saluting one another “as a commentary on the celebrity status that we offer politicians”, says an associate of the gallery. Two new videos in the series show Donald Trump being applauded by a sea of fans before entering a ballroom and dancing the waltz with Napoleon Bonaparte. The Barnard Gallery of Cape Town, one of 36 first-time participants at Volta, offers a series of nine abstract portraits of South African political figures (such as the writer Nadine Gordimer and the anti-apartheid crusader Oliver Tambo) by the painter Ryan Hewett titled *Once Were Leaders*. The series follows “two successful, sold-out solo shows for the artist in London last year and in 2015”, says Alexandra Zehaczek, an associate at the gallery.

At the sixth edition of the New Art Dealers Alliance fair (Nada, 2-5 March), in a new venue at Skylight Clarkson North in SoHo, political content is by turns humorous and sinister. Among the 100 exhibitors, the Chicago-based dealer Shane Campbell brought paintings by David Legett that show “racially and socially charged topics in a way that’s maybe meant to amuse you”, says the gallery’s Megan Bedford. *It’s Not What You Know It’s What You Can Prove* (2016) shows Chief Wiggum, the cop of Simpsons fame, with a bloodstain on the cap of his police uniform; while *Subsidised Sandcastle* (2015) applies the words “Jungle Fever” to a white character covered in a zebra-print smock. Brooklyn’s Motel gallery has multi-media works by Michael Assiff that address environmental concerns and “the inflation of injustices committed against humans, animals and ecologies”, says Motel’s Rosie Motley. One sculpture that resembles a Halloween mask wearing kitschy 2016 New Year’s glasses nods to the absurdities and traumas of the past year.

Nada has also taken its political concerns a proactive step further and will donate 50% of all proceeds from ticket sales to the American Civil Liberties Union—a nod to the fact that “politics is inescapable right now”, says Marcella Zimmermann, a spokeswoman for the fair. The other half of the revenue will fund the Nada x Exhibitionary International Gallery Prize, an award introduced last year to support the participation of underrepresented dealers and geographies. Galería Agustina Ferreyra of San Juan, Puerto Rico, is this year’s winner. A somewhat lighter-hearted philanthropic project on view at the fair—organised by the New York-based non-profit ProjectArt and titled *My Kid Could Do That*—unites childhood works of art created by 16 internationally renowned artists, including Katherine Bernhardt, Will Cotton and Sanford Biggers. The works will be on view alongside contemporary pieces being offered in a benefit auction conducted by Paddle8 on 28 April at Red Bull Arts New York, with all proceeds going to ProjectArt’s education programmes for students. But with the National Endowment for the Arts facing an uncertain future, here, too, politics hover in the background.

El escupitajo punk en el arte

El Museo del Chopo de Ciudad de México rastrea las conexiones entre la cultura contemporánea y el movimiento musical de finales de los 70



DAVID MARCIAL PÉREZ

México • 7 ENE 2017 • 16:17 CET



Fotograma de 'Song of Tyranny', de Federico Solmi

Una de las vigilantes de la exposición *Punk, sus rastros en el arte contemporáneo*, se levanta de la silla y se queda un rato mirando una de las videoinstalaciones.

“Es la historia de un borrachito —cuenta Verónica, 47 años— que por tener su vicio se deja hacer de todo por unos hombres malos”. Con una estética de animación de serie B, al borrachito le meten en una mazmorra, le pasan un rallador de queso por los genitales, le descuartizan y venden su carne a una

—¿Cuál cree que es el mensaje del artista?

—Es como un cuento muy raro. Eso no se puede hacer en la realidad

—¿Cree que está criticando algo?

—No creo, pero como los punks son anarquistas y van en contra del gobierno. ¿Quién sabe?

Muerto oficialmente en 1978 —*Punk is dead*, cantaban Crass—, la muestra del Museo del Chopo en Ciudad de México rastrea por el mundo del arte las conexiones, los antecedentes y las herencias de aquel incendio contracultural que nació en Londres y Nueva York, vivió deprisa y dejó un exquisito cadáver.

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“Como el surrealismo, ha trascendido el ámbito de las artes y se ha insertado en la lengua cotidiana. Uno califica una película de surrealista sin serlo y con el punk pasa lo mismo”, explica el comisario de la exposición, David G. Torres. El punk sería entonces un muerto viviente, una comunidad de ideas que siguen circulando y que tiene que ver con un cierto malestar. Un zombi inconformista, provocador, apasionado y rabioso. Un muerto muy vivo en la cultura contemporánea.

El punk es un escupitajo. El [dadaísta](#) Michel Mourre se subió en los cincuenta al púlpito de la catedral de Notre-Dame disfrazado de monje dominico y pronunció una homilía blasfema sobre la muerte de Dios. Años 70: en una Inglaterra empachada de rock progresivo y crisis económica, el bajista de los [Sex Pistols](#) se pintaba esvásticas en la camiseta, se cortaba el pecho con cristales y escupía al público desde el escenario. Años 2000: el artista Antonio Ortega se graba a sí mismo vomitando dentro de un bote de metal para después dárselo de comer a los pájaros. “Los eslóganes anti todo de los situacionistas, los aullidos dadaístas y su voluntad negadora están aún muy presentes”, apunta Torres.

El punk es disidencia y negación. El estribillo *No Future* bebe de un lema de los situacionistas que vagaban sin rumbo por las calles de París rechazando su cartografía e imaginando otra ciudad y otro mundo. El artista [Jordi Colomer](#), que representará a España en la próxima Bienal de Venecia, coloca el *No Future* como un cartel luminoso encima de un coche que recorre ciudades vacías.

El seminal grupo californiano Black Flag recogió directamente la bandera negra anarquista. Sin ser explícitamente políticos, la muestra recopila las portadas de sus discos a cargo [Raymond Pettibon](#): monjas lascivas, un revolver apuntando a la sien de un padre de familia, Elvis crucificado en calzoncillos.

El punk es violencia. En otra sala hay dos vidrios blindados colocados en vertical sobre los que el mexicano Enrique Jezik disparó más de un centenar de balas. Utilizó armas reglamentarias de la policía y los balazos quedaron incrustados en los cristales. Un audio va recreando el silbido y el impacto de los disparos. *La fiesta de las balas*.

Yoshua Okon y Miguel Calderón se grabaron a ellos mismos robando equipos de música de coches aparcados en las calles del Estado de México. Debajo de la pantalla, la instalación incluye la montaña de radiocasetes birlados. “La conflictividad de la sociedad mexicana, ese malestar es un caldo de cultivo inigualable. Queríamos enfatizar además que el punk va más allá del ámbito anglosajón, gracias sobre todo a que nació en medio de la cultura de los medios de comunicación”, añade el comisario de la exposición que viene de girar por Madrid, Vitoria y Barcelona.

El punk es repetición y rabia. El día de la inauguración, el coleccionista y autor mexicano, Guillermo Santamaría juntó parte de su colección de vinilos, los sacó de la funda y los estrelló sobre la pared como si fueran jabalinas. Mata a tus ídolos. Destruye. Punk. En otra sala, una pantalla expone una secuencia de unos segundos de una película del Hollywood de los cincuenta. Una familia está cenando y la escena intervenida se detiene, avanza, rebobina, se atasca y se repite y se repite hasta que el zumbido del televisor se hace insoportable.

El punk es un fraude. Durante el último concierto de los Pistols, mientras [Sid Vicious](#) escupía sangre y apenas era capaz de seguir dos acordes al bajo, Jonnny Rotten le preguntó a un público irritado por el fiasco musical: "¿Nunca se han sentido estafados?". Aquella gira de 1978 fue el delirio final de [Malcom McLaren](#), manager y padre de su criatura punk. Él los vistió como zapatos puntiagudos, pantalones de cuero y cadenas de su tienda de estilo sado. Modeló a aquellos cuatro desarraigados como un gran escándalo frente a los oficinistas y las señoras de misa. Les colocó en el centro de la diana de los medios de comunicación, consiguió contratos millonarios de las discográficas y luego los dejó caer. Todo fue un gran fraude para así desenmascarar la farsa del mundo del espectáculo.

McLaren estudió en una escuela de arte, admiraba a los situacionistas y a Andy Warhol, el apóstol de la cultura de masas. Una fotocomposición suya sobre un accidente de coche, Silver Car Crash, se vendió hace uno años por más de 100 millones de dólares en una subasta. El brasileño João Louro recoge este hito para la muestra punk. Un marco rectangular dividido en dos cuadrados. A un lado, el título de la obra millonaria de Warhol sobre un fondo blanco. Al otro, un cuadrado negro. Un gran No.

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· Agenda cultural · Latinoamérica · Música · Agenda · América · Eventos · Cultura · Arte

ARTE

«PIGS»: Si los cerdos hablasen

● Cuatro centros del sur de Europa –entre ellos, ARTIUM, en España– coproducen una muestra en la que se da réplica a los prejuicios sobre sus países manejados por sus hermanos del norte.



«Brotherhood» (2015), de Federico Solmi

NOEMÍ MÉNDEZ

[@NoemiMendez](#)

Vitoria - Actualizado: 17/03/2018 14:32h

Siempre que el visitante acude a [ARTIUM](#) sabe que se va a encontrar con algo cuidado, meditado y preparado para no dejarlo indiferente. Hasta el 15 de mayo podremos visitar «PIGS», la propuesta de Blanca de la Torre, que ejerce una crítica, para nada sutil, sobre cómo son tratados los países del sur de Europa dentro de ella.

La muestra ofrece trabajos de un buenísimo plantel de artistas contemporáneos entre los que se encuentran [Santiago Sierra](#), [PSJM](#), [Nuno Cera](#) o [Carlos Aires](#), que aporta la pieza más poética, o de mayor amabilidad en su apariencia formal, pero que contiene igualmente una tremenda carga crítica –una obra doble, compuesta por un «collage» que reproduce la letra de la famosa «Sweet Dreams», de [Eurythmics](#), por medio de precisos recortes de billetes, rodeados de «preciosistas» moscas, junto con un video grabado en el [Museo Cerralbo](#) en el que dos policías la bailan a ritmo de tango–. Fantástica también [Núria Güell](#), con su «Oficina de rescate invertido», en la que ofrece un servicio de asesoramiento gratuito sobre estrategias de desobediencia. El resto de propuestas, más «pesadas» en un sentido positivo, más guerreras o ruidosas, llevan al espectador a sumergirse de lleno en la «bulliciosa» Europa del sur.

El caos del sur

Y es que las salas destinadas para «PIGS» en ARTIUM se tornan caóticas en su transitar, en una puesta en escena curatorialmente correcta, diseñada para generar estrés en el visitante, también por el ruido de las video-proyecciones, que se entremezclan, exigiendo al espectador que preste especial atención a lo que observa en cada momento. Todo está orquestado para recrear la atmósfera más tópica y estereotipada del sur del continente: bullicio, ruido, caos...

La muestra, obviamente, viene al pelo en estos momentos, no sólo por los acontecimientos políticos y sociales de Europa –y si afinamos, de nuestro país– sino por esos absurdos estigmas que continuamente se muestran de norte a sur.

La propuesta de estos veinte artistas nos hace caer en la cuenta y rebelarnos ante lo que parece un sometimiento, un constante efecto Pigmalión que ha ido gestándose en generaciones con el resultado de incrustar prejuicios que taponan en buena parte el crecimiento y brillo de estos países.

La muestra es un ejemplo magnífico de cómo la ley de la «profecía autocumplida» toma su brillante forma mediante el constante bombardeo sutil producido por medio de **críticas, tanto económicas como sociales, absolutamente mediatizadas y medidas para minar** e impedir el resurgimiento y florecimiento de quienes forjaron los pilares del continente europeo. No en vano, **PIGS es el acrónimo de Portugal, Italia, Grecia y España (Spain)** acuñado por la prensa británica –el «Financial Times» lo popularizó en 2008, aunque otros como «The Economist», «The Times» y «Le Monde» ya lo habían utilizado con anterioridad–, **con el único fin de ridiculizar el mal denominado «milagro» del crecimiento económico dentro de la zona euro** –PIGS como término peyorativo que alude a la imposibilidad de que los cerdos vuelen, y, en este caso, interpretar como irreal su crecimiento económico–. «Si una situación es definida como real, esa situación tiene efectos reales», rezaba el teorema de Thomas. Y es que política y sociología van de la mano, y, **en tiempos de deshumanización avanzada en la que sólo importan los resultados**, parece que cualquier método es válido para conseguirlos.

Gran dosis de humor

Merece la pena citar al resto de los artistas que ejercen réplica en Vitoria y que denuncian de manera irónica, y con alguna dosis de humor, la situación real de los PIGS: **Vasco Araujo, Artspirators** (Maria-Andromachi Chatzinikolaou, Nikos Podias, Rania Armagou, Spyros Tsalapatas), **Bill Balaskas**, **Karmelo Bermejo**, **Rossella Biscotti**, **Stefano Cagol**, **Paolo Cirio**, **Danilo Corrales**, **Priscila Fernandes**, **Carla Filipe**, **Jenny Marketou & Zafos Xagoraris**, **Juan Carlos Meana**, **José María Durán**, **Avelino Sala**, **Federico Solmi** y **Stefanos Tsivopoulos**. Pero atentos: la muestra, que nace con carácter itinerante, promete incluir no sólo nombres nuevos en cada uno de los cuatro países protagonistas, sino que **llega acompañada de charlas y proyecciones documentales** que harán «que los cerdos vuelen». Al menos con la mente.

Como suele suceder en este centro, **la cita hila rápidamente con las salas anexas**, como la revisión de la colección propia con un título que viene al pelo –«**La trampa en la sonrisa**»–, o la instalación de **Eduarne Herrán** «**El jardín de las emoji-delicias**»... un cúmulo de reflexiones sociales sumamente interesantes.



«Gimme Shelter», instalación de Avelino Sala

«PIGS». Colectiva

ARTIUM. Vitoria. C/ Francia, 24. Comisaria: Blanca de la Torre. Coproducen: Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Tesalónica, Galería Municipal do Porto y Es Baluard. Hasta el 15 de mayo

The Martian



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ARTE. CYPHORIA E UNTITLED. QUADRIENNALE DI ROMA E ART BASEL MIAMI. INTERVISTA A FEDERICO SOLMI

Oggi, **giovedì 1 dicembre**, si aprono i battenti di **Art Basel Miami Beach**, l'appuntamento americano di una delle rassegne d'arte internazionale più importanti al mondo che, ogni anno, è possibile visitare anche a **Hong Kong** e **Basel**. Per il 2017, rispettivamente, le giornate saranno dal 23 al 25 marzo e dal 15 al 18 giugno.

A Miami Beach, in questi giorni, sono quindi arrivati artisti, galleristi, esperti, compratori, giornalisti e, ovviamente, appassionati, pronti a visitare le **269 gallerie di arte moderna e contemporanea** provenienti da tutto il mondo e a vedere il più possibile degli oltre **4000 artisti** che espongono pittura, scultura, disegno, installazione, stampe, fotografia, film, video e arte digitale.

A Art Basel Miami Beach c'è anche **Federico Solmi**.

Artista poliedrico, versatile e assolutamente impossibile da circoscrivere in una definizione, lavora, o meglio, manipola, o, ancora, decostruisce; no, in realtà, smembra, corrode e scarnifica, tutto. Sì, tutto.

I simboli. I personaggi. Gli uomini. L'ambiente. La storia. Tutto quello che l'artista ha visto, ha sentito, ha letto, ha studiato, ha vissuto, è passato in un tritacarne per poi essere ri-assemblato e servito su un piatto con su scritto «Eccoti la civiltà». L'artista si fa soggetto e oggetto di una civiltà che divora e inquina, deturpa e riproduce, umilia e consacra. Il suo è un invito a fagocitare, oltre il possibile e ossessivamente tutto l'orrore dell'operato degli uomini. Nelle sue opere la storia è il palcoscenico, e i personaggi, siano essi politici, businessman, i ricchi possidenti senza scrupoli o i volti conosciuti della storia umana, sono le marionette affamate, assetate, indegne, ignobili. Noi tutti, siamo quel popolo variopinto e rumoroso che sta sullo sfondo con gli occhi sgranati a guardare e a non vedere.

Film, animazione e videogiochi da una parte e disegno e pittura dall'altra, sono gli strumenti antichi come tecnologici con cui realizza le sue opere di arte digitale in medio e grande formato.

Federico Solmi, vero e proprio fiume in piena, con adorabile e intatto accento bolognese narra e spiega generosamente la sua ricerca artistica, i meandri dell'America in cui vive e la stasi cristallina della cultura in Italia. Fino all'8 gennaio 2017 è possibile vedere le sue opere anche alla **Quadriennale di Roma**, nella mostra **Cyphoria**, a cura di **Domenico Quaranta**.

Come definiresti la tua presenza ad Art Basel Miami Beach?

La prima volta che ho esposto a Art Basel Miami era il 2005. Era ancora un evento in via di formazione ma io ero felicissimo. Essendo in America, per me era davvero bello partecipare a uno degli eventi più belli e importanti al mondo. Se un artista riesce a esporre con una certa continuità in una manifestazione come Art Basel ha di certo una visibilità notevole. Quest'anno farò parte di due stand ad **Untitled Miami Beach**, una fiera satellitare, una delle migliori. Ho preparato quattro diverse opere abbastanza grandi e sarò lì per confrontarmi con gli artisti provenienti da tutto il mondo. Per me è un appuntamento importante. Mi piace molto di più preparare mostre personali e museali, ma comunque la fiera fa parte di una realtà che è il mercato dell'arte. Il pubblico adora andare a vedere e comprare nel grande avvenimento. E questi avvenimenti sono diventati enormi e fondamentali.

Delle vetrine imprescindibili.

Sì lo sono. Ma l'importante è esserci con costanza. Da oltre dieci anni espongo qui regolarmente. A volte ci sono artisti che espongono un anno nella migliore fiera internazionale. Poi nulla per cinque anni. Ecco questo è dannoso. Esserci con costanza significa anche far avanzare la mia ricerca, la mia personalità, la mia determinazione.

Da molti anni seguo il tuo lavoro e trovo tu sia un artista che cambia sintassi espressiva velocemente. E oggi è possibile vederti anche alla Quadriennale di Roma. Che cosa ne pensi?

Sono stato felice di ricevere l'invito per la mostra curata da Domenico Quaranta. Ma, lavorando molto in America, anche con le mie opere, credo si possa dimostrare quanto l'Italia sia ancorata a certe logiche poveriste, minimali, accademiche. In confronto ad esse, la sezione curata da Domenico sembra il futuro. Un futuro già presente. Tutti i nuovi linguaggi e tutte le tecnologie possibili, sono difficili da comprendere e accettare, inizialmente, però la realtà è che i nostri figli nascono e a un anno hanno un iPad in mano. L'arte non deve essere vista per l'impatto che ha nel presente ma per l'impatto che potrà avere fra quindici anni. Questa mia visione delle cose, secondo me, è stata la mia forza. Avendo sempre avuto un linguaggio artistico tecnologico, sempre nuovo, ibrido, fra pittura, video, animazione, disegno, per me è stato difficile imporre la mia arte, però quello che mi ha tenuto molto determinato è il fatto che tutte le nuove generazioni entrate nel mondo dell'arte hanno sempre visto in me un grande potenziale, e ora che ho l'appoggio di fondazioni, curatori e gallerie ovviamente sono in un momento proficuo. Quattro o cinque anni fa era molto più duro per me imporre il mio linguaggio, proprio perché nuovo.

ARTFORUM



Federico Solmi, *The Invader*, 2015, acrylic, gold leaf, mixed media with LCD screen and video, 24 x 16".

NEW YORK

Federico Solmi

POSTMASTERS

54 Franklin Street
 September 8–October 17

In his latest output, Federico Solmi scans hand-painted imagery and applies it to digital three-dimensional models of world leaders. He then imports each into a video-game platform and records their movements as if they were on a movie set. Titled "The Brotherhood" 2015, this series includes "video-paintings" of mostly infamous leaders with works that indict the viewer and society as much as the leaders themselves, as they flamboyantly posture like shallow celebrities. For example, *The Invader* (*Christopher Columbus – Italy*) (all works 2015), in which the titular figure struts, laughs, and salutes in front of an abstract landscape of

shifting colors, resembles a Hollywood screen test

In group scenes such as *The Waltz*, Solmi emphasizes the pomp and circumstance that accompanies state functions, in this case manifesting in a ballroom dance where leaders from different eras, such as Ramses II and Mussolini, move in close embrace. The scratchy lines of Solmi's distinctive, cartoonish, garishly hued renderings of the leaders and their surroundings thankfully don't resemble the polished, rounded forms of mainstream digital animation, with its cloaking interchangeable characters.

The artist has painted ornamental details on the Plexiglas surface of the works, which covers each video monitor, further intensifying its theatricality. In *The Brotherhood Triptych*, Napoleon, Mussolini, and Marie Antoinette among others arrive at a red-carpet event, proceed down a grand staircase, and depart on a spaceship amid a cheering throng of spectators, evoking the idea that such leaders are mainly entertainers wielding unearned power. The audio tracks of individual works, including distorted national anthems and carousel music, combine to heighten the forced pageantry to comedic levels. Solmi has also painted the walls a deep reddish orange, so as to mimic the manufactured splendor of government-sponsored events—propaganda to maintain the status quo.

Federico Solmi's Twisted Take on the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

● Karen Kedmey Jun 2, 2015 2:32 pm   



Federico Solmi, *American Circus* (Installation view), 2014, 3 video paintings, acrylic paint on plexiglass, gold and silver leaf, video loop, time varies, 18 x 24 inches (each).

In keeping with the internet age, [CONNERSMITH.](#) has recently launched a new online exhibition series on its website. For its inaugural presentation, the gallery features three mixed media video works by [Federico Solmi](#), who is known for using art as a platform for his satirical, at times scathing, commentary on contemporary society. In these recent pieces, he focuses on an event that lends itself all too well to criticism: the 2016 U.S. presidential race.

Each one of the videos is centered upon a political archetype, as indicated by Solmi's titles: *The Next President of the United States of America*, *The Last President of the United States of America*, and *Dick Richman Wall Street Tycoon* (all 2014). Rendered with a combination of video game animation technology, acrylic paint, and gold and silver leaf on Plexiglas (these are objects as much as videos), the figures move in the stiff, staccato manner typical of video game characters. They stand against a background filled with an American flag, and before a bank of microphones, nodding their heads to acknowledge the cheers of an unseen crowd. Their faces are ghoul-like, complete with waxy-looking skin, dark bags under eyes that practically pop out of their heads, and curious crimson splotches that resemble splattered blood. The bright reds, whites, and blues that comprise the scene glow and pulse continuously.



Though each figure is shown as if preparing to give a speech, only the *The Last President of the United States of America* actually talks. In composing his short address, Solmi takes stock of what he sees as the subtext of presidential messaging, distills it down to its essence, and then foregrounds it—with frightening results. “My fellow Americans, we are the best country in the world,” says the candidate. “We are spreading freedom and liberty across our empire, and we will continue to rule the world thanks to our invincible military. Our currency is gaining strength. Our appetite for supremacy and authority endures, and because of this, the rest of the world is on their knees. God bless America.” My fellow Americans: get ready for 2016. •



¿QUÉ TENDRÁ EL DIBUJO?

David G. Torres

Quizá el acceso tecnológico de los últimos años ha provocado un vaivén que no debería sorprendernos en arte, acostumbrados a idas y venidas –si es que mantenemos cierta memoria histórica y, por tanto, discursiva. De ahí la centralidad del dibujo. A-Desk.org ya toma nota sobre ello en las crónicas de las exposiciones “World Painting” (A.Desk.org, N°1), de Abigail Lazcoz y (tangencialmente) de Gustavo Marrone (A.Desk.org, N°2).

Ahora, además de las reflejadas en esta crítica (Fernando Bryce y Federico Solmi), se acaba de inaugurar la exposición de Pauline Fondevila (de la que daremos cuenta en el próximo número) y termina la de Francesc Ruiz en el CASM: dibujo y pintura, dibujo, más pintura y dibujo, dibujo, dibujo en animación, dibujo y cómic. Todo ello mientras, de repente, la producción parece ser el gran tema que ocupa las discusiones estratégicas en arte, como si la centralidad de la exposición se hubiese desplazado hacia la producción. ¿Será que la falta de coleccionismo vuelve a hacer de las suyas buscando nuevos puntos de anclaje ante la imposibilidad de definir una industria?

En este sentido, recientemente François Piron, director de Les Laboratoires en París, rememoraba las declaraciones del artista también francés Franck Scurti: “Me he dado cuenta de que para muchos artistas, si no hay exposición, bueno, ¡no hay obra! La lógica de la respuesta condiciona la producción de las obras, pero también la visibilidad del artista, ya que permite un reconocimiento más rápido de su trabajo. Hay una especie de protocolo: te invitan a una exposición, luego se abordan las condiciones de producción, entonces sabes qué dinero vas a tener para la producción y, al final, haces una propuesta en función de esa suma... Muchas veces, hay una temática para ese género de exposición, entonces acabas respondiendo también al tema. Es un poco deprimente, ¿no? Eso lleva a menudo a propuestas menores... No es que los artistas sean malos, ¡es que ya no tienen tiempo! La temporalidad es cada vez más corta en materia de exposición y de puesta en circulación de las obras en el mercado, entre tres y seis meses, y esto ejerce un impacto considerable sobre el tiempo de producción de las obras. (...) Un proyecto siempre depende de alguien que lo encarga, de la persona o la institución que lo financiará. Será discutido, modificado, renegociado. Esto puede ser peligroso para la obra, porque puede ocurrir que, al final, el resultado quede muy lejos de la idea inicial. (...) Hoy tengo a veces la impresión de que ya no se crea, sino que se produce, y sin embargo, ante un producto, siempre hay una creación... ¡No hay que tomar los presupuestos de producción por conceptos!”

No parece ser que esta mecánica, que cuestionaba Franck Scurti, afecte a Fernando Bryce y a su "método de análisis mimético". Este método consiste en la copia de imágenes tomadas de revistas, periódicos y propaganda en dibujos organizados en series del mismo formato. Es un trabajo meticuloso y obsesivo del que ya vimos una amplia muestra en año pasado en la Fundación Tàpies. Entonces las salas de la fundación aparecían repletas de estos dibujos en una especie de loca operación de rescate documental con una ingente e inasimilable cantidad de información. Comparada con aquella muestra la de ahora en la galería Joan Prats sólo puede verse como un breve recordatorio de la del año pasado, una muestra que se adaptaría al feo apelativo de "exposición de galería" o, positivamente, como una parcela ampliada de aquella y que vendría a corroborar que lo de Fernando Bryce no era una simple instalación para la ocasión, sino un trabajo personal y en continuidad.

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En Joan Prats, Fernando Bryce presenta sus últimas series de 2006 y 2005 "Kolonial Post" y "Work in Progress" (un título que casi es una declaración de principios de su propia obra). La primera es una documentación de informaciones y panfletos que tienen que ver con el periodo colonial y las colonias de Alemania, Francia e Inglaterra; mientras que en la segunda reproduce informaciones de la historia reciente de muchos de esos países excolonias y los procesos económicos, de ayudas y guerras del actual proceso postcolonial en el cual el título, ahora, desvela críticamente la actualidad de la idea de colonialismo. Como vemos, el trabajo de Fernando Bryce se adaptaría a lo que se ha venido a llamar cultura de archivo o, en este caso más justamente, estética de archivo. Más justamente en la medida en que su obra incurre en la estetización de toda esa ingente documentación vía dibujo. Frente a la desinformación que implica el exceso de información ofrece tematización archivística que regresa a una especie de normalización formal.

El trabajo de Federico Solmi que ofrece ADN galería también implica una exploración sobre el potencial crítico del dibujo. Aquí ligado a su supuesta inmediatez más que a su capacidad de nota que implica la labor archivística de Fernando Bryce. Y también a diferencia de éste, Federico Solmi se acerca a esa dimensión crítica a través del sentido del humor, la ironía o la mofa. "King Kong and the end of the world" (título de la pieza que presenta) es en realidad una videoanimación a partir de cientos de dibujos de trazo inmediato, con una selección de ellos también expuesta. En el cortometraje las referencias se cruzan y King Kong machaca la Gagosian Gallery de Nueva York con, literalmente, el Guggenheim Museum de la ciudad, después lucha contra la estatua de la libertad armado con una gigante "M" de McDonald's y finalmente ante la destrucción del mundo, anegado por los meados de King Kong moribundo, el propio Solmi y su pareja se dedican a producir maquinalmente hijos/copias de ellos mismos para repoblar el mundo. En fin, bromas gruesas sobre algunos iconos de la cultura estadounidense, algo del propio mundo del arte, con peligro del fin del mundo incluido como en todo producto apocalíptico hollywoodiense y sexualidad desbocada.

Si el caso de Fernando Bryce la dimensión crítica de su trabajo se basa en, precisamente, su desarticulación en un proceso inverso de estetización y sobreinformación, en el caso de Federico Solmi también resitúa la posible eficacia crítica del dibujo en una estetización del trazo e incluso de la mofa. En definitiva, ambos ponen en práctica una de las más acuciantes preguntas en las prácticas artísticas contemporáneas: no ya cómo ser críticos, sino si es posible serlo.