



Thomas Hirschhorn. *Equality Float*, 2008. Integrated text by Marcus Steinweg, plastic, paper, photocopies, print material, books, cardboard, paint, power line cables, wood, fabric, plastic flowers, plastic chairs, adhesive tape, painted mannequins, capsules, marker, foam, Plexiglas, platform scales, Polystyrene, mirrors, cubes, wooden sculptures, metal furniture, and spray paint. Courtesy of the artist.



Fernando Sánchez Castillo. *La calle es mía (The Street is Mine)*, 2004. Light object, metallic structure, 1,198 10-w lamps. Courtesy of the artist and Galería Juana de Aizpuru, Madrid. Photograph: MARCO/Enrique Touriño.

images in his video *T.W. (rock)* (1972), where a group of people lynches an individual while we hear, through headphones, the drowsy voice of René Magritte speechifying about art. The sensation of emptiness, the vertigo of the images and the indifference of the world all question the role of art in the face of violence.

Another highly staged work is *Equality Float* (2008,) by Thomas Hirschhorn (Bern, Switzerland, 1957). Commissioned by MARCO Vigo, this spectacular piece is a veritable kitsch carnival that mixes plastic flowers and chairs with mannequins, disco balls, a giant pair of hands on each side holding a medication capsule, and advertising billboards precariously built in papier maché. Known for the structure of his fragile works and for his philosophical referents, Hirschhorn creates a float/monument to the contemporary world, its debate centered around the in-equality and duality of language and action, symbolized by the number of giant bicolor (yellow and blue) capsules inscribed with the word "equa-lity." Building on his experience as a graphic designer, Hirschhorn's "scaffolds" become a platform for political, social, and cultural commentary.

Equally impactful is the ready-made presented by Jorge Perianes (Ourense, Spain, 1974) a mountain with living flora that is characteristic of the Galician landscape, resting at the base of which we find a cleanly cut fragment. The literalness of the citation forces us to rethink our relationship with the landscape and to wonder how much does economic and cultural colonization influence our perception of it.

But not everything is as grandiloquent or visually overwhelming as the installations just reviewed. In the simple yet no less impactful work of Teresa Margolles (Mexico, 1963) a line of 24 discretely placed speakers on a white wall force us to bring our ears close in order to hear everyday city sounds. Margolles has recorded the echo left in locations where the corpses of murdered women were found, with the victim's name and case number she places on the wall. The presence of death in anonymous sites, sites that are unknown yet familiar to us, point to the vestiges of violence there were it was committed.

The various typographies projected as flash animations and with a Jazz soundtrack by the duo known as Young-Hae Chong Heavy

Industries (Young-Hae Chang and Marc Voge) also speak of violence. *The End* is the halting last dialog of a couple that ends in physical aggression, suggested only by the sequence of words and the emphasis of the typography. A true exercise in economy of means (their projects are design for the Internet) with extraordinary visual effectiveness.

7 + 1 Project Rooms offers something more than a listing of well-known international names. It is an exercise in the selection of works of art that fit MARCO's particular space, which, without establishing an argumentative line, becomes thus a kind of Babel of this interconnected world, where nothing can be alien to us.

NOTES

1. From MARCO's press release describing the project's curatorial parameters.
2. Mosquera, Gerardo. Curatorial text for the catalog (work in progress.)
3. From the exhibition information displays that accompanied and explained Tania Bruguera's works.

Dermis Pérez

The 9th Sharjah Biennial

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Sharjah, the cultural capital of the United Arab Emirates, it is located on the Persian Gulf and has a population of some 800,000 people making it, the UAE's third largest city after Dubai and Abu Dhabi. An initiative of its Sultan, HH Dr. Sheik Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qaimi, Ruler of Sharjah, the Sharjah Biennial has been organized since 1993. The event was founded with the intent of fostering

relationships between Arab-world institutions and artists, as well as with the international art scene. This year the Biennial held its 9th edition between March 19th and May 16th, inaugurating for the first, in parallel with Art Dubai and the alternative fair Al Bastakiya, in order to strengthen art in the Gulf region and take advantage of the audience of collectors, critics, curators, and artists. Directed

by Hoor Al Qasimi and with Jack Persekian as its artistic director, the event's team also included curators Isabel Carlos and Tarek Abou El Fetouh. The Biennial brought together 60 artists, 34 of them women and 24 selected from its production program, through which the chosen artists receive official support for the production of their work, emphasizing the importance of the process. The



Liliana Porter. *Forced Labor: Red Sand*, 08, 2008. Installation. Wooden shelf, red sand, figurine. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.



Karin Sander. *Ball Valve*, 2009. One highly reflective polished chrome ball, track in wood and Plexiglas. Diameter: 11 3/4 in. (30 cm).



Eugenio Dittborn. *Heráldica (Heraldry)*, Airmail Painting No. 156, 2003-04. Tincture, photosilkscreen, polygal, and stitching on 2 sections of duck fabric. 110 x 82 1/2 in. (280 x 210 cm). Photo: Bill Orcutt.

main exhibition was complemented with a film and performance program, *Past of the Coming Days*, conceived by Tarek Abu El Fetouh, and a series of workshops and conferences that, under the title of *March Meetings*, brings together cultural institutions working in the Arab world.

Several artists from Latin American countries participated for the first time in this 9th edition of the Sharjah Biennial. In part thanks to Portuguese independent curator Isabel Carlos, who in 2004 was artistic director of the Sydney Biennial and in 2005 was in charge of Portugal's delegation to the 52nd Venice Biennale. Under the title of *Provisions for the Future*, the curator posited a topic to integrate artists and issues from different places, inspired in Sharjah itself, a city that, as she puts it in the catalog, "... is a cultural and geographic meeting point where the notion of "future" is permanently evoked."

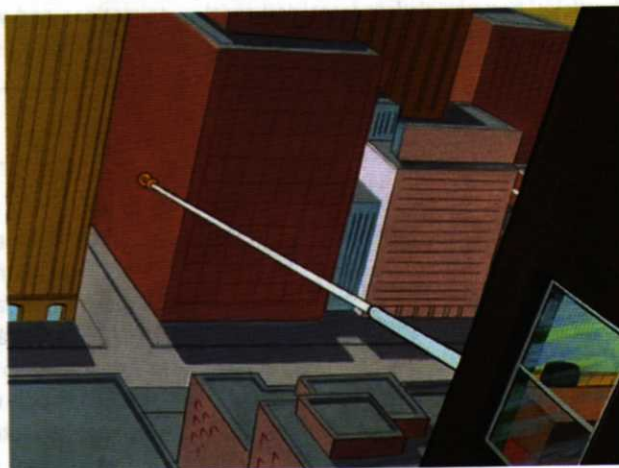
Maidier López. *Fountain*, 2009. Glazed tiles and water. 35 x 118 x 19 1/2 in. (89 x 300 x 50 cm).

The Biennial integrated artists from many areas, mainly artists from the region, whose works deal with issues like memory, journeys, immigration, integration, and exile. Several of the works on exhibit were created on site and inspired by the city. The main exhibition was held at the Sharjah Museum of Art and was accompanied by a catalog where each artist responded to seven basic questions, which allowed readers to explore the specific work the artists were presenting at the Biennial as well as the challenges they faced to create it.

One of the most interesting works, well interconnected with the context of the city and its environment, was the fountain -created by Maidier López, from Spain- located in the square that lies across from the Sharjah Museum of Art, offering the only public drinking fountain in the city. López, who has distinguished herself by intervening

spaces, created during a residence in 2007 the work *Football Field*, where she painted the lines of a soccer field on this square; now locals have placed goalposts and use it to play on a daily basis, giving the space a new function. Another interactive work was the one developed by Gita Meh, an Iranian artist based in Dubai. *Soffreh* (tablecloth in Persian) depended entirely on its viewers for its culmination as a work of art. The artist laid down a white tablecloth made of sugar to serve as a canvas on which she placed mats, utensils, and a large banquet. Around it, visitors could sit and leave their mark as they enjoyed a variety of dishes prepared by Meh herself, such as lentils with raisins and saffron rice, expressing the artist's desire to arrive at new meanings on the basis of interrelatedness, understanding, and the integration of different cultures.

Jose Luis Martinat. *City*, 2007. 7 minutes, video loop. DVD. The Commissioned Drawings Series (2006-2008). Drawings on paper. Series of 35 drawings. Photo: Courtesy of the artist.



With the intention to create her work directly in the museum where the Biennial was held, German artist Karin Sander developed an installation that ran along the rail in the upper floors and down to the lower ones on a subtle track on which a metallic sphere rolled; every so often the ball was picked up by a security guard, who placed the ball on an upper floor to have it begin its descent again. Sander is interested in the relationship between space, art, and public.

The presence of Latin American artists included well-known names like Liliana Porter, Eugenio Dittborn, and Valeska Soares in collaboration with O Grivo, as well as younger figures like Juan Araújo and José Luis Martinat. Dittborn, from Chile, and Porter, from Argentina, were placed across each other in order to show the portability of their works, which do not require a great effort to be transferred and installed. Dittborn presented a three-way dialog with his famous *aeropostal* paintings, a concept he develops by means of paintings and photographs inspired on themes of travelers, such as the Robinson Crusoe story, which he folds and sends via regular mail to different places to be exhibited, and where the traces and marks left by the process become part of the work. In turn, Porter presented a group of works that explore the concept of representation and spatial location, among them *Fox in the Mirror, 2007*, a digital video that deals with the meaning of reality and our awareness of the role we play as responsible creators of that meaning. Porter's work speaks of dislocated simultaneous situations and plays with scales of time and space, destruction and reconstruction, joy and sadness. *Trabajos forzados (arena roja), 2008* evokes, in this context, the sand of the vast deserts that cover the region.

Valeska Soares, from Brazil, presented several works, among them a set of three perfectly sculpted marble objects, two pillows and a mattress, the plasticity of which allowed viewers to evoke their own intimate stories. Soares' most notable work was a sound installation created for the Biennial in collaboration with O Grivo (Marcos Moreira and Nelson Soares), a collective that works and researches "new music" in the field of acoustics. (*Shushhhhh...*) *Prelude* was inspired by the mo-



Gita Meh. *Soffreh*, 2009. Tablecloth, Sugar, Food.

Valeska Soares. *Shushhhhh...* In collaboration with O Grivo (Marcos Moreira and Nelson Soares). 48 speakers discretely installed on the walls of the courtyard at Bait Al Serkal.



ment before a concert or recital when the audience starts to request silence and the shushing sound expands throughout the space. This work tells of absence more than of presence, and includes 48 speakers discretely installed on the walls of an open patio. Each speaker transmitted the sound of a person silencing somebody. The sounds were configured so as to create a musical pattern. This work also acquired an unexpected layer of meaning due to the context. During the course of the day the silence includes sounds from the city and from nature, and at certain hours allows us to hear the Koranic prayers that are broadcast, also via speakers, to the entire city. These sounds that come through the silence of the audience are integrated as part of the work's musical score.

Peru's José Luis Martinat, a young artist currently based in Sweden, appropriates existing materials and transforms them to achieve a new interpretation. Martinat presented the latest of seven videos he has created based on cartoons from the 1970s, where all human presence has been erased in order to leave only environments. The question thus becomes, "What is a city without its inhabitants?" In this video, the image of a flagpole without a flag is repeated constantly, in reference to identity or the lack thereof.

Martinat also presented a selection from a series of commissioned drawings. This project began in Lima in 2006: he asks street portrait artists to draw him as he appears, and then to draw him as if he were dead; in the second case, the street artists are free to represent the way in which they imagine Martinat's death.

Venezuelan artist Juan Araújo presented a group of works related to architecture. Araújo has developed his career working with references from the history of art and dealing with the reproduction and appropriation of works of art, about which he poses different reflections.

The Sharjah Biennial was able to respond to different identities and to create a commitment to a growing city, fostering the emergence of a space for exchange on the basis of a rapprochement between different cultures. I was surprised to see a cultural encounter of this caliber allow the promotion of political propaganda during the *March Meetings*, which fomented the conflict as with the case of Dr. Rafiq Al Hussein with his exhibition, *Jerusalem, Capital of the Arab World 2009*, instead of using cultural exchange as a tool for mutual understanding towards peaceful coexistence.

Susanne Birbragher

Preemptive Resistances: Critical Pointers in Latin American Art

Westport Arts Center
Westport, Connecticut

Denise Carvalho's latest curatorial effort "Preemptive Resistances: Critical Pointers in Latin American Art" took an unequivocal stance in defining the art of the region as inextricably tied to its politics. The exhibition, on view at the Westport Art Center

in Connecticut from January to March, included the work of eight artists from six Latin American countries and the United States. Tying them together was the theme of "preemptive resistance," an idea diametrically opposed to the Bush Doctrine

of anticipatory attacks against potential enemies. Instead, "preemptive resistance" acknowledged an inherently defensive attitude among artists from Latin America, or as the catalogue described it, "an activist posture of resistance."