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For Mexican Artist, a Quest to Map Lives

Laura Pomerantz · Thursday, September 20th, 2012

Renowned Mexican artist Betsabée Romero's solo exhibit, *Cartography of an Identity*, opens on September 22 at ADC & Building Bridges Contemporary International Art Exchange, in Bergamot Station, Santa Monica.

An observer of human behavior, Betsabée Romero breaks onto the contemporary street scene between memory and oblivion, rootedness and rootlessness, permanence and transience: parameters enveloped in an aura of tracks that leave their imprint on the depths of urban life and amidst the migratory reality of violence and contradictions intrinsic to modernity. Her iconography is filled with found, decontextualized and resignified objects: prints made on recycled and engraved tires, car hoods and even culturally dressed toy cars.

A committed observer and daughter of her time, the artist develops within everyday experience, bringing constantly interacting thematic variety to the surface. Plagued with cars, overpopulated Mexico City is like an enormous tire compressed in history, or history is described compressed in the tire. What's plausible and what's real merge between past and present, miracle and accident, drafting a future amidst sharp, cutting, aesthetic and colorful outlines.

Romero presents the social structures of a complex society, whose pillars seem to have been shaken up within a map that constantly extends farther beyond its boundaries, though paradoxically affirming its borders. She transmits the persistent realities that surround and concern her through intervention of easily recognized objects. The car, the artist's seal, is nothing but a Duchampian *objet trouvé* (ready-made), around which her creative process focuses, from the moment it is found to its conceptualization, its novel arrangement and respective reformulation. Through intervention, it acquires a local outlook, which connects with other places, due to the broad identity spectrum to which it alludes. This is how she shapes the cartographic horizon, whose identity never stops creating and re-creating itself, from the moment these realities emerge from traveled roads and found paths, which could, at times, lead into dead-end streets, appear as a game or vanish in a puff of air.

Cartography of an Identity presents concrete facts as if in a mirror. The loss of cultural identities and homogenization of sorts have taken place in most societies, leading to economic and cultural decadence. Betsabée Romero's work points out that identity-related portion of the Mexican map, which resists being uprooted. It presents ruptures and social decompositions yet maintains a nucleus and appearance assimilated with its landscapes: rugged geography extremely rich in ethnic, linguistic and cultural variety, struggling, in its own way, to survive.

Immersed in the contemporary maelstrom, this translator of realities recovers identities by

interweaving that socio-cultural morass in which we wander. The exhibit confronts the US public with a new look at a Mexico that lives in what amounts to a second home, enveloped in an original discourse permeated with humor.
Exhibit information here.

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