

tween them and the white dust scattered by the man.

At the same time, Marco Mojica's work is nourished in a significant way by the dialogue he establishes with other artists. There are references to Marcel Duchamp in pieces like *Evolución [Underwood]*, and reflections on artists like Elias Heim or Win Delvoye that translate their installations into painting. The origins of *Incidente*, the piece that recently won the Botero Prize of 2005 for Mojica, can be traced to Elias Heim's installation *Accumulated Atmospheres Extractor*, and Mojica's *Óleo Machina* has its roots in Delvoye's *Cloaca*.

Installation is in essence a three-dimensional medium, and it is important to note here the tensions produced in the transfer of that language to the space of the canvas. Elias Heim is an artist who continuously examines the dynamics of museum spaces, while Delvoye's *Cloaca* is concerned with an artistic practice and questions the figure of the artist as maker in a direct, ironic way.

Although works like *Volumen 2* represent objects and situations that are inserted in a space that alludes to a museum or a gallery, the fact of eliminating three-dimensionality from the represented object already cleanses it of the pressures that an installation necessarily exercises on the space that contains it. In this way, the reflections that in the motivating installation were of a spatial nature, in Mojica's work become allusions to an artistic event; it becomes artistic language that speaks of itself—metalanguage.

Cloaca has a temporal ingredient that is eliminated in *Óleo Machina*. Delvoye's piece

demands that a worker "feeds" the machine twice a day for it to produce excrement, but painting is not a temporal art and *Óleo Machina* can only present the moment when the residue is finished. Mojica translates Delvoye's concerns into different terms: Delvoye employs irony to comment on the role of the artist, while Mojica's dialogue is from his perspective as an artist who creates images. While Delvoye presents the artist as a maker of excrement, Mojica uses the analogy to talk about the very raw material of his work: oil paint.

Paula Silva

BRONX / NY

Javier Téllez

The Bronx Museum of the Arts

In 2003, when Javier Téllez resigned his official invitation to represent Venezuela at the 50th Venice Biennial—by way of an e-flux "open letter"—he spoke of standing "side by side with the excluded ones of our society." Téllez described these individuals as "'invisible' subjects within the social fabric: the mentally ill confined in psychiatric hospitals, prisoners or the populations of shanty towns," concluding that he had "never believed in the autonomy of the work of art over the social context."

Refusing patronage from a government he considered intolerant and corrupt, Téllez identified 'autonomy' as the indispensable ingredient in both his personal life and work. In stark contrast, it is precisely the *absence* of personal autonomy that pervades Téllez' Bronx Museum

project. Through various media and multiple voices, the New York-based artist constructs a composite of overlapping subjugations—psychosis, drug abuse, institutional oppression, historicized racism, among others—but stops short of suggesting that autonomy is possible for any of his subjects.

S-T-E-R-E-O-V-I-E-W, part of the Museum's ongoing *Conversations with the Permanent Collection*, continues Téllez' collaboration with the mentally ill, a topic that reflects his childhood as the son of two psychiatric doctors. This time working with the Bronx Psychiatric Center, Téllez conducted audio interviews, captured video inside and outside the institution, and invited patients to respond to the museum's Stanley Burns Collection of nineteenth-century photographs of African-Americans, specifically vintage stereoscopic cards. The patients made up comic-style word balloons to give voice to the figures in the photos—primarily black children and adults suggestive of or outright depicting racist stereotypes.

To organize and present this material, the artist applies several motives—binocular sight and birds (the latter being the less original and quite unfortunate given the facile allusion to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*). In the center of the darkened gallery, Téllez has placed a human-scale "birdhouse" made of plywood. Two circular holes are cut to allow viewing (or perching—roosts are mounted under the holes on the outside). The stereoscopic cards, audio interviews, and video have been edited together to create a piecemeal montage, which is presented as two sepa-

Marco Mojica. *The Straight Line*, 2005. Oil on canvas. 31 1/2 x 59 1/16 in. (80 x 150 cm.).



Javier Téllez. *S-T-E-R-E-O-V-I-E-W*, 2004. (Bronx Psychiatric Center). Video installation. Photo: Cathy Carver.



rate and nearly identical projections side by side on a gallery wall.

The binocular motif, suggested by the birdhouse holes and the dual projections, is clumsily made explicit in the video. In it, the patients (all men) speak calmly about life inside and outside the hospital. Sometimes nutty but often eloquent, their stories recount how they've learned to cope with their mental illness and status as, using Téllez' term, "outsiders." Gazing out barred windows through binoculars, the patients seem like the ultimate insiders. Particularly poignant is a man who performs James Brown's "I Feel Good," singing and dancing down a narrowing, hospital corridor.

Between these segments are transition shots from outside the caged institution, accompanied by a heavy-handed soundtrack of twittering birds. The stereoscopic cards pop up randomly in the video and offer a silent rebuttal to the more fluid and audible meanderings of the patients. There are no apparent links between these materials, but it is impossible to disallow the bleed of information that naturally occurs. One image of a smiling woman nursing a baby carries the word balloon, "I wish she have solid food when I get older." Another, of a boy posed by a pond, says, "Many people call me a half breed bastard."

We can imagine these lines spoken by the voices we're hearing and woven into their stories of misery, fantasy, and compromised dreams. Yet since these voices are multiple—and many hands have stirred this collaborative pot—are we doing anything other than projecting our own conclusions? In all of this information, the author's voice is fugitive, shifting, and ultimately unidentifiable. In fact, it is the only thing "autonomous" in Téllez' project.

Inside the birdhouse, a hundred or more white plastic Whiffle balls are screwed to the ceiling in random clusters. Though these are famously popular as bird toys, they strike one in this context as stray thoughts pressing futilely against the cranium and other layers of confinement. There are many reference points offered in this sad, eerily quiet work but no central thesis to navigate their interstices. We get stereo where mono is needed.

John Ewing

BUENOS AIRES / ARGENTINA

Alejandro Kuropatwa

Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires -MALBA-

Museo de Arte Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires, created and managed by the Costantini family, has begun to implement a policy of devoting one of its galleries to temporary exhibitions of works by established Argentinean artists. Neither ultrafamous nor emerging names (the former tend to be housed in the museum's top floor, while the latter are included in the cycle *Contemporáneos*, held in the basement gallery), the artists of the intermediate generation have gained a space of unquestionable quality for the exhibition of their work. Alejandro Kuropatwa deserves such a privilege: despite his death in 2003, he remains one of the greatest talents in contemporary Argentinean photography.

Educated at Parsons School of Design in New York City in the years of the paranoia, when the city celebrated itself with abandon in parties and other excesses, Kuropatwa returned to Buenos Aires in 1985 and inserted himself seamlessly into the local art circuit, reestablishing contact with his actor and musician friends, who had jumped from the underground they occupied under the military dictatorship to the explosion of cultural euphoria that came with democracy. Considered by all—and by himself—an irreverent eccentric, Kuropatwa carved the place he occupies today in Argentinean art on the basis of a gaze that was as refined as it was kitschy, a gaze that seemed intent on capturing the boundary that separates the sublime from the ridiculous.

The show presented at MALBA, an anthology of his last years lovingly curated by Andrés Duprat, includes images from series that vary widely and yet are linked by a common stylistic thread of large formats and vibrant colors, and a common conceptual thread associated with an—almost always incisive—observation of power and glory, beauty and decay, exquisiteness, and the antinomy of natural/artificial. *Cóctel* (1996), *Yocasta* (2000), *Mujer* (2000), *Flores* (2002), and *Naturalezas muertas* (2002) are the titles of this

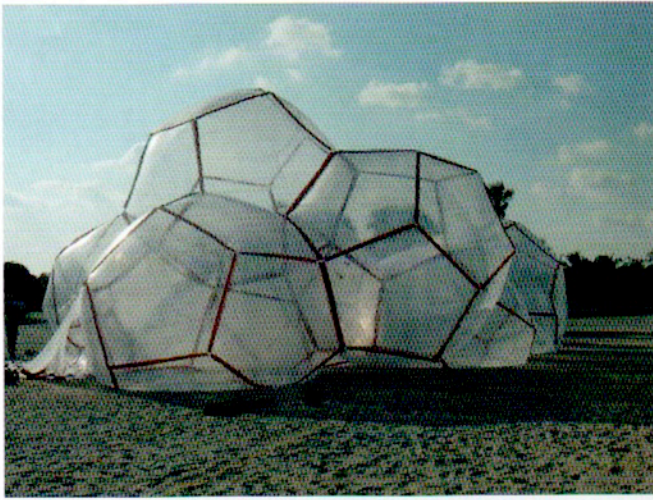


Alejandro Kuropatwa. *Untitled*, from the series *Yocasta* (flowers), 2000. Color photograph. 39 1/4 x 27 1/2 in. (100 x 70 cm.).

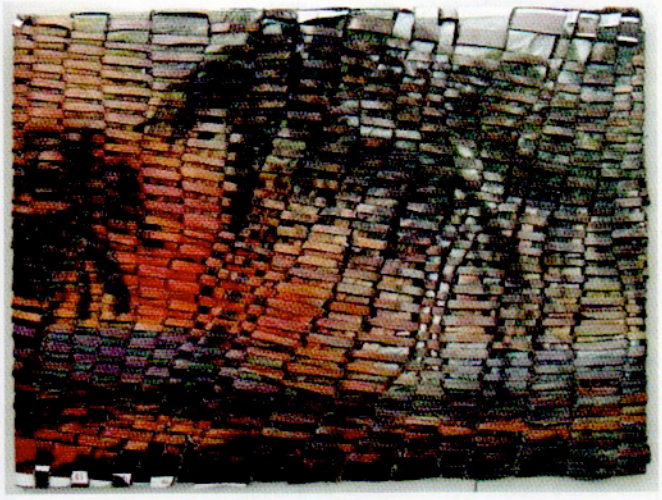
series created in the final period of Kuropatwa's life (the artist had suffered from AIDS since the 1980s). Accompanied by a good selection of portraits of his friends and of celebrities, both black and white and in color, these images transcend the limits of each series and make up a whole filled with humor, a certain hardness, and an evident gift for composition, in the classic sense.

Cóctel was one of the most heavily promoted and commented on of Kuropatwa's shows: euphoric after the development of an AIDS treatment with DDI and AZT, the artist launched a personal song in celebration of those pills which, as he said in many interviews and public statements, had given him new hope. The series is devoted to the colorful little pills and uses the formats of advertising, a resource that the artist was able to deploy with great intelligence and with humor (one pill barely leans on the tip of a prototypical, dew-covered rose). Seductive in their brilliance, size, and excellent definition, Kuropatwa's photographs are all very impressive and etch themselves on the retina with the efficacy of the best communications campaigns. Except that in his case, what is being communicated always has a dark, even sad side, which places him at the opposite pole of those media discourses he emulates or quotes.

The series *Mujer* and *Marie Antoinette*, partially included in this overview, are among Kuropatwa's sharpest creations.



Tomás Saraceno. *When Spheres Meet Spheres from Miami to Cuba*, 2005. 10 Inflated PVC dodecahedrons, zippers, and rope. 24 x 14 x 14 feet (each). Courtesy: Ella Fontanals Cisneros Collection.



Jarbas Lopes. *Hurricane*, 2005. Woven digital image and carpet. 60 x 84 in. (152 x 218,8 cm.). Courtesy: The Ella Fontanals Cisneros Collection.

Tomás Saraceno and Jarbas Lopes

The Collins Building

The Project Exhibition, with the work of Tomás Saraceno and Jarbas Lopes, opened on May 12 at the Collins Building (139 NE 39th Street) in the heart of the Design District and closed on May 29, 2005. This exhibition is the result of the Artists in Residence program of the Cisneros Fontanals Foundation, based in Miami. The Foundation was created in 2002 by Ella Cisneros, an art collector and philanthropist, who is also the founder of Miami Art Central. The Foundation and MAC are housed in the same building.

Basically the Foundation supports the work of young artists from Latin America and the Artists in Residence program was established with this intention. It was announced in November 2004 and this is its first edition. The process of selection is done through a nominating committee and the foundation board makes the final decision later. The program offers a three-month stay in Miami to contemporary artists from Latin America living outside the States. The work created during this period is exhibited following the residency.

Jarbas Lopes (b.1964, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro) is an artist known for the social connotations of his work, especially his projects where the public is actively involved. For his work as a resident artist with the Foundation, Jarbas selected a stereotypical image of Miami: the beach at dusk with palm trees and the lifesaver station. This kitsch conception of the tourist enterprise is very much in keeping with aspects of the life in the city, and is

a facet that is reflected in Jarbas's works. Jarbas transferred the images to woven carpet surfaces. The result offers an optical effect of fragmentation and re-construction of the image. This is his way of dissecting the reality of the city.

Another aspect of the city life that attracted the artist's attention—the Cuban exodus—has a social connotation. The third woven piece was titled *Rafters* and is a photograph of himself and Tomas Saraceno in a raft, his tribute to the Cuban rafters.

Part of the residency program included traveling to Jamaica. While on the island Jarbas bought a bicycle and traveled around the country, getting to know the people. He completed a series of drawings, eight of which were included in the exhibition, along with the bicycle.

The last piece presented by this artist was *Carpa de Gracia*. This is a work in progress and is an installation of a tent built with inexpensive publicity materials for carioca music. Jarbas also did a performance within the tent.

Tomas Saraceno (Argentina 1973) is known for his installations and his concept of creating international floating cities. His work for this residency was presented in several stages from the conception and realization of his installation *When Spheres meet Spheres from Miami to Cuba*, to the making of a video that documented the whole process, and finally to the presentation of this video. Included in the exhibition were drawings and sketches of the piece, one sphere, and the video, which was projected continuously.

The piece consisted of eight spheres constructed of a transparent material with or-

ange borders. All the spheres were joined and technically it could float or fly and would become a means of transportation. The spheres were built and taken to the beach where air was pumped into them. It was decided that the next day instead of air the structure would be filled with helium so it could fly. Unfortunately the heat of the beach damaged some of the spheres and the flying part could not be completed. This is an experimental work and as such there are unexpected obstacles.

The idea behind *When Spheres meet Spheres from Miami to Cuba* is related to Saraceno's previous work and his conviction of a future without traditional geographic barriers. In this instance he is touching the delicate relationship between the island and Miami, something that is part of the daily life in the city. Saraceno's idea of a sphere—actually a group of them—that can float or fly is the perfect connection with the island.

The work of both artists is characterized by their experimental approach to art. They belong to a generation interested in crossing boundaries and interdisciplinary manifestations that use art as a channel to discuss more philosophical and social matters.

Irina Leyva

NEW YORK / NY

José Bedia

Galeria Ramis Barquet

Although art is often discussed in spiritual or quasi-religious terms, it is rare that contemporary artists take on the roles of holy

man, shaman, or seer as overtly as does José Bedia. The Cuban artist is a member of the Palo Monte priesthood, a sect of the Afro-Caribbean religion known more generally as Santería. Bedia has also studied with the Lakota in South Dakota and with indigenous communities in Mexico, where he emigrated in 1991 before settling in Miami in 1993.

When brought into the secular gallery setting, religious practice and symbolism can come off as merely illustrative or worse, gratuitous. Bedia has consistently avoided these traps by combining the vocabulary of spiritualism, religious practice, and art into a syncretic visual style not unlike his eclectic religious background. Bedia's earlier black wall paintings and site-specific installations are utterly contemporary in their disregard for "white box" conventions, coursing across walls, ceilings, and floors with animal forms and symbol systems. Though specific religious content is no doubt lost on the uninitiated, the raw, nimble spirit that imbued Bedia's works requires no translation.

However, in this new group of five acrylic-on-canvas paintings—all roughly 5 x 8 feet in size—much of Bedia's signature energy is hemmed in by the traditional painting format. Each picture contains the work's title painted in white and is organized around a totem image of industrial culture that Bedia infuses with a kind of animistic pathology. What the artist loses in outsize fervor, he attempts to make up in political critique and dark humor.

La tranquilidad de saber que todo esta en orden (The Tranquility of Knowing That Ev-

erything Is in Order) depicts a row of receding smoking nuclear reactors. The bruised palette of dirty blacks and grays—with thickly applied highlights of white, pale yellow, and peach—creates a brooding and toxic atmosphere relieved only by a tiny, mischievous-looking horned figure. Suspended from the top of a reactor, the black cartoon figure appears to be marking the surface with mystical symbols in white chalk, a common component of Santería ritual and a recurring motif in the exhibition.

In *La vida pudo ser más simple (Life Could Have Been Simpler)*, the horned figures lounge and smoke on a surfaced submarine floating toward the viewer, its hull chalked up with religious symbols. *Más rápido nos hará mejores (Faster Will Be Better)* depicts a high-speed train lunging across the picture from right to left. The locomotive's simple, stylized outline gathers an animate ferocity as its headlight bears down on a graceful, loping animal shape not unlike the horned figures riding the back of the engine, which is also marked with religious symbols.

Eso no se queda así (This Will Not Remain as It Is) features a warship steaming toward the viewer with guns blazing—a dramatic image achieved with sharp dashes of acrylic applied by knife. More horned figures lounge and smoke on the ship's various decks, while a hovering *orisha* spirit rendered in chalk-white outline, holds a finger to its mouth as if to say *shhhhhhhhh*.

The last painting, *Adonde no existe la muerte (Where Death Does Not Exist)*, is the most affecting of the five works. The

central image is a huge, stonelike figure riddled with cracks that lumbers across the picture accompanied by more of the tiny, horned creatures. The figure's shadow, painted in thin wash, appears to lead it toward an undefined destination. Where the other paintings present aggressive images undone by ironically understated titles and comic horned figures, this last picture is heavy with genuine pathos.

True to the role of shaman or seer, Bedia seems to be suggesting multiple levels of existence—the dark landscape poisoned by greed and aggression; the carefree, horned interlopers who blithely negotiate the mess; and the watchful but apparently ineffectual spirits hovering over all. Bedia has treated the gallery walls with painted drawings that echo the relationships within and between the paintings (perhaps an effort to shake up the rather decorous look of the show).

There are also additional spirit outlines painted on the gallery walls—arcing, shapeless forms with faces—that float above the paintings in several places. As indicated by short lines coming out of their mouths, the spirits blow air. Whether this represents helpful intervention or capricious play is the airy ambiguity around which the show's heavier, darker elements revolve.

John Ewing

Agustín Fernández

Mitchell Algu Gallery

Agustín Fernández (Havana, 1928) moved to Paris in 1959. At that point, he abandoned the colorful palette he had been cultivating for a more austere one. In exile, his work be-

José Bedia. *The Tranquility of Knowing That Everything is in Order*, 2004. Acrylic on canvas. 59 x 96 in. (149,9 x 243,8 cm).



Agustín Fernández. *Watching and Understanding Two Different Operations*, 1963. Oil on linen. 137 x 100 in. (348 x 254 cm.). *Totem*, 2005. Oil on linen. 74 x 40 in. (187,9 x 101,6 cm.).

