



LA BIENAL 2013: HERE IS WHERE WE JUMP!

The Colossus of East Harlem by Raul Zamudio

The title of the 2013 edition of El Museo del Barrio's La Bienal, Here is Where We Jump, is derived from the ancient Greek writer Aesop. Compelling, poetic, and open ended the paraphrase is culled from one of the author's fables entitled The Braggart. The story entails a man who returns home from travelling abroad and boasts of defeating athletes in places as distant as Rhodes. What supports the braggart's claim were the spectators of these competitions, and if they happened to be with him when proclaiming his victories they would verify these feats to be true. However, a skeptic counters the braggart's boast by stating that the competition's locale is irrelevant and therefore it could be reproduced anywhere, consequently he exhorts: "here is Rhodes, so now jump!" Apart from the fable's underlying meaning that one should act rather than speak and be modest of one's accomplishments, it has been referenced in various contexts.

These citations come from far and wide the historical and cultural spectrum and include the German idealist philosopher George Hegel, the German materialist philosopher Karl Marx, and the Swiss historian Herbert Lüthy. In stark contrast to these was a segment entitled The Braggart (1974) featured on the 1970s American television series innocuously called The Waltons. Aesop's tale was appropriated as a moral lesson that reflected the Waltons' populist family values; indeed, the social backdrop of the show was a nostalgic and homogenous rural Virginia historically situated between the Great Depression and World War II. However in Hegel's The Philosophy of Right, The Braggart is briefly noted to underscore that discourse can never be ahistorical. In the text's preface, Hegel inserts the Aesop reference in a discussion of philosophy's historicity:

Hic Rhodus, hic saltus [here is Rhodes, here jump]. To apprehend what is the task of philosophy, because what is reason. As for the individual, everyone is a son of his time; so philosophy also is its time apprehended in thoughts. It is just as foolish to fancy that any philosophy can transcend its present world, as that an individual could leap out of his time or jump over Rhodes.[1]

Hegel's extension of the braggart's feat to encompass all of Rhodes is analogous to the impossibility of historical transcendence. What is nonetheless prescient is the coupling of the temporal with the spatial: "leap out of his time or jump over Rhodes." The philosopher was, of course, theorizing and writing within his own historical milieu absent of technologies where the collapse of time and space is the sine qua non of our contemporaneity. While there is no denying that we create events as well as being shaped by them and thus are products of our historical moment, in one sense we can "leap out of time" and "jump over Rhodes"; anyone from one part of the world can videoconference with someone in another part of the world, where time zone differential allows that discussion to simultaneously occur today and tomorrow; and one can don an avatar and enter a virtual Rhodes in which the jump would be as "real" to the surrogate as to a viewer of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the



Colossus of Rhodes. The Braggart's contextual pedigree and its overt meaning and attendant subtexts are reflected in the curatorial undercurrent of Here Is Where We Jump. The artists in the exhibition, then, dovetail on the Aesopian adage vis-à-vis various genres and media articulated through formal and conceptual strategies that allow them to metaphorically "leap out of time" and "jump over Rhodes."

Underscoring the trope of both time and space, the artists who are at various stages of their careers were born in South America as well as the Philippines but currently live and work in the greater New York City area. Other artists who are native to the region or elsewhere in the U.S. have also ventured far and wide and exhibited their work in international contexts. In moving like nomads and responding to globalization while concomitantly addressing local social and political issues, the exhibiting artists jump indeed. And like the audience of Aesop's protagonist, we are riveted by the stories they tell us; but the tales they share are not transmitted orally as they are embodied in their artworks.

Pavel Acosta, for example, is the author of a corpus spanning painting, photography, video, performance and interventions into the public sphere. His works evince a complex understanding of form as well as being layered with multiple meanings that coalesce around the complexities of urban life, both in Cuba and internationally. His contribution to Here Is Where We Jump consists of a site-specific variation of a painting currently exhibited in El Museo Del Barrio culled from its permanent collection. Based on Manuel Macarullia's Goat Song #5: Tumult on George Washington Avenue (1988), Acosta's Wallscape (2013) faithfully simulates Macarullia's painting and the artistic doppelgänger is situated across from the original consequently creating a formal and conceptual call and response. The technique utilized in Wallscape is similar to Acosta's modus operandi in an ongoing series of paintings titled Stolen (2009-) that were initiated in Cuba. In a kind of de-graffiti similar to the de-collage of French Nouveau Réaliste Jacques Villaglé, the Stolen works were rendered from paint chips illegally acquired from exterior walls found throughout Havana. In Wallscape, however, Acosta has carefully removed the museum's surface wall paint revealing a patina of tonal variegations formed from undercoats of pigment applied over time, which become the chips used to constitute the work but in unison also create a phantasmagoric refraction of Macarullia's painting. Formally elegant, labor intensive, and visually arresting, Wallscape comments on historical memory, the museum as archive, the singularity of the art object as sacrosanct to collection practice as well as to the history of wall works including prehistoric cave paintings, religious frescoes, and street art. While the painting technique of the Stolen works has been ingeniously reconfigured in Wallscape, both engage displacement and site-specificity of which one can find affinities with other works in the exhibition including those by Patricia Domínguez, Ernest Concepción, and Gabriela Salazar.

Part Earth art, social sculpture, durational and participatory, Patricia Domínguez will create a site-specific installation for the exhibition in a garden adjacent to El Museo Del Barrio. Titled Tree Analogue (2013) the work is, to a degree, inconstant; for it is actualized through living flora as art: as an actual fruit-bearing tree is planted, takes root and expands so does the artwork become ever more animated. An herbalist healer or curandera will facilitate the sculptural installation, and the fruit and herbs planted and gathered will be made into jam, tea, and medicinal tinctures that will be made available to the public. Amidst a luscious garden refuge palpitating with an aura



of serenity and peace, Tree Analogue is not only a locus of spiritual and social regeneration but also a work of political resistance and affirmation in the face of East Harlem gentrification. Of the many ideas stemming from Tree Analogue, it is also an eco-political and critical therapeutic spin on Hans Hacke's important landmark conceptual work: Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971 (1971). This work was exhibited south of El Museo Del Barrio at the Guggenheim Museum but censored by that institution. Further highlighting the relational undercurrent of her project, Domínguez will install a recording device in the garden from which visitors can orally document their observations, histories, narratives, musings, and so forth while harbored by the organic environment. As the artist eloquently stated herself, Tree Analogue "is an inversion of the panopticon, the non-monument, and a moment where the periphery absorbs from the center." [2] Equally working in an installation format but within El Museo Del Barrio and through the medium of drawing is Ernest Concepción.

The detailed and expansive drawings of Ernest Concepción will permeate over support columns in El Museo Del Barrio and in the process, transform architectural elements into contemporary horror vacui. This term, which derives from the Latin "fear of empty space," refers to the filling up of a visual composition to the point of saturation, and is not too far off of a descriptive for the renderings of this meticulous and more than capable draftsman. Never conventional and always innovative in transforming the art of drawing, Concepción's wall drawings can take many forms including some that are ostensibly rhizome like in structure; these have a diffused quality of controlled dispersal where it is difficult to ascertain sequence and by nature are anti-teleological. This is not to imply randomness or sporadic mark-making: there is a rigorous visual logic that Concepción deploys across walls and surfaces by way of line, color, collaged elements, dichotomy of representation/pure abstraction and interplay between positive/negative space that allows visual information to seamlessly unfold in manifold directions. With Concepción, not only is a picture worth a thousand words, but also his sensuous and confident line in its diverse articulations becomes a signifying practice in and of itself. Concepción's intervention into El Museo Del Barrio is not dissimilar to what the artist engages on paper or canvas as site for artistic exploration, which in the latter instance is usually the province of the studio.

In an ironic response to so-called post-studio practice, the studio as trope will be an element to Gabriela Salazar's contribution to the exhibition. Gabriela Salazar is an eclectic artist evidenced in a deft body of work consisting of indoor and outdoor sculptures and installations constituted from doors, doorframes, walls, floors, ceilings and other elements alluding to construction, home remodeling, building sites etc. But her recasting of these materials into complex and visually arresting artworks is more than a unique aesthetic statement. Added to this is Salazar's sophisticated visual acumen resulting in a style that occasionally feigns anti-aesthetic by way of the media used; concomitantly, her sculptures and installations emanate a palpating and vibrant presence. Among other pieces the artist will present will be a transposed portion of her studio. More than a simulacrum of Salazar's working environment or even a theatrical presentation of her laborious process, it's a formal and conceptual triangulation of worlds within worlds: it's a microcosmic museum exhibition space, it also contains actual works placed in the truncated studio, as well as being an artwork itself. While her aesthetic is evocative of a critical urbanism that connects her to such artists as Gordon Matta-Clark, Michael Asher, and Dan Graham, her formal vocabulary



reveals an awareness of materiality as imbued with signification. This is underscored in Salazar's much-lauded public art project entitled *For Closure* (2012), which incorporated 29 doors that were specifically selected because of their socio-economic associations. Another artist that has transposed an environmental like structure into the exhibition space, but for different ends and through different means, is West Coast transplant Eric Ramos Guerrero.

Appearing as his radio personality known by the moniker DJ Decker Radario AKA DJ Decks, Eric Ramos Guerrero will host *Cortez Killer Cutz Mixtape Radio* (2013) for the exhibition. DJ Decks' pirate radio has been stealthily stationed on an island thought to be California that was first described in the 1510 novel, *Las sergas de esplandian*, by the Spanish writer Garcí Rodríguez de Montalvo. From first hand accounts by wayward early 16th century Spanish explorers, Rodríguez de Montalvo was the first to publish on the inhabitants of the island: a castration complex-inducing, estrogen fueled isle of colossal women overruled by a warrior queen named Califa. Similar to the role that DJ Decks' radio program plays in his homeland, its presence in the exhibition will function as beacon for social and political discourse. It will also transmit live from El Museo Del Barrio and rock the airwaves but also host interviews and performances. *Cortez Killer Cutz Mixtape Radio* is context dependent and relational, and alludes to other forms of electronic transmission associated with the historical avant-garde: the Eiffel Tower's (1889) ability to transmit radio waves across borders in the first decade of the 20th century inspired the Eiffel Tower paintings by Orphic abstractionist Robert Delaunay. Guerrero's intelligent and poetic *Cortez Killer Cutz Mixtape Radio*, with its admixture of rap, oldies music, street culture and a sort of neo-Fluxus conceptualism and performance, has an affinity with one of the landmark works of discursive transmission, albeit never actualized: V. I. Tatlin's utopian *Monument to the Third International* (1919-20). Performance and installation within the parameters of El Museo Del Barrio will also be integral to Risa Puno's contribution to the exhibition.

Similar to Guerrero's radio installation and its inclusion of the public sphere as intrinsic to its activation and completion, Risa Puno creates installations and environmental works that are interactive. However in her case the artist plays off of recreational games, leisure activities and toys and imbues them with sociopolitical contexts. Thus a miniature golf game entitled *Leap of Faith* (2010) draws attention to exclusionary and asymmetrical U.S. immigration policies; *You or Me* (2013) is a carnival dunk tank that existentially shifts the onus of the person who will get wet to the friend who proposed him as participant; and *Economic Mobility* (2005), which uses a trampoline for the participant to jump up and snatch dollar bills hanging overhead, succumbs into a Sisyphean task that critically reflects on the American dream of socio-economic advancement via hard work. For *Here Is Where We Jump*, the artist will install the interactive piece entitled *Breaking Bienal* (2013). Consisting of a piñata in the form of a mirrored disco ball, the sculpture will eventually be broken up by the public at the end of the exhibition run. Whereas the typical piñata is filled with candies and money to be picked up by children after breaking apart, a variant of this titled *After Party* (2010) was filled with condoms, pregnancy tests, Advil, coffee and other assorted elements meant to symbolize the unintended fallout of a party: hangovers, one-night stands, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancies and so forth. For the exhibition Puno will fill her disco ball with ephemera from the other participating artists: reproduced works, objects and assorted bric-a-brac from their studios,



announcements cards, clippings of exhibition reviews by art critics, as well as copies of exhibition didactics. There are various things this work thematically rubs with and against regarding the museum and its agents: its destruction is similar to the landmark and iconic piano obliteration by Raphael Montañez Ortiz, who was one of the founders of El Museo Del Barrio. Furthermore, Breaking Bienal's spilled contents of art related materials are commentary on the art market and its infrastructure; a contemporary David meets Goliath, if you will. Also working in performance but not collaboratively is Élan Jurado.

The performance work of Élan Jurado has a visible ardor that commands attention. This is detectable in his method of working solo in real time with the least amount of props. His pieces often revolve around an action that becomes the work's formal and narrative pivot rather than an enactment or monologue. This procedure of isolating the body situates it as site of artistic, social and political expression. Jurado's performances are plural in meaning though singular in execution: a shot to the back at close range from a paintball gun; playing air guitar with his penis; banging his paint-covered face up against a wall; and tying a string around his fingers till his blood flow ceases. These actions, which often entail endurance and a degree of pain, are heightened by their physicality subsequently giving his pieces an aura of the ritualistic. But this is not an art form where the world is subsumed into the artist. Rather, it is the other way around: this is evinced in the intimacy that Jurado's performances have with their receiver by way of nudity that is integral to the artistic act. When Jurado performs nude intimacy is heightened as this creates vulnerability between artist and receiver because clothing's emotional armature is stripped away. This performance strategy, by nature, engenders a proximity that cannot be achieved outside of those presentation dynamics. And nearness is not only meant on physical terms, but rather an emotional connection where reciprocity freely circulates between artist and receiver. While one can see a link with the Viennese Actionists, and Chris Burden, among others, Jurado has forged a unique path in performance by returning to the body with a deft and primeval intensity. In the same way that Jurado as well as other artists such as Guerrero are foregrounding the importance of performance and expanding its parameters, so it is with the painters presented in the exhibition including Edgar Serrano and Bernardo Navarro Tomas.

From the 1980s onward painting has gone through many permutations since its purported death(s) and resurrection(s). Akin to Nietzsche's eternal recurrence and no less apocalyptic, when it supposedly dies it nonetheless returns with a vengeance. Its most recent incarnation has been with the younger generation of artists who view the debates about painting's viability as passé and doctrinaire. Some of the artists in Here is Where We Jump, for instance, incorporate painting in some fashion in their practice or work in the medium as well as in other genres. In the case of Edgar Serrano, he makes painting malleable in that his work evinces an encyclopedic knowledge of styles; but this is no mere citation because he artistically devours visual culture and regurgitates it anew. His iconography is culled from a dizzying array of sources: art history, history, philosophy, "low" culture including comic books, television, movies, postcards and just about anything is fair game that the artist re-contextualizes. These high/low brow mash-ups are nuanced by the diversity of media at his disposal: acrylic, oil, watercolor, encaustic, tempera, gouache and latex but also silver dust, synthetic hair, wood, coffee, animal hides, and hooves. Serrano's eclectic formal arsenal is more than just a means to an end, for he often incorporates elements



because of their potential polysemy rather than being vehicles that convey meaning. In an ongoing series of altered postcards entitled *Parallel Inventory* (2010-), for example, the artist intervenes in postcards of reproduced artworks by historical and contemporary artists and non-Western cultures. In one work Serrano has affixed a cheap reflective decal of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the colors of the Mexican flag on the front shirt of a portrait by Wolfgang Tillmans. The photograph is entitled *Adam, Head Down* (1999), and the figure is looking downward at the superimposed, dime store image of a deity on his shirt. The intervention is both humorous and intricate with meaning: for the placement of the image is similar to the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe found on the cloak of the indigene Juan Diego in 1531. Of course Adam as the first created human is not lost on the narrative, either. Another artist who uses humor in a complex way and couples it with political commentary is Bernardo Navarro Tomas.

Whereas Serrano's paintings draw us in and seduce us with their idiosyncratic materials, lush and broad palette and multivalent narratives, the paintings of Bernardo Navarro Tomas are cathartic, dense, and physical and executed with a refined abrasiveness. Cultivating an aesthetic vocabulary distilled from, among other sources, German Expressionism, George Grosz, Phillip Guston, broadsides, protest signage, and political graffiti found on walls, the works for *Here Is Where We Jump* are adamantly oppositional. For the exhibition, Tomas will present paintings based on his upbringing in Cuba and Fidel Castro's cult of personality. The canvases are forceful via a variety of compositional techniques and tropes. A formal tactic that has become a Tomas stylistic is pushing the figures to the foreground and flattening of space; this gives his pictures a kind of deflated yet gorgeously raw quality as his imagery operates like emblems that eschew academic mimeticism. This placement of his figures seem to give a nod to the viewer as well as what's inside the picture plane, subsequently repositioning the former as implicated spectator than detached observer. This is emphasized in the depictions of Fidel in his ubiquitous megalomaniacal orations: not only are the masses being addressed in a kind of Cuban *Triumph of the Will*, but the viewer is subsumed into the narrative thus symbolically becoming part of the collective subservience. Some works are ostensibly about tyranny under Castro, while in other paintings subject matter is wider in scope. This is evinced in *Rebellion En La Granja (Animal Farm)* (2008) in which the artist depicts three pigs in the gesture of "speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil." The pigs, however, are dressed in camouflage army uniforms, don beards, and one of the pigs is actually peaking through his fingers thus emphasizing Big Brother. This Orwellian reference is, of course, also underscored by the parenthetical title's citation of George Orwell's dystopian novel about pre-Soviet Revolutionary Russia.

At first glance, it seems that the artwork made by Tonatiuh Pellizi is quite literal: a mobile of readymade car odorizers hangs from the ceiling. But this unassuming odorous sculpture is more than a conflation of Marcel Duchamp and Alexander Calder. Indeed, its olfactory quality dovetails on Nietzsche's critique of Kantian aesthetics through Duchamp's devaluation of modernism's privileging of vision as conditional for the artistic experience.[3] Thus Pellizzi's aromatic mobile is, by nature, an ontological contradiction: it's highly visual yet anti-retinal; one looks up at it with the eyes but it overpowers our sense of smell. Another Pellizi signature sculpture is also fabricated with commonplace materials: a sinuous, serpentine form constituted from industrial metal tubing connects and lights up primary colored light bulbs, which



is akin to Piet Mondrian's reductive geometric abstractions in red, yellow, and blue. But whereas Mondrian's canvases are rooted in Theosophy and spiritualism, Pellizi brings that aesthetic down to earth via his work's allusion to illumination used in seedy establishments, cheap cafes, and roadside honkytonks. Another work that subverts art history that will be in the exhibition is *Transitional Geometry in Blue (Cathedra)* (2013), which is based on Barnett Newman's *Cathedra* (1951). Both works are rendered in the same monochrome and detailed with white, hard edge lines that Newman called "zips." Though on the surface they both appear not dissimilar, Newman's painting was viciously cut with a knife by an artist whose reasoning for his action was that "[he] didn't hate all art, just abstract art and realism." [4] While one cannot separate the Newman *Cathedra* violence from Pellizi's variation, the latter's iconoclasm is rooted in a conceptual approach to color rather than incisions. For Pellizi's monochromatic blue refers to the palette of police barricades ubiquitously found throughout New York City. Newman's work has been restored though it's still imbued with the history of its attack; inversely, Pellizi's color scheme evokes the police state that failed to protect the painting from vandalism.

Unlike Pellizi, Kenneth Rivero is first and foremost a painter but he also works in sculpture, work-on-paper, installation, and video. One medium, however, often crosses over into another and vice versa. In his ambient video piece entitled *The Professional* (2012), for instance, there is a strong pictorial presence that nudges the cinematic into the painterly. Interestingly, this type of aesthetic one can find in directors who first started out as painters and then later made films such as Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman, and David Lynch, to name just a few. The painterly effect in Rivero's video is almost like an apparition, specter, atmospheric mist, or digital sfumato. These painterly leitmotifs are also evinced in three-dimensional work as well, though some of the paintings push the two-dimensional beyond their planar structure via their sculptural qualities. For *Here Is Where We Jump*, Rivero will exhibit a large mixed media painting entitled *Pique* (2013) and works on paper encased in a vitrine. The former is a visual cornucopia of color and imagery set against an overall pinkish background. The background washes of color create an ambiance in which the narrative scenario is piecemealed. Whereas in *The Professional* Rivero pushed video into a painterly direction, the swaths of color in *Pique* become like lighting in a film. Lending to this fragmentary quality are the disparate imagery scattered about and loosely linked by red lines to an individual holding a baseball bat whose head emanates fire. Buoying these and almost transforming the painting into a diptych is another figure literally tearing apart the surface canvas. In contrast to this exquisitely executed and image saturated painting are the drawings that convey intimacy because of their formal delicacy. Made on an array of support material including paper, the insides of paperback covers, book covers and photo albums, they are extremely versatile in subject matter and are concomitantly cerebral and emotive, spare and profuse.

Moving with aplomb between painting and photography yet veering both into the sculptural field is Pablo Jansana who will exhibit two mixed media wall works. One piece is entitled *Munich Circle* (2012) and is an upright rectangular photographic work in a saturated reddish monochrome bisected horizontally. The upper register consists of a group portrait of individuals known collectively as the Munich Circle; the lower half is awash in the overall hue. Led by the charismatic Alfred Schuler, the Munich Circle were writers and intellectuals at the turn of the century Germany that shared a



cosmology based on neo-paganism and occult arcana. One of the peculiar things about Schuler, apart from his other worldly concoction of mythology, alternative spirituality and purported anti-Semitism, was his fascination with the swastika to where it became a kind personal logo.[5] Jansana's other exhibited work is equally interesting but in this case consists of a black monochromatic painting where the body is implied by way of its bulbous forms. Entitled Touch, Touch, Touch (2011), this work is made of epoxy resin, pigment, wooden stretcher bars, and canvas, and consists of two panels that jut out from the wall with allusions to the corporeal by way of its sensuous volumes. The monochrome has traditionally implied an emptying of representation i.e. the real world, and in its wake would remain the spiritual as was the case with Malevich's Suprematism; with the Minimalists, the reduction of form entailed a phenomenological framing of the object; and either conceptual basis for the monochrome, whether spiritual or phenomenological, could only be conveyed in a hermetically enclosed artwork without any referent to the world beyond it. On the one hand, Jansana implies that the monochrome's appropriation by the occult or spiritualism may carry with it authoritarianism underscored in Schuler's proto-fascist tendencies; and in Touch, Touch, Touch, Jansana is subverting Minimalism's reductivist aesthetics with a reinsertion of the body back into the monochromatic void. Riffing on Ad Reinhart's black paintings, Lucio Fontana's slashed monochromes, Brazilian Neo-Concretism, and more recently Steven Parrino, Jansana ups the ante in a work that is about the politics of form as it is about the form of politics. The politics of form, however in this case manifesting within the context of identity, is germane to the work of Mel Xiloj.

Unlike most artists who attend formal schools related to their artistic practice, Mel Xiloj graduated with degrees in mechanical engineering and product design. The former training is apparent in her meticulous drawings and their seemingly machine-like control. By the same token, her renderings are embodiments of a sensitivity and delicacy that can only come from a human hand. Compounding this precise yet exquisite drafting *métier* is a sophisticated understanding of composition that reveals a nuanced design aesthetic. The works, however, are composites of imagery that function like visual poems yet are charged with subtle commentary about the politics of identity: gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. In *Astronaut* (2013), for example, Xiloj present us with what appears to be a kind of homage to Neil Armstrong's landing on the moon. For not only do we see the proverbial astronaut, but are reminded of this event by a banner with the date: July 21, 1969. There are other elements to this drawing that point to things far beyond the work's ostensible narrative. Armstrong, if we are to believe he's the astronaut depicted, is about to take his first iconic step for mankind wearing a woman's platform shoe. What complicates this emphasis on gender intervention is the mythological association of the moon as feminine archetype. Finally, what gives this deft drawing another conceptual twist are two other elements: one is the text underneath the astronaut's left foot that states: *Circulatory Grammar*. The other element in this work is its presentation format: a 4 x 4 inch drawing seen through a magnifying apparatus. Although *Astronaut* is a work on paper, it subliminally alerts us to the iconicity of the image, especially those that have such historical weight as the lunar landing.

Ernesto Burgos is primarily a sculptor though his chosen medium subtly weaves its way into his photographic work. Burgos' sculptural practice can incorporate an array of materials including iron, wood, clothes, fabric, resin, paint and paper, but he's best



known for sculptures consisting of altered sofas. Taking the ubiquitous furniture piece that is often central to practically any living room, Burgos deconstructs and lays bare the nexus of social domestic space as gestating with desire that he sublimates into political questions concerning the family as microcosm of society, and vice versa. As such, Burgos transforms sofas by colliding decrepitude with high aesthetics. For *Here Is Where We Jump*, the artist will present a sculptural work and a series of photographs of what appear to be advertisements of non-existent products. The sculpture is an amorphous white form that appears like a cross between a ruin, a monument, and a fetish object. Ostensibly dilapidated yet beautiful, Burgos sculpture is arcane, mysterious, and enigmatic and has an innate magnetism that draws us to it. Whereas Burgos' sculpture embodies the fetish in anthropological terms, that is, a mysterious object that has magical power over us, the photographs also imply the fetish but in Marxian terms. One key aspect of Karl Marx's theory of capitalism is the need for the system to perpetuate itself through reproduction of the underclass class, but also to create wants in the form of products and product them as needs. We all need to eat, drink water, sleep and so forth, however we do not need the newest gadget year in year out, though capitalism convinces otherwise. Burgos' photographs are a formal and conceptual extension of his sculpture but comment on the social construction of reality through the specular world of advertisement. They dovetail on the Marxian fetish by presenting us glossy sales pitches of products that have no labels; the products are shiny and attractive yet devoid of the substantive; they are nothing more than beautiful objects of spiritual vacuity. The fetish is also a conceptual touchstone in the work of Alejandro Guzmán.

The work of Alejandro Guzmán is by nature protean: painting, drawing, photography, sculpture and video. However, it is his performance based-sculptures that often are mounted on wheels that will be exhibited as well as related drawings. It's difficult to pinpoint the formal and conceptual lineage of these visually poetic sculptural aberrations made of wood, paint, plastic, cloth, as well as various bric-a-brac that the artist transforms into objects of aesthetic delectation. Spawned from Yoruba Egungun, makeshift shelters, Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle* (1988-89), David Hammons, Thomas Hirschorn, parade floats, and the *Carnival*, are the artistic mongrels that Guzmán calls *Mixed Media Sculptural Performance Object*. Highly variegated though there are some structural elements that unify them, each iteration is differentiated by materiality and attendant nomenclature; for example, *The Procreation Mixed Media Sculptural Performance Object on Ink on Paper with Sculpture* (2013) as opposed to *The Intellectual Derelict Mixed Media Sculptural Performance Object on Oil Painting* (2013). While the works in general convey playfulness and are employed in performance contexts and usually set loose in the public sphere, they are also a kind of a Trojan horse that blindsides us with the formal uncanny: they are materially strange though concomitantly homey. For Guzmán, cross-cultural is as much vertical as it is horizontal: siphoning from both high and low culture as well as across borders, his aesthetic rubs up against modernism's artistic other orphaned by European colonialism. In the same way that Oaxacan Talavera pottery is a confluence of Old and New World sources including Italian, Spanish, Mudejar, and Mexican indigenous that represent what the scholar Serge Gruzinski called the "first globalization,"[6] so is the *Mixed Media Sculptural Performance Object* the critical hybrid of the trans-cultural. As an artistic and cultural *mélange*, then, Guzmán's transitory sculptural works embody well the multivalence of *Here Is Where We Jump*.



Indeed, the “jump” that the artists metaphorically make in the exhibition implies movement, flux and mutability produced from what geographer Edward Soja coined as Thirdspace.[7] This, in turn, alters, modifies, rearranges, inspires their diverse aesthetic practices. It is in heterogeneous localities—whether Lima, Mexico City, Bogota, Havana, and New York City, and the communities that constitute them—that sets the stage for these variegated art forms to foment. One such place is New York City’s East Harlem, a community at the epicenter of an organic unfolding of the artistic Americas since El Museo Del Barrio’s inception in 1969. And this continues today in the form of La Bial. Taken together, El Museo Del Barrio and La Bial are more imperative than ever as demographic shifts situate Latinos as playing a more central role in the American social, cultural, and political landscape.

[1] George F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* [1820], trans. S.W. Dyde (Kitchner: Batoche Books, 2001), 19.

[2] Correspondence with the artist, May 24, 2013.

[3] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1956), 19; for a discussion of Duchamp’s anti-retinal art, see Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1996)

[4] Carol Vogel, “Restored, But Still Blue,” *New York Times*, January 04, 2002, accessed May 31, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/04/arts/design/04INSI.html>

[5] Robert E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 294-95.

[6] See Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind*, trans. Deke Dusinberre (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

[7] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996)