

EL MUSEO'S BIENAL THE(S) FILES 2011 THE STREET FILES





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THE (S)FILES 2011

THE STREET FILES

CURATED BY
ROCÍO ARANDA-ALVARADO
TRINIDAD FOMBELLA
ELVIS FUENTES

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO NEW YORK
JUNE 14, 2011–JANUARY 8, 2012

CHASHAMA AT THE DONNELL
JUNE 4–28, 2011

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK, QUEENS
JUNE 19–AUGUST 21, 2011

LEHMAN COLLEGE ART GALLERY, BRONX
JUNE 22, 2011–JANUARY 8, 2012

TIMES SQUARE ALLIANCE
JULY 14, 2011

NORTHERN MANHATTAN ARTS ALLIANCE
SEPTEMBER 13–NOVEMBER 16, 2011

BRIC ROTUNDA GALLERY, BROOKLYN
NOVEMBER 9, 2011–JANUARY 8, 2012

INTRODUCTION

El Museo's Bienal: The (S) Files is a strategic and successful project. By focusing on emerging Latino, Caribbean and Latin American artists based in the greater New York area who have never exhibited with our institution previously we are able to respond regularly to the most cutting edge artists as they join our communities. One of El Museo del Barrio's goals is to serve as a platform for our most innovative participants. Through them, we continually replenish our resources, sharpen our senses, and build our stakeholders, one by one, with the freshest energy in our fair city.

Founded in 1999, this is the 6th edition of our Bienal, and by far the largest. Satellite venues include Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx; Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance (NoMaa), Washington Heights; Chashama at Donnell Library, Manhattan; Times Square Alliance, Manhattan; BRIC Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn; and Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, Queens. The organizers of this edition —Rocío Aranda-Alvarado, Associate Curator; Trinidad Fombella, Assistant Curator & Exhibition Manager; and Elvis Fuentes, Curator— have expanded our capacity to serve as well as to offer access to these rich works borough-wide. Our guest curator Juanita Bermúdez thoughtfully organized our invited delegation from Central America, in celebration and solidarity with the Bienal de Artes Visuales del Istmo Centroamericano. Elaborating on previous years' invitations to Puerto Rico and Ecuador, the expansiveness of this inclusion mirrors the more than 75 artists who will be highlighted across the city under *The (S) Files* banner.

The curators have identified "The Street" as an encompassing theme for this year's presentation, and take that concept from its graffiti roots to contemporary models of recycling and surfing the public stream. This theme is addressed from various directions in this catalogue, and will be teased out through an expansive series of programming during the course of the exhibition. Opening with Museum Mile and closing with Three Kings' Day, this 6th edition encompasses not only Día de los Muertos but also an illuminating series of educational and public programming, performances, video and film screenings, music and literary presentations, and conversations among artists and curators entitled "Voces."

We are particularly grateful to all of the participating venues and to their staff for their collaboration and belief in this project. We would especially like to thank Anita Durst of Chashama, Alyson Baker of Socrates Sculpture Park, Susan Hoeltzel of Lehman College Art Gallery, Tim Tompkins and Glenn Weiss of the Times Square Alliance, Sandra García-Betancourt of the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, and Elizabeth Ferrer of BRIC Rotunda Gallery.

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our forward-thinking sponsors. Among these, we are pleased to count on the expansive collaboration of The Jacques & Natasha Gelman Trust as well as our corporate sponsor Bloomberg. Additional support was provided by The Greenwall Foundation, and the dedicated champions in "The (S) Files Council," chaired by El Museo Trustee Tracey Riese. This special group of contemporary art lovers boasts Chairman's Circle members Gail and Louis K. Adler and Ramiro and Patricia Ortiz, as well as President's Circle members Tony Bechara, Yaz and Valentin Hernández, Mary and Larry McCaffrey, CIDCO, S.A.-Guatemala, Encarnita and Robert Quinlan, and Tracey and Phillip Riese. The Curator's Circle counts upon Alessandra and Jonas Almren, Susan Bershad, Suzy Delvalle, Michèle Gerber Klein, Jill and Tom McAdam, Beatriz and Jesus Peña, and Mary Beth Radke, while the Patrons include Peter Bloom, Susan Chapman, and Bernard Lumpkin. We thank WNYC for serving as our media partner. Finally, we mention the special efforts, logistical support, and cariño provided for the Central American delegation by Fundación Ortiz-Gurdián in Nicaragua. Without this mosaic of friends around the world, *The (S) Files 2011* would not have been possible.

We are sure you will make exciting discoveries this year among this deserving new talent. Remember their names: we suspect they are going places!

Deborah Cullen
Director of Curatorial Programs
Co-curator, *The (S) Files* 1999, 2000, 2002, & 2005

In his intervention *Get Lost!*, created in several subway stations and subway cars, **Daniel Bejar** substituted New York's MTA map, saturated by lines that indicate the public transportation network, with an empty map in green; he also altered the labels of places in order to return them to their original names. Thus, Manhattan became Manahatta, Brooklyn became Breuckelen, and so on. This simple gesture underscores the denaturalization of geographic space and the vulnerability of an existence that depends too much on the symbolic. In the photographs that document the action, passers-by appear disconcerted. **Justine Reyes'** approach to the subway is very different, although her material is also the MTA. In her case, she riffs on the campaign "If you see something, say something," launched after the 2001 terrorist attacks on New York. In her photographic series, *The Usual Suspects*, Reyes places all kinds of bags, suitcases, purses, and containers on a stool, as if they were on trial, and takes pictures of them. But these objects show signs of use and abandonment, as if they were the belongings of those worst affected by the crisis, those "others" who are often blamed for everything.

Portraiture as a traditional genre (and symbolically, the subject represented in it) is transformed into still life in the paintings of **Geandy Pavón**, and into a hallucinogenic vision of meltdown in **Joaquín Rodríguez del Paso's** gaze. The figures of Barack Obama and Tiger Woods melting next to Mickey Mouse and an ice cream cone, and again the wrinkled figures of Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy, and Obama, are not presented simply as mementos of American politics. They represent a media culture in which they are merely objects of use, symbols of this or that doctrine (whether it be the social ascent of African Americans or the neoconservative figure who inspires Tea Party activists). Although perhaps in opposed ways, these artists underscore the intrinsic illusionism of triumphant discourses on democracy, and expose their fault lines. For her part, **Rachelle Mozman** exploits the expectation of fidelity that the viewer has with regards to photographic portraits, and uses a simple effect—the darkening of the skin—in order to create three characters from a single one: her mother. Taking on the roles of the white lady belonging to the aristocracy, the mestizo sister that the family hides away, and the maid, this multiple portrait of her mother allows Mozman to bring out the social disparity associated with racism.

If Rodríguez del Paso uses as visual material what is massively consumed as American culture in Latin America, **Jonathan Harker** focuses on another aspect of the media's game of mirrors: the North American perception of modern Managua by the authors of a song that was popular in 1946. In *Manawa, Nicarawa*, the Panamanian musicians Iñaki Iriberry and Rodrigo Sánchez alter the lyrics and music of the song written by Irving Fields and Albert Gamse. This is the basis for a design-based animation film that brings out stereotypes, the illusions of development, and the unequal power relations that have existed historically between the United States and Nicaragua. In contrast, **Sandra Mack-Valencia** celebrates with irony her recently earned American citizenship through a pompous series of drawings where a lavish dress with a red, white and blue stripe motif hides a landscape of her native Colombia. By comparing her new immigration status to the aristocracy, Mack-Valencia echoes the imperial attitude that is still present in American official documents: the envelope where the passport is delivered reads: "The world is yours."

War and social violence that consume the energy of family and country are the themes of *Women Breeding Soldiers*, by **Lady Pink**, a pioneer of graffiti art since the 1980s. In this mural, made up of canvases of different sizes and designs painted directly on the wall, the dominant color is pink, something that produces an effect similar to that of **Jessica Kairé's** sculptures, shaped as military or police paraphernalia, such as grenades, bullets, mitts, and batons. These objects are presented under the paradoxical label of a fake trademark, *Confort*. On the other hand, the duo **nicoykatiushka** explore interpersonal relations through performances, installations and situations that often become violent expressions (duels or aggressions). This shares an affinity with Marina Abramovic and Ulay's performances, with added humor and a lighter tone. By doing so, they update the subject of the rubbing (sometimes erotic) between reality and fiction, art and life.

The marginal neighborhoods, with their social tensions and frustrated dreams, offer inspiration to two artists who also share the use of wood, staggered structures and futurist imagination. *Lost Cities (Ciudades perdidas)*, by **Simón Vega**, defies economic logic by fusing informal architecture to high tech: surveillance cameras and exploration robots are fashioned out of materials gathered from urban dumps. For her part, **Priscila de Carvalho** imagines a bright, colorful world, where a street fair's games and distraction take over the beat-up favela dwellings, and their inhabitants overcome the challenges of life in the ghetto. Painting on wooden strips becomes the camouflage that mass culture, with its portion of exoticism and adventure, imposes on the poor sectors of the city.

As a result of the massive shut-down of factories and worker layoffs, **Alicia Grullon** decided to recreate a worker's protest in the Stella D'Oro cookie factory in the Bronx. The original protest had happened a year earlier, but few seemed to remember it. Grullon positioned herself in front of the old factory, carrying banners similar to the original ones, and handing out homemade cookies to passers-by, who would begin to talk with her and expressed their regret regarding the "imminent" shutdown. With this action, *No more cookies*, the artist underscores the paradox of the disconnect between the residents of a neighborhood and their own surroundings in a world invaded by mass communication and social networking sites, the same ones that have facilitated large-scale popular uprisings in the Middle East.

Another project focuses on economic history, in this case the manufacture of car tires from Peruvian rubber. In his installation, **Ishmael Randall Weeks** employs discarded rubber to create black trophies symbolizing the triumphant spirit of progress. These crafted, quasi-gloomy objects contrast with the accompanying images, photographic transfers of cityscapes from Brasilia, New York, and other modern metropolises associated with the Novecento. Likewise, **Adán Vallecillo** exposes the patches of tires repaired over and over again by stretching them like canvases. They look like abstract compositions. The deterioration of this chemical material associated with transportation is a metaphor underscoring the failure of the many nationalistic and regional projects throughout the subcontinent over the last two centuries. **Juan Betancurth**, too, bases his work on a motif that epitomizes the technological progress of the second half of the last century: the television set. Television and mass culture are the basis for an installation and performance in which the artist mixes objects from his studio with some others sent by his aunt from Colombia. In a space that resembles his aunt's living room, the artist performs, and invites some colleagues to do so as well. Most of the audience, however, sees those actions through the electronic screen.

JOAQUÍN RODRÍGUEZ DEL PASO (B. 1961, PUEBLA, MEXICO)

I proceed from the notion of identity. I realize that our culture is clearly divided between those who create or produce "discourse" and those who "consume" it—or hegemonic centers and peripheries. This polarity is rooted in the economy, specifically, market economy. Countries that have privileged economic models that focus on industrial production, scientific and technological research, have completely surpassed those countries that provide raw material and cheap labor—in crude terms, developed nations and undeveloped ones.

What does it mean to be born and raised in a peripheral economy? What are the implications of speaking a peripheral language? And more to the point, to live in an undeveloped nation considered a paradise? What does it mean to be an artist in this kind of country? Living in Costa Rica, a top tourist destination these days, I have grown more and more aware of the huge presence of the United States of America. What does it mean to be only 2 hours away from them? Adopting their lifestyles or a poor copy of those? These are the questions surrounding my artistic practice over the years. I have no answers, only paradigm-like proposals.

Procedo de la noción de identidad. Me doy cuenta que nuestra cultura está dividida claramente entre los que crean o producen el "discurso" y aquellos que lo "consumen," o centros hegemónicos y periferias. Esta polaridad está arraigada en la economía, específicamente la economía de mercado. Los países que tiene modelos económicos privilegiados que se enfocan en la producción industrial, la investigación científica y tecnológica, han rebasado completamente a esos países que proveen materia prima y mano de obra barata—en términos burdos, los países desarrollados y los subdesarrollados.

¿Qué significa nacer y crecer en una economía periférica? ¿Cuáles son las implicaciones de hablar una lengua periférica? Y más específicamente, ¿de vivir en un país subdesarrollado considerado un paraíso? ¿Qué significa ser un artista en este tipo de país? Al vivir en Costa Rica, un destino turístico muy popular en estos días, me he vuelto más y más consciente de la enorme presencia de los Estados Unidos de América. ¿Qué significa estar a sólo dos horas de viaje de este país? ¿Adoptar sus estilos de vida o ser una pobre copia de ellos? Esas son las cuestiones que rodean mi práctica artística en los últimos años. No tengo respuestas, sólo propuestas en forma de paradigma.

EDUCATION

MFA, Pratt Institute, New York, NY
BFA, University of Costa Rica, Costa Rica

RECENT SOLO SHOWS

2007
Centro Cultural de España, Costa Rica

2006
Americana, Jacob Karpio Gallery, Costa Rica

RECENT GROUP SHOWS

2010
Bienal de Pontevedra (UTROPICOS), Pontevedra, Spain

Trienal del Caribe, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Bienal de Artes Visuales del Istmo Centroamericano, Managua, Nicaragua

2009
Pintura: El Proyecto Incompleto, Centro Cultural España, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

2007
The Possibilities of the Gaze, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile



THE (S) FILES 2011

Marcos Agudelo
Sol Aramendi
Firelei Báez
BASE Collective
Daniel Bejar
Patricia Belli
Francisca Benítez
Juan Betancurth
Alberto Borea
Javier Bosques
José Castrellón
COCO144 / Roberto Gualtieri
Donna Conlon
COPE2 / Fernando Carlo Jr.
Christian Curiel
Priscila De Carvalho
Abigail DeVille
Dister / Dister Rondon
Alexis Duque
Gerard Ellis
Feegz, Firo173, Figaro /
Carlos Jesús Martínez Domínguez
Felipe Galindo
Daniel González
Edwin González-Ojeda
Julio Granados

Alicia Grullon
Yasmin Hage
Jonathan Harker
Las Hermanas Iglesias
Juan Hinojosa
Janelle Iglesias
Lisa Iglesias
INDIE184 / Soraya Marquez
Gisela Insuaste
Jessica Kairé
Jayson Keeling
Lady Pink / Sandra Fabara
Thessia Machado
Sandra Mack Valencia
Sofía Maldonado
J. Manuel Mansylla
MARE139 / Carlos Rodríguez
Armando Mariño
Jessica Mein
Leonor Mendoza
Carlos N. Molina
Irvin Morazán
Felix Morelo
MÖSCO / Alvaro Alcocer
Rachelle Mozman
Felipe Mujica

nicoykatiushka
Ohne Titel
Angel Otero
Geandy Pavón
Antonia A. Perez
Lina Puerta
Ronny Quevedo
Lee Quiñones
Hatuey Ramos-Fermin
Ishmael Randall Weeks
Justine Reyes
Ryan Roa
Joaquín Rodríguez del Paso
Rafael Sánchez
and Kathleen White
Rafael Sánchez
Carlos Sandoval de León
TOOFLY / Maria Castillo
Johanna Unzueta
Rider Ureña
VJ Demencia / René Juan de la Cruz
Adán Vallecillo
Simón Vega
Elena Wen
Marela Zacarías

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