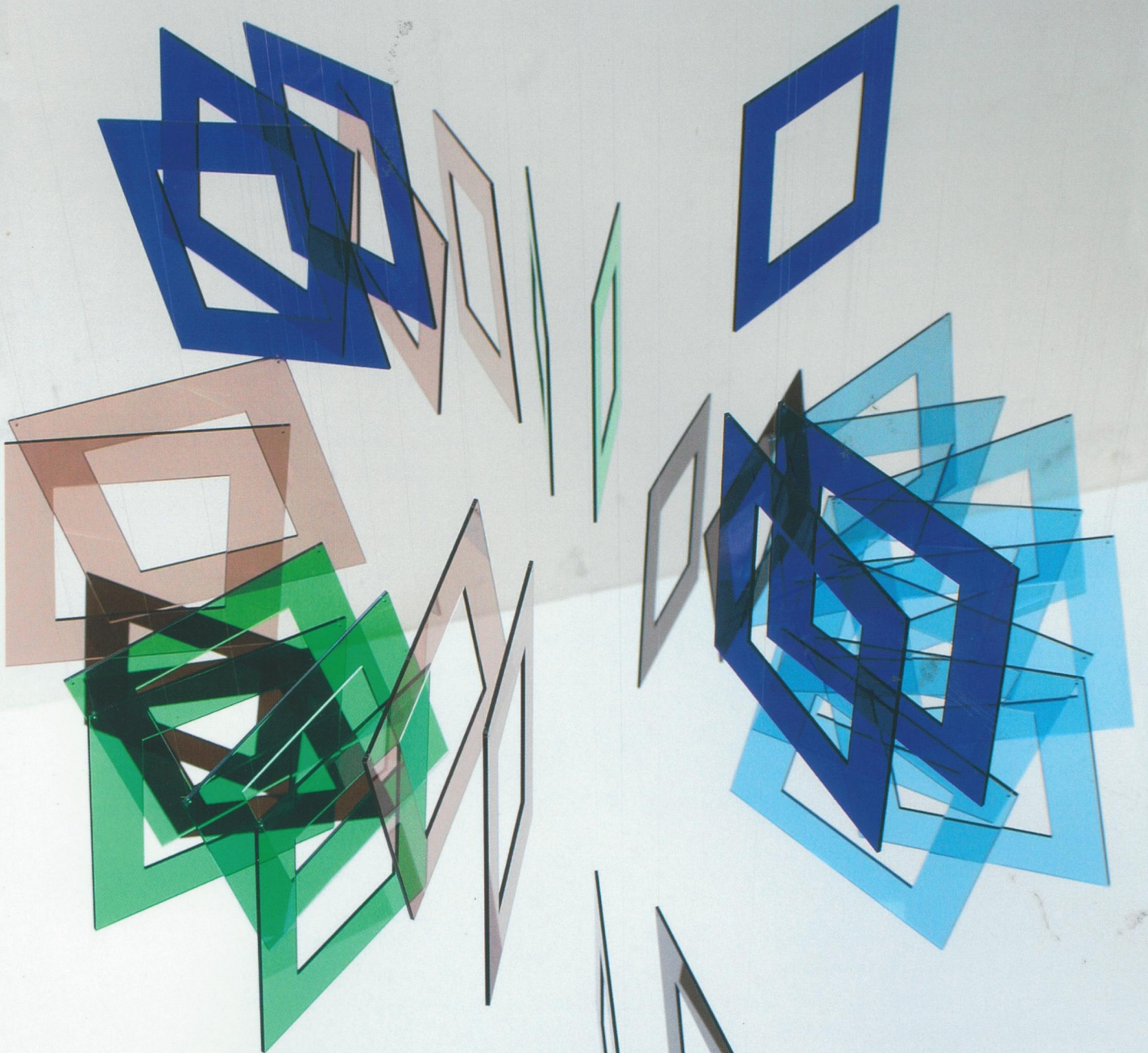


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Elías Crespín

Howard Farber • Rivelino • Miler Lagos • FotoFest
Greater New York • Salpicón and compota • Diana Cabeza
Pontevedra Biennial • Guatemala Biennial



John Searle, consists of folded straws and napkins, bent bottle caps and other trinkets left in bars and restaurants, collected and preserved by Neuenschwander during the past decade. These tiny installations that combine relational theory and chance are inspired by Brassai's pictures of folded tickets and other minutia from one year of combing the streets of Paris.

Neuenschwander uses the term "ethereal materialism" to characterize how even the most subtle, near-invisible things are all part of a network of uninterrupted relationships and airy exchanges. And she, as observer and conductor, acts as a mediator of these relationships, as the 'floating eye' of the disembodied camera. This is clearly the case in her video, "The Tenant" (2010), which takes its name from the 1976 Roman Polanski film. In Neuenschwander's version, with sound by the Brazilian duo O Grivo, a soap bubble floats around the artist's studio for 10 minutes and 34 seconds. Here, the long-lasting bubble, orchestrated to traverse a predetermined space, touching surfaces without exploding, almost strikes one as absurdly 'realistic'; it prompted me to look for editing flaws, fruitlessly. In another video, "The Fall" (2009), an egg balances precariously on a spoon for 14 ½ minutes. The viewer's perspective is that of the person holding the spoon while walking; Neuenschwander borrows from animation here to create 'spatial' effects.

"Rain Rains" (2002) consists of a series of 62 metal buckets suspended from the ceiling by varying lengths. Through holes in their bottoms, water drips continuously and is collected by identical buckets on the floor. Every four hours, museum employees must empty the lower buckets into the top ones to keep the process going. This act of maintaining the work is, in effect, the cause of its very existence. Integrated around the buckets is another installation, "Walking in Circles" (2000), consisting of circles drawn with invisible glue on the floor. As visitors walk over them, they collect dirt, assuming the imprint of a multitude of shoes. Initially, viewers seem mostly unaware of the piece, even less so of their participation in it. Neuenschwander creates situations of unavoidable complicity, all the while keeping this complicity largely anonymous. The series "After the Storm" (2010) hangs nearby: the artist exposed vintage maps of New York counties to rain outside her home in Belo

Horizonte, then painted the remaining dried fragments in bright, flat colors. The series takes its name from a short story by Ernest Hemingway, although in Neuenschwander's piece, the issue of global changes in weather patterns suggests a shift in geographical topographies.

"At A Certain Distance (Ex-Votos)" (2010) is a series of paintings on wood panels based on traditional Latin American ex-votos. These paintings, with their receding tiled floors, reference Renaissance paintings of interior spaces, addressing the inaccuracy of perspective in its scenographic, architectural appearance. In "The Conversation" (2010), the interior gallery space is linked to the interior space of the apartment in Frances Ford Coppola's 1974 movie of the same title, with Gene Hackman playing a paranoid surveillance expert. Pre-installation, Neuenschwander hired a security firm to bug the gallery. She then began cutting up carpet and drilling holes in the wall to find the listening devices. A soundtrack plays back the noise created during Neuenschwander's destructive search.

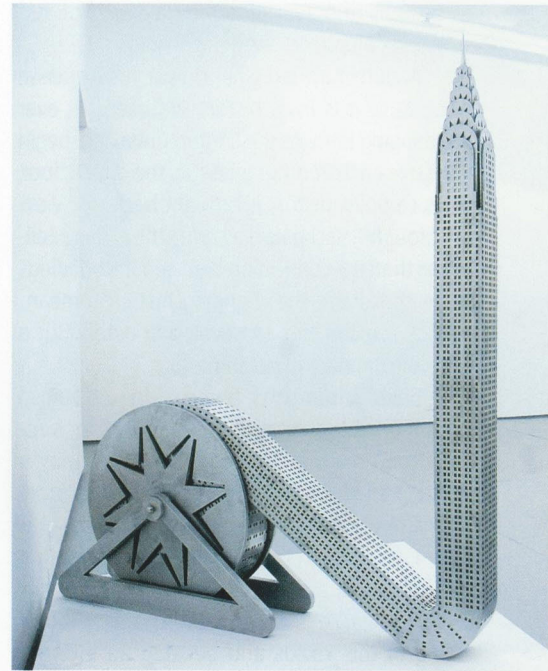
Undoubtedly, Neuenschwander owes much to her Brazilian heritage, to movements such as Neo-Concretism and Tropicália. Her conceptualism and interactive practices encapsulating viewers/participants are direct influences from fellow Brazilian artists Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark. While works that demand viewers' participation are well-represented in this retrospective, the artist has, in the past, coaxed a diverse number of critters to complete her works. She has exhibited snails eating through rice paper, ants crawling on raw meat, and filmed an ant colony, in carnevalesque fashion, carrying sugar-coated, brightly colored confetti through the jungle. These works from the early 2000s are curiously absent from "A Day Like Any Other," an otherwise memorable exhibition of the artist's oeuvre.

Denise Carvalho

Alexandre Arrechea

Magnan Metz Gallery

Alexandre Arrechea's productions and ideas over these past few years accept, create and critically reveal a world where normalcy is a matter of shifting and multiple identities. Ideas are layered such that the deeper you look the more you realize.



Alexandre Arrechea. *Elastic Chrysler (After the Monument Series)*, 2010. Aluminum. 59 x 8 x 50 in. (149.8 x 20.3 x 127 cm.).

Literalness is not so much elided as it is both the starting and return point. As usual, architecture is the key that opens the most, but not all, doors.

On the literal level, the exhibition has two types of new work that begin with known objects in the world. The most physically impressive are two large (13 and 7 feet high) spinning tops based on children's toys. They are made of wood and resin but topped (pardon the pun!) with waterjet-cut and painted aluminum replicas of well-known buildings from Havana, whose names you need to know; the Bacardi Building on one and the Someillan on the other. On the surrounding walls, an installation made possible and spacious by the new and vastly larger gallery of MagnanMetz, are Arrechea's drawings, his usual source for his ideas, of tops with buildings but now also referred to as "dancing" to emphasize not only the joyful play of dancing tops but of social motion.

Few visitors realize that the metal tip of the 13 foot Bacardi top allows it to spin (dance) and even fewer tried it. The physical balance was exact because Arrechea had the master top maker from Omaha, Nebraska, Alan Gray, make them. Conceptually they had to spin and dance because Arrechea's world view does. What do I mean by that? After all, isn't this humorous child's play? Not only! His address is to shifting, public

systems of power in motion, where nothing stands alone.

Architecture remains a pivot for Arrechea because it is lived history in frozen yet ever changing form. As the US and Cuba now begin to eye each another anew on the dance floor, its complex history is brought back into view through Arrechea's play and little is more telling than the connection between the buildings he chose and the changing historical meanings too complex to develop in detail. But a brief summary gives some clue.

Bacardi rum was founded by a Spanish family whose members were jailed for supporting the late 19th independence movement in Cuba, and were early supporters of Castro and the revolution. Prospering as good capitalists during the US occupation after the Spanish-American War, the family built their beautiful Art Deco Bacardi building in the 1920s and became an international symbol of hip Havana well into the 1950s. But by this time they had removed most of their assets to other countries and eventually used their money and contacts with the CIA to support exile conflict with the Castro regime and helped write the 1996 extension of the embargo against Cuba (the Helms-Burton Act condemned by most U.S. allies) while winning suits in the US to assure trademark protection. Although no Bacardi drinks or business ties exist in Cuba, they have reintroduced their connections to Cuba in the late 1990s via false labeling and reviving the older name of the rum and coke drink, "Cuba Libre," apparently with no sense of irony.

Lawsuits and counter-suits abound across the world in this floating game of money and power tied to the identities referenced here.

Similarly, the concrete high rise of the Someillan built in the 1950s as the first modern condo in post-revolutionary Cuba has changed meaning several times, signifying post-revolutionary exuberance by upper classes merged with the name of a Cuban naturalized US citizen (Luis Someillan) imprisoned around the time of José Martí as an agent for the junta opposed to Spanish occupation. Then came the building's decay as symbol of revolutionary failure, and now, after the 1990s restoration on the waterfront of Havana, a bit of both, depending on where you look.

A similar approach is invested in the second type of new art forms found here, metal reproductions of well-known buildings, whose

lower sections are now coiled up on replicas of fire hose spools and looking like cartoon characters. Two of the New York "elastic" buildings—the Metropolitan Life Insurance and Chrysler buildings—were developed in their time as signifiers for corporate wealth and prestige as they competed at various times to be (and were) the tallest skyscrapers in NYC. Plotting their histories is equally fascinating, and linked to Arrechea's concept of buildings, or the material world in general, that expand in prosperous times and shrink during market blowouts.

It's not only children and artists that play.

Richard Leslie

SAN JUAN / PUERTO RICO

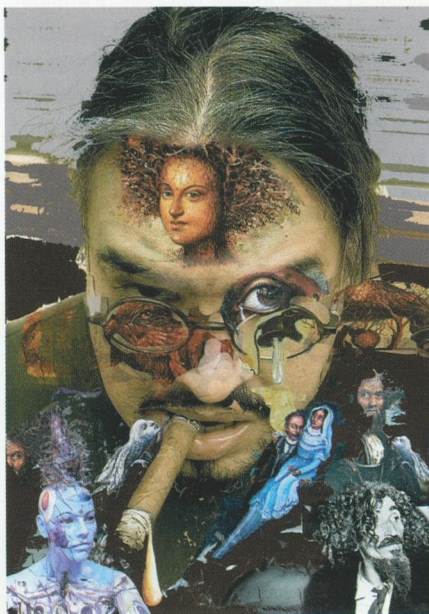
Williams Carmona

Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico

Williams Carmona is a sort of restless elf who loves to dig in the unfathomable labyrinths of the soul. With sharp sensitivity and a singular sense of humor, his work becomes a fertile landscape for the imagination and scrutiny. Such is the sense that animates this current individual exhibition – at the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico – in which storytelling and delirium go hand in hand.

A compendium of recent works by Carmona, the exhibition envisions new lines of exploration, such as those in the case of the

Williams Carmona. *Body Madness*, 2010. Oil on canvas. 14 x 18 in. (35,5 x 45,7 cm.).



sophisticated mannequins turned into spoiled madonnas who trap all sorts of mysteries in their crinoline petticoats.

Carmona's proposal draws from the deep well – so dear to our region – of magic realism. Much has been said about the close relationship between his work and surrealism. In this respect, his 1999 encounter with Leonora Carrington in Mexico was symptomatic. To Leonora, Williams Carmona was a sort of "esoteric wizard," and an "old ghost." Both descriptions reveal essential attributes of an artistic personality that regards his artistic endeavor as sorcery; the right cauldron in which frogs and spells are transformed into yellow butterflies. On the other hand, there is something very special in the artist's canvases that transport us through time in an unsurpassed way. It is as if Carmona, the "old ghost" that Leonora Carrington speaks of, had returned from some mysterious trip and was describing it to us through his canvases.

While there are indeed surrealist elements in his work – such as psychic automatism and chance – that act as integral components and nourish the creative process, we also cannot deny a realist undercurrent and an attraction to history that inspires and is the cornerstone of Williams Carmona's proposal.

Carmona's work resorts to the inclusivism and referencing so near the heart of contemporary art. The appropriation of epigones from the history of art is a constant part of his images: capricious *meninas*; courtiers; transvestite Giocondas, and Christs, among others, and even a reference to the sacrifice in Van Gogh's creative act manifested in his *Self-portrait*, or – in a more general sense – the martyrdom incarnated by Saint Sebastian. The fundamental idea in his art is inspired by neighborhood characters who are included in the sort of staged play that is his work.

His proposal also contains a metaphysical breath. The characters are generally carefully arranged at the center of the composition and are surrounded by nothing, with only the horizon present as a necessary reference. The predominance of blue in the background continuously reaffirms the watery element – also evidenced in the artist's depiction of showers, fish, and water faucets. The majority of the figures portrayed are mannequins, busts with no arms that stare at us with inquisitive gazes. A good example of this are the works *Las*