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Mario García Torres: *Je ne sais si c'en est la cause, What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger, and Some Reference Materials* / MATRIX 227

February 22 through May 17, 2009



The Grapetree Bay Hotel, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, December 2006. Photo: Mario García Torres. Courtesy of the artist; Jan Mot, Brussels; and White Cube, London.

Exhibition features an artist whose work makes connections between the present moment and artists of past generations

Berkeley, CA, February 13, 2009 — The University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA) presents **Mario García Torres: *Je ne sais si c'en est la cause, What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger, and Some Reference Materials***, which features work by an artist who communes with earlier generations of artists—particularly conceptual artists—through a variety of means. García Torres repeats or reperforms the original gestures of these artists, obsessively researching and representing documentation of their work, and in some cases imagining conversations with deceased artists. His work looks to recent history, in both its anecdotal and official articulations, to make connections between the present moment and these artists of past generations who, in his words, “were fundamentally trying to legitimize a different way of conceiving art.” **Mario García Torres: *Je ne sais si c'en est la cause, What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger, and Some Reference Materials***, which is curated by Phyllis Wattis MATRIX Curator Elizabeth Thomas and is the artist's first solo exhibition in the United States, opens February 22 and runs through May 17, 2009.

The exhibition includes two works. *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger* takes the form of a subtitled slideshow to chronicle García Torres's attempt to revive the Museum of Modern Art Syros (MOMAS), initiated by the artist Martin Kippenberger in an abandoned building on the Greek island in 1993. Similarly, *Je ne sais si c'en est la cause*, a new commission, has a little of the character of a travelogue, with images of distant places tied to anecdotal occurrences. In this case, instead of subtitles, he uses the device of the folk song to construct an alternative lore surrounding the creation of murals by the artist Daniel Buren at a resort hotel in the US Virgin Islands.

García Torres has spent years researching these murals, piecing together facts from various sources and traveling to the abandoned site to experience and document the murals firsthand and trace anecdotal information about the hotel's troubled history. He has unearthed archival materials, from the few extant photographs of the murals at the time of their making, to Buren's disparaging letter to his family, to a record made by the hotel with the famous steel band musician Pedrito Altieri in a blatant promotional effort. García Torres's resulting work narrates the history of the project through the reframing of fragments—objects culled during his research, a tropically inflected pop song composed of one of Buren's letters (created with musician Mario López Landa), slideshows of the murals in situ. His subjective documentary approach presents this work not as an isolated instance in Buren's career, but as inextricably tied to questions about European influence in the Americas, and how the context of landscape and tourism informs these proto-conceptual works. In all his work, he approaches historical episodes with a deeply subjective sense of the documentary. His interest is not solely in reconstructing obscure incidents, but in the operations of recollection and mythmaking on "quieter, almost cameo-like narratives from the recent past" that have not been solidified, canonized, classified, and codified by history.

Mario García Torres was born in 1975 in Monclova, Mexico, and is now based in Los Angeles, California. Solo exhibitions include *Jeu de Paume*, Paris; *Kunsthalle Zurich*; *Kadist Art Foundation*, Paris; and *Stedelijk Museum*, Amsterdam. He has participated in group exhibitions at venues such as *CAC Vilnius*; *Yokohama Triennale 2008*; *De Appel*, Amsterdam; *Museo Tamayo*, Mexico City; *Barbican Gallery*, London; *52nd Biennale di Venezia*; *Frankfurter Kunstverein*; *Centro de Arte Reina Sofia*, Madrid; *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris*; *MCA Chicago*; *Tate Modern*, London; *Artists Space*, New York; and the *2nd Moscow Biennale*. He was the recipient of the *Cartier Award* at the *Frieze Art Fair* in 2007. He received his B.F.A. from the *Universidad de Monterrey*, San Pedro Garza García, Mexico, and his M.F.A. from *California Institute of the Arts*, Valencia, California.

Mario García Torres's solo exhibition, as part of *The Show Formerly Known As Passengers*, will be on display at the *CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts* in San Francisco from July 7 to August 1, 2009. On view will be a selection of earlier works that made ground for the new commission presented as part of his *MATRIX* exhibition.

Public Programs

Artist's Talk – Mario García Torres

Sunday, February 22, 3 p.m.

Museum Theater

Free admission

The artist discusses his work, and is accompanied by his musical collaborator, Mario López Landa. Reception to follow in Bancroft Lobby.

Support

The MATRIX Program at the UC Berkeley Art Museum is made possible by a generous endowment gift from Phyllis C. Wattis.

Additional donors to the MATRIX Program include the UAM Council MATRIX Endowment, Jane and Jeffrey Green, Joachim and Nancy Bechtle, Rena Bransten, Maryellen and Frank Herringer, Noel and Penny Nellis, James Pick and Rosalyn Laudati, Barclay and Sharon Simpson, Roselyne C. Swig, Paul L. Wattis III, Penelope Cooper and Rena Rosenwasser, Paul Rickert, and other generous donors.

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About BAM/PFA

The UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAM/PFA) aims to inspire the imagination and ignite critical dialogue through contemporary and historical art and film, engaging audiences from the campus, Bay Area community, and beyond. BAM/PFA is one of the largest university art museums in the United States in both size and attendance, presenting fifteen art exhibitions and 450 film programs each year. The museum's collection of more than 15,000 works includes exceptional examples of mid-twentieth-century painting, including important works by Hans Hofmann, Jackson Pollock, Eva Hesse, and Mark Rothko, as well as historical and contemporary Asian art, early American painting, Conceptual and contemporary international art, and California and Bay Area art. The PFA film and video collection now includes the largest group of Japanese films outside of Japan, as well as impressive holdings of Soviet silents, West Coast avant-garde cinema, seminal video art, rare animation, Central Asian productions, Eastern European cinema, and international classics.

Museum Information

Location: 2626 Bancroft Way, just below College Avenue near the UC Berkeley campus.

Gallery and Museum Store Hours: Wednesday to Sunday, 11 to 5. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

Admission: General admission is \$8; admission for seniors, disabled persons, non-UC Berkeley students, and young adults (13 – 17) is \$5; admission for BAM/PFA members, UC Berkeley students, staff and faculty, and children under 12 is free; admission for group tours is \$3 per person (to arrange a group tour, call [510] 642-5188). Admission is free on the first Thursday of each month.

Information: 24-hour recorded message (510) 642-0808; fax (510) 642-4889; TDD (510) 642-8734.

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