

The Image Warehouse:

Literature and Photography in Adela Goldbard

by Vera Castillo

One of the most recognized names in the Mexican contemporary art scene, at least by photographers and artists, is that of photographer Adela Goldbard (DF, 1979), a very young artist who has only been making work for a short period of time. Goldbard has received a number of grants from the FONCA (National Fund for Culture and Arts), across a range of disciplines. Furthermore, in 2012, she won the Premio Centenario for an emerging artist, awarded by zona MACO. Her work, like that of other Mexican contemporary photographers, both renowned and emerging, was included in *Women behind the lens: 100 years of photographic creation in Mexico 1910-2010*, a work by art historian Emma Cecilia García Krinsky, published by CONACULTA in 2012, which examines the work of more than 100 Mexican women photographers over the course of 100 years.

Adela Goldbard has studied photography in Mexican institutions, including the Escuela Activa de Fotografía [Active School of Photography] in Coyoacan and the Centro de la Imagen [Center for the Image], as well as international ones, including the Saint-Etienne Higher School of Art and Design, in France. However, this artist's work cannot be understood without examining her personal history. First, we should note that Goldbard received her bachelor's degree in Hispanic Literature from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Having said this, it is possible to understand that her work

as a photographer is a constant dialectic between photography and literature. There is no doubt that interdisciplinarity has generated a richer discourse.

Thus, Adela Goldbard's photography dialogues with literature and other forms of artistic expression like video and sculpture, generating new realities, new and varied possible worlds, which invite an overlap between reality and fiction. Literature is considered the art of writing, and is likely understood as a discipline through which fictional realities are created, and only this. Photography, in the same way, has served as the means through which the photographer expresses or represents what is thought to be true, but which is not. Despite what has been believed since the nineteenth century, photography does not show reality. Literature does not show it either, and so it has often been dismissed by other social sciences that purport to show the reality of the past or present: history and sociology.

In this sense, the interdisciplinarity of Goldbard's work gains strength when it contrasts the real world with the fictitious world, in an attempt to move beyond the separation, in both the disciplines and the dialectic between the two worlds. Thus, her photographic series incorporate staging as an element through which reality and fiction intertwine. Working with models, as she mentions in an interview for *Museógrafo TV*, would undermine this touch of reality.

In her search to merge the real and the fictitious, Adela has used newspapers to conceptualize her projects, which has guided her along the research path of defining and refining her series. Such is the case of the series *La Isla de la fantasía*, in which she seeks to reconstruct the reality of the past using replicas of aircraft and research into the air

accidents of public officials. She is thus using history to reconstruct memory through criticism in the medium of photography.

“I think what is important to me in my work is how fiction and reality seem to constantly be merging in our lives. Sometimes people ask me why I work with full-scale objects when it’s so easy to trick the eye using photography. But for me, the work I do is not just photography; the photographic and video cameras are important as a medium, but the work speaks about reality itself. So if I worked with models, for me, I wouldn’t actually be working with a replica of reality.”

— Adela Goldbard in an interview for Museógrafo TV [previously translated]

Laura González Flores, who has a PhD in Fine Arts and is a researcher at the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, has done an analysis of Goldbard’s work, with the title “On the good practice of lending resources between the arts: *On the road* by Adela Goldbard.” In it, she presents an analogy between the photographer’s series *On the road* and the novel with the same name by Jack Kerouac; literature and photography collide when Goldbard uses the landscapes through which the characters in Kerouac’s work passed. In the photographs, the land itself is very important and objects take on life and meaning from the use of lighting. The cool colors of the landscape are mixed with the warm colors of the objects, thus creating a visual balance. González Flores’s reading is very wise, revealing that landscape in Goldbard’s work represents a broken social space where the conflicts that occur in Mexico today are present: drug trafficking, economic crisis, corruption in a country full of Oxxos [the equivalent of 7-11]; the same Oxxos that the Mexican photographer Adam Wiseman positions as part of the Mexican social imaginary.

Goldbard's photography has found a place in Mexico's art scene not only because her photographic projects are artistically well made in terms of composition and other photographic techniques, but because the discourse on which the author bases her work enables the projects to have coherence and meaning. Thus, Goldbard is—in my opinion—a complete artist, as her training in literature and photography has enabled her to sustain the themes that she photographs, causing them to move beyond the artistic work.

Source: <http://chulavista.mx/el-almacen-de-la-imagen-literatura-y-fotografia-en-adela-goldbard-83381#.VIZAgGTF88Y>