

CHRISTIE'S

MAGAZINE

September - October 2017



Yusaku Maezawa with Roy Lichtenstein, *Figures*, 1977 (detail)

Yusaku Maezawa: The record-breaking art collector

THREE MEXICAN ARTISTS causing a commotion in California

Barbier-Mueller: the making of a museum

The LESSONS and LEGACY of THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL

PLUS

20th CENTURY AUCTIONS at CHRISTIE'S

POLSKIN
ARTS
& COMMUNICATIONS
COUNSELORS

[ON SHOW]

Face ornaments of
Quetzalcoatl from the Getty's
Golden Kingdoms exhibition



LOS ANGELES

Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA

More than 70 cultural institutions across Southern California are coming together, with the help of more than \$16 million in grants from the Getty Foundation, to stage exhibitions and public events on the subject of Latin American and Latino art. The project, which lasts five months, embraces big institutions and museums and small university art galleries in a bid to cast light on a thriving but relatively little-known area of art. Among the shows are one on 18th-century Mexican painting (at LACMA, 19 November–18 March), another on the work of radical Latin American women artists active

between 1960 and 1985 (at the Hammer Museum, 15 September–31 December), and an exhibition of Cuban photography (at the Annenberg Space for Photography, 9 September–4 March). At the Getty itself, *Golden Kingdoms: Luxury and Legacy in the Ancient Americas* (16 September–28 January) will trace the development of the luxury arts from 1000BC to the arrival of the Europeans in the early 16th century. More than 300 objects will be on display, and all that glitters is probably gold. Various venues. www.pacificstandardtime.org
From 15 September. See *Artists in focus*, page 042

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[ARTISTS IN FOCUS]

Boom time

Latin American art is making a big noise in California, with a defiant celebration taking place across the state. Claire Wrathall chooses three Mexican women from the 1,100 artists involved





A still from Adela Goldbard's video PEMEX (Paraallegories Series), 2015

© Adela Goldbard, courtesy the artist

Last January, President Trump signed an executive order demanding the 'immediate construction of a physical wall' along the US border with Mexico - a distance of 1,933 miles. In response, cultural organisations across southern California are banding together, with generous support from the Getty Foundation, for a four-month celebration of Latino art. Named *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA* and held across more than 70 venues, the majority in Los Angeles, it includes the work of more than 1,100 artists from all over the Americas.

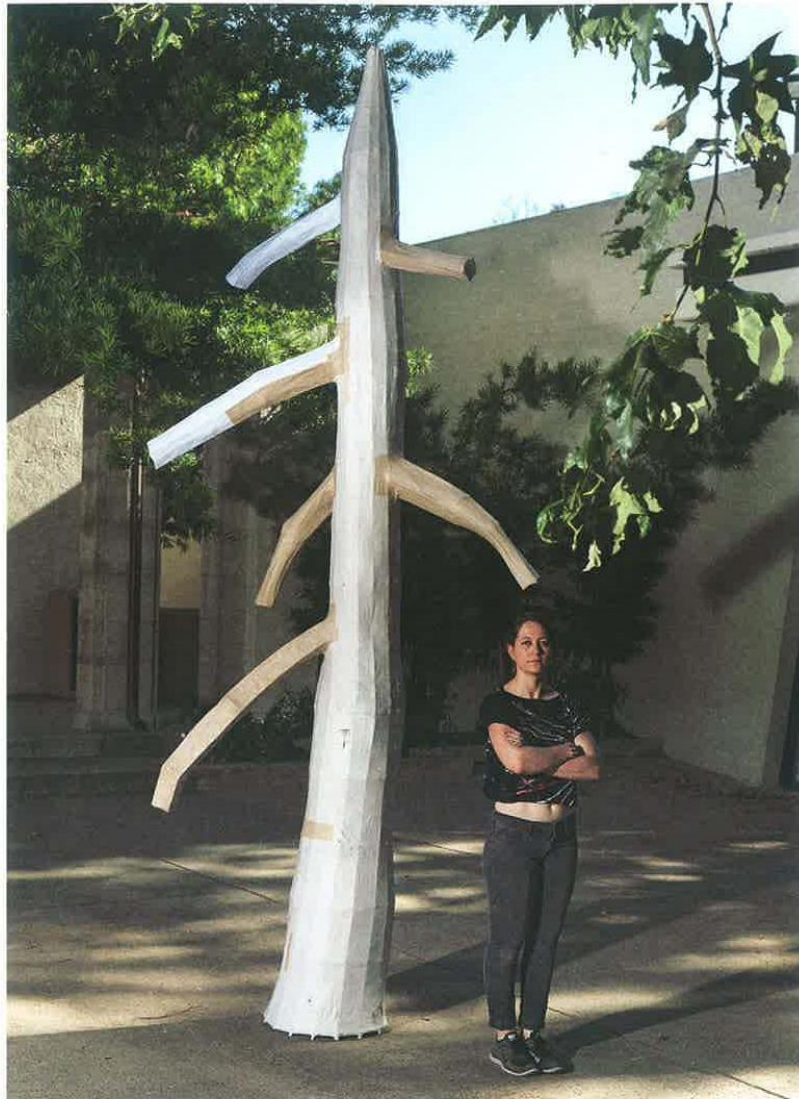
Inevitably, there's a political edge to some of the exhibitions - *The US-Mexico Border: Place, Imagination, and Possibility* at the Craft and Folk Art Museum in LA, for example; and *unDocumenta* at San Diego's Oceanside Museum of Art, which examines what it is, for those who make it across the border illegally, to live without papers.

But they will also celebrate Mexico's remarkable cultural heritage. *Art of the Americas: Mesoamerican and Pre-Columbian Art* at the Mingei International Museum, also in San Diego, is a survey of objects from the ancient Olmec and Maya civilisations. And *Painted in Mexico: Pinxit Mexici, 1700-1790*, at LACMA, brings together 120 landscapes, portraits and academic works painted by colonisers and settlers in Mexico during the 18th century.

Of course, work by Mexico's most famous artist Frida Kahlo and her husband, the great muralist Diego Rivera, will feature in the festival, notably in *California Mexicana: Missions to Murals, 1820-1930* at the Laguna Art Museum, which explores how part of Mexico became California. At Pomona College Museum of Art, four artists will revisit the work of the other great Mexican muralist, José Clemente Orozco.

The latter's celebrated contemporary namesake, Gabriel Orozco, has work in the permanent collection at LACMA, as well as in museums the world over. Having lived in New York and Paris, he now resides in Tokyo - evidence that artists tend not to be tied by notions of nationhood. Just as Mexican artists have moved abroad, so non-Mexican artists have settled in Mexico: take the British-born painter and film-maker Melanie Smith, whose work can be seen in *Learning from Latin America: Art, Architecture, and Visions of Modernism* at Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, and James hd Brown, born in Glendale, California, but based since 1995 in Oaxaca. He is the subject of a one-man show at USC Fischer Museum of Art in LA. Oaxacan culture figures again in a celebration of indigenous Zapotec culture at the Library Foundation of Los Angeles.

In the following pages are three Mexican-born artists with US connections, for whom the personal is political, whether it relates to immigration, Mexico's drug cartels or the female body, and whose work is being showcased in *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA*. www.pacificstandardtime.org



Adela Goldbard

Born 1979

A taxi pulls up slowly at a remote petrol station. It is night. The pump attendant approaches the vehicle: is he moving in slow motion or just languidly? Only the soundtrack of cicadas and traffic on a distant highway, the tiny lights of the passing cars and a bird in flight suggest that we are watching something unfold in real time. The attendant goes to the driver's window, fills the tank, pats the boot, then - unexpectedly - opens the passenger door and gets in. The car slowly drives off and all is quiet. Until suddenly there are two explosions. The screen fills with white

smoke. There are flames. Another bang. Then a fourth. You can hear the sirens of emergency service vehicles. But as the smoke clears, and the devastated scene is revealed, you realise that none of it was real. The petrol station was a flimsy model, just cardboard and reeds, its PEMEX signage clearly hand-painted. It was a construct.

Adela Goldbard's 2015 film and stills series *PEMEX* is one of eight 'paraallegories', as she calls these beautifully filmed re-enactments of violent scenes (Alex Albert's cinematography owes something to David Lynch, favouring saturated

colour and exaggerated shadows, and David Goldaracena's sound design deserves credit, too). By recording the destruction of familiar objects notable for their solidity, Goldbard reinforces the sense that everything we rely on is essentially fragile and ephemeral.

PEMEX, for example, takes its name from Mexico's state oil company, which retains a monopoly on the nation's petrol stations. In another work in the series, *Oxxo*, Goldbard blows up a meticulously detailed cardboard model of a supermarket bearing the livery of the Mexican chain of that name – a 'symptom of capitalism' in Goldbard's words. In *Lobo*, she re-stages the bombing of a Ford Lobo, 'the preferred pickup truck of the Mexican narcos' (drug dealers), and in another work, a bus goes up in flames, a reference to the means by which Mexico's notorious drug cartels blockade highways. In 2014, Goldbard made a film, *Casino Royale*, based on the terrible shootings and subsequent incendiary attack on a casino in Monterrey by the criminal syndicate Los Zetas, in which 52 people died.

But her treatment of such atrocities, though deeply shocking and disquietingly compelling, is far from gratuitous. Indeed, its roots can be found deep in Mexican folk culture, which has

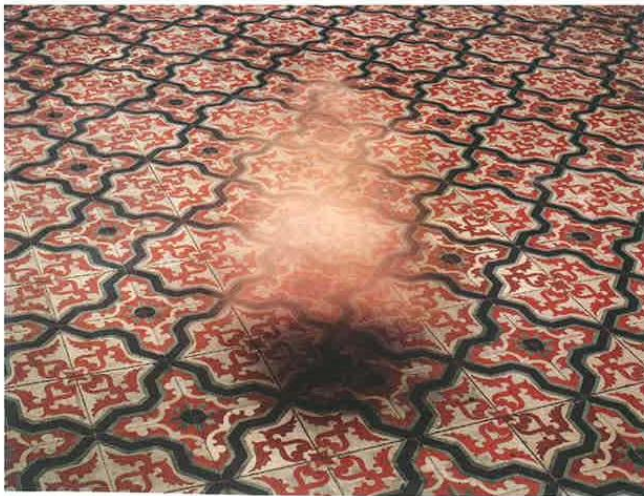
long had a fondness for setting fire to things. Take the annual *Quema de Judas* or 'burning of Judas', a Holy Week tradition in Tultepec, just north of Mexico City, where Goldbard has her models made. Every Easter, giant papier-mâché figures of Jesus's betrayer are set alight, or stuffed with fireworks – Goldbard's preferred explosive – and ignited. Fire, after all, is the ultimate destroyer and cleanser, and a powerful metaphor for the need to clean up corruption and quash the drugs trade and the crime it fuels.

Goldbard was born in Mexico City and is now based partly in Chicago. Her practice also embraces sculpture, immersive installation, writing, ethnographic research and 'public actions'. She believes in the 'potential of art to generate critical thinking and social transformation', and wants 'to challenge traditional documentary and mainstream cinema by performing unrepeatable actions for the camera'. It's a way to bring the uncontrollable under control, and a powerful one at that.

Adela Goldbard is one of four artists responding to the work of José Clemente Orozco in 'Prometheus 2017' at Pomona College Museum of Art until 16 December. On 18 November, she will present the pyrotechnics performance 'A World of Laughter, A World of Fears'. www.pomona.edu.galeriaenriqueguerrero.com

Below, a still from Goldbard's *Microbus* (*Paraallegories Series*), 2014. Opposite, the artist with a model from her performance *A World of Laughter, A World of Fears*, 2017





This page, from top:
Carmen Argote, *Las
Lindas*, 2015; *Tias*, 2016.
Opposite, from top,

an installation view
of *Houses he wanted
to build*, 2015, and a
portrait of the artist

Carmen Argote

Born 1981

As a five-year-old, Carmen Argote moved with her family from her native Guadalajara to Los Angeles. Her father had trained as an architect and was a gifted draughtsman. But by the 1990s, architectural practices in the United States were invariably working on AutoCAD (computer-aided design), which he had not learned to use, so his professional career foundered. Instead, he drove a truck and worked as a crossing guard (what the British call a lollipop man), and in time he was able to build his family a house back in Guadalajara. As his daughter wrote, there was, during her childhood, an 'ever-present feeling that Los Angeles was a temporary situation'. Even so, she continues to live there.

Buildings and plans, as well as what it means to leave one's home and make a new one elsewhere, are integral to Argote's installations, photography, sculpture and painting. As she has described it, 'I explore notions of home and place, interacting with architecture to reflect on personal histories. My practice uses the act of inhabiting as a starting point, allowing the work to take form as I respond to a space.' Last year, for example, she presented a series of photographs entitled *Mansión Magnolia*. Its name refers to a grand 19th-century neoclassical stone house in Guadalajara that her paternal grandmother inherited and then passed to two of her aunts, who converted it into an events space. She persuaded them to allow her to live there, in an office, for three months. The result was a body of work that explores memory and the extent to which we define ourselves by the environments we inhabit or call home.

In his 1936 book *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin made the observation that 'Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception – or rather by touch and sight.' Taking this to heart, Argote shows us the building as she finds it. Its handsome colonnaded hall, with its chequerboard floor of polished marble, becomes the backdrop for what calls to mind an installation by Ai Weiwei or Doris Salcedo, but is actually just a neatly arranged stack of 200 dining chairs hired in for an event and not yet unpacked. In another image, the same space plays host to a brightly coloured inflatable climbing frame and slide. Others show piles of tabletops, discarded styrofoam cups, sweepings of what look like ash and leaves. In some works, the ghostlike form of Argote's own body appears almost

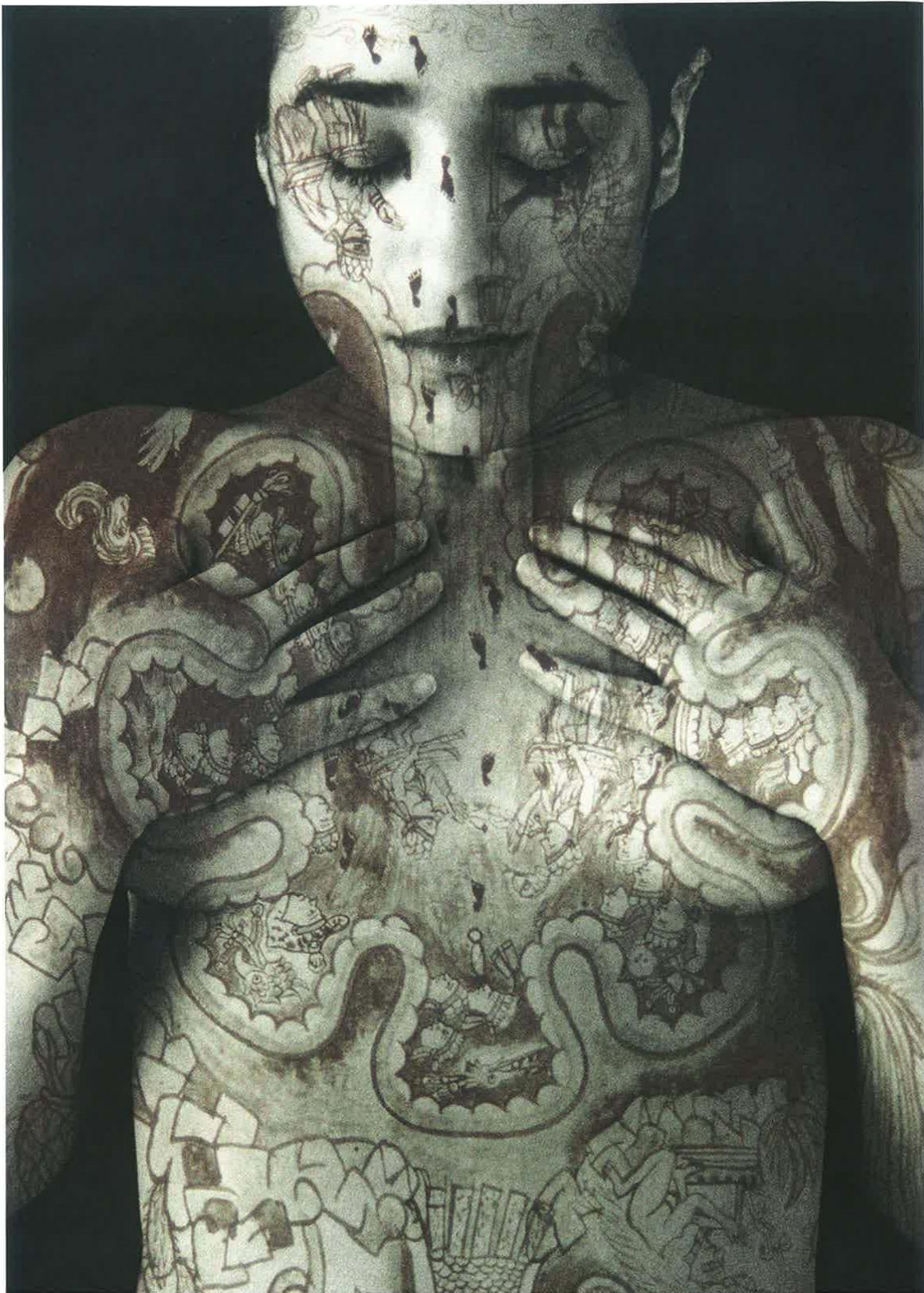
[ARTISTS IN FOCUS]



like ectoplasm, as though she has returned to haunt the building and assert a kind of ownership.

Argote's installations also dwell on notions of home and on buildings. *Mantas* (2014) is a series of rooms she has known, each measuring about five metres by 5.5 metres, reconstructed in muslin and painted in acrylic with the blank outlines of items that furnished them: the outline of a bedhead, a side table and a lamp, the pictures on the wall, the tiles on the floor, the architraves and the skirting. More evocative still was her 2015 work *Houses he wanted to build*, a site-specific work at the Adjunct Positions gallery in LA: she covered the building's exterior in painted muslin treated with graphite rubbings, in order to create what she described as 'architectural renderings of houses [my father] wanted to build, all rendered in a 1970s style incorporating light tangerine, pink and light blue... to reflect the standard of his architectural education in Mexico'. In communicating the challenges and dislocation inherent to the immigrant experience, her subtly beautiful and evocative work also has a powerfully political subtext.

Carmen Argote's work is on show at 'Home - So Different, So Appealing' at LACMA until 15 October, and at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston from 19 November to 21 January 2018. www.lacma.org www.mfah.org www.shulamitnazarian.com



Tatiana Parcerero

Born 1967

Born in Mexico City and based in Buenos Aires, the artist Tatiana Parcerero is so highly regarded in the USA that the State Department includes one of her works in its Art in Embassies collection. *Re-Invento #19* (2005) shows Parcerero's feet decorated with four circular diagrams depicting compass-like stars and concentric circles. Charts of the heavens and astrological imagery appear a lot in her work, as do ornithological, botanical and – most startlingly – anatomical drawings from ancient medical texts. But for all the sum of human knowledge, the body, she believes, is 'the container that holds everything' – hence her decision to put hers at the centre of her symbolically rich yet enigmatic photographs.

She has written that her early work 'tended to draw on the autobiographical'. (Before she moved to New York to do a Master's degree in art theory and photography at NYU, she took a degree in psychology at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.) But over time, she has expanded the scope of her investigations, using her face, her torso, her hands, even the soles of her feet, as the basis of 'maps' on which to explore 'concepts of identity, memory, territory and time... the relationship between man and Earth, between nature and the body'. The images that she incorporates, by means of transparent acetate overlays, are what she calls

'visual metaphors' relating to some of the most pressing issues of our time: climate change, dwindling natural resources and migration. The effect of the superimposed images varies from something reminiscent of Edward Steichen's 1924 portrait of Gloria Swanson, photographed through lace, to an impression that Parcerero's body has been elaborately tattooed in henna or ink.

Take two striking images from her series *Nuevo Mundo*, in which she presents her hugely distended pregnant belly, in profile (#10) and front on (#16), overlaid with colonial-era maps of the Americas, rivers and mountain ranges, no longer virgin territory now that the invading power has them charted. They radiate from her navel as if to say: new worlds presage new life.

Other photographs from that series, *Cartografía Interior*, show the artist's torso, the soles of her feet and, strikingly, her hands, apparently inscribed with pages from pre-Columbian Aztec codices, a play on the idea that the future may be foretold by the lines on our palms. ♦

'*Revolution and Ritual: The Photographs of Sara Castrejón, Graciela Iturbide, and Tatiana Parcerero*' is at the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, California, until 7 January 2018. rcwg.scrippscollege.edu. www.jdcfineart.com

Right, Tatiana Parcerero, *Re-Invento #19*, 2005. Opposite, *Cartografía Interior #44*, 1996

