

CREAM 3

PHAIDON

Born Guadalajara, Mexico, 1974 Lives and work in Guadalajara and Mexico City

Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 'Watch Your Step', NAP, Guadalajara 2001 '45 Minutes', Televisión, Guadalajara; 'Monocromo', Project Room, Mexico City; 'Temporality is a Question of Survival', Camden Arts Centre, London 2002 'Erosing Memory', Galeria Enrique Guerrero, Mexico City

Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 'Incidental', Condominio Guadalajara Piso 23, Guadalajara 1999 'Searching for an Unconquered Place', Museo Ex-Teresa, Mexico City 2000 'Demonstration Rooms/the Ideal House', Museo Alejandro Otero, Caracas/Apex Art, New York/NICC, Antwerp; 'Jet Propelled', Museo de las artes, Guadalajara; 'Open Studio', Braziers International Artists Workshop, Oxfordshire 2001 'Assemblée', Centre Culturel du Mexique, Paris; 'The Vanishing City', Programa Art Center, Mexico City; 'Veritancas', Centro de arte.com for ARCO 01, Madrid 2002 'Leisure Theory', Jumex Collection, Mexico City; 'Mexico City: an Exhibition about the Exchange Rate of Bodies and

Values', PS.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York/Kunstwerke, Berlin; 'Savage', La Panaderia, Mexico City

Selected Bibliography: 1999 Javier Dueñas/José Dávila, 'Prison', *Casper*, April; Yazmin Juandiego, 'Searching for an Unconquered Place', *Mural Newspaper*, 27 March 2000 Luz María Sepúlveda, 'Unnatural Science, the Intervened Space', *ArtNexus*, April–June 2001 Sacha Craddock, 'Temporality is a Question of Survival'/Rubén Gallo, 'José's Books', *Temporality is a Question of Survival*, Camden Arts Centre, London; Mark Currah, 'José Dávila, Sophie Ristelhueber', *Time Out*, 16–26 October; Dan Smith, 'Doris Salcedo, Sophie Ristelhueber, José Dávila', *Art Monthly*, November 2002 Omar Garcia, 'Re-creating Basic Needs', *Reforma*, 7 June

JOSE DÁVILA

Jose Dávila has incorporated many of the themes and strategies introduced by Conceptual artists in the 1960s and 1970s into provocative interventions that comment on the various ills plaguing the contemporary art world. *S,M,L,XL* (2000) one of his early works, can be read as a criticism of a recent trend in art-book publishing that has produced stunning and beautifully designed volumes, which are ultimately bulky, unreadable and destined to be little more than coffee-table books. In order to expose this kind of publication as an aesthetically pleasing but unreadable object, Dávila took a copy of *S,M,L,XL* by the architect Rem Koolhaas, and sliced it into three sections that were then shown as sculptural elements. It makes no difference, this piece seems to suggest, whether the book is intact or in parts, since it is not meant to be read but merely admired and handled like a precious object.

Pure will, without the confusions of the intellect (2000) suggests that not only modern books suffer from this problem. For this series, Dávila sliced up several books (including one dating from 1814) that he had bought from a Parisian antiquarian bookshop. This intervention implies that the value of antique books depends almost entirely on their material support, their content often becoming irrelevant (who, for example, would want to read a physics manual from the nineteenth century?). These antique books

are treated like sculptures, transformed into objects with a purely decorative function.

A similar critique of the 'formalist fetish' that has shaped much recent art can be found in Dávila's 'topographic' landscapes. These large-scale, wall-mounted photographs touch on the current obsession with oversized Cibachrome prints that has become all the rage in galleries from Mexico City to London. But unlike the pristine photographs so loved by gallerists, Dávila's versions are crumpled, as if fished out of the garbage. Dávila also plays with the tension between the ostentatious scale of these photos and the triviality of their subject matter. One of his wrinkled photos presents a postcard image of the New York skyline (since the piece was created before 9/11, the World Trade Center dominates the image); another shows the lanes of an empty highway at night, while yet another depicts a nondescript tropical beach dotted with palm trees that could be anywhere from Cancún to Bali. These works not only stage a curious agreement between a damaged form (the crumpled photograph) and an equally devalued content (photographic clichés), but they also invite us to ask a pertinent question: has the art world fetishized Cibachrome prints and other glossy works to the point where their content has become irrelevant?

Rubén Gallo



S,M,L,XL (1), 2000
chromogenic print, 40 x 60 cm



Globalization - the world, 2000
C-print, 40 x 60 cm



np. **Unproductive Machine**, 2002
Polystyrene foam, dimensions variable
Installation 'Flexible Packaging Group', San Juan Bernalde PROE, Bayamon, 2002
Polystyrene spatial skeleton model of a polystyrene-making machine (*below*), occupying its space in the factory

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