

In The Open

A project by Pablo Vargas Lugo

To leave something out in the open means to leave it bare and exposed. *Intemperie (In The Open)* is a piece by Pablo Vargas Lugo, specifically created for Museo Experimental el Eco. The piece is divided into two parts: a delicate carpet laid inside the museum, made out of marble dust and tinctures, and a great curtain of vertical lines covering the windowpane that separates the museum from the external patio. The carpet and the curtain establish a dialogue with this space from an apparently recognizable place, for, at first sight, both elements would seem to belong more to a domestic milieu than to a museum. The feeling of dissociation thus created leaves us in the face of an enigma.

Besides making reference to a domestic setting, the carpet chosen by the artist has an exotic halo in our context and collective imagination. The Turkmenian carpet, with its stylized floral motifs, has been historically produced and used by nomad tribes in Central Asia with a double function: practical and symbolic. Today we are used to see it in homes as a decorative element divorced from its origin, paradoxically bestowed with a symbolic weight of status and domestic comfort. The technique used for the elaboration of this carpet in *el Eco* is the same used in Tibetan mandalas, which are created for the purpose of meditation and destroyed afterwards. This formal technique has already been used by Vargas Lugo in other pieces, as in the case of *Hamadryas Guatemalena Marmarice Mandala* (2007), a mandala that mimics the design of butterfly wings. Here, the reference of the mandala as a meditational process of creation is maintained, and being applied to an object of decoration and luxury, expands the notion of what we can consider to be an image of the psyche.

The windowpanes in the cross-shaped casement of the building constructed by Mathias Goeritz, have been removed by the artist's request in a gesture that is far from being a conceptual affront linked to the discourse of institutional critique. Instead, the windowpanes' absence transforms the space in an atmospheric level and makes this threshold an architectural motif with metaphorical implications. Lighting conditions are changed and the wind fully blows throughout the space, creating a sly gust that will eventually erode the mandala-carpet during the time of its exhibition, revealing the passing of time.

On the other hand, the curtain now covering the metal frame is a direct quotation to the piece *Senza titolo* (1980) by Gino de Dominicis (1947-1998); an installation of bars that block a white space simulating a cell where two of the bars have been opened with the use of force. This opening, absent in the curtain, unfastens what had initially been opened by force and wittily portrays the artist that always maintained his eccentricity in his connections to the art world. Vargas Lugo's interest for Dominicis's work is marked by mystery, a notion both artists share. The latter presents us not only a bar, but also the illusion of a bar that suggests captivity, disrupted by the intrusion of elements.

In a 1939 text entitled *The Sacred in Everyday Life*, the French writer and ethnographer associated with surrealism Michel Leiris (1901-1990) ventures into the elaboration of a distinction between the profane and the sacred, the latter being defined from an strictly personal point of view, that is, outside the realms of the officially sacred (religion, country, morals). Thus, the first issue the reader is confronted with is summed up in the next question: *what is the sacred for me? Or more exactly, what constitutes what is sacred for me?* Through a moving account of memories of places, objects and childhood events, Leiris plunges into the core of a special feeling he describes as a particular mixture of fear and fondness, attraction and danger, something at once valued and excluded—that combination of respect, desire and dread that we identify as a psychological symptom of the sacred.

For Leiris, the sacred always is veiled by mystery. The work of Pablo Vargas Lugo is charged with hidden meanings that are simultaneously harbored by different places in our psyche; they work in the realm of the sacred, as pointed out by Leiris, unveiling a world of revelations and small discoveries (like realizing the carpet is made out of dust, not woven), undermining notions we saw as carved in stone. I would dare to say that in the specific case of *Intemperie*, there is also a kinship with Mathias Goeritz ideas in the field of emotional architecture, in this case manifested in a dream-like, contemplative experience. As the environment becomes part of the piece in the erosion of the carpet, whoever experiences this space, contemplating what unfolds here, crosses that threshold and becomes part of the enigma.

Paola Santoscoy

Canon

A project by Miguel Monroy

The idea of the *eternal return* is a philosophical conception that defines time through the events that make it up in a circular, non-linear fashion. It is also the definition of a historical event that points towards the beginning and the end of something, repeating itself in a stagnation of sorts that impedes the ascending progress of man, trapped in repetition of “the same”, not only in behavior, but also in the thoughts, opinions and beliefs that make man a part of the world. There are many reflections made from the philosophical conception of the eternal return, from the mythical figure of the Uroboros, as a self-consuming animal biting its own tail, to the literary work of Friedrich Nietzsche: *“the principle of persistence of energy demands the Eternal Return... the measure of force—as dimension—is fixed, but its essence is fluid... the world is a circle that has repeated itself an infinity of times, and will continue to do so in infinitum”*

In all the artistic and literary works made on this topic, a prevailing theme is the way in which the space-time physical relationship behaves after the presence of the human being in the world, who is never unattached to its carnal condition, only transforming himself after his debilitation. This situation of physical and symbolic debilitation can be represented in Pina Bausch’s choreography *Café Müller* (1978), or in the short film *Tango* by Zbigniew Rybczyński (1980). In these works, repetition of actions in characters reaches levels of automatism, underlying the wearing out of their own life circumstances and creating a new meaning: the real evidence of the situation as a dramatic state, critical and ironical of the human condition. These language strategies inserted in the poetical construction of art are constant elements of interest in the work of Miguel Monroy (Mexico City, 1975).

Monroy’s work dwells on the possibility of fracturing different structures, codes or systems in which the utilitarian-occidental worldview rests, creating alternatives within the nature of art which make possible a broader reflection on the place where we find ourselves.

Canon is the title of this multi-disciplinary exercise conducted in the Daniel Mont Room in Museo Experimental el Eco, as part of its exhibition program for 2012. This exercise re-

structured the exhibition space's working mechanisms, where actions continuously alter the place through the montage processes before each show, resulting in a pattern of regular activities that define the exercise of cultural production within the institution of the museum.

Canon is also the term used by Monroy to broaden his work system by incorporating artists into his project for the configuration of a video. The video presents the exhibition space as the engine for the generation of situations alluding the utilitarian function of the museum, which is represented through the repetition and confrontation of common actions performed by characters that evoke the usual onlookers in the cultural space, in an altered state of repetition, creating an ironic vision of the place's work, a metaphor of sorts that is related to Nietzsche's idea of *eternal return*.

David Miranda

Miguel Monroy (Mexico City, 1975) holds a degree in Visual Arts in the National School of Plastic Arts in UNAM. His work alters daily-life systems to create self-confrontation among these very systems. Through a process of unfolding and perpetual balance, he produces a self-boycott, which becomes a metaphor of the absurd. He uses several media and platforms in his work: drawing, photography, sound and site intervention. His work has been shown in the Raul Anguiano Art Museum in Guadalajara, Art&Idea Mexico City, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels and the Leme Gallery in Sao Paulo, among others.

Miguel Monroy is represented by Galería de Arte Mexicano (GAM), Mexico City.