

Invert and Survive.

Many of Mauricio Guillen's works involve the process of turning inside out - either physically or conceptually - the objects or ideas he wants to investigate. Swapping the gallery's lock and his private home's one (*Tu Casa es Mi Casa* 2003) or turning the gallery guards in a museum into the fashion models for tailored tweed 'customised uniforms' (*Security Measures* 2004) are only two examples of his constant drive to playfully subvert overlooked conventions through a calculated dose of humour. There is in fact a certain degree of pleasure in inverting superficial constructs, a playfulness that in his work is located between the gesture and the formal composition and visual framing of the artwork.

Guillen's conceptual explorations tend to be visually quite stripped down and austere, as if the artist aimed to reverse every seductive component of visibility within. In this sense, the procedure of turning entire walls (*Street Wise* 2005), cereal boxes (*The Daily Enigma* 2004) and found display windows (*May 1st in Mayfair* 2002) inside out contains both a frustration and a promise. While we cannot directly access the element of visual pleasure, the trigger of our desire, we can conceive the object of this inversion as retaining all the elements of its seductiveness in the enclosed conceptual and physical space that we cannot see. High-class shops windows or colourful boxes to be exhibited in a supermarket undergo a process of reduction that has the side effect of imploding the object of our desire towards an invisible and enclosed space.

The composition obtained through the process of conceptually manipulating the ideological notions at stake often generates a visual effect that turns the conceptual practice into a formal production strategy. The intervention for the 70th. Anniversary of the Galeria de Arte Mexicano *Street Wise*, for instance, combines the element of making a public surface private with the advantages of its side effect: the exterior wall is turned into a pictorial surface, a formalised metonymy of *la calle* - the Mexican street - as a space for collective elaboration of meaning. The element inverted in this work, is not only the interior of a Mexican house but also the ideological frame of an art institution that has historically processed the art production of a country. One single gesture conflates a conceptual project and a sculptural result reminiscent of Michael Asher's austere concise installation of the 1970s.

Guillen always performs such procedures of ideological de-mystification with a light touch of irony, the rhetorical tool of inversion par excellence. His titles as well as the procedure in which the idea takes a physical manifestation imply a measure of dry humour that always twists the issues addressed into the territory of an indirect and askew indication of possible meaning. In this way, the conceptual premises of the works get detoured and reversed through the procedure of a double inversion in the verge of self-reflexivity. The ironist in fact is akin to the mystifier in uttering something different than what he means, but it differs from the liar as he produces knowledge different from his enunciation, almost impossible to pin down entirely. The space of manoeuvre between the idea and the inverted shape of its discursive incarnation is where the meaning is allowed to float in and in which critique touches the softest spot of ideology.

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