

The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

Contemporary Drawing, Sculpture and Works on Paper

Work'n It

January 10 - February 14, 2008

Oswaldo R. Castillo

Commentary by Julie Oakes

Artist Catalog, Osvaldo Ramirez Castillo
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This catalog was created for the exhibition titled "Work'n It"
at Headbones Gallery, The Drawers, Toronto, Canada, January 10 - February 14, 2008

Commentary by Julie Oakes
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Rich Fog Micro Publishing, printed in Toronto, 2008
Layout and Design, Richard Fogarty

Printed on the Ricoh SPC 811DN

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RICH FOG



Micro Publishing
Toronto Canada

Oswaldo Ramirez Castillo

Work'n It

Working with images that unflinchingly examine the grotesque and painful alongside of the fantastical Castillo moves forward with a steady and adept talent. The macabre content of his drawings on Mylar depict vague and extraordinary memories of his native country El Salvador where political unrest was a part of the daily diet of his childhood. Lately, the malignant imagery has been couched in a rainbow palette. The overall effect is one of wonder that the face of extremity can be so gloriously rendered as to become almost comprehensible.

Transformation myths help to explain the unexplainable and often irreconcilable opposites of good and evil. They allow ugliness to change into beauty, beast into man, darkness into light and inspire the hope of devastated peoples who feel they have been abandoned by their god.

Oswaldo Ramirez Castillo reinvents the Aztec character as a means of dealing with the violent imagery, born of memory and experience, that have made up his artistic output. From the dense black and white pain of *Shipwreck in Jucuapa*, 2005, to the harmful in influence and effect of his imagined interior of Quetzecoatl in 2007, there has also been an artistic transformation. From grey scale or muted analogous color schemes to a full and lurid palette, his work has gone through a transformation that reaches further into the convolutions of his fertile mind.

Quetzalcoatl is an Aztec sky and creator god. The name is a combination of *quetzal*, a brightly colored Mesoamerican bird, and *coatl*, meaning serpent. He is the God of the wind and the air, part bird and part snake. One of the pantheon of deities that reigned over the consciousness of South America before the advent of the Spanish, he was a personified translation of the mysteries of survival made into a visual form. However, other than the flying horse, clarion crying rooster and gaseous atmosphere enveloping the serpent, there is not a lot of flight in Castillo's rendition of the mythical creature. If the snake was the creator (phallic, truthful metaphor) - then the beginning was slithering into being rather than rising upon a spirit wave. There is violent indigestion in this hell-like process of birth and the element is fiery rather than light and airy. If these are Quetzalcoatl's children in gestation, then all hell is about to break loose.

The violent memories of a people are often passed on in story telling, the intimate disclosure from father to son or mother to daughter of the trials and tribulations of their generation. The figures, fantastic and unreal to our Western culture where there has not been a war fought upon this native land, have a resonance for Castillo that was born of

experience. This is the telling seed of the conceptual beginnings of Castillo's work. It has been processed through his life and passed on from his parents who heard from *their* parents similar tales of transformation and change. This is the valuable insight that he is able to share and the result, foreign and horrific with exploding bodies, dog-men, soldiers, spikes and torture; is a cause for wonder. Only Castillo knows where, in *Quetzacoatl's Children*, the ropes towards the sky are anchored. That he delivers this epic version of the Aztec god with the deft and clairvoyant mastery of an angel, renders the statement even more poignant.

Julie Oakes



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



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Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - (detail)



Quetzalcoatl's Children - 2007
mixed media on Mylar (42x143 inches)

Oswaldo Ramirez Castillo

Education

1997-2001

Ontario College of Art and Design

2004-2008

MFA, Concordia University

Selected Exhibitions

2008

The New Gallery. + 15 Window Space, "Ferias/Fairgrounds" solo show, Calgary, Canada. (confirmed for 2009)

La Maison de la culture cote -de- neiges. "Eyes of the hurricane" group exhibition. Montreal, Canada. (confirmed)

International Print Center New York, "New Prints 2008" winter show, New York city, U.S.A. (juried)

FOFA Gallery, Concordia University, "Carnivalissimo drawings", three man show, Montreal, Canada. (juried)

Headbones Gallery, "Work'n it" group exhibition, Toronto, Canada.

The 9th Annual Drawing Exhibiton, John B. Aird gallery, Toronto, Canada. (juried)

2007

Beyond/in Western New York 2007 Biennial, Buffalo Arts Studio, Buffalo, U.S.A (juried)

Toronto International Art Fair. Presented by Headbones Gallery. Toronto, Canada.

The Print Studio. "Les Silences dans la Foret" group exhibition. Hamilton, Canada.

Atelier Circulare Gallery. "Les Silence dans la foret" group exhibition. Montreal, Canada.

The 8th Annual Drawing Exhibition. John B Aird gallery. Toronto, Canada. (juried)

2006

"Thinking through silence." Installation project in collaboration with Concordia's MFA students. Montreal, Canada.

Headbones Gallery. "Independent curator's picks". Group exhibition. Toronto, Canada.

Trisc Cultural Heritage Site. Art residency exhibition. Trisc. Serbia and Montenegro.

John B. Aird Gallery. "The Print Show." Toronto, Canada. (juried)

La Maison de la Culture Villeray-Parc Extension. "Voir grand" 3e Biennale d'estampes grand format group exhibition. Montreal, Canada. (juried)

The 5th Egyptian International Print Triennale. Travelling exhibitions in Cairo and Alexandria. Egypt. (juried)

Atelier Circulaire Gallery. "Rotary blue" MFA Print Media group show, Montreal. Canada.

Etobicoke Civic Centre Art Gallery. "3rd LatinoAmerica" group exhibiton. Toronto, Canada. (juried)

The 7th Annual Drawing Exhibition. John B. Aird Gallery. Toronto, Canada. (juried)

2005

SKOL galley, short video projects night. Montreal, Canada.

L.A. gallery. Group exhibition. San Salvador, El Salvador.

Centro Cultural de España. "Adapes" group exhibition. San Salvador, El Salvador.

Etobicoke Civic Centre Art Gallery. "2nd LatinoAmerica" group exhibition. Toronto, Canada.

The 6th Annual Drawing Exhibition. John B. Aird Gallery. Toronto, Canada. (juried)

2004

Galerie les Nouveaux. Barbares. Symposium d'art sur papier de Montreal exhibition, Montreal, Canada. (juried)

Real Time Gallery at the Distillery District, "Salvadorian night" art exhibition, group show. Toronto, Canada.

Gallery 1313, Latin- Canadian Cultural Association, group show, Toronto, Canada.

Etobicoke Civic Centre Art Gallery, "LatinoAmerica", Toronto, Canada.

Kabat and Wrobel Gallery, "Relatos", two man show, Toronto, Canada.

The 5th Annual Drawing Exhibition. John B. Aird Gallery. Toronto, Canada. (juried)

The 11th International Print and Drawing Biennale Exhibition. Taiwan, R.O.C. (juried)

2003

The Great Hall, Salvador Allende Festival for Peace show. Toronto, Canada.

A Space Windows Gallery, Featuring printmaking works. (solo show) Toronto, Canada.

The 4th International Triennale of Graphic Art Exhibition. Bitola, Macedonia. (juried)

Timothy Eaton Memorial, Open Studio 100 Prints show, Toronto, Canada.

Gallery 1313, "La Trinchera Collective" group show, Toronto, Canada.

2002

Acadia Gallery, "La Trinchera Collective" group show, Toronto, Canada.

Kabat and Wrobel Gallery, "Latin American Art", Toronto, Canada.

The 22nd MiniPrint International Exhibition, Cadaques, Spain. (juried)

L'arte gallery, Group Show, Toronto, Canada.

Acadia Gallery, "La Trinchera Collective", group Show, Toronto, Canada.

2001

Casa de las Americas National Gallery, “La Joven Estampa” group show, La Habana, Cuba. (juried)

Peter and Richmond Gallery, Featuring printmaking works. (solo show). Toronto, Canada.

Hart House, University of Toronto, “Social Justice festival”, Toronto, Canada.

Wagner and Rosebaum Gallery, “Borderlands” group Show, Toronto, Canada.

Art System Galley, “Th'Ink“-Contemporary Printmaking group show, Toronto,Canada,

Soho20 Gallery, “Works on Paper” International Exhibition, New York, USA. (juried)

OCAD Atrium Gallery. “OCAD/OCA” student group show. Toronto, Canada.

Belleville Library Gallery, recent works from OCAD printmaking department. Belleville, Canada.

OCAD Atrium Gallery. Latin American Artists Collective Annual Exhibition. Toronto, Canada.

2000

OCAD Atrium Gallery. Latin American Artists Collective Annual Exhibition. Toronto, Canada.

Belleville Library Gallery, recent works from OCAD printmaking department, Belleville, Canada.

1999

OCAD Atrium Gallery. Latin American Artists Collective Annual Exhibition. Toronto, Canada.

Belleville Library Gallery, recent works from OCAD printmaking department, Belleville, Canada.

1998

OCAD Atrium Gallery. Latin American Artists Collective Annual Exhibition. Toronto, Canada.

Awards/Grants

2007 Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation grant, California, U.S.A.

2006 Vermont Studio Center partial fellowship grant. Johnson, U.S.A.

2006 C.I.A.M Travel grant (centre universitaire des Arts Mediatiques). Montreal, Canada.

2005 Ontario Arts Council Production Grant, emerging level

2005 Toronto Arts Council Production Grant, emerging level.

2005 C.I.A.M Production grant (Center universitaire des Arts Mediatiques). Montreal. Canada.

2005 Honorable mention, “LatinoAmerica Exhibition”. Toronto, Canada.

2004 J.A. deSeve Entrance Scholarship, Concordia University. Montreal.

- 2004 Ontario Arts Council Grant to The Latino Canadian Cultural Association for The "Ebb and Flow" group exhibition. Toronto, Canada.**
- 2004 The 5th Annual Drawing Exhibition, 2nd prize, John B Aird Gallery. Toronto,**
- 2002 StudiosLivan International print award. Toronto, Canada.**
- 2001 Open Studio Printmaking award**
- 2001 Printmaking award, 1st Prize, OCAD. Toronto, Canada.**
- 2000 General Printmaking Award. OCAD. Toronto, Canada.**
- 2000 The Duncan McPherson Award in Drawing and Painting. OCAD, Toronto, Canada.**
- 1999 Lithography Award. OCAD. Toronto, Canada.**

Residencies

2007

Vermont Studio Center Residency

Full Month residency (April)

Johnson, U.S.A.

2006

International Multidisciplinary Art Residency

In conjunction with the Loznica Cultural Center and the Belgrade School of FineArts. (July)

Trisc, Serbia and Montenegro.

2004

Graff- Centre de Conception Graphique

Insertion Project- (June to August)

Montrea, Canada.

L'atelier de L'Ile

Creation Project- (May)

Val- David, Canada.

Publications/catalogues

- 2008 Soliloquies: Concordia's creative journal magazine, vol 12.0.** Montreal, Canada.
- 2007 Beyond/In Western New York Biennial 2007 catalogue,** curatorial statement by Brooke Fitzpatrick, published by Albright Knox Gallery. Buffalo. U.S.A.
- 2006 Headbones Gallery Artist catalogue.** commentary by Zachari Logan, Toronto.
- 2006 5th International Egyptian Print Triennial Catalogue.** Cairo, Egypt.
- 2005 Adapes group show catalogue.** San Salvador, El salvador
- 2004 The Woodcut artist's handbook** by George Walker, Toronto.
- 2003 The 11th International Print and Drawing Biennial Catalogue.** Taiwan. R. O. C.
- 2003 The 4th International Triennial of Graphic Art Catalogue.** Macedonia.
- 2002 The 22nd International Miniprint International Exhibition Catalogue.** Cadaques, Spain.

Press Reviews

- 2007 Buffalo Spree Magazine, Beyond/In WNY: Setting course.** By Bruce Adams, November 2007, Buffalo. U.S.A
- 2007 The Bank Independent, "Going regional"** by Colin Dabrowki. September 28, 2007. Buffalo, U.S.A.
- 2007 Buffalo News," Focal Point: A closer look"** by Colin Dabrowski
- 2007 The Toronto Star, "Buffalo Art Stampede"** by Peter Goddard, September 22nd , 2007. Toronto
- 2006 Le Monde-** "voir grand 2006-Exposition d'estampes grand format" review. Vol 24. Montreal
- 2006 Journal de St-Michel-** "Voir grand 2006 review. Vol 28, no 67, Montreal
- 2006 Riverside quarterly magazine.** "Silent Auction". Winter 2006. Vol 3, issue 2. Toronto.
- 2004 La Prensa Grafica.** Exhibition review for the two man show "Relatos. (La Prensa Grafica is one of El Salvador's National newspapers). San Salvador, El Salvador.
- 2004** Interview with Ismael Calas, **TeleLatino Network.** Toronto. Canada.
- 2004 Le Delit-** McGill University Francophone student Journal, interview by Ines Wu, Montreal, Canada.

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