Dias & Riedweg

Americas Society
New York

Seize the moment to see an excellent exhibition at the Americas Society by artists Mauricio Dias (b. Rio de Janeiro, 1964) and Walter Riedweg (b. Lucerne, 1955), the collaborative team based in Rio de Janeiro. Dias & Riedweg... and it becomes something else is the first solo exhibition of their work in the United States. Intelligently curated by Gabriela Rangel with the assistance of Isabela Villa Nunez, the five videos, including two video installations, offer exceptional insights into diverse thematic landscapes each of which address public and private subjectivities and internal and external displacements. Working together since 1993 on public projects, Dias and Riedweg are known for interactive, cross-disciplinary work that fuses aesthetic, journalistic, and performance based modes to illuminate sociological and political proclivities.

The broad reach of their explorations includes The Raimundos, The Severinos, and The Franciscos (1998), a shorter version of the work exhibited at the São Paulo Bienale in 1998; MAMA, 2000, commissioned by InSite (San Diego-Tijuana, 2000); Throw (2004), commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki; David & Gustav (2005), a straightforward documentary presented during the artists' solo exhibition at Le Plateau, Paris; and Suitcases for Marcel (2006/2008). The Raimundos, The Severinos, and The Franciscos features some nineteen doormen, migrants from northern Brazil who work in a high-rise apartment building in São Paulo. The doormen remain all but anonymous to the tenants who know them by first name only. Subverting their anonymity, each man, holding a personal item, enters a very small apartment without touching, speaking, or looking at each other as, one by one, they fill the room. One of several objectives in this performative piece is to offer a counter-history of migrant workers whose duties include the care and protection of the buildings’ public spaces and, by extension, the private spaces of the tenants who employ them.

MAMA is a series of interviews with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Guards who describe their relationship to the dogs that assist and protect them as they enforce laws against drug trafficking and illegal immigrants at the U.S. border with Mexico. Dias and Riedweg’s questions to the guards are edited out of the video, leaving the viewer surprised by the sensitive comments of the officers whose affection for their canine partners (whose pictures fill two gallery walls) is likened to the love parents give their children. During these remarkable interviews, the authorities are filmed discovering and destroying drugs as well as finding and returning illegal immigrants hidden in vehicles. Their unabashed expression of maternal feelings toward their dogs presents a complex view of the crossovers and separations between duty, power, and love.

The subject of displacement, central to these works, is further explored in David & Gustav. Although the two artists
live and work in London, David Medalla, originally from the Philippines, identifies home as several places, while Gustav Metzger, survivor of the Holocaust, sees himself as stateless. Each became known in selective artistic circles in distinctively different ways. Medalla contributed to the countercultural scene in London in the 1960s and 1970s. As a writer, he furthered the understanding of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, among other artists. Metzger organized the now historic Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in London in 1966, attracting the attention of the international media and art community.

Suitcases for Marcel (2006/2008) presents twelve videos, each in a small suitcase. The videos show anonymous people picking up, carrying, and dropping off small, locked suitcases from place to place in Rio de Janeiro. The directorial instructions given by Dias and Riedweg were edited out of the final narrative, as they have been in all the above work. Thus in viewing the suitcases’ journeys, many details are left to the spectator’s imagination, enhancing the role of artifice in creating this and the other projects on view.

Milagros de la Torre
Y Gallery
New York

Y Gallery featured Milagros de la Torre’s first solo show in New York under the title Bulletproof. On this occasion, the Mexican artist continues with her personal investigation of memory and censure, always accompanied by subjects such as pain, fear, and the individual’s fragility.

De la Torre carefully captures the details and presents them to the eyes of the viewer in a neutral way, as if assuming the role of a mere narrator, in a chronicle where the human presence seems to vanish to leave any trace of objective evidence aside.

One might say that this exhibition constitutes a sort of small retrospective, for it encompasses several of the artist’s projects and aspects of her trajectory since the 1990s. This allows the viewer to trace an itinerary among her artistic career, from her well-known Censored, books censored during the Inquisition period, to the most recent series, Bulletproof, which consists of bulletproof clothing. She also showed one of the projects for which she is best known, The Lost Steps, images of crimes that shook the city of Lima.

De la Torre pretends to stir the dark side of the human nature and reinvent the sinister from a very personal poetries laden with sensuality and delicate rhythm.

Y Gallery presentó la primera individual en Nueva York de Milagros de la Torre bajo el título "Bulletproof". En esta ocasión, la artista mexicana continúa con su investigación personal sobre la memoria y la censura, siempre acompañado de temas como el dolor, el miedo y lo frágil del individuo.

De la Torre captura minuciosamente los detalles y los entrega a los ojos del espectador de manera neutral, como asumiendo el papel de un mero narrador en una crónica en la que la presencia humana parece desvanecerse para dejar de lado cualquier rastro de evidencia objetiva.

Se podría decir que esta muestra funciona a modo de pequeña retrospectiva de la artista, que engloba varios de los proyectos y aspectos de su trayectoria desde los años noventa. Esto permite al espectador trazar un recorrido a lo largo de su carrera artística, desde sus conocidos Censored, libros censurados durante el período de la Inquisición, hasta la serie más reciente Bulletproof, que consiste en fotografías de vestimentas antibalas. También mostró uno de los proyectos por los que más se ha dado a conocer, The Lost Steps, imágenes de crímenes que sacudieron la ciudad de Lima.

De la Torre pretende remover el lado oscuro de lo humano, reinventar lo sinister desde una poética muy personal, cargada de sensualidad y delicado ritmo.

Blanca de la Torre