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TRIANGLE FRANCE

—
ASCO and Friends:
Exiled Portraits

8 March 2014

— 6 July 2014

Opening: 7 March 2014.

Harry Gamboa Jr., Gronk,
Willie F. Herrón III, Patssi Valdez.
With works by Oscar Castillo,
Cyclona, Jerry Dreva, John Valadez,
Agnès Varda, Ricardo Valverde,
Humberto Sandoval, amongst others.



Asco, *Pseudoturquoisiers* (fotonovela), 1981

Color photograph by Harry Gamboa, Jr.

Courtesy of the artist. © Asco; photograph © 1981 Harry Gamboa, Jr.

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Triangle France, The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and Le Cartel are pleased to announce *ASCO and Friends: Exiled Portraits*, the first major exhibition in France of works by the artist group ASCO, active in Los Angeles from 1972 to 1987. As a multi-disciplinary group who came of age during the Chicano movement, ASCO employed performance, photography, film, urban intervention and public art to respond to the social and political inequities that surrounded them. Throughout ASCO's diverse practice, the concept of portraiture functioned in a counter-intuitive way, to simultaneously reject systems of erasure and to interject constructed images documenting an exiled, invisible group. Centering on works produced by the core founding members Harry Gamboa Jr, Gronk, Willie F. Herrón III, and Patssi Valdez, this exhibition looks at Asco's conceptual and experimental works within the context of portraiture, community and social exile by exploring visual dialogues between the group and other artists of the same generation and locale, including Cyclona, Oscar Castillo, Jerry Dreva, John Valadez and Ricardo Valverde.

In reaction to the absence of imagery of Chicanos in the collective media, ASCO appropriated cinematic strategies and crafted alternate narratives through self-documentation. These staged and constructed images are ironic to the extent that they put something new into circulation and public discourse, but they do so from the margins of an increasingly global media culture. Their works do not claim a neutral space from which the artists can proclaim a greater authenticity, reclaim lost traditions or engage in heroic depictions of an oppressed yet defiant people. Instead their images index a mythology of self within an unequal set of power relations. While that irony expresses itself differently among the artists in the group and the friends they collaborated with, in all cases the artists understand that they are documenting something that cannot be documented: the politics and the poetics of erasure.

ASCO made use of both public and private portraits to build occluded narratives in their work. The artists imagined the city itself as a backdrop for documenting themselves and as terrain for street performances, often conflating these notions. In works such as *Patssi Valdez*

with Self-Portrait (1972) by Harry Gamboa, Jr., Valdez is at once the sitter, performer, author and subject of the self-portrait painting next to her. Set on the street against a graffiti-covered wall, this photograph brings forward several levels of representation and complex interplay in one image. Similarly, interior portraits by ASCO and their friends depict "intimate" scenes in both authentic and inauthentic portrayals, thus signaling the private space as a location where certain kinds of social images are staged but at varying levels of disclosure. For example, *NO MOVIE Six Chapters*, (1978) by Gronk is suggestive of both a B-film narrative and early male "physique" photography, and touches on issues of gender and sexuality, while Ricardo Valverde's nudes question the orthodoxy of staged family portraiture.

In the realm of ASCO's performances, portraiture factored as a mechanism for constructing the self in fotonovelas, and in public events such as fashion shows and award ceremonies that referenced celebrity culture. With an emphasis on conceptual narratives, the group's charge derives from the affect associated with Hollywood film genres and how that industry blurs the distinction between production culture, publicity, and on-screen performance. Within these works, ASCO interposes an often absurdist self-portrait within the context of cinema and mass media, from which they felt excluded, while keeping the limits of these concepts flexible.

The works in *ASCO and Friends: Exiled Portraits* look at questions of presence and absence within the collective's production and associated artist friends. Notions of the ephemeral in ASCO's practice, including concepts such as rumor, innuendo, and gossip, often supplant factuality in the photo documentation of their work. In that sense, they provide visible evidence of events, but often function as more of a provocation than an absolute or empirical truth. Through the visual dialogs created between their works and that of their friends, a larger depiction of the erasure of image and displacement of portraiture emerges from the context of the moment in which the works were made.

Curators :
Céline Kopp, Chon Noriega and Pilar Tompkins Rivas.

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Asco, *Pseudoturquoisiers* (fotonovela), 1981
Color photograph by Harry Gamboa, Jr.
Courtesy of the artist. © Asco; photograph © 1981 Harry



Harry Gamboa Jr. *First Supper After a Major Riot*, 1974.
Color photograph. From left to right: Patssi Valdez,
Humberto Sandoval, Willie Herrón III et Gronk.
Reproduced with permission of Harry Gamboa Jr.
Courtesy of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center



Harry Gamboa Jr., *Tumor Hat (Silver and Gold)*, 1974.
Color photo representing Patssi Valdez with “paper
fashion” of Gronk.
Courtesy the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center



Ricardo Valverde, *Diane (Paper Fashion Show)*, from
Day of the Dead, 1983. Black & White photograph.
Courtesy of Esperanza Valverde

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Chon A. Noriega

Chon A. Noriega is Director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA. Since 2004, he has been Adjunct Curator of Chicano/Latino Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He has published numerous books on Latino art, media, and performance, and is editor of the award-winning *A Ver: Revisioning Art History* book series and *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* (both CSRC Press). Noriega has curated and co-curated numerous Chicano art exhibitions, including most recently *L.A. Xicano*, which comprised five exhibitions developed for the Getty Foundation's Pacific Standard Time initiative (2011-12). In partnership with the UCLA Film and Television Archive, he has recovered early Chicano works in independent films and video art. He is currently completing a book on Puerto Rican multimedia artist Raphael Montañez Ortiz (b. 1934) and a longitudinal study of online and social media strategies of art museums in the U.S.

Céline Kopp

Céline Kopp is a french curator and writer, director of Marseille's artist run space Triangle France since September 2012. In this context she recently curated the first solo exhibition of canadian artist Liz Magor in Europe, and produced new works by Jean-Marie Appriou, Andrea Buettner and Laure Prouvost. She is currently working on the launch of the online magazine COMMA. She has previously been curator for ART2102 in Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA), organized curatorial projects and residencies at Memphis College of Arts, Krabbesholm Hojskole, Skive, Denmark. She curated numerous independent projects in galleries in France and abroad and has contributed to many books (Phaidon, Hatje Cantz, etc.) and magazines (Uovo, Artpress, Domus magazine, Zero Deux).

Pilar Tompkins Rivas

Pilar Tompkins Rivas is Coordinator of Curatorial Initiatives at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). Since 2002, she has curated and organized dozens of exhibitions, working with established, mid-career, and emerging artists from North America, Central America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Previously she was Curator and Director of Residency Programs at 18th Street Arts Center, and has held positions as Arts Project Coordinator at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Curator of the Claremont Museum of Art, and Director of the Latin American branch of the Artist Pension Trust. As part of the Getty Research Institute's Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980, Tompkins Rivas curated *Civic Virtue: The Impact of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery and the Watts Towers Arts Center* for the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. She concurrently co-curated the suite of exhibitions, *L.A. Xicano*, at LACMA, UCLA's Fowler Museum, and the Autry National Center.

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/ About Triangle France

Triangle France is a non-profit contemporary arts organization, based in “La Friche la Belle de Mai”, a former tobacco factory located in the city center of Marseille. Triangle France aims to promote the emerging international art scene through a challenging and experimental program of artist’s residencies, exhibitions, events, new commissions, and publications. Triangle France supports the production and presentation of new forms of artistic activity and aims to create dynamic relationships between art, artists, and audiences both locally and internationally. Since its founding in 1995, Triangle France has established itself as one of France’s most innovative organizations supporting artists at a formative point in their career. Triangle France supports emerging artists as well as artists that are under-represented in France by collaborating with them in the development, production and presentation of important new projects that enable them to take new steps in their careers.

Triangle France organises residencies for French artists abroad with partner organisations and also hosts residents throughout the year. Among previous residents at Triangle are : Simon Starling (1997), Virginie Barré (1998), Jim Lambie (1998), Pierre Malphettes (1998), Bruno Peinado (1998), Damien Mazière (2002), Lili Reynaud Dewar (2006), Clément Rodzielski (2007), Kara Uzelman (2009), Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (2009), Emmanuelle Lainé (2009), Tim Braden (2009), Dominique Hurt (2011), Jean Alain Corre (2013), etc.

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About Le Cartel

Triangle France is one of the six members of Le Cartel, a federation of visual arts non-profit based in La Friche la Belle de Mai (with ART-O-RAMA, Asterides, Documents d’artistes, Le Dernier Cri and Sextant & Plus). This exhibition is part of the 2014 exhibition program conceived collaborately by le Cartel for la Friche la Belle de Mai in Marseille.

About The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC, established in 1969) has played a pivotal role in the development of scholarly research on the Chicano-Latino population in the United States over five decades. Its projects include cutting-edge research focused on the arts, education, media, economic security, and public health. The award-winning CSRC Press publishes books, policy briefs, a DVD series, and *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, the flagship journal for the field. The CSRC Library holds the largest archival and digital collections in the U.S. on the Chicana/o experience, drawing numerous scholars and curators from around the world. In addition to holding library exhibitions and public programs year-round, the CSRC regularly organizes research-based art exhibitions at major institutions, including *Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), *Art Along the Hyphen: The Mexican-American Generation* (Autry National Center), and *Mapping Another L.A.: The Chicano Art Movement* (Fowler Museum at UCLA).

For more information: www.chicano.ucla.edu

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ASCO AND FRIENDS: EXILED PORTRAITS

Curators:

Céline Kopp, Chon Noriega and Pilar Tompkins Rivas.

Production:

Triangle France.

Co-production :

Le Cartel, a federation of six visual art organizations :

Astérides, le Dernier Cri, Documents d'artistes, Group/ART-O-RAMA, Sextant et plus, and Triangle France, The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC).

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How to find us

Friche La Belle de Mai

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Hours

Open from Tuesday to Sunday 1pm to 7pm

Late night opening on last Friday of each month until 10pm

Tickets

6 € full price · 3 € reduced price

Reservations and Guided tours

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