

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORGANIZES THE FIRST MAJOR MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVE OF CONTEMPORARY ARTIST GABRIEL OROZCO

Mobile Matrix, a Monumental Sculpture of Reassembled Whale Bones, Is on View for the First Time Outside Mexico, in MoMA's Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium

Gabriel Orozco

December 13, 2009–March 1, 2010

The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art Gallery, sixth floor

NEW YORK, December 8, 2009—The Museum of Modern Art presents the first major museum retrospective of the artist Gabriel Orozco (Mexican, b. 1962), who since the early 1990s has forged a career marked by continuing innovation and has become one of the leading artists of his generation. On view from December 13, 2009, through March 1, 2010, this midcareer retrospective examines two decades of Orozco’s career in an exhibition of some 80 works, revealing how the artist roams freely and fluently among drawing, photography, sculpture, installation, and painting to create a heterogeneous body of objects that resists categorization. Works in the exhibition come from international public and private collections, including the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. ***Gabriel Orozco*** is organized by Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, with Paulina Pobocha, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art. It will be on view in The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art Gallery, sixth floor.

Mobile Matrix (2006), a monumental sculpture composed of a reassembled gray-whale skeleton, is installed on the second floor in the Museum’s Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium. Orozco was commissioned to make the sculpture by Mexico’s National Council for Culture and the Arts for its permanent home in the Biblioteca Vasconcelos in Mexico City. Its inclusion in this exhibition marks the first time it has been seen outside of that library. After excavating the bones from the Isla Arena in Baja California Sur, Orozco and a team of approximately 20 assistants used some 6,000 mechanical pencils to draw lines on the whale that relate to its structure. Dark solid circles are surrounded by numerous series of concentric rings that overlap and collide with each other.

Explains Ms. Temkin, “Orozco’s transformation of the concept of sculpture—via innumerable mediums and methods—makes him a central figure of his generation. Sixteen years after his debut in MoMA’s Projects series, this exhibition explores both the consistency and the surprising evolution of his artistic approach.”

Orozco was born in 1962 in Jalapa, in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, to Cristina Félix Romandía, a student of classical piano, and Mario Orozco Rivera, a mural painter and art professor at the Universidad Veracruzana. In 1981, Orozco enrolled at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas (ENAP), a division of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), from which he graduated in 1984. In 1986, to broaden his knowledge of contemporary art practice, Orozco left Mexico City for Madrid. There he enrolled in courses at the Círculo de Bellas Artes and, using Madrid as a base, traveled throughout Europe; but by 1987, he returned to Mexico City. He formed a workshop with other artists—Damián Ortega, Gabriel Kuri, Abraham Cruzvillegas, and Dr. Lakra (Jerónimo López Ramírez)—and worked with this group for the next five years.

Orozco spent the 1990s traveling to cities throughout the world, and many of his works are emblematic of the locations where they were made. Bringing together objects originally created for autonomous settings and contexts, Orozco and Ms. Temkin have conceived this exhibition as a new landscape. Rather than offering a chronological or linear account of Orozco's body of work, this exhibition celebrates the experimentation that lies at the heart of his practice. Orozco's works are variously cerebral and spontaneous, convivial and hushed, the result of painstaking planning and fortunate accident. The exhibition highlights the diversity of Orozco's materials and the variety of his methods while presenting an oeuvre that is unique in its formal power and intellectual rigor.

Art and life combine in Orozco's work. Shown for the first time outside Mexico, a new work titled *Eyes Under Elephant Foot* (2009) is made of a section of a Beaucarnea tree trunk into which glass eyes have been set. To create *My Hands Are My Heart* (1991), the artist squeezed a ball of clay between his two hands, forming a heart-shaped object that reveals the process of its making. Rather than using a fine-art material, Orozco used clay made in a brick factory in Mexico. Like many of his early works, this object proceeds from a modesty of materials and simplicity of gesture, reducing the act of sculptural creation to its bare but potent essentials. Nearby are two photographs showing the artist with *My Hands Are My Heart*, exemplifying the close relationship that exists between photography and sculpture in Orozco's work.

Among the works recreated here, only one is presented in a way that echoes its original installation: *Yogurt Caps* (1994), which was first shown in Orozco's debut exhibition at Marian Goodman Gallery in New York in 1994. Four blue-rimmed Dannon yogurt lids affixed to four otherwise empty walls punctuate the visual field so minimally as to be barely perceptible; by demarcating the perimeter of the gallery, Orozco's intervention throws the emptiness of the room into focus.

For many of his sculptures from the 1990s, Orozco altered ready-made objects, such as an elevator, a car, or a bicycle. Without concealing the original object's function or transforming its principal identity, he instead heightened its defining characteristics. *La DS* (1993) is a streamlined version of the already sleek Citroën DS, made in Paris, where the cars were manufactured. Orozco cut a 1960s model in thirds lengthwise, removed about two feet of width

from the center, and reassembled the two remaining sections to create a version of the original that exaggerates its aerodynamic design.

Photography has been an essential component of Orozco's practice throughout his career. There are images of objects he manipulated into sometimes poetic or humorous assemblages, and straightforward pictures of ready-made sculptural situations just as he found them. *Until You Find Another Yellow Schwalbe* (1995), comprising 40 color prints, is Orozco's lighthearted diary of his travels around Berlin. While riding his own yellow Schwalbe scooter—a popular motorbike produced in East Germany during the 1960s—he searched for other yellow Schwalbe scooters. Orozco parked his scooter next to nearly identical ones as he found them, and photographed them, eventually forming the series of 40 prints. By photographing these East German relics that punctuate the landscape of a unified Berlin, Orozco invokes Germany's divided past.

In 2004, Orozco began to paint circles first on canvas and then on wood. Using a computer and drafting software, Orozco created a design template for a large series of paintings collectively titled *Samurai Tree Invariants* (2004, ongoing). Every panel in the series features four colors (gold, white, red, and blue) distributed across the canvas based on the movement of a knight in a game of chess. Alongside the *Invariants*, Orozco has also produced a body of paintings, such as *Kytes Tree* (2005), whose compositional structures are unique to each work. Also on view are works like *Fertile Structure* (2008), made with graphite on a plaster-primed wood support. Melding painting and drawing, this recent work acknowledges the origins of Orozco's painterly enterprise while suggesting the possibility of endless variation.

The provisional objects of Orozco's *Working Tables, 2000–2005* illustrate the artist's hand and mind in action, and provide an intimate look at his working process. The tables display prototypes for finished works, the beginnings of projects never realized, and found objects the artist kept for one reason or another—all things on their way to becoming sculpture. Several of the objects included in *Working Tables, 2000–2005* relate directly to the finished sculptures, such as *Floating Sinking Shell 2* (2004) and *Double Tail* (2002).

The exhibition will travel to three other museums after MoMA: Kunstmuseum Basel (April 18 to August 10, 2010); Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (September 15, 2010, to January 3, 2011); and the Tate Modern, London (January 19 to April 25, 2011). Each exhibition will be a uniquely designed collaboration between the artist and the institution where it is presented.

SPONSORSHIP:

Major support for the exhibition, is provided by the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONACULTA), and Fundación Televisa, Mexico.

Additional funding is provided by MoMA's Wallis Annenberg Fund for Innovation in Contemporary Art through the Annenberg Foundation and by Jerry I. Speyer and Katherine G. Farley.

ABOUT THE CURATOR:

Ann Temkin was appointed The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern in 2008. In this role, she guides all aspects of the

department, including its installations, acquisitions, exhibitions, and loan programs. Previously Ms. Temkin served as The Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Curator of Painting and Sculpture at MoMA (2003–08). From 1990–2003, she was the Muriel and Philip Berman Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She was curator at MoMA for the exhibition *Martin Kippenberger: The Problem Perspective* (2009), which was organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and *Monet's Water Lilies* (through April 12, 2010).

RELATED EXHIBITION:

Gabriel Orozco: Samurai Tree Invariants

December 9, 2009–March 1, 2010

The Paul J. Sachs Prints and Illustrated Books Galleries, second floor

On the occasion of the exhibition *Gabriel Orozco*, MoMA's Department of Prints and Illustrated Books presents the artist's *Samurai Tree Invariants* (2006), comprising a digital-print installation and computer animation, acquired for the Museum's collection in 2008. Of the 672 prints in the series, 460 are on view in this exhibition. Limiting himself to the circle's simple form and only four colors, Orozco multiplied, reduced, and shifted these elements according to a pre-determined system to create hundreds of sequential compositions on screen and paper. The resulting installation is an immersive space that combines digital precision with organic mutability, to mesmerizing effect. Orozco's *Samurai Tree Invariants* represents an expanded concept of printmaking that embraces digital technology and encompasses installation art. The exhibition is organized by Gretchen L. Wagner, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, The Museum of Modern Art.

PUBLICATION:

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue titled *Gabriel Orozco*, edited by Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art. It was designed by Pure+Applied in collaboration with Orozco. Critical essays by Ann Temkin; Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, The Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Modern Art, Harvard University; and Briony Fer, Professor of Art History at University College, London, provide new approaches to grounding Orozco's work in the larger landscape of contemporary art. They are complemented by a richly illustrated chronology by Paulina Pobocha, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, and Anne Byrd, an art historian and writer based in Brooklyn, New York, which combines biographical information with focused discussions of selected objects. These texts pay particular attention to Orozco's material practice and introduce the artist's own reflections on the work he has made. It is published by The Museum of Modern Art and is available at the MoMA Stores and online at www.momastore.org. It is distributed to the trade through Distributed Art Publishers (D.A.P) in the United States and Canada, and Thames + Hudson outside North America. Hardcover: 256 pages; 500 color illustrations. \$55.

AUDIO GUIDE:

A MoMA Audio program for the exhibition includes commentaries by Ann Temkin and Gabriel Orozco. The audio program is available at the Museum free of charge, courtesy of Bloomberg; and as a podcast on www.moma.org/audio and iTunes. MoMA Audio is a collaboration between The Museum of Modern Art and Acoustiguide, Inc.

EXHIBITION WEBSITE:

The exhibition website, www.moma.org/gabrielorozco, features approximately 90 works, along with roughly 60 pages from the artist's notebooks. Navigation will allow visitors to explore Orozco's work both chronologically and associatively. Audio and texts explain the significance of certain works. Video of the installation will also be featured. The site was designed by Shannon

Darrough, Senior Media Developer, Department of Digital Media, The Museum of Modern Art, and developed by Sastry Appajosyula, RenderMonkey Design. It will launch on December 13, 2009, in conjunction with the public opening of the exhibition, but will be up for preview starting December 8, 2009.

VIDEO:

Clips of the exhibition will be posted to MoMA's YouTube Channel and on MoMA.org. Please visit:
YouTube: www.youtube.com/MoMAdvideos
MoMA.org Exhibition page: www.moma.org/gabrielorozco
MoMA.org Multimedia page: www.moma.org/multimedia

PROGRAMS:

A Conversation between Briony Fer, Gabriel Orozco, and Ann Temkin

Tuesday, December 15, 6:30 p.m.
The Celeste Bartos Theater, 4 West 54 Street

Briony Fer, Professor of History of Art, University College, London, and Ann Temkin, organizer of the exhibition *Gabriel Orozco*, engage the artist in a conversation about his practice and exhibition. Tickets (\$10; members \$8; students, seniors, and staff of other museums \$5) can be purchased online or at the lobby information desk and the film desk. Tickets are also available online at www.moma.org/thinkmodern.

Gabriel and the Whale

Tuesday, February 9, 6:30 p.m.
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2, 11 West 53 Street

Archeologists, paleontologists, scientists, historians, and others discuss the search for and recovery of a whale skeleton from the shores of Mexico, and how it became a work of art by artist Gabriel Orozco. Tickets (\$10; members \$8; students, seniors, and staff of other museums \$5) can be purchased online or at the lobby information desk and the film desk. Tickets are also available online at www.moma.org/thinkmodern.

Brown Bag Lunch Lectures

February 8 and 11, 12:30–1:15 p.m.

Gabriel Orozco

Paulina Pobocha, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art, will give lunchtime lectures exploring the work of Gabriel Orozco. Attendees may bring their own lunches. Tickets (\$5; members, students, seniors, and staff of other museums \$3) can be purchased at the lobby information desk, at the film desk, or in the Education and Research Building lobby.

TRAVEL:

The exhibition will travel to the Kunstmuseum Basel, where it will be on view from April 18 to August 10, 2010; the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, where it will be on view from September 15, 2010, to January 3, 2011; and the Tate Modern, where it will be on view from January 19 to April 25, 2011.

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PRESS CONTACT:

Meg Blackburn, (212) 708-9757, meg_blackburn@moma.org

For downloadable high-resolution images, register at www.moma.org/press.

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400

Website: www.moma.org

Blog: www.moma.org/insideout

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MuseumofModernArt

Twitter: www.twitter.com/MuseumModernArt

Videos: www.youtube.com/momavideosFlickr: www.flickr.com/groups/themuseumofmodernart/

Hours: Wednesday through Monday: 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Friday: 10:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Closed Tuesday

Museum Admission: \$20 adults; \$16 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$12 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Target Free Friday Nights 4:00-8:00 p.m.

Film Admission: \$10 adults; \$8 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D. \$6 full-time students with current I.D. (For admittance to film programs only)

Holiday Hours 2009: Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, November 26), closed
Christmas Eve (Thursday, December 24), 10:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (Museum closes early)
Christmas Day (Friday, December 25), closed
Saturday, December 26-Monday, January 4, 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. (Museum opens one hour early)
Tuesday, December 29, 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
New Year's Day (Friday, January 1), 9:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.