



Extension of Reflection, 1992, Cibachrome

DIRECTIONS
GABRIEL OROZCO
EXTENSION OF REFLECTION

June 10–September 6, 2004



Sleeping Dog, 1990, Cibachrome

ALTHOUGH HE HAS NEVER CONSIDERED HIMSELF a photographer, Gabriel Orozco's photographs stand out with arresting clarity from the rest of his work: a varied production that includes sculptures, installations, drawings, photographs, and videos, interrelated in a fluid process that expresses the artist's belief in the "liquidity of things."¹ Integral to all of these practices are his interventions with the world as he finds it. His photographs are characterized by formal restraint, elegance, and understatement, as well as by his unfailing eye for color and the interplay of forms. Coexisting with their formal beauty is their haunting chimerical strangeness—bringing together seemingly disparate elements into one image, like the mythical creature from Greek mythology composed of a lion, a goat, and a serpent—a quality that the writer Jean Fisher has identified in all of his work.²

"The camera is a way of awareness," Orozco states in the documentary video *Art 21*. He refers to the studio as "an artificial place, like a bubble."³ Orozco's photographs document chance sightings such as a dog sleeping, seemingly impossibly, on an almost vertical pile of rocks (*Sleeping Dog*, 1990) or the artist's impromptu interventions in assorted settings, such as cans of cat food rearranged on a pile of watermelons in a New York supermarket (*Cats and Watermelons*, 1992) and fake plastic food located in incongruous places throughout the streets of Tokyo (*Lemon Distance Call*, *Love Affair*, and *Sandwich Steps*, all 2000). Some of these are quite hilarious because they are so obviously set up. But many of his images fall in between: the possibilities exist for the subjects to be found "as is" or to have been intervened with so gently that the intervention is almost imperceptible. *Common Dream*, 1996, shot in India, captures the uncanny configuration that older sheep naturally take to protect the younger sheep from the heat, forming a circle around them. *Turista Maluco*, 1991, was photographed at a market in Brazil just after it had closed for the day. Orozco picked up leftover and discarded oranges and placed one in the center of each table, then photographed this rearrangement, creating an improbable visual experience of bouncing orange balls. In *Traffic Worm*, 1993, he laid balls, or

"worms," of plasticine over a *National Geographic* illustration of an urban traffic jam and rephotographed the page, producing a vertigo-inducing image that plays with perception and creates inverted levels of reality. *Paper Clipped*, 1995, also evolved from direct manipulation of simple materials, in this case a piece of paper, folded and held together with a paper clip, which he then photographed as an elegant abstract form. *Extension of Reflection*, 1992, like *Tourista Maluco*, documents an impromptu intervention in a found setting. The artist rode his bicycle back and forth between two puddles and photographed the pattern made by his tires:

I was in the East River Park with my camera and it had just rained and the light was very beautiful and it was full of reflections... then there were all these cycling guys going really fast and I was there with my \$100 bicycle, and they were fast and avoiding all the puddles and I was thinking that they didn't need to avoid the puddles... What I did was just to cross them and instead of avoiding them, I made a personal situation absurd, connected it to the puddle. And it is an extension of reflection because you see the reflection of the branches in water and the extension of the lines.⁴

Extension of Reflection brings together in one image many of Orozco's repeated and signature photographic tropes: his love of reflection, light, and circular forms—flat circles, round spheres, puddles of water with radiating ripples—to which his sculptures and drawings are also related.

Orozco's photographs seem to be inhabited by something like a life force: a sleeping dog and other powerful animal and earth images; oranges that seem to bounce from table to table, not literally, but visually across the picture plane; puddles alive with the movement of ripples and reflection; the bustle of a Mexican town seen from above with thousands of details seeming to sparkle in the light; little dots of color jumping out from images that at first seem uniform in hue. Whether living creatures animated by their own animal-ness or objects put into play and animated by the artist—pebbles tossed into pools of water to create ripples, coins on a window—all of Orozco's subjects fully



inhabit their spaces, they are never passively there. Even when humorous, there is a profound sense of biological cycles in Orozco's images: food, excrement, life and death—from the powerful image of a sleeping dog (startling because it at first appears to be dead and, only after we have read the title, does it seem so warmly and palpably alive) to the sculptural forms of dead leaves in the lush, abundant forests of Costa Rica, or cemeteries in the desert of Mali. Often Orozco's images are of sleep, that mysterious transitional place between life and death. He frequently photographs his subjects through screens or fences and from angles that make it difficult to discern their scale, size, or orientation in space. Rarely are humans the subject of his work, but their absence is often palpable, as in the stains left on the walls above the plastic chairs in an empty, dilapidated waiting room (*Waiting Chairs*, 1998) or in other discarded and transformed remnants of human activity.

Games are important in Orozco's work. "What I like about games," he says in *Art 21*, "is that [each one] is a thing in its own—a world in its own. And you just live in it, a new space." Games have often been the subject of Orozco's drawings and collages. Among the sculptural objects he has created are an oval billiards table, a four-sided ping pong table with a little pond in its center, and a chess board with only knights for playing pieces. Like these puzzling playing fields for which only Orozco seems to know the rules, each of his photographs also contains the space of a game. Each one is a whole world of its own. And you just live in it—a new space.

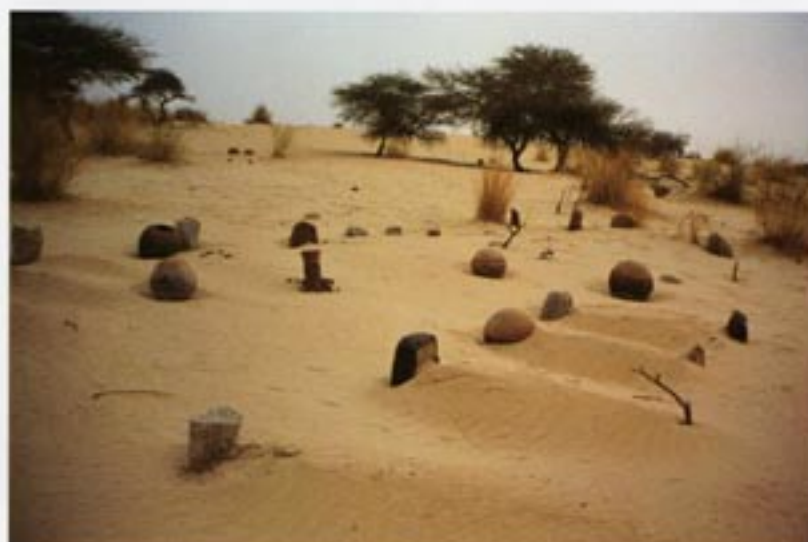
—Phyllis Rosenzweig, Curator of Works on Paper



Common Dream, 1996, Cibachrome
Turista Maluco, 1991, C-print

Hoja Suspendida, 2001, Cibachrome

- 1 Daniel Bimbaum, "A Thousand Words: Gabriel Orozco Talks About his Recent Films," *Artforum* 36 (summer 1998), p. 115.
- 2 "Closer to the workings of dream than to rational thought, the camera is drawn from the enigmatic and archaic strata of the mind-body," Jean Fisher, "The Sleep of Wakefulness," *Gabriel Orozco*. Exh. Cat. (Kortrijk, Belgium: The Kanaal Art Foundation, 1993), p. 18.
- 3 All quotes from the artist are drawn from *Art 21* (<http://www.phs.org/art21/artists/orozco/>) unless otherwise indicated.
- 4 "Gabriel Orozco: The power to transform," Interview by Robert Scott, *Art Press* 225 (June 1997), p. 25.



Cemetery (View IV), 2002, Fuji crystal chromogenic archival C-print

BIOGRAPHY:

Gabriel Orozco was born in Jalapa, Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1962. He studied painting at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas in Mexico City, 1981–84, and at the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid, 1986–87. Orozco has been the subject of one-person exhibitions at the Kanaal Art Foundation, Kortrijk, Belgium (1993); The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Kunsthalle Zurich; Artangel, London (1996); the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1997); the Musée d'Arte Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1998); Portikus, Frankfurt (2000); and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, (2000 traveled to Mexico City and Monterrey, Mexico). *Sculpture of the Americas into the Nineties*, Museum of Modern Art of Latin America (Organization of American States), Washington DC, 1990, was one of the first exhibitions in which he was included in the United States. He has been included in major international exhibitions such as Documenta X, Kassel, Germany, 1997, and the Venice Biennale, 1993 and 2003. Previous exhibitions of his photographs have been held at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (1996–97), and the St. Louis Art Museum (1998–99). He lives in New York City, Paris, and Mexico City.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

José Manuel Springer, "Spotlight: Gabriel Orozco: Placement, Displacement," *Art Nexus* 25 (July–September 1997), pp. 90–91.

Gabriel Orozco. Exh. Cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art), 2000. Introduction by Alma Ruiz; essays by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Abraham Cruzvillegas, Gabriel Kuri, and Molly Nesbit.

Gabriel Orozco: Photographs (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, in association with the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden), 2004. Essays by Phyllis Rosenzweig and Mia Fineman.

CHECKLIST

Photographs are listed chronologically and alphabetically within year. Unless otherwise noted, the photographs in the exhibition are Cibachrome prints, 16 x 20 inches (40.6 x 50.8 cm) sheet size, and are lent courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York. Titles are in English or Spanish or, in one case, Portuguese.

Piedras en la Reja 1989
Eaten Hose 1990
River of Trash 1990
Sleeping Dog 1990
Sleeping Leaves 1990
Tortillas y Ladrillos 1990; Collection Ricardo and Isabel Ernst
Turista Maluco 1991, C-print
My Hands Are My Heart 1991, 2 parts, 9 1/8 x 12 1/2 inches (23 x 34.5 cm) each
Extension of Reflection 1992
Cat in the Jungle 1992
Cats and Watermelons 1992, C-print
1992 Chalmers 1992
Five Problems 1992
Horse 1992, C-print
La Oficina II 1992
Sand on Table 1992
Breath on Piano 1993, C-print
Dog Urine in Snow 1993
Empty Shoe Box 1993
From Roof to Roof 1993
Island Within an Island 1993
Pinched Ball 1993
Seeds and Cardboard 1993; Collection Anita and Burton Reiner
Traffic Worm 1993
Wet Watch 1993
Ball on Water 1994
Coins in Window 1994

Big Bang 1995
Comedor en Tepoztlán 1995
Dog Circle 1995
Paper Clipped 1995
Sundial Banana 1995
Common Dream 1996; Collection Anita and Burton Reiner
Marble Game on a Rotating Field 1996
Path of Thought 1997
Two Trash Cans Up 1998
Waiting Chairs 1998; Collection John and Dede Brough
Knife on Glass 2000; Collection Ricardo and Isabel Ernst
Lemon Distance Call 2000; Collection Ricardo and Isabel Ernst
Love Affair 2000
Noodles in the Fence 2000; Collection Ricardo and Isabel Ernst
Sandwich Steps 2000
Hoja Suspendida 2001; Collection Ricardo and Isabel Ernst
Lluvia en Tokio 2001
Toilet 2001, Fuji crystal chromogenic archival C-print
Cemetery (Views I-VI) 2002, Fuji crystal chromogenic archival C-print
Mosquitero 2002
Rubbed Bricks 1991/2002, Fuji crystal chromogenic archival C-print
Total Perception 2002, Fuji crystal chromogenic archival C-print
Well 2002, Fuji crystal chromogenic archival C-print
Isadora's Necklace 2003, Fuji crystal chromogenic archival C-print; Collection Anita and Burton Reiner

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