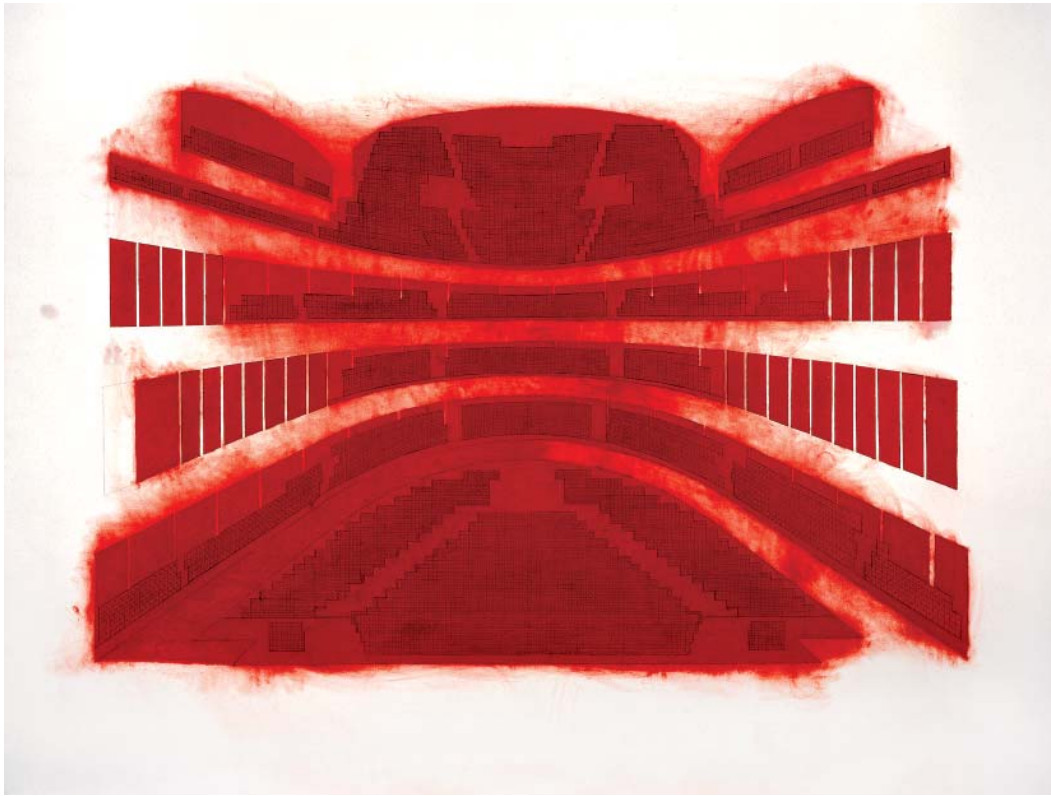


GUILLERMO KUITCA
EVERYTHING

Paintings and Works on Paper, 1980–2008



The artist's intense and often ambivalent relationship with painting is at the core of Everything—a fitting title for a retrospective that traces the evolution of Kuitca's work, both his paintings and works on paper, for it aptly describes the artist's creative ethos, an expansive sensibility receptive to multiple influences.



Mozart-Da Ponte I, 1995, Oil paint, pastel, and graphite on canvas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, 1995. Photo by Lee Stalsworth

Guillermo Kuitca's artistic talents were recognized early, and, in 1974, at the age of thirteen, he had his first solo exhibition at the Galería Lirolay in Buenos Aires. Throughout his thirty-five-year career, he has questioned what it means to be an artist and how he can persist as a painter. There were times, particularly during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the act of painting, declared dead by some contemporary critics, also seemed to Kuitca irrelevant. The medium's limitations frustrated him. So for a time he entered the arena of theater, as a director and set designer, and through this experience he came to envision the canvas as a virtual space, or even a battlefield, where the collision of materials, memories, images, and influences made painting possible.

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Kuitca's work, both his paintings and works on paper, for it aptly describes the artist's creative ethos, an expansive sensibility receptive to multiple influences. Kuitca's formative years are inextricably bound, on the one hand, to his own aesthetic explorations and continual migrations, and, on the other, to the horrific events that shaped Argentina during the 1970s. Coming of age in Buenos Aires at this time, he was witness to the torture and disappearance of thousands of Argentinean citizens at the hands of a dictatorship. Although acknowledging that these experiences have influenced his world view and his work, the artist considers his identity from a more global perspective, and his art reflects this outlook with themes at once personal and universal.

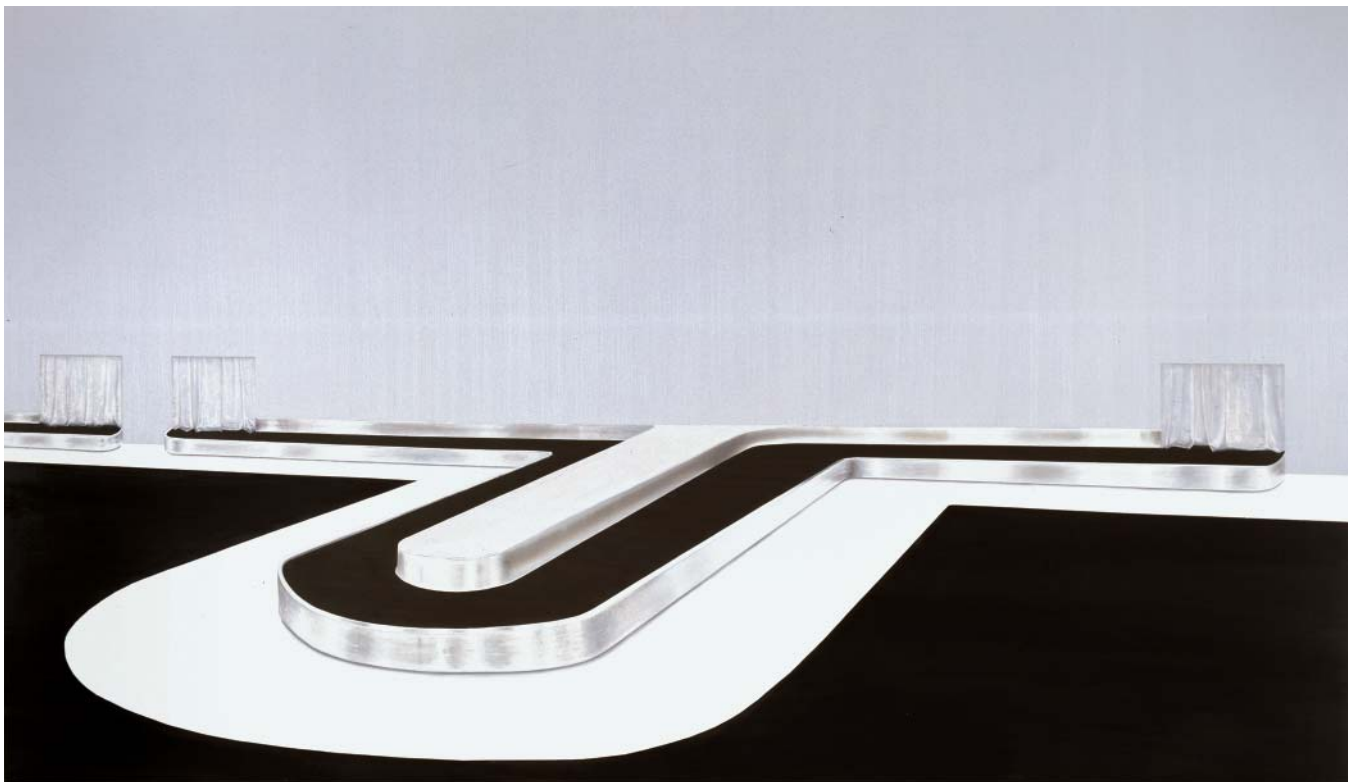
The exhibition begins with works from the 1980s inspired by Kuitca's involvement in theater both in Europe and Argentina during the early part of that decade. These canvases bear titles from plays,

literature, and popular songs, and their cavernous interiors incorporate tiny figures acting out mysterious and disturbing dramas. Themes of absence and disappearance inform later paintings in the series: haunting scenes populated with overturned chairs, sullied beds that appear to be on fire, and spot-lit microphones abandoned by the speaker.

Purged of figures, Kuitca's paintings from the late 1980s and early 1990s explore human interaction and migration through architectural and topographical renderings. Working with the floor plan of a one-bedroom apartment inspired the artist to foreground other types of domestic and communal spaces—plans of public institutions in *The Tablada Suite*, 1991–92, and geographical maps painted on canvases and mattresses, from the late 1980s on. The notion of a floor plan as an objective depiction of a location or the map as a navigational tool becomes, in Kuitca's hands, a vehicle for more poetic musings

about place and non-place, memory and loss, migration and displacement.

The artist returns to the subject of theater in 1995 with the *Puro Teatro* [Pure Theater] series, which represents the grand interiors of renowned theaters throughout the Western world. In these paintings, architectural elevations rendered from the perspective of the stage invert the spectator-performer dynamic. Once again, an inherently objective chart becomes a powerful metaphor for individual and shared experience. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Kuitca continues to develop various series inspired by plans, maps, and public spaces. The *Neufert Suite*, 1999, based on the building diagrams and data contained in a comprehensive architect's handbook, eliminates all signs of architecture to focus solely on objects (office furniture, exercise equipment, peep shows, and confessional booths) presented in the format of a



Trauerspiel, 2001, Oil paint on canvas, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2003. Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Untitled, 1998, Oil paint on canvas, The Rachofsky Collection. Photo by Tom Powel

blueprint. *L'Encyclopédie* [Encyclopedia] series, 1999–2001, reflects Diderot's attempt to consolidate the whole of human knowledge into a unitary volume, while the *Global Order* works, 2001, fuse world maps with domestic buildings to suggest that place and borders are fluid products of human invention and negotiation. The *Terminal* and *Trauerspiel* [Tragedy] paintings, 2000–01, based on airport baggage claim carousels, serve as metaphors for tragic journeys without end. *The Ring* series, 2002, traces Richard Wagner's epic operatic cycle of the same title through visual correspondences. And in the more recent *Everything* and *Desenlace* [Denouement] paintings, 2005–07, references to maps and art historical sources are liberated through abstraction.

The act of drawing stands out as an integral though intermittent part of Kuitca's creative practice and is manifest as linear articulations on paintings, notations scrawled on sheets of paper and circular

canvases that function as a tabletop in the artist's studio, large-scale collages, and small sheets of digitally printed images soaked in water that emulate drawing through their spontaneous qualities. Kuitca's affinity for paper, particularly when seen in the context of his paintings, reveals how certain ideas are sustained, reinvented, and abstracted.

Guillermo Kuitca's prolific career encompasses a diverse body of work and a familiar yet thought-provoking range of imagery. These paintings and works on paper inspire viewers not only to contemplate their relationship to the piece in front of them, but also to their place within individual spaces and the larger world.

Douglas Dreishpoon
Chief Curator, Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Cover: *Teatro Rojo* [Red Theater], 2004, Collage on paper, Collection of Diane and Bruce Halle. Photo by Tom Powel; Inside panel: *Heaven*, 1992, Mixed media on mattress, Collection Donna and Howard Stone, Chicago, IL. Photo by Adam Reich

GUILLERMO KUITCA: EVERYTHING

October 21, 2010–January 16, 2011

PROGRAMS

Meet the Artist: Guillermo Kuitca

Thursday, October 21, 7 pm; Ring Auditorium

Artist Guillermo Kuitca discusses his work with Graciela Speranza, professor of Argentinean literature at the University of Buenos Aires, on the opening day of the exhibition. The galleries will be open prior to the program.

Meet the Artist received federal support from the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center, and is also made possible through the support of the Secretariat of Culture of Argentina.

Poetas Argentinos en Estados Unidos y Canadá: Celebrando las Raíces

Thursday, December 2, 7 pm; Lerner Room

Join us for an evening of spoken word by some of the most eminent Argentinean authors and literary critics living in the United States and Canada. Recited in Spanish with musical accompaniment, this program features the poetry of Luis Alberto Ambroggio, Nela Río, Lila Zemborain, Mercedes Roffé, and Alicia Borinsky.

This program has been organized by the Smithsonian Latino Center, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and the Embassy of Argentina in the United States as part of the series *Argentina at the Smithsonian 2010*.

Lecture: Andreas Huyssen on Guillermo Kuitca: Painter of Space

Thursday, January 13, 7 pm; Lerner Room

Andreas Huyssen, Villard Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and contributor to the exhibition catalogue, presents Guillermo Kuitca's work in relation to recent discussions of transnational modernism and its imaginative transformation in contemporary art.

After Hours

Friday, October 29, 8 pm to midnight

Buy tickets online at hirshhorn.si.edu

After Hours celebrates Guillermo Kuitca's work with curator-led gallery talks, live music, and special performances on the plaza.

HIRSHHORN

Artist at Work with Youth: Dan Steinhilber

Saturdays, October 23, November 20, December 11
10 am to noon (ages 6–9) and 1 to 3 pm
(ages 10–13); Register online at hirshhorn.si.edu

This fall, aspiring young artists and their families and friends are invited to the Hirshhorn for a series of hands-on art-making workshops. After visiting works in the galleries, artist-in-residence Dan Steinhilber will lead participants in creative projects inspired by *Guillermo Kuitca: Everything*. Participation in all three workshops is encouraged but not required.

Support for educational programs is provided by the Vivian and Elliot I. Pollock Fund, the Lenora and Robert Burnstein Memorial Fund, and contributions to the Hirshhorn Education Fund.

Interpretive Guides

Daily, 10:30 am to 4:30 pm

Interpretive Guides are available in the galleries to answer questions about the exhibition.

Highlights Tours

Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 pm

Join our docents for tours of the exhibition.

Guillermo Kuitca: Everything, Paintings and Works on Paper, 1980–2008 is co-organized by Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; and Miami Art Museum, Miami, Florida. Major funding is provided by the Bruce T. Halle Family Foundation, AXA Art Insurance Corporation, and the Leadership and Honorary Patrons Committees for the exhibition, with additional catalogue support from Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros.

Leadership Committee: Moisés and Diana Berezdivin; Eugenio Lopez—Fundación/Colección Jumex; Mr. and Mrs. Steven Mishaan; Humberto and Rosalía Ugobono. *Honorary Patrons Committee:* Philip and Shelley Fox Aarons; Tiqui Atencio and Ago Demirdjian; Charles E. and Carol Balbach; Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Banta; Esty and Dan Brodsky; Ella Fontanals-Cisneros; Nora Kohen and Alfredo Ghirardo; Dr. and Mrs. Robert Magoon; Dr. and Mrs. Mark Oren.

The presentation at the Hirshhorn received federal support from the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center, and is also made possible through the support of the Secretariat of Culture of Argentina and Wines of Argentina.



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