



mercoledì 20 aprile 2005

Cos'hanno in comune superstizione e disco music anni '70, estasi mistica e trance sintetica, scintillanti membri virili (leggi: *sculturette*) e complementi d'arredo così algidi da apparire aberranti? A sorgere spontanea, per una volta, è la risposta: poco o nulla.

Così, per convincerci del contrario, **Delia R. Gonzalez** (Miami, 1972; vive a New York) e **Gavin R. Russom** (Providence, 1974; vive a New York) stilano un repertorio di ipnosi *take away* intorno ad un tema, sua maestà il rito, che con forza universale –e soprattutto primordiale– seduce e stordisce. Sulfurei frutti-amuleto, svettanti e vermigli come candeline; sonorità elettroniche estreme dall'impatto fermo e lancinante; astrazioni abbaglianti, tra il bersaglio e il mandala, di disegni indifferentemente neri o lattescenti, quasi miniati nonostante l'allure siderale. Insomma, cos'altro raccontare se non la verità dell'uomo "*before and after science*", come recitava un bel disco di Brian Eno di qualche lustro fa?

Ecco allora servito, tra antropologia e psichedelia, un trip massimalista –tutto è remoto, tutto è plausibile– fatto di armi e bagagli per l'occasione camuffati da chincaglieria. Sugli scudi, neanche a dirlo, la premiata ditta Energia & Liturgia –ovvero, ma soltanto in teoria, quanto di più estraneo la nostra epoca riesca a immaginare–, evocata dalla puntualità di un ghigno che sceglie di farti la festa, in modo fosco e divertito, semplicemente parlando, con dovizia di particolari, della festa e basta.



Si scherza col fuoco, insomma, a partire dalla fibrillazione torva dei titoli con cui questa coppia (per ora) terribile sceglie di presentare il veleno del proprio lavoro (*Evolution is Extinction*; *Dream Machine*: così le due precedenti personali newyorchesi). Fino a questo fluttuante *I feel love*, intorno al quale una galleria napoletana diventa uno spettacolo da non perdere, connotata –ovvero trasformata, e non è poco– da cima a fondo: un laboratorio-tempietto-dancefloor, perfetto per farti cogliere (letteralmente) in fallo, come fosse un'invasata qualsiasi, proprio la tecnologia. Per sorprenderti a stanare la storia e i suoi lacerti a braccetto con (tanti) totem e tabù, ancora una volta ma senza la retorica solita. Ebbene sì, al postmoderno non si arrivò per caso: tu chiamali, se vuoi, fiori della decadenza.

pericle guaglianone

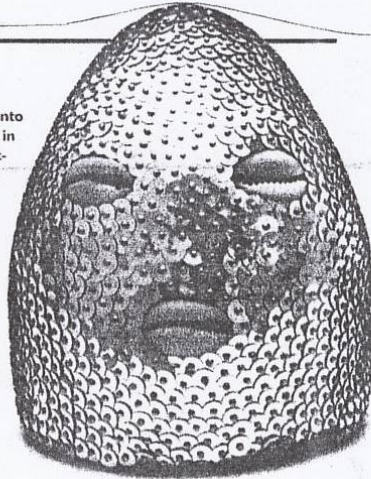
mostra visitata il 26 marzo 2005

NEW YORK

MAY 24, 2004

LAST SHOT NOTHING IS SACRED

Minimalism tends to separate the viewing public into believers and nonbelievers, and never more so than in the current blockbusters on both coasts. The eclectic spirituality of artists, dancers, and electronic musicians **Della R. Gonzalez** and **Gavin R. Russom**, at Daniel Reich, offers a worthy alternative to the Church of Judd. Reich has a weakness for New Agey, totemic installations (witness Nick Mauss and Shelby Hughes's crystal-strewn shrines last winter), and this show is no exception: Peering out from a landscape of black boxes is the mischievous, sequined face of Elegua (pictured, 2004), the Afro-Cuban guardian of thresholds and a reminder of just how varied religious experience can be. (Through May 22; see "Galleries: Solo Shows—Chelsea.")



The New York Times

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, JULY 12, 2002

Della R. Gonzalez And Gavin R. Russom

*Daniel Reich
308 West 21st Street, No. 2A,
Chelsea
Through July 21*

Delia R. Gonzalez and Gavin R. Russom often work collaboratively on performance pieces under the name Dream Machine, though at Reich they're each showing paintings and sculptures. Ms. Gonzalez draws on her Cuban background in politically inflected shrines dedicated to Santería deities like St. Barbara and St. Lazarus with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara playing the role of demons.

Mr. Russom's work also follows a spiritual path, but a trippier, more abstract one. His paintings and drawings, with their crystalline forms, astral symbols and triangular mountains, are like a combination of Joseph Yoakum and Joseph Beuys, and lovely. Collaboration comes in a video with the (to me) enigmatic title "Initiatic Journey Through the Vibrational System of the Planetary Eye." Its woozy color images look like television viewed through a dense filter, with artists in metallic makeup looking like space travelers or shamans.

Young artists are doing interesting, funny things with occultist theater and retro-60's spirituality these days. And when, as in the case of Ms. Gonzalez and Mr. Russom, the great Jack Smith appears to be an influence, you're already on sublimely funky ground. Reich has just published an attractive little book by them, and the artists will be offering performances, live and taped, at the gallery later in the month. Call for information and take your own headphones.

HOLLAND COTTER

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Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom

GALLERIA FONTI

Via Chiaia 229

March 24–May 06

In their first solo exhibition in Europe, Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom entice passersby to enter the gallery, luring them with the sounds of a synthesizer emanating from the gallery to the sidewalk. The sound is a fundamental element of the show, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the psychedelic and sensual atmosphere created by this New York-based duo. A series of collages, drawings, and small sculptures are positioned throughout the gallery. Near the entrance, bunches of grapes perch on three tall pedestals of laminated white plastic. A quintessentially Italian symbol of fertility and abundance, the grapes are completely covered in spangles, as are the surfaces of various phallic-looking sculptures. The gleam of the surfaces, the ironic and playful spirit of the work, and the ambiguity of the iconographic references catapult the viewer into Gonzalez's and Russom's surreal world. It is a complex exhibition, rich with meanings that weave themselves through the minutely detailed, Rorschach-like images in the artists' collages, which play with the contrast between references to '70s Italian B-movies and analogies with the avant-garde architecture of Superstudio.



Exhibition view.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

—Filippo Romeo

TALK BACK (0 messages)

< Milan | Naples | Rome >

New York

- Carter Mull
- Anthony Goicolea
- Mungo Thompson
- Philippe Parreno
- Nicki Stager
- Eliot Shepherd
- Gonzalo Puch
- Amir Zaki
- Wayne Gonzales
- Emily Sartor
- Marlene Dumas

Chicago

- "In Sight: Contemporary Dutch Photography..."

San

Francisco

- Tariq Alvi
- Tracey Snelling

London

- Guillermo Kuitca
- Rezi van Lankveld
- Carey Young

Paris

- Loris Gréaud

Milan

- Christian Boltanski

Naples

- Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom

Rome

- "Area"

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2005

ART REVIEW

Latino Art, And Beyond Category

By HOLLAND COTTER

At its most rapid, talk about contemporary art is marketing talk, hem-length talk, trend talk. Painting is back. Pleasure is in. Like that. And because trends are cyclical, there's always a "new" to talk about, even though it's old.

Ideas about art, as distinct from styles, also come and go. But they can be tenacious. Their vogue may pass, but they still shape art in fundamental ways. Historians writing decades from now will surely note the lingering impact of 20th-century multiculturalist thinking on early 21st-century art. And they will acknowledge the way identity politics, and its aesthetic of marginality, continued to transform visual culture long after being absorbed into it and rendered effectively obsolete.

We see this absorption in process in two large museum group shows that are serving as prequels to the new season. One, "The (S) Files/The Selected Files 2005," is at El Museo del Barrio in Manhattan; the other, "AIM 25 Artist in the Marketplace," at the Bronx Museum of the Arts.



Left, "The Faceless Soldier" by Fawad Khan, at the Bronx Museum. Below, Alfonso Muñoz's "Boy in a Mercury Forest," at El Museo del Barrio.



El Museo del Barrio was established in 1969 by a group of New York artist-activists, most of them of Puerto Rican descent, who felt themselves excluded from New York City's major cultural institutions. After a decade as a neighborhood fixture in East Harlem, the museum moved to Fifth Avenue and expanded its mission to embrace art of the entire Caribbean and Latin America. More recently it has been working hard to establish an international presence, while continuing to describe itself as "New York's leading Latino cultural institution."

Embedded in this institutional ambition is a changing concept of what "Latino art" means. And "The (S) Files," the museum's

Continued on Page 27

The New York Times

Exhibitions of Latino Art, Moving Beyond Category

Continued From Weekend Page 25

Modest biennial, now in its fourth edition, is a fair indicator of what that change looks like.

Organized by Deborah Cullen, director of El Museo's curatorial programs; Miki Garcia, executive director of the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum; and Marysol Nieves, curator of contemporary art at Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, the exhibition was drawn mostly from unsolicited proposals submitted by artists in the greater New York area. The resulting show — clean, well-schooled, coolish, with solid work, if no obvious center — is therefore shaped to some extent by the play of chance. But it also seems to reflect a continuing curatorial effort to break down the notion of Latino art and artists as a fixed category and to demonstrate its integration into the art world mainstream.

All but absent, at least at first glance, are elements that once virtually defined art as Latino, at least in New York: religious im-

Agnes Martin and slightly soiled flags. Once you learn that all the work is based on fabric patterns that the California-born artist remembers his mother and sister wearing in the 1960's, many other references open. Suddenly, pop abstraction becomes art about personal memory.

An ethereal sculpture by Milton Rosa-Ortiz, made from hundreds of clear glass shards suspended by filaments, is also a memory-piece, memory in this case being historical. Although Mr. Rosa-Ortiz has arranged the fragments in the shape of a curmudgeon cloud, an abstract harbinger of fair weather, the glass was gathered from the beach in Puerto Rico where invading United States forces landed at the beginning of the Spanish-American War.

Mr. Rosa-Ortiz is by no means alone in approaching art as a kind of critical, materialized poetry. Fay Ray does so in cancerous-looking collages made from images of guns cut from magazines; and Alfonso Muñoz in a photograph of a dark-skinned doll armed with a tiny ax, and set like a vengeful imp in a forest of antique silverware.

Even didactic pieces deliver their messages with an eye to entertainment, as in Carlos Agosté's clever graphic coding of machine, and Michael Paul Brito's "Ghetto Games," a video that turns an image of children playing on a found mattress into a slow-motion ballet. Carlos Motta catches the psychological manipulations of military training in an evocative merging of image and spoken text. Karina Aguilera Skvirsky, in her video "Blowback," uses horror movie scores to accompany a spectral army of global refugees marching through Central Park.

And a few artists subject old-school identity politics to an update. Jesús Negron, known as Bubi, one of four Puerto Rican artists picked by Ms. Nieves, tackles the overworked theme of Latino spirituality by turning a religious pilgrimage into a lewd, hairhopping binge. Ostensibly honoring a promise he made to his mother to quit drinking, he traveled from Puerto Rico to Mexico, persistently lugging her wheelchair with him and drinking all the way. He documents his via crucis with an archive of photographs, a video and a relic: the wheelchair itself.

In place of a huddled-masses view of immigration, Chio Flores offers, in a wall drawing, a wry, street-wise cartoon-strip account of her own move from Lima to New York just two days before the destruction of the World Trade Center. Another wall drawing, this one by the Bronx-based artist Wanda Raimundo-Ortiz, rips into the very idea of ethnic identity, specifically the "Latina" identity that women like herself are pressured to adhere to.

Ms. Raimundo-Ortiz has more work on the same theme in "AIM 25" at the Bronx Museum. No art institution in the city has been more diversity-conscious than this one. And its Artist in the Marketplace program, a 12-week residency that focuses on the mechanics of career development and culminates in an exhibition, reflects this. While all of this

year's 35 participants live in the United States, many were born elsewhere, including Brazil, Germany, India, Israel, Japan, Libya, Mexico, the Philippines and Croatia.

(the intriguing photographer Vlatka Horvat).

Comparisons between the two exhibitions are interesting. There is even less overt po-

litical work in the Bronx show than at El Museo. A text-based installation by Yusef Merhi and a group of drawings by Fawad Khan that includes a striking but enigmatic image of a blank-faced soldier, are pretty much it. At the same time, the shows have many points of formal overlap.

An assemblage sculpture by Brian Caverly, a cut-paper relief by Beth Gilfolen and a neon sculpture by Esperanza Mayobre, all at the Bronx Museum, have counterparts by José Enrique Krapp, Nicola López and Ilana Umita Garcia at El Museo. All this work, in turn, finds ready correlatives in Chelsea galleries, raising the question of whether smaller museums are serving as alternatives to, or mirrors of, the mainstream. This is not to say that the Bronx show — organized by Lydia Yee, the museum's senior curator, and Amy Rosenblum Martin, assistant curator — is without distinctive entries. It has its share, in Ben Colebrook's pointed sculptural recreation of the self-help section of a Barnes & Noble bookstore; in Ernest Concepcion's absurdist mural drawing of universal war; in an installation by Olen Hsu that includes a full-scale paper plane.

And there are two noteworthy videos. One, by Ivan Monforte, shot with a digital camera, shifts ingenuously from house cars playing, to hip-hop dancers dancing, to slices of moths attracted to light. With its grainy color and spacey metalism, it is strange and beautiful. Mr. Monforte is worth keeping an eye on.

So, maybe, is Steven Lam. His "Desperate Attempts in Making Something Out of Nothing: Toward an Illegitimate Practice" borrows from the wackiness of very early video art and adds slacker wackiness of its own. Unstylish style is part of the point. The only identity under scrutiny is Mr. Lam's as geek-anarchist artist. And the big idea, as suggested by the title, takes the form of another question, one that a lot of people have been asking in these postidentity, postpolitical days: beyond the film-flam of passing trends, where does art go from here?

Are smaller museums serving as alternatives to, or mirrors of, the mainstream?

agery, a rhetoric of political resistance and nostalgia for a rooted, preimmigration life. Actually, all of this is still in place, but in new ways. Far from taking the "Latino" out of art, much of the recent art presents a sotto voce, as a subliminal, oblique, even optional content.

This content is all but invisible in several Minimalist works. A delightful sculpture-and-sound piece by Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom, for example, looks like a cross between a mirrored Art Deco vanity, a set of Donald Judd boxes and space age furniture with a programmed hum. Only the addition of two bunches of sequined grapes suggests

a link to the altars of popular religions related to Ms. Gonzalez's Cuban heritage. David Cabrera's contributions are sparser still. Four collages of cut-paper flowers or stars on a solid ground have a gentle Mattis-like bounce. Six printed digital "paintings," composed of horizontal bands in indeterminate brown, white and blue, bring to mind

"The (S) Files/The Selected Files 2005" remains at El Museo del Barrio, 1210 Fifth Avenue, at 104th Street, East Harlem, (212) 812-7272, through Jan. 29. "AIM 25: Artist in the Marketplace" remains at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse, at 165th Street, Morrisania, (718) 681-6999, through Oct. 2.

The New York Times

By KEN JOHNSON

CONTEMPORARY sculpture knows no boundaries. There is no material or technology, from dirt to video, that sculpture won't pick up and exploit for its own ends, and there are no formal parameters like, say, the flatness of painting to constrain it.

Certainly there is no primary style right now setting visual or conceptual limits. About the only thing sculpture cannot tolerate, at least in theory, is being restricted to two dimensions. This makes sculpture a zone of enormous creative freedom.

The down side is, if sculpture can be anything, then maybe it is not anything in particular. It loses a sense of tradition, identity and purpose. And it becomes hard for people to care very passionately about it (the way many people still care about painting), much less evaluate it. If you think that artists, like children, need limits, you may not like what has become of sculpture.

Freedom or delinquency then? You could start an investigation into the state of contemporary sculpture this weekend by visiting gallery shows in Manhattan.

It would profitably begin with some historical stage setting, provided by exhibitions of Minimalist boxes by Donald Judd, an architectural excision by Gordon Matta-Clark and metal reliefs from the mid-1970's by Frank Stella.



Delia R. Gonzalez And Gavin R. Russom

An installation by the young team of Delia R. Gonzalez and Gavin R. Russom at the Daniel Reich gallery in Chelsea has an altogether darker mood. The artists have filled the gallery with boxy modules, all painted glossy black; they variously assume the forms of book cases, end tables and speaker cabinets.

Some have metal control panels built in with knobs for fine tuning the weird electronic sound effects that reverberate through the gallery. Square, all-black paintings hang on the walls and here and there are sculptures that look like rounded modern office buildings made of beach sand.

Also appearing in different places are odd little totemic, sequin-covered coneheads with cowrie shells for eyes and mouths. With a short, extremely low-budget, semi-abstract horror movie also on view, the whole show immerses you in a suburban, lower-middle-class Neo-Gothic romance.

delia gonzalez and gavin russom

DELIA GONZALEZ: BORN IN MIAMI/FLORIDA/USA IN 1972
GAVIN RUSSOM: BORN IN PROVIDENCE/RHODE ISLAND/USA IN 1974
LIVE AND WORK IN NEW YORK CITY

TOMORROW BELONGS TO ME 2001
MIX FORMICA, ALUMINUM, ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS, SPEAKERS, SYNTHOSINE, BRASS, PEARLS, FLUORESCENT LIGHTS
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE, BASED ON A MODULAR FORM, 10 SQUARE, 2 WORKS 11 1/2 x 12 INCHES, 2 WORKS 48 1/2 x 12 INCHES,
34 1/2 x 12 INCHES, 11 1/2 x 12 INCHES, 11 1/2 x 12 INCHES, 34 1/2 x 72 INCHES, 2 WORKS 34 1/2 x 24 INCHES

The precise, highly produced line and surface of Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom's modular formica sculptures draw as much from the industrial seriality and clarity of minimalist forms as they do from a scaled replication of the dimensions of Nazi monumental architecture. Arranged in this installation as if a model for Fascist urban planning, the pristine planes of the rectilinear sculpture also suggest a highly stylized bedroom set, conflating these distinct «sacred» arenas of private and public, personal and monumental. The glossy finish of the formica is polished to a reflective sheen, evoking a mirrorlike dissolution of surface. Elements of rococo ornamentation are also present in the addition of two sequined seashells, embellished with pearls and displayed in the display case like their own reliquaries of sources unknown, memories lost but still precious. The sound component of the work, embedded within but controllable on the exterior, is initially repetitive and electronic, though with sustained listening it seems to change, cycle

and breathe in a manner that mimics an organism. The sound evokes a concurrent thread of meaning in the piece, what the artists call «the sacred characteristic of disco culture and music with its emphasis on repetition, reflective surface, light and particularly collective ecstatic experience outside of any particular religious or political ideology.» Tapping similarly ecstatic theatricality, cultural transformation, and the exploration of political power, the piece is entitled «Tomorrow Belongs to Me,» the song that the Hitler Youth sing as things begin to disintegrate toward the latter half of Bob Fosse's Cabaret.

The artists' interest in Fascist architecture lies in the power still embedded in, even emitted by, those forms, and their potential for that energy to be redirected towards different goals. The notion of ritual resonates in the idea of the monument, of elevating and assigning power to a symbolic form, as does the clear (though manipulated) architectural

reference to classical temples. Similarly, like the titular talisman, the sequined icon sculptures become themselves baroque amulets, holding transformative power. As they write, «combining this architectural dimension with a vaguely familiar domestic setting and a reduced scale transforms its power from that of oppression into that of personal empowerment. The secular ideology behind these buildings gives their sacred dimension a much more egalitarian character ... This parallels the ecstatic impulses of disco culture, also secular, and focused on collective celebration of the body, glitter, beauty, and losing it.» Bringing together structurally similar ideologies and lifestyles in a single installation, coupled with the tension in the material contrasts within, conceptually evokes an idea of ritual and possible reinvention and transformation.



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GARDAR EDE ENARSSON
DELIA GONZALEZ AND GAVIN RUSSOM
TERENCE KOH
CHLOE PENE



Delia & Gavin
Vanity "Untitled"
 2006
 Peres Projects



Delia & Gavin
Fainting Couch 1
 2006
 Peres Projects



Delia & Gavin
Fainting Couch 2
 2006
 Peres Projects



Delia & Gavin
Untitled (fountain)
 2006
 Peres Projects

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

by Kathryn Garcia

Delia & Gavin, "Ceremonies of Consummation," May 4-June 24, 2006, at Peres Projects, 969 Chung King Road, Los Angeles, Ca. 90012

The work of Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom has long been a fusion of sculpture, music and performance, with references to the occult, Santería and contemporary ritual (their 2002 inaugural solo exhibition at Daniel Reich gallery in New York was titled "Dream Machine"). Their current suite of minimalist noise-machines at Peres Projects in L.A., titled "Ceremonies of Consummation," plays on the relationship between glamour and tragedy through the lens of Hollywood's own artist-mystic, Kenneth Anger.

In the opening scene of Anger's surreally moving 1949 short film *Puce Moment*, we watch the extravagantly made-up actress Yvonne Marquis. Feedback blares on the soundtrack as Marquis strikes glamorous poses in front of a mirror, and then throws herself dramatically on a puce daybed. She sighs, her eyes roll back in ecstasy, shadows turn the room light and dark as though the bed is moving through a passageway -- and then we see her lying on her porch, transported, the Hollywood Hills in the background.

Delia & Gavin's show is a monument to this moment of sublime, enigmatic transformation. Upon entering the gallery, you come face-to-face with your reflection in a theatrical gold vanity mirror, set atop a ziggurat-like pedestal of gold steps with a base of Artschwager-esque marble-patterned gray Formica, evoking Marquis' encounter with the mirror in the movie. Flanking you on either side are two sculptures of the same immaculate gold color, resembling the daybeds that function as backdrop for the actress' fainting in the film. The configuration has a riddle-like character to it.

Embedded within these objects are analog synthesizers that play pulsating, trance-like, repetitive drones, similar to the feedback on Anger's soundtrack. Music is a key aspect of Delia & Gavin's work: Their recent four-song album, *The Days of Mars* was released on DFA, a popular label with other indie bands like Black Dice and the Lcd Soundsystem, filled with synthesized melodic interludes redolent of Kraftwerk, Brian Eno and M83 -- somewhat more emotive than the drone emanating from the sculptures at Peres Projects, but with a common interest in playing around with listeners' expectations about musical climax.

The sounds from the Sphinx-like, mirrored objects produce an eerie, tranced-out feeling. The setting comes to seem like the elements of a Dadaesque theater where some ceremony is to take place, conveying divine, magical value on these objects. The prop-like character of the duo's work stems from their respective backgrounds. Both have been involved, with Christian Holstad, with the dance/performance troupe Fancypantz, while Russom has performed magic acts under the pseudonym The Mystic Satin, with Gonzales as assistant.

In Peres' downstairs gallery, a blue formica fountain lined in gold is centrally placed, sputtering ambient sound instead of water. Though somewhat of a departure from the glowing mirrors above and with no obvious Anger reference, the work continues the haunted, theatrical feeling of the rest of the work. (In fact, the piece was inspired by the duo's recent travels to Istanbul.)

A suite of accompanying drawings, installed upstairs from the main gallery, also relates to the idea of ecstatic states. Gonzalez has three works, each symmetrically composed and employing patterns of interlinked circles that resemble impenetrable mystical symbols. Russom's two drawings have a similar cryptic quality but use abstracted shapes that seem to be draft sketches for their Formica sculptures, emanating wavy colored lines -- a synesthetic depiction of the sound emanating from the objects?

The Russom images get at the heart of this show, depicting via color a world where sound fuses with sculpture in experience. The drawings make it clear that sound serves here as a kind of ecstatic "other space" that unfurls outward from the interior of the objects.

The fact that Delia & Gavin's minimalist objects are altars to Anger adds another layer of referentiality to their cosmic oeuvre. Anger's *Puce Moment* depicts an actress channeling her glamorous and tragic past, driving herself into a frenzy that transports her to another state of consciousness. Delia & Gavin's installation knowingly parallels this act, channeling the spirit of art's glamorous and tragic past -- Anger himself, with his tortured and personal modernism -- reflecting and refracting its spirit through their gold constructions.

These are the kind of ironic games with reference that artists love. What makes "Ceremonies of Consummation" special, however, is that Delia & Gavin's use their references as a jumping off point for something that feels genuinely like a gateway to an alternate reality.

KATHRYN GARCIA is an art writer in Los Angeles.

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INNER SPACE ODYSSEY
HOW DELIA & GAVIN ARE MAKING EARTH COOLER

MIND MELDERS

AT HOME, AT WORK AND AT PLAY WITH THE
THE VISIONARY ARTIST-MUSICIAN DUO
DELIA GONZALEZ & GAVIN RUSSOM.

BY TRINIE DALTON | PORTRAITS BY HADLEY HUDSON

MATT AND I ARRIVED on our bikes to this chic Berlin restaurant that had no sign, and I wouldn't have known we were at the right place had there not been a long dinner table set outside where a Stevie Nicks-ish redhead sporting a '70s military jacket sat next to a semi-crusty, spaced out guy with really long hair and a beard that looked matted as if he had just gone scuba diving; his locks looked like they were caked with sea salt. *I hope we're eating with them*, I thought, in awe of their awesome style. I also immediately liked them because we were gathered to visit mutual friend, artist AVAF, a.k.a. assume vivid astro focus, a.k.a. Eli Sudbrack, and friends of Eli's are all jovial and talented. Eli had just come from Brazil via London and was in Berlin for two days before going to Barcelona, or something. Next to him was artist (and also, like Matt and I, summer Berlin resident) Terrence Koh, wearing a buckled up Michael Jackson leather jacket. Then there was gallerist Javier Peres, the ultimate host, who'd just flown in from somewhere like Greece, England, or the U.S., and was stopping through before a trip to Estonia to pick up travel partner and permanent Berlin-resident, Danish artist Kirstine Roepstorff. The other ten people at the table were French or Spanish DJs.

I locked up my bike, sat down, ordered some champagne and a bowl of white asparagus soup, and introduced myself to Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom, the most stylish couple in the world. They looked like a couple I could relate to: same age as me,

creative, but with a way advanced fashion sense. I chatted with them while I waited two hours for the waitress to come out and tell me they were out of soup, and it was now too late to order more food since the kitchen was closed. Oh well, I enjoyed more champagne and listened to Delia talk about horoscopes and her visit to a highly-skilled psychic. It was a summery night and Delia and Gavin had only spent a few months thus far in their new Berlin apartment, where they moved to escape the New York art world and high cost of living. They met eight years ago in New York, where they're both from. Matt and I enjoyed discussing the beauty of discovering a new city with them. I felt a bond with Delia and Gavin, a sense of expatriate camaraderie, which imbued the rest of my stay in Germany with the comforting knowledge that other youngish American artists were living only blocks away. Even if I didn't get to hang out with them, since they had an intense traveling schedule, they were still there, making the city cooler. Delia and Gavin made Berlin feel less foreign to me.

Therefore, I first met Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom as visual artists. They've worked as a pair for the past seven years, used to be a couple but aren't anymore, and live separately, sharing each others' apartments; Delia's house is the art studio and Gavin's is the music space. I'd seen their sculptures, knew they were represented by Daniel Reich, and seen another piece of theirs in a catalog for a group show in Austria. Their sculptures look like



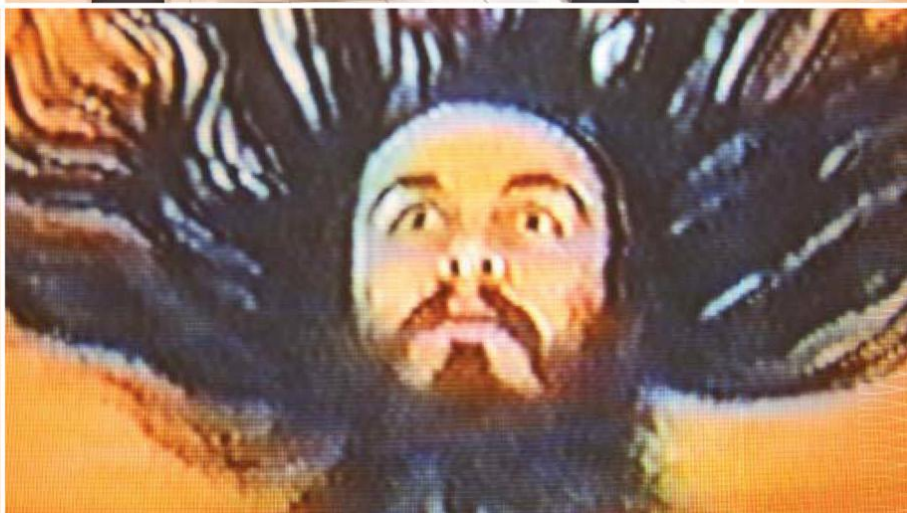
Dionysos from the "I Feel Love" exhibition in Naples, 2005.



"Synthesizer sculpture titled Tomorrow (right). These sculptures are made of simple modular forms in Formica, which are arranged to simultaneously suggest fascist architectural projects, minimal sculptures and vanity mirrors. They have analog synthesizers built into them that play meditative, repetitive sound based on the settings of knobs on a control panel built into the sculpture."

—D&G

"These two stills (below left and right) are from a video we made in 2002 called *Initiatic Journey Through the Vibrational System of the Planetary Mind*. The video goes through the color spectrum as a metaphor for the initiation experience."



minimalist architecture, gleaming and pristine, hypnotically formal, and are either covered in cowrie shells or sequins. Sometimes they're laquered or gold-leafed. They have a sort of punk-new age spirit, if one could mention the two together without extreme cheesiness. Their artwork's punk glamour is cross-pollinated by a fascination with the occult. The sculptures are inspired by Art Deco, the Golden Age of Disco, and '70s Italian horror movie sets; some pieces have religious undertones, referencing Latin-American and African ceremonial totems and shrines, and illuminated manuscripts. Human-sized cubes and cones

get cowrie shell eyes and mouths, transforming simple geometric shapes into magical talisman. Most of their sculptures are soundtracked by Delia and Gavin's trance-inducing disco.

But Delia and Gavin didn't begin as a collaborative sculpture team. Delia, originally from Miami, moved to New York in the mid-'90s to dance in troupes like Fancypants. Gavin, from Providence, was hosting magic shows under the name The Mystic Satin when the two met at a loft party. At first, Delia joined The Mystic Satin, while her and Gavin tinkered with prop making, set design and several varieties of modern dance. Since then, they've made videos, starring themselves,

about zombies who wander Times Square; performed live magic acts dressed as a ballerina (Delia) and a warlock (Gavin); danced in their troupe called Black Leotard Front, and played in a heavy metal band, Fight Evil With Evil. Their first 7" single (and straight-up music project) "El Monte," came out in 2004. Last October, hip electronic label, DFA (home of LCD Soundsystem and The Juan Maclean) released Delia and Gavin's first full-length album, *The Days of Mars*. They'll be playing some U.S. gigs while here for their art opening at Peres Projects Los Angeles in April. They'll also be promoting the release of their single and video, "Relevee," out

this month.

Days of Mars is like Brian Eno, Goblin, and Kraftwerk combined into four long synthesizer tracks that are ambient but layered with pulsating rhythm. Gavin makes their analog synthesizers. When you listen to it you feel like you're traveling to well, Mars. But their music is really more about life on Earth, Delia and Gavin each told me separately over the phone from Berlin. I spoke with them both as they passed their phone back and forth. Their wide range of interests reflect how limitless the idea of making art is to them. Genres don't matter. Music, video, dance, magic show, sculpture, drawing: they love it all. >>

ARTHUR \$ MARCH 2006

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ON SCIENCE FICTION
SOUNDTRACKS,
HOT LESBIAN AUTHORS,
AND HOMEMADE
SYNTHESIZERS

Delia: *Days of Mars* is named after a Winifred Bryher book. She was Hilda Doolittle's girlfriend. I had a little crush on her. It's about WW2 in England. Bryher lived in Switzerland, but when the Germans were bombing England, she went back to support her friends, and kept a diary. The way she described people's reaction to the war, the way they ignored everything that was going on, reminded me of Bush's reelection. Everyone was threatening to leave the country, revolt, but when he was reelected, no one did anything about it. Everyone was in denial. "Black Spring," the fourth song on the album, is also named after a book, by Henry Miller. I found out about that while reading Anaïs Nin.

Gavin: To make this album, we used synthesizers. I always related to music, and I wanted a more fluid relationship with my instruments. Building synthesizers was something I really wanted to do. In 2000, we were doing performances, and I wanted to make more synthesizer music. I made connections with people in NYC and over the Internet until I figured out how to build analog circuits using parts from Radio Shack and mail order electronics catalogs. I even etched the circuit boards in our apartment, until I figured out a more efficient way to do it. We use regular keyboards; since a lot of what we do is based on pulsing rhythms, the synthesizers allow us to separate out parts of the sound and give them their own rhythms. The sounds are mechanically generated so they interact with what we're playing.

But really, I don't know anything about electronic music. The only person I've been inspired by in that realm is David Tudor, John Cage's pianist. He did the "Silence 4'33" piece, for example. As a composer, his basic idea was that the score is a circuit. He built what he called Black Boxes, so that the music he composed would serve as connections between them. Then there's Louis and Bebe Berron, they made the soundtrack for *Forbidden Planet*. They felt that a soundtrack should not only be a soundtrack but also the sounds of the events in the film. There was the ongoing score then action sounds. They built a lot of their own stuff, and had this idea about the Cybernetic, that all instruments should have a life of their own. You'd turn the instrument on, it would create sound for a while,

then it would die.

What's interesting about making soundtrack music that isn't a soundtrack for anything is that it becomes an analog to experience. It's not fixedly about something visual, but to me it's a way to be very expressive. Also, it articulates something about living in a time of war. People are in weird states of mind. Critics make this surface comparison of our music to '70s synthesizer music, whether German or Vangelis, but that music is about escapism, creating an alternate world, whereas what we do is more about describing an inner world.

Delia: Since we make the instruments, there's already a story in them. We interact with the instruments. And since we've worked together for so long, we work so intuitively that we really just sit down and start playing. We think up themes for the songs on our own, but together we just play.

ON KENNETH ANGER,
PERFORMANCE ART,
DRESSING UP,
AND STAGEFRIGHT

Delia: Style is important to me. I'm definitely motivated by beauty, as well as Gavin. No contemporary styles fall into that category, though. Our pieces have entertainment value because we grew up watching TV and movies. Hollywood has influenced us. In that way, we are like Kenneth Anger.

Gavin and I always have a dilemma of how to look on stage. When we performed in the past, we made all of our costumes. Now, when we play, we feel like it's really us, so it's harder to come up with a visual. We're used to performing live in galleries. But our music now is more personal. Before our record came out, I was nervous to tour because I get so embarrassed. For our shows coming up, we are for sure renting costumes! Then, I can totally perform.

Everything I do is extremely personal. For our sculptures, we take more into account what people will think, but really, we're not even interested in that. Living in New York, it bothered me that so many people make art for commercial value, to get ahead. So we both made work against that. Our work is personal on purpose.

Gavin: Kenneth Anger makes me think of the aesthetics of magic. The most important thing is that magic or religion works. So in that sense, it doesn't matter if art is made to entertain others or if it's for yourself. You can look at Anger's movies as Egyptian Magic

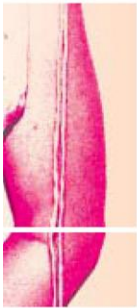
(continued on page 46)



"A drawing by Delia, from 'I Feel Love' in Naples. This series of drawings depicts a vision of the moment when an interior world is glimpsed through a crack in the corporeal."



The Other Side, a "Magic Show" from 2000 (left): "This performance was in Sweden. We did a lot of performances under the rubric of 'Magic Shows.' Basically the idea was to create a magical atmosphere using very poorly executed and totally un-mystifying illusions, disco music and a lot of fireworks shot off indoors."



DELIA & GAVIN'S PLAYLIST

Delia and Gavin are all into dance music. I got curious about it and asked them to make a little playlist as if they were DJing. —TD

Rhythm Is Rhythm, "Nude Photo"

Tony Conrad with Faust, "From the Side of Man and Womankind"

Gwydion, "Sun God"

Luciano Berio and Cathy Berberian, "Visage"

Love and Kisses, "Romeo and Juliet"

Meredith Monk, "Dolmen Music"

Cell Bee and the Buzzy Bunch, "Superman"

Boudewijn de Groot, "Nacht en Ontij"

Adonis, "No Way Back"

Alice Coltrane, "My Favorite Things"

Anything by **Blood on the Wall**



Vesuvius also from the "I Feel Love" exhibition in Naples, 2005 (left): "Fertility symbols given obsessive attention and repetitive glamorous decoration, evoking the trance inducing properties of late disco music and connecting them to the Bacchanal cult and to the Erotic art found at Pompeii."



(continued from page 28)

Tools, or Hollywood Spectaculars. There's this over-saturation to the point that it becomes ecstatic. What inspires me about Afro-Latin-American religions is that they take from everything. If some image from pop culture works in a magical context it becomes integrated into the system. The cool thing about music versus art is that music functions as entertainment even though it is really personal too. It's high intensity since it's social.

ON MAGIC,
CUBAN CULTURE,
AND THE OCCULT

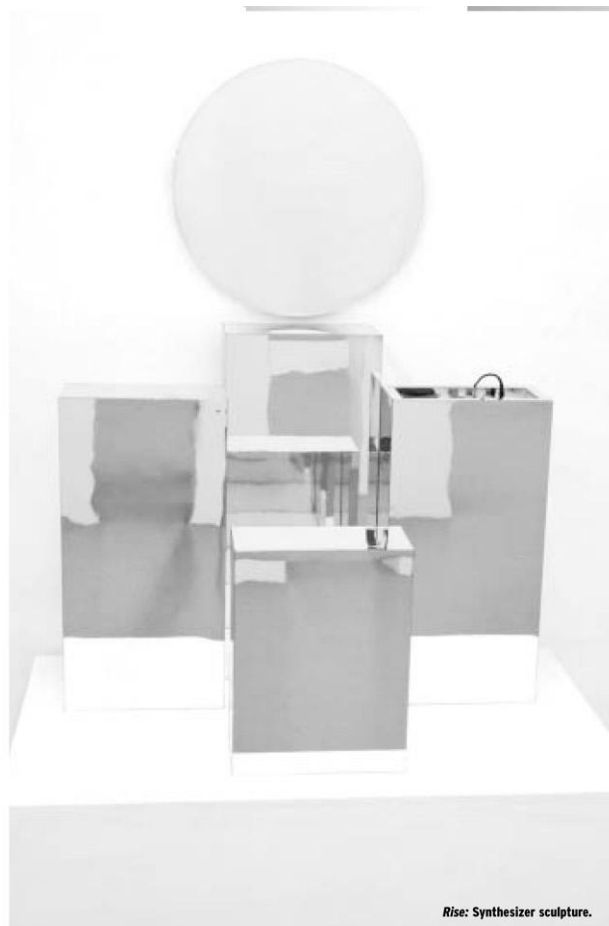
Delia: I have a definite interest in occult systems. My parents are Cuban, and Santería has an impact on Cuban culture whether you're into it or not. When I met Gavin, he was interested in Santería too. We're not involved in occultism, but we're interested in expanding our consciousness. We're interested in both the supernatural and natural ways of looking at things. There's a lot of struggle in our music. While we were recording *Days of Mars*, there were so many things I was holding inside that needed release, and I couldn't put them into words. Music is spiritual for me.

Gavin: I'm interested in trance phenomenon. As a kid, I wanted to put myself into trances. Going to punk rock shows as a teen was ritualistic for me. So I started researching occult ideas, and how they manifested themselves in other cultures. I was interested in meditation and the psychedelic experience, because in my mind, the function of music is to access some deeper state.

ON COLLABORATION,
MINIMALISM,
AND FINDING
YOUR CORE

Delia: We have conversations and come up with ideas together. Since we've been working together for eight years, it just happens. At first, it was hard for Gavin to work with someone else, and it was easier for me. There was a power struggle. But then we spent every second of the day together. We'd never spent a night apart, so we became in tune with each other. We exchange ideas all the time, so in some sense we're one entity.

Gavin: At first, we introduced so many things to each other. Then we searched for things together, and now we're back to showing each other things from different directions. Delia brings literary



Rise: Synthesizer sculpture.

influence. She knows about 20th century literary social circles, like the Surrealists, like the poets Hilda Doolittle and Edith Sitwell, and she's also aware of fantasy stuff. We're both hugely into cinema.

Delia: Our work is somewhat visionary, but mostly intellectual because ideas come out of conversations we have. The reason our work looks so bare and stripped down is because we're collectors, so when we lived together, we had too much shit. When you walked in, everything was about to fall in on you. That affected our artwork. We almost have too many ideas, so we want to strip everything to its minimal essence. Individually, our instincts are to make crazy, elaborate stuff. If we made things separately, everything would look way different. Our aesthetic is shared. We want to find our core.

©



Video still from *Day of Blood, 2003*: "We play vampires and go to Times Square. Using magic we make all the billboards, and eventually everything, bleed. While we were filming it, there was someone playing those Andean pan pipes really poorly. A loop of that sound is the bulk of the soundtrack."

Circus Circus

Norrtälje Konsthall

In Douglas Coupland's novel *Girlfriend in a Coma* (1997) a paramedic wheels a zombie with green, peeling skin, and a blonde dressed up as cinnamon candy, into casualty. 'China White. OD'd at a Halloween party' the paramedic informs the nurse. This scene takes place when the apocalypse is imminent. The narrative voice has just shifted from Richard (dressed as an astronaut) to that of Jared, a dead friend of the main characters, who is now a ghost. At the moment when Richard's girlfriend wakes from her coma of 17 years, not even the most precocious reader could have anticipated the book finishing on a note of L. Ron Hubbard-esque transfiguration.

Douglas Coupland's tableau of Generation X'ers with dissipated identities was echoed in the atmosphere of 'Circus Circus', a group

and Gavin Russom's hypnotic staging of Hårleman & Sjölund's classy magic tricks; Marnie Weber's formidable beast taming; Annika Eriksson, who organised a local teen Black Metal outfit to perform serene forest noises; and Paulina Wallenberg Olsson, who sang Swedish folk songs in national costume.

Obviously, visitors who came to the show after its opening night missed out on some pretty important action, although the video and sculptural works saw to it that the gravy didn't separate between one evening of live acts and the month-long exhibition. In fact, the bonkers, melancholy trip that was 'Circus Circus' was accentuated by the missing performances that could only be seen on the noisy documentation video. Highlights were Marnie Weber's Hieronymous Bosch-like, cartoon imitations of animals displaying traits of human frailty, *Poor Them* (2000) – 'with broken down bodies in pain they know the show must go on'. Her

Opening performances included magic, beast taming, and a Metal band playing serene forest noises.

show curated by Carl Frederik Hårleman, and artist Stig Sjölund. However, by taking the family circus of art to the extremes of chaos and sensationalism, 'Circus Circus' had the potential to delve deeper than Coupland's critique of a consumer-paralysed 30-something civilisation. In their catalogue texts, the curators claim that the idea of the circus has art historical precedents (such as Alexander Calder's miniature circus over which he was the lifelong impresario), and that it is present in the cultural studies of post-post-Modern (un)reality – for example, the casino 'Circus' in Las Vegas.

'Circus Circus' emphasised relations between the body, movement and technology. The opening night included performances, the video documentation of which was subsequently shown on monitors throughout the gallery. Artists included Delia Gonzalez

performances also included Tiger Woman with her head in a cage and Poodle Girl in an ambulator.

As you might have already guessed, humanity as a structuring principle was thoroughly displaced in 'Circus Circus'. Bigert & Bergström's *First Number* (2000), a short video-loop of a rabbit humping a teddy bear as only a rabbit can, is a Mike Kelley-esque fever dream, a meta-commentary about much of the art of the 1990s. Henrik Håkansson's *The Lure 1* (2000) is a portrait of misplaced desire: flies stuck to an adhesive sugar cube are displayed with entomological hyperbole – proof that desire is at once ancient, and a perpetual dream-like energy source.

Anders Lindgren's sturdy mechanic dolls, Lotta, Eva, Kajsa, Sara, Erik, Thomas, Magnus, Nicklas (2000), buzzed around the gallery until they bumped into objects in their path. Michael Joaquin Grey

showed his type of Space Lego called Zoob, a creative and scientific medium to supplement activities from art to zoology. Samples were provided to enable visitors to create their own circus acts and quasi-mechanical toys. Despite all the funny Zoob creations on display, the workshop was tinged with a therapeutic *unheimlich* you might otherwise find in less leisurely institutions than art galleries. So, after being confronted with wicked rodents and artificial catastrophes – such as Via Lewandowsky's sculpture *Beyond Equilibristic Practice* (2000), a section of a spectators' enclosure tilted at a 90 degree angle and precariously fitted between the floor and ceiling – 'Circus Circus' wanted you to play! When you're offered such a plastic coloured break from traumatic reality, you're more likely to break down and cry.

Goopy epiphany is never far away in a Douglas Coupland novel,

be it worldly or quasi-religious. Epiphany of any kind was a long way away from 'Circus Circus', a salutary concept only heard as a peristaltic lapse somewhere on the horizon of civilisation. Debasement dressed up like this sometimes feels really cathartic.

Lars Bang Larsen



Marnie Weber
Tightrope Wabbit
2000
Performance



Delia Gonzalez
Gavin Russom
The Other Side
2000
Performance