

March 6 - May 30, 2015

Two musicians perform together, from their living rooms in separate cities. Sebastian Cruz, originally from Chapinero, Colombia, plays half of a classical guitar from his home in Corona Queens, New York. Misha Marks, from TeWhenua, New Zealand who previously lived in Corona plays the other half of that same guitar from his apartment in Centro Historico in Mexico City. The artist Jane Benson has sliced the guitar in two parts, giving one to each musician to play remotely together, improvising from their distant cities, sharing sound via Skype.

At the United States-Mexico border, David “Cannonball” Smith prepares to be catapulted over the disintegrating barricade dividing Playas de Tijuana and Border State Park in San Diego, California. The event was staged by artist Javier Téllez as part of *InSite 05: Art in the Public Domain*. The context of the piece is an on-the-ground protest orchestrated in collaboration with psychiatric patients from a local hospital. Bearing placards, they demonstrate against their exclusion from society.

A crumpled male figure can be found in multiple locations on the sidewalks of Manhattan’s Wall Street neighborhood. The man appears to be in a resting position. Is he passed out? Perhaps he is homeless or intoxicated. What is evident is that he is on the outside. In fact, the man is artist Alberto Borea, whose studio was located for a



Lan Tuazon, *Architectures of Defense: Decorative Garden Gates*, 2010

year in a vacant office space at 1 Liberty Plaza in New York City’s financial district. Within these images, Borea occupies a position on the threshold, close to the boundaries between privately owned and public spaces, many of which are adjacent to corporate financial power, a stone’s throw from Zuccotti Park, also known as Liberty Park, where Occupy Wall Street began in 2011.



Javier Téllez, *One Flew Over the Void (Bala Perdida)*, 2005

These three projects, by Jane Benson, Javier Téllez, and Alberto Borea reflect the conditions of distance, exclusion, and placelessness, respectively. Where Borea - with his own body - makes an intervention into the order of New York City’s financial district that challenges the comfort found in what appears to be a working system (the sidewalks are clear, and public spaces are maintained), Benson and Téllez create situations to bridge the gaps between spaces, through two different

forms of performance and documentation. In Téllez’s *One Flew Over the Void (Bala Perdida)*, 2005, a human cannonball transgresses the boundary set to keep illegal activities, specifically border crossing, in check between the U.S. and Mexico. It is a large-scale spectacle in which patients perform a chaotic and emotionally charged pageant, chanting against the injustices they face in mental illness. Benson’s *Splits* project is comprised of duets played from remote geographic locations, creating a platform for musical dialogue between family and community members who are separated because of political turmoil. These duets have been played between Corona, Queens and Mexico City, between Iraqi brothers living in Bahrain and Cologne, and between states of Virginia and New York. Building on these split performances, Benson produces sculptures that incorporate halves of



Alberto Borea, *Wall Street*, 2013

Much of Lan Tuazon’s work is directly connected to her experience of moving from the Philippines to the United States, where she was confronted with a very different urban landscape, with public space defined and outlined by fencing and barricades, even in recreational areas. In her practice Tuazon addresses the order of things as they relate to built and imaginary environments. Of her series of sculptures and prints that make up *Architectures of Defense*, 2010, Tuazon writes, “spaces are not natural; they are socially made and are products of political and capital values...the demarcating line that creates spaces of difference, in and out, here and there, is essentially what characterizes an exclusionary definition of an ‘us’ and ‘them.’” She goes on to say, “*Architectures of Defense* is a demonstration of how history, the law, and class structures are written on the physical environment.” The sculptures are the basis for the prints featured in the

exhibition, and start with several layers of wrought iron fencing, which reveal the absurdity of placing fencing around so-called public spaces like civic parks and school yards. If these spaces are truly public, then why is there a need to keep people out, and who is being kept out? This series of prints are more elaborate proposals for sculptures that challenge the austerity of these standardized barriers, and the idea that public assets should be protected from public access. Tuazon’s *Architectures of Defense* are in direct dialogue with Borea’s *Wall Street* photographs and *Empire of Decline/One Liberty*, 2013, a sculpture made from scrap materials found in the high-rise located at 1 Liberty Plaza. Borea transformed structural elements of the building’s interior into curving forms, at once humanizing and undermining the power of corporate architecture that is so disengaged from the human experience below. *Empire of Decline/One Liberty*, 2013,

instruments, and a series of weavings. The composite woven flags merge the home countries of the musicians with those they have performed the duets in, representing a symbolic closure of the geographic gaps between them. Although Benson’s performances are more intimate spectacles than Téllez’s, each reflect one aspect of mobility in their inability to be controlled.

Similar to the uncertainty felt in the works of Benson and Téllez, the meaning and terms of mobility are in continual flux. In the United States during the 1980s, the phrase ‘upward mobility’ was used to describe young urban professionals (or yuppies) whose earning potential was on the rise. In the context of immigration, mobility is at once desirable, necessary, at some times painful, and always complicated. Everyone should have the right to mobility, but no one should be forced to move. Mobilization might be described in terms of military action, as well as grassroots political participation. Mobility between Cuba and the United States shifted radically in December of 2014, when Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama re-established diplomatic relations between the two countries, after more than fifty years. Due to the embargo, travel from the United States to Cuba was restricted to government officials, journalists, academics, and those with immediate family on the island. In 2011, Americans were allowed to travel to Cuba on trips under ‘people-to-people’ licenses, and most recently in January 2015, the United States loosened the travel ban. In the other direction, following Fidel Castro’s 1959 Cuban Revolution, immigrants were welcomed into the United States as political refugees. How these immigration



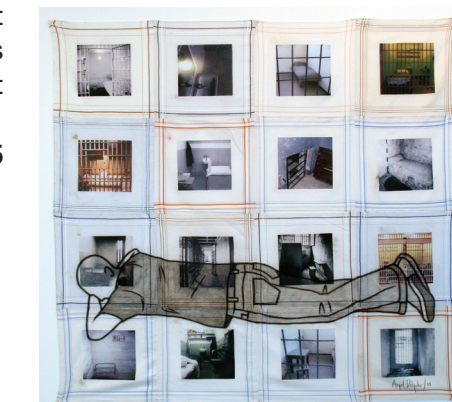
Jane Benson, *Weave for Sir Creek (from “Sir Creek Splits”)*, 2014

interprets ideas of power, value, excess, and waste in an area of vast abundance.

Borea’s most recent site-specific project *El Sol*, 2015, was constructed at The 8th Floor. Made from a collection of yellow shopping bags, *El Sol*, or “the sun,” symbolizes the divine in a number of cultures, representing cycles of death and rebirth towards evolution, appearing in the design of many national flags. The use of throwaway bags imbues the installation with an ecological meaning, referring again to waste and excess, but also to our common interest in the environment that surrounds us, regardless of national identity or location. Signaling a kind of post-nationalist progress, Jane Benson’s *21st Century Weaves* combine the flags of countries where her split duets are played, and in some cases integrate flags with the nationalities of the respective musicians. Weaving together symbols that represent her performers’ stories of mobility, Benson proposes a new model for our relationships to place and to each other. The next installment of *The Splits* is planned for January 2016, in the Salt Desert on the India-Pakistan border, involving a split sitar duet filmed across Sir Creek, between the closely situated towns of Kaloi City, Pakistan and Fort Lakhpat, India. In spite of the political and social displacement produced by our current global condition, art continues to push culture to recombine, evolve, and reconnect what has been ruptured.

- Sara Reisman, February 2015

The 8th Floor wishes to thank the participating artists, Jane Benson, Alberto Borea, Ángel Delgado, Javier Téllez, Lan Tuazon, and Jorge Wellesley for their participation in the exhibition, Peter Kilchmann Gallery, Zürich and Y Gallery, New York City, as well as our dedicated staff, George Bolster, Michelle Hailey, Matthew Johnson, Yandro Miralles, Anjali Nanda, Sara Reisman and Raul Zbengheci. As always, we are grateful for the generosity and support of Shelley and Donald Rubin in providing us with the opportunity to share the work of these artists with a greater public.



Ángel Delgado, *Inside-Outside IV*, 2009

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| Jane Benson (b.1973, England) | Alberto Borea (b.1979, Peru) | Courtesy of the artist and Peter Kilchmann Gallery, Zürich |
| <i>A Place for Infinite Tuning</i> , 2014 Plywood, steel, mirrored plexiglass, wooden vase, latex paint, hand-cut artificial flowers, hand-cut oud and viola 44" x 48" x 45" | <i>One Liberty/Empire of Decline</i> , 2013 Found aluminum and newspaper from buildings and construction sites around the financial district of New York 69" x 39" x 39" each | |
| Family Portrait (from "Finding Baghdad") , 2014 Hand-cut and woven flags (Iraq, Bahrain, Germany, Turkey, China, Normay, USA, UAE) 24" x 36" | <i>El Sol</i> , 2015 Collected gold plastic bags Site-specific installation Dimensions variable | Lan Tuazon (b.1976, Philippines) |
| <i>Family Portrait II (from "Finding Baghdad")</i> , 2014 Hand-cut and woven flags (Iraq, Bahrain, Germany) 24" x 36" | <i>Wall Street</i> , 2013 Silk-screen on canvas 75" x 50" | <i>Architectures of Defense: Decorative Garden Gates</i> , 2010 Chromogenic print 30" x 30" |
| <i>Weave for a Duet (from "Extended Play: TeWhenuaCentroChapineroCorona")</i> , 2014 Hand-cut and woven flags 24" x 36" | <i>Wall Street</i> , 2013 Silk-screen on canvas 75" x 50" | <i>Architectures of Defense: Geometric Backdoor Gates</i> , 2010 Chromogenic print 30" x 30" |
| <i>Weave for a Duet II (from "Extended Play: TeWhenuaCentroChapineroCorona")</i> , 2014 Hand-cut and woven flags 24" x 36" | <i>Wall Street</i> , 2013 Silk-screen on canvas 75" x 50" | <i>Architectures of Defense: Broken Gates of Zagreb</i> , 2010 Chromogenic print 27 1/2" x 36" |
| <i>Weave for Sir Creek (from "Sir Creek Splits")</i> , 2014 Hand-cut and woven flags 24" x 36" | <i>Inside-Outside II</i> , 2009 Wax pencil, pastel, and digital print on stitched handkerchiefs 62 1/2" x 61" | <i>Architectures of Defense: Royal & Public Gates of Zagreb</i> , 2010 Chromogenic print 27 1/2" x 36" |
| <i>Extended Play: TeWhenuaCentroChapinero-Corona</i> , 2013 Dual channel HD video and audio track, 24 min. Dimensions variable Courtesy of the artist | <i>Inside-Outside IV</i> , 2009 Wax pencil, pastel, and digital print on stitched handkerchiefs 62 1/2" x 61" | Courtesy of the artist |
| | Javier Téllez (b.1969, Venezuela) | Jorge Wellesley (b.1979, Cuba) |
| <i>One Flew Over the Void (Bala Perdida)</i> , 2005 Single-channel video, 11:30 min. color, sound Produced for InSite 05 | | <i>Exit-Exito (from the series Efigios)</i> , 2012 Acrylic on canvas 33" x 39 1/2" |
| | | Courtesy of the Shelley and Donald Rubin Private Collection |
| | | <i>Dyslexia II</i> , 2013 Watercolor on card 24" x 36" |
| | | Courtesy of the artist |

policies will be affected by the opening up of diplomatic relations still remains to be seen.

In the work of Cuban artists Ángel Delgado and Jorge Wellesley, the constraints surrounding mobility relate to artistic expression. In 1990, Delgado was incarcerated for six months, a direct consequence of his now famous performance *Hope is the last thing we're losing*, which was included in the exhibition *The Sculptured Object* at the Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana. The performance involved defecating on an issue of Granma (which is described on its masthead as the “Official Voice of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee”) in protest of the newspaper’s and the government’s tendency towards censorship. Two artworks in *Mobility and Its Discontents* are from Delgado’s series *Inside/Outside*, 2009, both made from stitched together handkerchiefs. These quilted pieces are representative of the materials readily available to him while incarcerated; they depict prison watchtowers, security and border stations, as well as interior views of jails.

Jorge Wellesley’s text pieces reposition the role of advertising, proposing questions to the public at large through ambiguous, and sometimes controversial slogans. In *Exit/Exito*, 2013, the English word *exit* and similarly spelled Spanish word *exito* (meaning success) visually reflect each other. This pairing of like words suggests that one path towards advancement in Cuba is to leave. The billboard, proposed for display as part of the 2013 Havana Biennial, exists as both a painting and a small-scale sculpture, but it has not yet been realized in full scale and the proposed location due to limited resources and political sensitivities at the time of the Biennial.



Jorge Wellesley, *Dyslexia II*, 2013

