

LOS CARPINTEROS DRAMA TURQUESA

at Ivorypress Art + Books



Sala de lectura, 2010

‘Our work is like a sponge, soaking up political and social situations’

Cuban artists Marco Castillo and Dagoberto Rodríguez, **Los Carpinteros** (**‘The Carpenters’**), will present *Drama Turquesa* on **5 May** at Ivorypress Art + Books. The exhibition, which will run until 24 July 2010, is the art collective’s largest solo exhibition in Europe in the last decade. The artists will exhibit twelve of their most recent sculptures and installations, some of which were conceived especially for the Ivorypress Art + Books gallery in Madrid. The exhibition will also include nineteen large-scale drawings, integrated in the contemporary notion of the project as the artwork.

In the exhibition catalogue published by Ivorypress, **Elena Ochoa Foster** writes: *‘The Ivorypress team has worked with the artists over the last year, in Madrid, in a close and exciting collaboration, to offer the public and contemporary art collectors an exhibition which will indubitably represent a significant step the creative progress of these extraordinary Cuban artists.’*

16 m., the first work of art visitors will see when entering the exhibition, is one of the pieces created specifically for Ivorypress Art + Books. *‘The exhibition hall itself inspired this piece,’* comment Marco and Dagoberto, referring to the body of the sculpture, which is comprised of two hundred perforated jackets, hung in a row. *‘The suits become a sculpture because of the volume they occupy; they become a single object. [...] When you place them in a row they form a single block, like a tube, creating a vacuum.’* One of the hallmarks of the exhibition will be artwork which is integrated into the gallery space.

Drama Turquesa

Drama Turquesa's leitmotif has its roots in a piece entitled *Derrame Turquesa*, from the series *Derrames*, which is comprised of objects 'which have apparently been exposed to high temperatures or deformation, which has caused them to melt.' They use highly-symbolic Cuban elements—congas, drums, kerosene lamps—which melt and are reduced to a liquid stain on the floor. Los Carpinteros explain: 'We talk about melting, but it goes far beyond that really; it's something that is dirty, corrupt, something that has lost its physical unity.'

Humour (at times scathing), spectacularism, game playing, provocation and diversity of materials are recurring features in their work. These elements are visible in the drawings and sculptures of the series entitled *Barbacoas*, which includes pieces such as *Homenaje al Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* and *Suboficial Grill*, inspired by monuments to unknown soldiers in Socialist countries. 'The star sculptures near revolutionary squares have burning flames,' explain Marco and Dagoberto. 'We created something domestic out of all that dramatic Socialist iconography; we made something quite 'dominguero.'

Los Carpinteros use architecture, sculpture and design to represent political metaphors through revolutionary symbols and the use of colour. Their most spectacular works of art are installations, as is the case of *Sala de lectura*, the largest piece on display at Ivorypress Art + Books. Inspired in the Isla de la Juventud prison (Cuba), it's shaped like a huge wooden circular library, following the panopticon model. This piece, which measures three metres high and five in diameter, dates back to the collective's sketches of the 1990s. 'We've added the practical use as a bookcase to the original idea, as if it came from the factory like that; as if someone made it for people to use. [The Isla de Juventud] prison was an attempt to do something different with Cuban prisoners in the 1920s, which to me is very strange. It evidences the troubles that Cuba has suffered over the last century. The prison was built in the 1920s, when Cuba was under the brutal dictatorship of Gerardo Machado; it's as if Cuba's history were cyclical; it comes back to the same point every once in a while.'

According to the artists, their work 'is like a sponge, [soaking up] all the political and social events generated through the production of one object, one design, one space, even in the way that people dress.' Along those lines, visitors will find *Patatas de rana*, the most enigmatic piece in the exhibition. It is a large circle comprised of deformed flippers which, according to the artists, is 'purely physical, as if it were pure interpretation, pure fiction.'

Their piece *Ping-pong* is charged with action and energy. 'It's about an arbitrary movement made with sculptural gestures,' comment Los Carpinteros. 'It's a strategic action, with the speed of a game of table tennis, like so many situations in life. In this case, the game is defined by lines, almost as if it were a drawing or the structure of a space, but made with PVC tubes.'

Exhibition catalogue

The catalogue has been edited especially for this occasion by Ivorypress. It includes a conversation between **Marco Castillo** and **Dagoberto Rodríguez**, much like a self-interview, in which the artists talk in detail about the pieces in the exhibition and discuss how they create and relate to one another as an artistic collective.

The catalogue also includes a story by Cuban novelist and journalist **Leonardo Padura Fuentes**, entitled *La muerte feliz de Alborada Almanza* (*Alborada Almanza's Happy Death*). Los Carpinteros asked Padura to write a literary, non-critical text inspired by elements in their artwork. 'It didn't have to be literal [...] a tale, or even a theoretical explanation. That was what fascinated us at first.'

The story has become another work of art in *Drama Turquesa*. 'Although it has nothing to do with the exhibition, the text has something that converts it, in part, into the group of sculptures we're presenting. It's what we do, in literary terms; it's a narrative, fiction. If we had to define our work in cinematographic or literary terms, we would interpret it as how we see a series of cultural issues. The story works as fiction that goes beyond all of the fiction of our artwork. That makes it part of the project.'

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