

Small image by Yoshua Okon. Main photo, by Juan Ignacio Ortega, originally appeared in *Reforma*.



PUKING UP BULLSHIT

The Media's Obsession with Obsessions

THE BEST ART TO COME OUT OF MEXICO NEVER ACTUALLY existed. It was poignant and beautiful and provided heavy social commentary. It was everything good art should be, and the media was so excited to find it they never bothered to check if it was really there.

It all started last summer when the cleaning ladies at Mexico City's Universidad Ibero Americana complained about the horrible pukey smell coming from the women's bathroom. Soon after, plumbers discovered corrosive acid had opened holes in all the pipes leading from the women's bathroom. A rumor began that bulimic students had destroyed the school's plumbing with their stomach acid. *Vice* regular Yoshua Okon asked his chemist dad if stomach acid could corrode pipes, and after getting a conclusive "I guess so," he called the local paper about his latest art piece. It was a corroded pipe in a glass box. He called it *HCl* (the chemical formula for stomach acid) and said he would be showing it, um, somewhere, uh, really soon.

Now, as we all know, editors are obsessed with finding sensational and politically relevant culture features. They are overwhelmed by the glut of news sources out there and will do anything to scoop the competition, even if it means turning a blind eye to some really obvious questions, like "Is this true?" When an editor at *Reforma* (the *New York Times* of Mexico)

finally took Yoshua's call he became hysterical and deployed journalists over there like torpedoes. Yoshua was forced to leap onto his computer and draw a 3-D model of the piece. When the doorbell rang Yoshua was outside, in his shed, digging up a random piece of rusted pipe. The journalist was giddy with excitement over the pipe and the 3-D model that accompanied it. "I was shocked by their enthusiasm, but I never lied. I never told the journalists I got the pipe from the school," Yoshua told us from his house just outside of Mexico City. "They never specifically asked because they just assumed it to be true." By "they" Yoshua is referring to the hundreds of radio, TV, and print journalists that mobbed his house for the next three weeks talking about Yoshua's stolen pipe. The story became one of the most sensationalized in the country's recent history. "Even today I have old ladies coming up to me on the street and thanking me for my work," he says, bewildered. "I've been making art for the past ten years, but this is the only thing people know about. It doesn't even exist."

The most consistent thing about stories like this is that once the hype dies down and the truth starts to surface, nobody cares anymore and it never gets mentioned. Mistakes aren't sensational. The truth is, there is no evidence that women's puke caused the corrosion, and even if it is true, there has never been an art piece confronting said issue. It's all bullshit. In fact, the only lesson to learn from all this is the more bile the media pukes up, the more corroded and toxic its outlets become. As with most bulimic college girls, editors need to get over their obsession with how they look and focus on what's important: the truth.

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