

Risas enlatadas presents the scenery of a typical "maquiladora" factory of North Mexico cities, such as Ciudad Juárez, where such firms hire cheap workforce, mainly women, to handle exportation products, generally sent to the United States. We know that Ciudad Juárez has a lot of *maquiladoras* and a high women murder rate. Despite denunciations, including the Mexican Commission of Defense and Promotion of the Human Rights, impunity prevails. By rescuing the history of Ciudad Juárez inhabitants, you create a project that questions a real situation within the city context. What actually this work? In 2007, I was invited by the curator Mariana David, within the "Juárez Project", to participate of a residence in Ciudad Juárez in order to develop an experience-based work. After several travels and investigations, it was clear to me that the presence of the *maquiladoras* had an essential role in the social fabric worsening and, consequently, in the violence and impunity high levels. I got interested in Ciudad Juárez as an example of one of the many places on this planet that stay totally aside from legality and where deliberately exist perfect conditions for the utter exploitation (slavery). It is important to mention that the *maquiladoras* are not necessarily North-American, but mainly transnational companies whose shareholders and owners come from many countries (including Mexico and Brazil). Therefore, one of my motivations is to present Ciudad Juárez violence as a fundamental part of the current global economic system.

The will of working with documentaries transiting between reality and fiction is one the issues that permeates some of your contemporary projects. In one of your best known works, *Orillesse a la orilla*, you asked Ciudad Juárez policemen to act before the cameras. In *Risas enlatadas*, you filmed in a disused factory and hired unemployed persons that had already worked in such kind of factories. How was the creation process of this project? Did the former employees made some statements? Did you collect the testimonies of the former employees of the *maquiladoras* for your project, and how?

The *maquiladoras* operate 24 hours per day with restricted access, a kind of prison with high security measures, huge walls, that people from outside cannot enter. The workers are picked up by trucks and driven in. Once there, they get off work only after 12 to 15 hours, given the fact the plant has restaurants, daycare service, etc. After trying for months and through several ways, I could only access one *maquiladora* in which I was allowed to a quick look around but not to enter with a camera. That is the reason why I did the major part of the investigation through interviews with former employees of *maquiladoras*. At the end of these interviews, I wrote the script and incorporated the interviewees as workers of my own *maquiladora* of canned laughs.

In *Risas enlatadas*, a *maquiladora* concocts various types of laughs for North-American sitcoms. The French philosopher Stiegler, by making a rereading of Adorno and Horkheimer, says that diversion is one of the forms used by industry in order to control

people behavior. Is this work criticizing the cultural industry? Why did you choose laughter as an exportation product for this project?

I was not interested to literally recreate a *maquiladora*. Currently, I am very interested in guaranteeing the accuracy of what is shown, as a documentary, and that clear for whom is watching that something is out of place. And I believe that at this very moment the spectator feels critically detached. For this reason, it was essential the product of my *maquiladora* be absurd up to a certain point, but with a credible appearance. I really liked the idea of juxtaposing laughter with disangelical and bored faces that mechanically repeat the same work for hours: the image of faces that emit sounds of laughter without laughing, the surface with no bottom, is a good analogy of the consumption culture. In that sense, my critic is more synoptic, but definitively refers to the entertainment industry, as I agree with Stiegler in considering that such industry has a fundamental participation in the control of behavior for consumption purposes, among others.

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What will be your next works?

Currently, I am taking part in a residency program with the Hammer Museum, in Los Angeles. I am actually investigating and focusing on the pit bull culture. My idea is to create a kind of choreographed ballet with dogs. The ballet incorporates elements based on rituals related to the large tradition of dogs' fights. The pit bull is not the North-American family official dog anymore; after being substituted by the golden retriever, he turned to be rejected by the official culture up to being demonized and becoming illegal in several states. Without any doubts, he still is the most popular dog. The story of this dog and the politics towards him reflect in a rather clearly way the huge cultural contradictions of this country.

p.108 Yoshua Okón was born in Mexico City in 1970, where he lives and works, alternating between Los Angeles, in the US. He has a master's degree in Art from UCLA Los Angeles/US (2002) and a bachelor's degree from Concordia University, Montreal/Canada. In 1994, he founded La Panaderia, a space coordinated by artists in Mexico City. He has had solo shows in Mexico, Italy, Germany, the US, Israel, and Switzerland. He has also taken part in Bial do Mercosul (Porto Alegre, Brazil); Istanbul Biennial; Trienal del ICP (New York, US); California Biennial; and Torino Triennale (Turin, Italy).