



Yoshua Okón, *White Russians*, 2008 (still), Video installation, Variable dimensions. Photo courtesy of the artist and Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil.

YOSHUA OKÓN: VENTANILLA ÚNICA

MUSEO DE ARTE CARRILLO GIL (MACG), MEXICO CITY

OCTOBER 7, 2009 - JANUARY 3, 2010

By Lourdes Morales

As an aesthetic experience, art has the capacity to preempt historic experience. Perhaps this is one of the most notable contributions to be derived from the solo exhibition of the artist Yoshua Okón presented at the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil in Mexico City. Curated by Roberto Barajas, the selection of works delineates a distinctive feature of the artist's vast repertoire: the idea of a piece as creator of a mirror image. *Ventanilla Única* is a performative installation consisting in the construction of a temporary office, in which the artist attends to visitors during established working hours. The idea is to operate "...in a liminal space between the exposition and the museum as institution," states Okón.

Another of the pieces displayed is *White Russian* (2008), a video installation that offers a 360° view of the living room of the Akien family, residents of Wonder Valley in High Desert, CA. Some local residents, together with the Akien family, are presented in a confusing narrative somewhere between fiction and reality. Produced within the framework of the California Biennial, spectators are welcomed with Diana Akien's favorite drink: *White Russian*. Moments of great tension are produced during the visit and the artist and the visitors are thrown out by the family, a situation reminiscent of an issue raised by Derrida regarding hospitality: If a guest oversteps the "house rules," he becomes a hostile stranger. The host's anxiety becomes apparent when he perceives the risk of becoming his guest's hostage.

In these pieces, the *Others* are defined in a relationship difficult to narrate or politicize. Under the dynamic that Okón establishes, we can glimpse a questioning of the artist's own practice as narrator – re-creator of a community that "...begins there where the personal ends." (Espósito, 2003).

Hipnostasis (2009) –realized in collaboration with Raymond Pettibon–, combines the Greek term "Hipóstasis" –"to be truthful" or "true reality"– and "Hypnosis." *Hipnostasis* presents a community of hippies, which has lived in Venice Beach for more than 30 years. The rendition reveals characteristics of a dystopia produced by social dysfunction, accentuated by the passage of time. With surprising coherence, the visitor can trace a parallel relationship with *Bocanegra* (2005-2007), another piece in the show. A group of Mexican Nazi sympathizers, which has taken its name from the street where it holds weekly meetings, is to be found in one of the rooms. Enveloped in ahistoric delirium, its desire is materialized in secondhand paraphernalia and lost in caricatural evocation of Fascism. Captives of ideologies that outlast temporality and are established in localized cultural forms, both groups recontextualize valid questions regarding the notion of community as defect. The distortion of that which political philosophy and other fields have worked so hard to construct, that is to say, the notion of community as "unity of unities" is challenged over and over again in the artist's inquiry. ■

WORKS CITED

Espósito, Roberto. *Comunitas: Origen y destino de la comunidad*. Buenos Aires & Madrid: Amorrotu Editores, 2003. 25-26.