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INSIDE: EDUCATION AND MEDICAL SPECIAL SECTIONS



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# Materials and Maids

OAS Rethinks Space, Society with 'Traveling Light,' 'Common Place'

by Fresia Rodriguez

Space and innovative interpretation are the powerful overarching themes that hold two separate exhibits together at the Art Museum of the Americas at the Organization of American States.

"Traveling Light, Five Artists from Chile," curated by Laura Roulet, presents a diverse series of site-specific installations that center on themes of materials in contemporary art. "Common Place," conceived by artists Justine Graham and Ruby Rumié, attempts to expose the complexities that oftentimes exist between Latin America housekeepers and their housewife employers. Both exhibits were organized in collaboration with the Embassy of Chile and while drastically different, their setup and presentation is complementary and allows for seamless compatibility and walkthrough.

"Traveling Light," with its airy feel, features five contemporary Chilean artists who installed five dramatically unique site-specific works at the museum that explore the concepts of architectural, historic and illusionist space. The exhibit is named after their mode of travel. Artists "traveled light" because they were "shipped" as opposed to their artwork — that is the artists traveled to the museum by themselves and had to seek out their medium to translate their respective visions. Their materials, ranging from paint, plaster, string and glitter, were all purchased in the Washington area. While in D.C., the artists also worked with a group of students from the Corcoran College of Art + Design who in turn assisted the artists throughout the 10-day installation process.

There is also an online extension to the exhibit that mirrors the student collaboration in the United States. Back in Chile, the five artists collectively administer a studio school in the capital of Santiago. The school, which can be found at [tallerbloc.wordpress.com](http://tallerbloc.wordpress.com), mentors younger artists in the practices of installation art.

One of the most intriguing pieces in "Traveling Light" is by Gerardo Pulido. Created with enamel spray

paint and egg tempera, the work showcases a technique that mimics the appearance of marble and wood. "I emphasize the materiality of the work with its capacity for illusion, the wall with its transformation into other surfaces, the simulation with its incompleteness," explained Pulido. "[I] stress height differences, horizontal and vertical directions, palace walls and graffiti and fine arts versus decorative painting."

Rodrigo Canala's "Empty Banners," intertwining PVC vinyl plastic and metallic glitter, combines celebration and invitation in its classic placement at doorways. "With their smart and zigzagging invisibility, over the head of the spectator, they threaten to disappear



PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER CUNNINGHAM

Artists Justine Graham and Ruby Rumié created the exhibit "Common Place," above, to cleverly explore the relationship between Latin housekeepers and their housewife employers — an exhibit that shares space at the Art Museum of the Americas with "Traveling Light, Five Artists from Chile," which features site-specific installations such as Catalina Bauer's "Frivolité (Tattooing)," left.

**Traveling Light, Five Artists from Chile and Common Place**  
through Jan. 22

**Organization of American States Art Museum of the Americas**

201 18th St., NW

For more information, please call (202) 458-6016 or visit <http://museum.oas.org>.

between rooms, between one work and the other, in what art is and what art is not, minimally invading space without saying anything," explained Canala.

"Common Place," located on the top floor of the museum, switches gears from focusing on materials to people, as issues of sociology, class and art merge. The multimedia exhibit, which combines photography, film and surveys of 100 women between the ages of 19 and 95, explores an often private element of the female experience in Latin America. The installation questions perceived soci-

etal roles and sheds new light on the dynamic between Latin housekeepers and their housewife employers, stripping the veneer of gender, power, class and race expectations.



## Homeless in Haiti

This fall, the Art Museum of the Americas will examine life in Haiti with two exhibits, "Tent Life: Haiti" and "Young Haitians with Disability."

Photographer Wyatt Gallery visited Haiti following the devastating January 2010 earthquake to chronicle the lives of displaced Haitians in the semi-permanent tent communities that have sprouted in the capital of Port-au-Prince. According to the United Nations, some 600,000 people still live in the sprawling tent camps nearly two years after the 7.0-magnitude quake, with many lacking basic services and vulnerable to sexual violence and cholera.

Gallery's resulting photo series shines a light on these uprooted lives, young and old, working independently and creatively to improve their bleak conditions. The images are collected in a book, "Tent Life: Haiti,"

and offer a visceral depiction of people facing tremendous challenges with undeterred resilience, relying on their own resourcefulness rather than outside aid.

Wyatt Gallery, a Fulbright fellow and former University of Pennsylvania professor, has been published in the New York Times, Esquire, Mother Jones, Newsweek and other publications. In 1998, after graduating from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, Gallery began traveling the Caribbean photographing spiritual sites through a Rosenberg grant. He spent two years in Trinidad and Tobago on a Fulbright Fellowship, documenting its religious places, landscapes, people and



PHOTO: WYATT GALLERY

Wyatt Gallery's "Girl in White Tent" is part of the photography book "Tent Life: Haiti," whose proceeds go to post-disaster recovery efforts.

homes.

Gallery's work in Haiti offers a vastly different perspective. The faces of Haitians stare pointedly but honestly into the photographer's camera, often surrounded by the blue-tinted hue of their makeshift tent homes or the debris-strewn landscape outside. Beyond offering a powerful visual

essay on what daily life is still like for hundreds of thousands of Haitians, Gallery aims to help them as well. Copies of "Tent Life: Haiti" will be available throughout the run of the exhibition for \$40, with 100 percent of the royalties going to the Haitian charities J/P Haitian Relief Organization, Healing Haiti, and the Global Syndicate. The book has so far raised more than \$30,000 for Haitian relief.

Also on display is "Young Haitians with Disability," made up of 28 drawings by young Haitians based on an initiative of the country's secretary of state for the integration of persons with disabilities. Haitian youth participated in the drawing contest to highlight the importance of building an inclusive society and incorporating the concept of universal accessibility into the country's rebuilding efforts.

The resulting drawings also showcase the talent of Haiti's youth and their stirring message of finding opportunity in their nation's post-earthquake odyssey.

"Tent Life: Haiti" and "Young Haitians with Disability" run through Dec. 2 at the Organization of American States Art Museum of the Americas, 201 18th St., NW. For more information, please call (202) 458-6016 or visit <http://museum.oas.org>.

—Fresia Rodriguez

According to the museum, the exhibit dovetails with the shared interests of the OAS Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), whose mission is to link women's rights with effective public policy.

"The housewife and maid [connection] is a really interesting relationship that happens in almost every home in Latin America. These are relationships everyone knows about but no one talks about," said Adriana Ospina, the museum's education coordinator. The project explores these women's sensory and emotional experiences, highlighting what the subjects share and how they differ.

"It can very well be a love-hate relationship," mused Ospina. "The housekeeper can know everything about the housewife, but she needs to respect the boundaries. The exhibit examines the domestic and social dynamic behind the relationship and it opens a can of worms."

In addition to the questionnaires, artists Justine Graham and Ruby Rumié tackle perceptions of hierarchy by having the pairs of women sit together for a portrait. Stereotypes are easily shattered by placing the subjects in white T-shirts with minimal makeup and jewelry, creatively simplifying their appearances to serve as

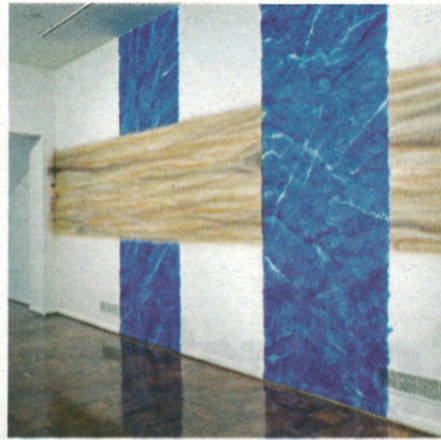


PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER CUNNINGHAM

Gerardo Pulido uses enamel spray paint and egg tempera to mimic the appearance of marble and wood in his installation at the Art Museum of the Americas.

equalizers and make visitors wonder who the housekeeper is and who her employer is.

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