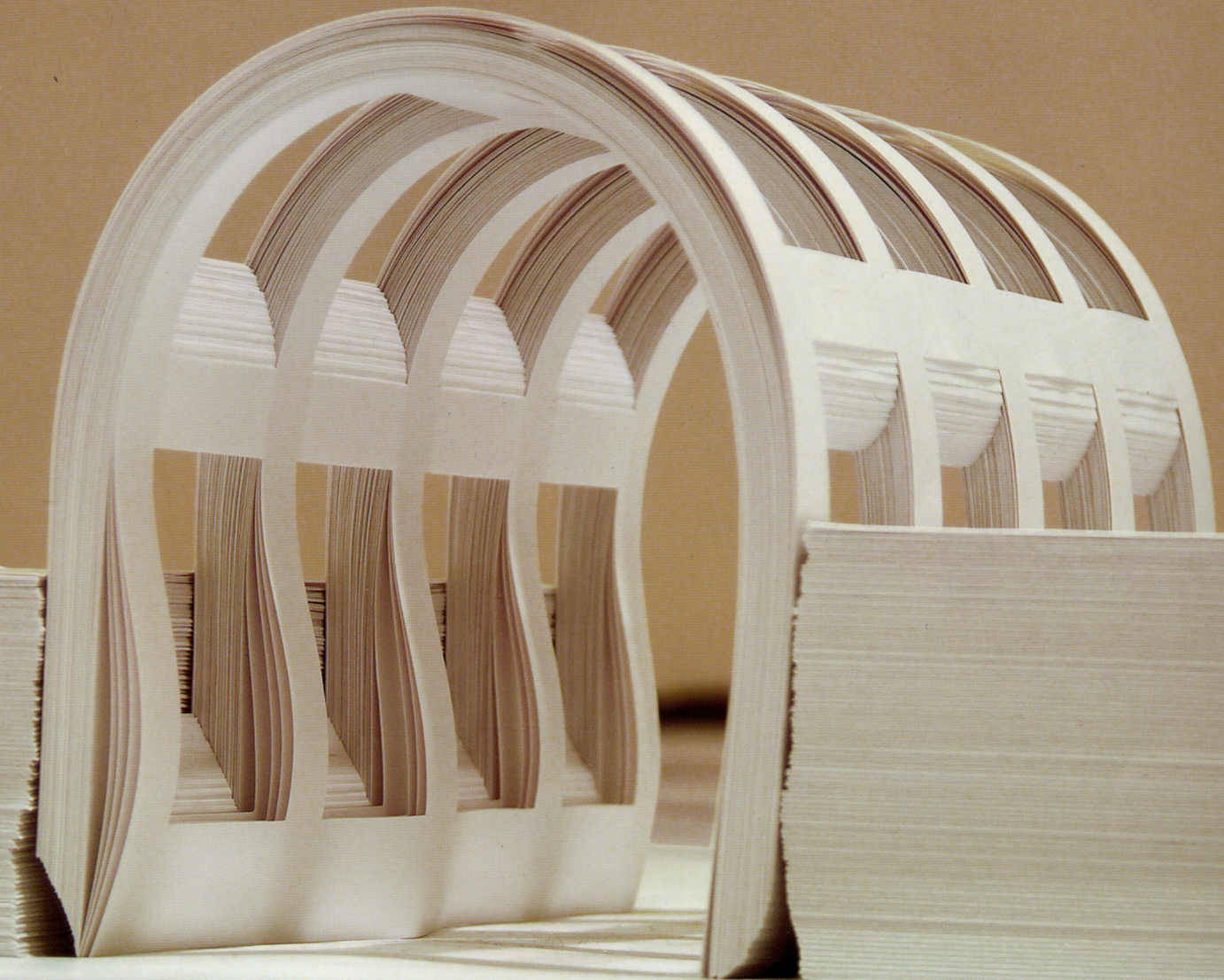


# ArtNexus

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the demarcation element. It is a clear barrier separating reality from unreality, light from darkness. The horizon guides the spectator throughout the exhibition. It efficiently structures our visit from beginning to end, serving as a versatile, melodic line. While guiding us, it becomes a grave and inquisitive element: a sort of tightrope on which our past and present are at play, as well as our fears and desires, our hopes and fantasies.

The horizon appears as a type of sheet music used by the artist — here, a sort of demiurge or capricious Parcae — to compose each note in abrupt ups-and-downs, good and bad choices, disquieting pauses, and an ever-increasing suspense.

*Delicate Balance* (2008-2009) is the other installation included in the exhibit. Consisting of twenty paintings, the work is initially noteworthy for its monochromatic nature and a tendency to favor repetition and otherness. The installation is closely connected with another two works also included in the exhibition: *Los Adioses* (The Goodbyes, 2008), a titled taking its name from Beethoven's piano sonata No. 26, *Les Adieux*, and *Rorschach* (2008), which adopts the name from the famous test, once again referring us back to the predominance of repetition throughout the exhibition.

Serving as counterpart of these canvases, the viewer will find at the opposite side of the gallery the piece entitled *Desierto* (Desert, 2008), in which the generous utilization of deep blue conveys a spiritual calm.

As if the differences between one proposal and the other were not sufficient, Spreng delves into another element that is not found in painting: time. While music occurs throughout time, painting is subjected to a set time,

one that is static and frozen on the canvas. It is not for nothing that painting is associated with timelessness and transcendence. Nevertheless, Spreng subverts this limitation by creating in the pictorial space a feeling of cycle or evolution, achieved thanks to the influence of the ever-changing horizon.

The exhibition is impregnated by a clear romantic spirit that is dominated by musical borrowings, a predilection for open scenes, and the subjective nature of the images. It consists of 88 works — many of these 10 × 10" small-format images — that are regrouped to form larger works, dominated by a sense of their puzzle-like quality and their changeable and recompositional nature, bestowed upon them by the base element and a polysemic sense that enables multiple readings.

*Sebastián Spreng: Handmade Horizons and Songs* is a highly suggestive exhibition. It compels the viewer to search for elements unnoticed during its first reading; elements lost or distant, or barely suggested by a horizon always acting with unifying purpose, as it represents both the cohesive element and the driver of change.

Janet Batet

## NEW YORK / NY

### Johanna Unzueta Queens Museum of Art

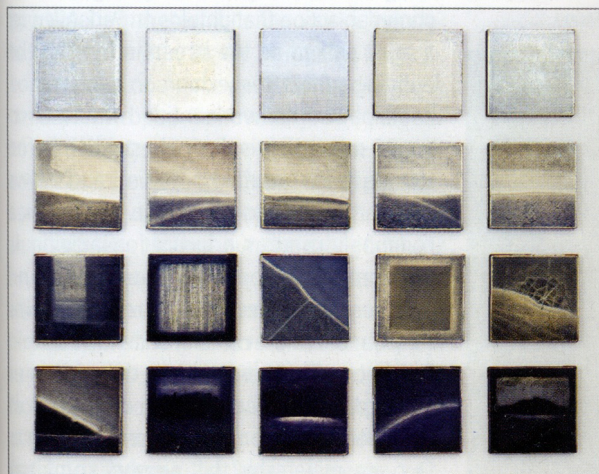
At the Queens museum, a viewer might glance up and catch sight of an exposed pipe. Industrial, unexpected, nearly anti-aesthetic, the object stands out as an anomaly in a highly finished space. A closer examination, however,

reveals an object not made from metal, not rigid, not actually an exposed pipe, but rather a carefully crafted handmade work designed to mimic a pipe. This pipe, hand stitched from red felt, runs the length of the upper gallery, close to the ceiling, like a real hot water pipe. Indeed, the artist has purposefully chosen a series of "non-art" spaces within the museum for the exhibition of her work, as though to underscore their connection to real objects and the culture of industry.

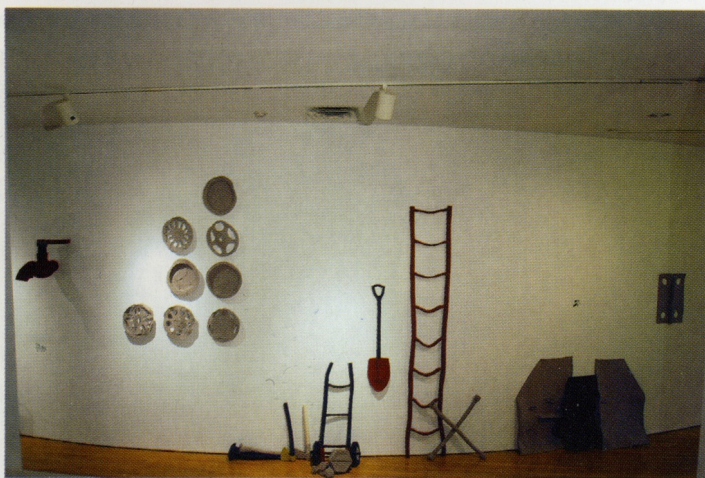
As a child, Johanna Unzueta made clothes. Her love of the hand-made object transformed itself first into garments that eventually morphed into moveable and wearable sculptural objects. Now, they find themselves on the walls of the museum.

Ms. Unzueta's project is titled *Iron Folklore* and makes direct reference to the nearby "Iron Triangle" neighborhood of Willet's Point, a 62-acre area of auto body shops, junkyards, and small manufacturing businesses on unpaved roads. The New York Times has described the area as "a gritty, sloppy eyesore of slapdash shops and workers lingering in dirt streets trying to flag down drivers to offer them on-the-spot repair deals." (New York Times, 11/19/08) Directly across the street from the modern coliseum of the New York Mets, the location of Willet's Point seems even more ironic and poetic. This mix of grittiness, unpaved road, and the work ethic that pervades the entire area became important to the artist as she developed this project. Each of the objects in the show pays homage to some humble tool or car part. Throughout the artist's work, the functional and unassuming are given the status of work of art; the normally invisible becomes the object of our gaze.

**Sebastián Spreng.** *Delicate Balance*, 2009. Oil on canvas. 20 pieces. 10 x 10 in. (25,4 x 25,4 cm.).



**Johanna Unzueta.** *Iron Folklore*, 2009. Felt. Variable dimensions.





This body of work comes after a long and serious consideration of the place and function of art and of the possibilities represented by large-scale work and works placed in public spaces. Working initially with cardboard, the artist began to sew felt because of its sensibility, its link to industry but also to physical warmth and energy, to history and to modern art. The artist acknowledges both Josef Beuys and Robert Morris as important figures and as influential to her consideration of materials.

The initial encounter is with the elevator's walls, which are covered in pieces of mismatched "corrugated metal" fashioned from felt. The even curves of the felt "metallic" surface perfectly mimic its actual counterpart, composing one wall of the elevator with felt of two different colors, the artist underscores the haphazard nature of small constructions made from this industrial material that is often associated with temporary structures (and with third world locations). Outside the elevator, the long red "hot water" pipe traces the spaces between the tall, slender columns of the museum's balcony, appropriately overlooking the museum's renovations. Following this work is an installation outside the museum's theater wall.

Among the carefully juxtaposed works in the installation are a hand truck, a selection of ("fancy") auto rims coveted by aficionados of car culture, a smorgasbord of hardware, a ladder, a shovel, and a selection of car doors, all hand made from felt. Playing with scale, Ms. Unzueta also pays homage to the works of Claes Oldenberg and Coosje van Bruggen by occasionally supersizing her hardware. A mammoth hinge hangs on the wall and, on the floor, we see a pile of colossal screws, nuts and bolts. This aspect of play in the work

is important because it underlines a note of humor within the artist's work.

The selection of car doors includes a significant element of realism represented by live feed. The artist has installed a speaker that is broadcasting the favored radio station of the workers at auto parts and services stores in Willet's Point. This purposeful link to the reality of those who spend their working lives in this area is important because it also points to the informal economy of the area. In the manner of Zora Neal Hurston, the artist acts as a kind of cultural anthropologist, a recorder of this unique landscape and its contemporary inhabitants.

Rocío Aranda Alvarado

## Dias & Riedweg

### Americas Society

In an exhibition apparently dominated by video, the walls were painted red as a symptom of the anthropophagi that permeates the works and to undercut a coldness that to some people appear to be an inherent part of the technological media. Those who know the works by Mauricio Dias and Walter Riedweg also are aware that they address social themes associated with ethnography and that these artists articulate their works by combining installation, video, performance, photography, sculpture, film, and theater – the latter two of these demonstrating experimental characteristics. The exhibition consists of the following five works: *Suitcases for Marcel* (2006-2008); *Throw (Tire)* (2004); *David & Gustav* (2005); *Mama* (2000), and *Os Raimundos, os Severinos e os Franciscos* (1998). The museography was shaped to underscore the artists' focus. Indeed, a certain pressure can be perceived, a

somehow disjointed dynamic, as the spectator is alternately placed inside and outside to force him-her to face public and private situations, a characteristic of works by Dias and Riedweg.

This transdisciplinary exhibition provides a close look at social interaction. The intensity of the subjective is perceived as soon as one is exposed to the content of each of the works. All of these transcend the visual, but as the exhibit's title *...And It Becomes Something Else* suggests, it also becomes something different. The main exhibition room contains two of the five works shown in the exhibition. The first, *Suitcases for Marcel*, is a small video-object installation that consist of six open suitcases (each measuring 34 x 30 x 23 cm) placed on sculpture stands and each housing a portable projector and a 7-inch monitor pointed at the ceiling for the spectators' viewing pleasure. This is an overt homage to Duchamp and to his *Boite-en-Valise* (Box in a Suitcase) by Dias and Riedweg. Something similar unfolds in each suitcase: circulation-rotation-transportation processes that nevertheless vary in duration, location, and the individuals who appear in the screen. There are recognizable areas from Rio de Janeiro during different seasons of the year. The work self-contains its own history. It is also possible to understand the metaphor that has been proposed: just as works of art are circulated around the world, so is capital. The title and the declaration by the authors establish these Duchampian parameters. Beyond that which cannot be denied, there is the reading that is already tattooed on the contemporary word with respect to the act of transporting, picking up, and dropping off a suitcase or package: the connection with drugs and drug money.

In another installation, a large screen shows an action that unfolds on Park Avenue: a truck parked on the street, in front of the building where the exhibition takes place, contains another work entitled *Throw*. Lasting 39 minutes, it is the longest video in the exhibit. It was recorded in Helsinki and shows people being interviewed in a public place commonly used as a forum for individuals to express their opinions. There, Dias and Riedweg asked people to throw whatever they wanted at the camera, but within certain limitations. There is no doubt that videos or photographs can be invasive, despite all of the people who enjoy appearing in them. Our senses register this weighty combina-

Dias & Riedweg. Installation view of the exhibition *Dias & Riedweg...and it becomes something else*, 2009.

