

located across from the crops, open to participation by the public and connected to a transducer arranged directly above the containers, in contact with the soil and the roots. The combination of these two audio systems invites, in a speculative manner, the generation of emotional and sensible connections between all participants in the ecosystem. While the musical composition was created to speed up the growing of the plants and enhance their biological systems, the human voice, resulting from the public's participation, connects the project with traditional cultural practices that see talking to plants as salutary. It bears noting that existing research, of interest to Vélez, indicates that plants do possess a particular sensitivity to sound and vibrational stimuli.

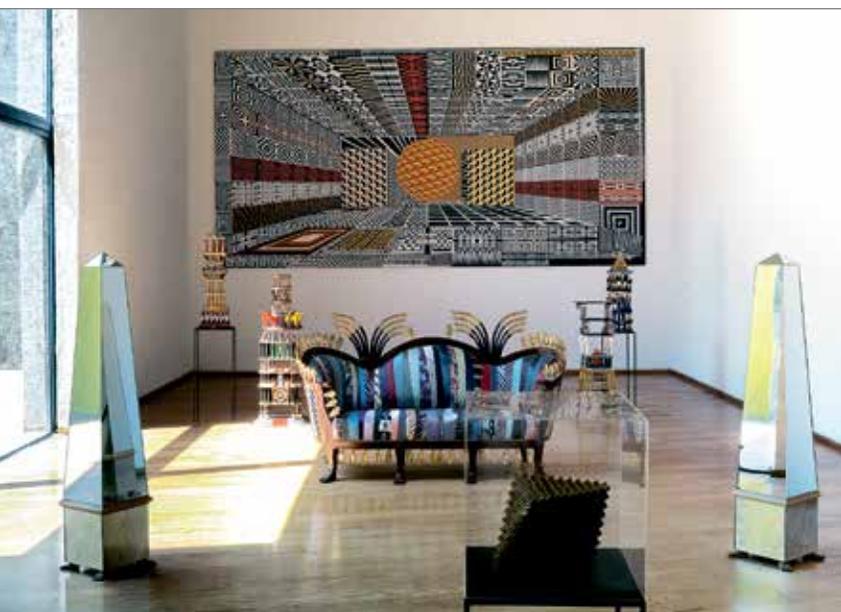
The exhibition as a whole is welcoming and hypnotic. The reddish light that slowly fades to leave the periphery of the rectangular space in penumbra, produces a visual effect on the crops, which seem to germinate strange iridescent plants. Adding to this, the sustained buzz of the sinusoidal waves, bothersome at first, becomes calming as the body adapts to the environment. Meanwhile, the experience of talking to the beetroots through a microphone is disconcerting at an auditory level, since the source of the amplification is not readily identifiable, which produces the sensation of hearing one's own voice inside one's head. In other words, the sound seems, rather than expanding into space, to be converging on the speaker, who in consequence is hearing what the plants feel.

Lastly, it must be noted that a detailed observation of this work reveals an entire natural ecosystem, with colonies of tiny insects, butterflies, and worms that join the artificial domain constituted by the technical infrastructure, the museum personnel, and the visitors themselves. This encounter underscores the problematic system circumscribed by Vélez and invites us to reflect about our cultural practices and ways of consumption, as well as the near future. As a colophon to the exhibit, the beets will be harvested and consumed by the MAMM team, closing the cycle inherent to the vegetable cultivation.

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ESTEBAN GUTIÉRREZ

**Pedro Friedeberg and Mathias Goeritz.** *Salón de los astrólogos homeopáticos* (The Hall of Homeopathic Astrologers). Installation view of the space created by Goeritz and Friedeberg's objects at the Museo Experimental el Eco. Photo: Pavka Segura



MEXICO / MEXICO

## Pedro Friedeberg and Mathias Goeritz Museo Experimental El Eco

In collaboration with Pedro Friedeberg, curator David Miranda designed a special room for the Museo Experimental El Eco, which opened like a conclave, as some mediums have done to invoke and bring to a specific space the appearance or apparition of a simultaneous multiplicity of probable worlds. Based on conversations between Friedeberg and Mathias Goeritz, as evidenced in their epistolary correspondence seasoned with drawings and photographs, which was exposed on glass panels that acted as windows to the process or matrix of synergies invoking or bringing to the present moment an installation consisting of Friedeberg's objects arranged in a space created by Goeritz.

The room complied with the deceptive limits of a credenza, although there was no separating glass. It was not about seeing *through*, but rather about seeing *during*; like walking between the objects that projected a tension not only among themselves but also in their function and nature. The place was dominated by a sofa that testified to this, and which was superimposed on the museum space. Framed by the illusion or the simulacrum of being a living room, the conclave opened as a place to engage in conversations (or performances in this case) of one kind or another, more or less banal, and within a more or less mechanical exercise of representation. The place invoked the marks of the modern age in order to disobey them. This was an exhibition space for artifacts imposed as elements of a social status (that transcended or transgressed conventions) to sublimate them from their traditional or utilitarian matrix towards a fantastic logic.

The sofa somewhat mimicked the taxonomic features of the Louis XV style to highlight other peculiarities. The tapestry is made from neckties, the legs emulate feet, little hands crown the edges like golden steles, and the extensions embellish the backrest like bouquets whose flowers are, again, hands. The potential sitters were drawn into the illusion of being surrounded by ceremonial headdresses, halfway between those described in Arabic tales and the filigree adorning the ancestral stones of Mesoamerica.

Of course, there was the temptation to sit down and document the act, despite the conventional drawbacks of such a stance. A forbidden field where temptation persisted as a means of transcending or transgressing an environment imposed or manifested by different and confusing layers of convention. It was less about actually sitting down than about the temptation to do so; something waiting to happen and, yet, as in a display window, an intangible distance or separation only allowed us to resort, in alchemical terms, to a sublimation.

Traces of the claws of domestic animals could be seen on the sofa, brought from Pedro Friedeberg's home. This peculiarity served as a bridge between public and private spaces in order to detect the exceptional from the everyday. Between restriction and impossibility, a magical quality (if it can be described that way) was discovered, which merged, distorted, and transformed these spaces. The temptation to speak from that place persisted as a call to the exceptional.

And in terms of space, confronting it with the notions of a specific place, imposed and confused in the dialogue established in this room, the exceptional was perceived as an appearance. A ghost, if one could call it that way, drawn-out in a supernatural way over the conversation

held by the objects and their delimitations, as a cosmological extension. The public served as witness to the dynamics created between the monoliths and the towers of a Babel built as a field. Delimitations superimposed from various rescued imaginaries, dragging the elusive noise of dead languages, lost voices, and totems viscerally recognized within an abstract dimension; uttered from places where the superposition of objects belonging to their specific times and references, appear as embodiments of a hallucination.

Space as architecture contravened the notions dictated by the modern regime (the great normalizing spirit of function's greatness), conjuring up time as a bastion of the organic for a catalogue of the world. It was an attempt to translate or reduce something as open and evanescent as the term "emotional" was for Goeritz, and even doing it as a provocation, as if to find the words that can conjure an "emotional" space set in a time out of time. An emotional place that evoked, in its materiality and as a *mise-en-scène*, the fields of exception that have survived through the conventions of the modern. Astrology as a means of registering and narrating. It speaks of placing in the world, of topologies, of probable futures based on registered notions and givens—in *extenso*—in a traditional way. Homeopathy as divergent or alternative medicine, which postulates that what is similar cures that which is similar. This is how they heal, from their similarities, breaking with the traditional, surviving as an alternative to the modernist norm.

"The Hall of Homeopathic Astrologers" takes its name from a small work by Friedeberg, which was expanded in more ways than one to adorn the wall and lend it, with patterns and geometric games, an abysmal depth.

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**RICARDO POHLENZ**

## Abel Quezada

### Proyectos Monclova

In the framework of Gallery Weekend, Proyectos Monclova took on the task of revising the pictorial work of Mexican artist Abel Quezada, widely recognized as a political cartoonist. His paintings are less known, but just as expressive and ingenious.

Quezada worked for decades as a cartoonist in Mexican print media and occasionally for foreign publications such as *The New Yorker* magazine. He saw himself as a draughtsman; as someone who produced illustrated texts, and who did not fit neatly into the category of a cartoonist. He worked in his paintings during his free time, as a hobby; and it was not until 1985 that he was given the first exhibition of his paintings, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

For decades, Quezada masterfully portrayed society and political figures in refined and scathing critiques. He continued to do so in his painting, while expanding his thematic repertoire with personal experiences and anecdotes to create playful works that surpassed the satiric genre.

At first glance, paintings from the early 1970s up to the late 1980s seem to be simple chronicles, but all manner of details added up to produce eloquent and imaginative storylines. A good example is *Jockey Club Members* (1972): a disproportionately large horse looms over the tiny characters below it. These figures are elegantly dressed, and we can imagine their milieu, hobbies, and interest in seeing and being seen at the equestrian club where the elite normally gathers.

In *Life in Mexico during the crisis of the 1970s and 1980s* we feel irony seeping into a country setting. *Charros* ride on horseback, a couple performs a typical Mexican dance to the music of a trio of musicians, and a miniature table is set with some food and drink. Crises, unfortunately common throughout Latin America, have been a recurring theme in twentieth-century sociopolitical caricatures and have often been humorously rendered by various artists.

The large-format *Project for a Mural: Mexico Emerging from the Crisis* depicts an idyllic scene where field workers are sowing and harvesting, while a train passes above as a symbol of progress, packed with distinguished ladies and gentlemen in suits. And in the background: a party, a canvas, an escape from the surrounding reality. The painting was accompanied by a note from the artist: "This mural was never made and remained a project, among other things because of its title, *Mexico coming out of the crisis*, since it so happens that, while it was being done, Mexico fell back into a crisis" (AQ).

It is fascinating how Quezada was able to capture Mexican idiosyncrasies and, unfortunately, also its crises, which is why his work remains so relevant. He addressed his subjects with sarcasm; humor is known to be the best way to face adversity.

Portrayals of everyday life was another theme he explored in his paintings. A girl leans back in an armchair and, through a window, we notice a couple that seem to be her parents having a drink in the garden: an involuntary family portrait. Or, as in *Lady with a Recipe for Stuffed Peppers* (1985), a very well-groomed woman proudly poses with a recipe for stuffed peppers, a very traditional Mexican dish.

A portrait painted on a folding screen was possibly inspired by the folding screens that narrate historical passages, a practice originating in Asia, but also present in 17th century Mexican art. Quezada's version portrays Ignacio Zaragoza, considered a national hero for his triumph against the French army when it invaded Mexico in 1862. The general is rendered in all his glory and mounted on his white horse. This is not the typical epic tribute to war heroes immortalized with their horses, but rather a portrait with the overtones of children's drawings.

In 1978, the painter José Luis Cuevas visited Quezada in his home-studio in Cuernavaca and became acquainted with his pictorial work. He later wrote Quezada a letter: "Someone said that your painting is primitive (naïve). I do not agree with this judgment since your work is too replete with nuances and artistic wisdom to pigeonhole it in that category."

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**ISAURA RUIZ**

**Abel Quezada.** *Proyecto para un mural "México saliendo de la crisis"* (Project for a Mural: Mexico Emerging from the Crisis), 1988. Oil on canvas. 51 3/8 x 51 3/8 in. (130 x 280 cm). Photo: WhiteBalance. Courtesy of Acervo Artístico Abel Quezada and Proyectos Monclova

