

Living

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The narrow, yet lofty, Caja Blanca gallery uses its available space wisely. Since it cannot display all the works of the 12 artists at once, they are constantly being rotated.

UNCANNY TALENTS COME TOGETHER

Twelve eclectic artists join forces at a relatively new gallery in the city

BY AIMEÉ DURÁN
The News

The towering, white walls of the Caja Blanca art gallery in the posh Paseo Arcos Bosques shopping and corporate center, are displaying a new collection of bright-colored, innovative and opinionated art pieces from contemporary artists.

The gallery put together its

first "Collective Summer Exhibit" featuring the most recent work of 12 artists: Edgar Aguilar, Gustavo Artigas, José Antonio Farrera, Fidel Figueroa, Eugenia Martínez, Mister Monji, Hubert Moreno, Laura Ortiz, Laura Rosete, Fabián Ugalde, Ricardo Villasana and Vigueta and Bovedilla (pseudonym of artists Marco Rountree and Rodolfo Díaz).

This eclectic collection of installations, sculptures and paintings will be up until Aug. 26 and offers a wide variety of points of view from both renowned and emerging young artists. The pieces range from an untitled sculpture of glass spheres encapsulated in acrylic boxes by Vigueta and Bovedilla to an acrylic on fabric

painting by Hubert Moreno, Interior número cuatro (Interior number four), portraying the interior of an actual house and making reference to the publishing world and its influence. However, as the narrow gallery cannot showcase all the works at once, they are regularly rotated.

The exhibit itself does not have a particular concept or a common theme; its purpose is to offer a mixture of different styles and techniques to suit almost every taste because in the summer months, attendance tends to decrease, according to Patricia Bessudo, one of Caja Blanca's three founders and curators of this exhibit.

"The truth is that the number of visitors significantly decreases in summer,

so we decided to have a little bit of everything. Instead of setting up an individual or a two-artist collection, we chose to offer more variety and to show the options that we have," she said.

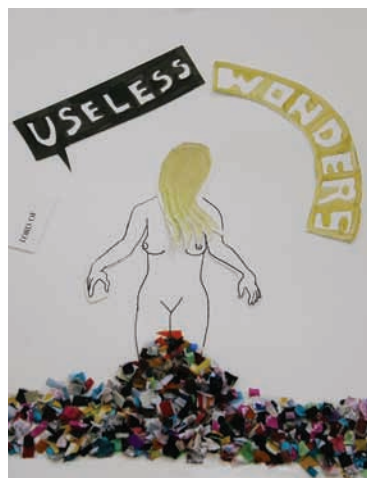
The Caja Blanca art gallery in Mexico City is a source of fresh artistic proposals.

At the exhibit, Laura Ortiz's *Serie Clasificados* (Classified Series) installation of 40 golden-framed mirrors with vinyl lettering shows humorous, emotive and seemingly random phrases which were, in fact, taken from actual classified ads. The point of this, she





Coincident Ideas by Fabián Ugalde recycles modern iconographies.



Lord of useless wonders by Edgar Aguilar uses handicraft materials.

said, was to show people that whenever they read the phrases and see their own reflection on the mirror, they can identify with them.

Her second piece, *Serie Paisaje Sin Título (Untitled Landscape Series)* is made up of two wooden boards covered with embroidery threads that depict two different graffiti she found on the streets of Mexico City. This piece was made using the traditional Huichole embroidering style in an attempt to merge two of Ortiz's passions: Huichol culture and urban art.

Fabián Ugalde's *Coincident Ideas* uses iconographies of contemporary artworks in his visually-attractive piece that presents a two-headed skull and brain floating in midair on a colorful polka dot-background. It expresses his notion that art has been recycling itself since the 1980's but can still offer fresh alternatives.

"For me, there is a moment in time when aesthetics begin to recycle themselves, and that's in the 80's. My work is basically doing the same, I am doing a simulation of other simulations," Ugalde said.

Nevertheless, he is not aiming to criticize the creators of those works, he is merely analyzing the winding path that art history is currently following.

Ricardo Villasaña's three-canvas oil painting *Dizzy* shows three different objects from three different angles as if seen through a thin mist using a pale palette.

"I believe the influence of images is utterly important. My themes are based on daily-life situations with the purpose of sublimating reality and causing different sensations to people," he said.

By means of different visual effects influenced by cubism, cinema and photography, Villasaña is aiming to convey feelings of peace, tranquility and harmony.

Risk Paintings, Lithol Red by Gustavo Artigas is stunning in its simplicity: a canvas with an entirely bright red background and a phrase with white letters describing the risks that artists

take when using lithol red as a material. This canvas, one of a 23-piece series, represents the way that art affects and transforms the lives of people depending on their individual perceptions and their closeness to it.

Some works at the exhibit illustrating the artists' view of Mexican society are *Bota (Boot)* by Eugenia Martínez and Edgar Aguilar's drawings *Quid pro quo, Lord of useless wonders*, among others.

Martínez's oil on linen painting of a boot lined by the same words repeating countless times speaks of some of Mexican society's major issues, namely, racism and inequality.

"I work around my belief that there have been some social structures since the colonial times that are still current. I think we (Mexicans) are very superficial and we are always trying to catch up with what is in fashion," she said.

The drawings of Aguilar are made of materials commonly used in handicrafts in order to point out the irony that art in Mexico is sometimes regarded as merely a hobby and a non-productive activity. Also, as a result of the impact Mexico City's 1985 earthquake had on him as child, Aguilar uses fiction and Aztec gods to describe his concept of death.

"I am asking the questions 'what is drawing?' and 'what are its limits?' as well as 'what is people's concept of death?' because for me (death) is change and renewal but I would also like to know what it is for other people," he said.

Since its opening in March 2009, Caja Blanca has focused on displaying strictly compelling contemporary art. For that reason, those visiting the gallery this summer will come across a multifaceted collection of pieces that speak, as a group, not only of the artists' take on the world, but also of the constant evolution of Mexico's contemporary art scene.



The dead come back to life through Facebook

BY JENNA WORTHAM
The New York Times

Courtney Purvin got a shock when she visited Facebook last month. The site was suggesting that she get back in touch with an old family friend who played piano at her wedding four years ago and died in April.

"It kind of freaked me out a bit," she said. "It was like he was coming back from the dead."

Facebook, the world's biggest social network, knows a lot about its roughly 500 million members. Its software is quick to offer helpful nudges about things like imminent birthdays and friends you have not contacted in a while. But the company has had trouble automating the task of figuring out when one of its users has died.

That can lead to some disturbing or just plain weird moments for Facebook users as the site keeps on shuffling a dead friend through its social algorithms.

Facebook says it has been grappling with how to handle the ghosts in its machine but acknowledges that it has not found a good solution.

"It's a very sensitive topic," said Meredith Chin, a company spokeswoman, "and, of course, seeing deceased friends pop up can be painful." Given the site's size, "and people passing away every day, we're never going to be perfect at catching it," she added.

James E. Katz, a professor of communications at Rutgers University, said the company was experiencing "a coming-of-age problem."

"So many of Facebook's early users were young, and death was rare and unduly tragic," Katz said.

Now, people over 65 are adopting Facebook at a faster pace than any other age group, with 6.5 million signing up in May alone, three times as many as in May 2009, according to the research firm comScore. People over 65, of course, also have the country's highest mortality rate, so the problem is only going to get worse.

Facebook's approach to the deaths of its users has evolved over time. Early on it would immediately erase the profile of anyone it learned had died.

Chin says Facebook now recognizes the importance of finding an appropriate way to preserve those pages as a place where the mourning process can be shared online. Member profiles can be "memorialized," or converted into tribute pages that are stripped of some personal information and no longer appear in

search results. Grieving friends can still post messages on those pages.

Of course, the company still needs to determine whether a user is, in fact, dead. But with a ratio of roughly 350,000 members to every Facebook employee, the company must find ways to let its members and its computers do much of that work.

To memorialize a profile, a family member or friend must fill out a form on the site and provide proof of the death, like a link to an obituary or news article, which a staff member at Facebook will then review.

But this option is not well publicized, so many profiles of dead members never are converted to tribute pages. Those people continue to appear on other members' pages as friend suggestions, or in features like the "reconnect" box, which has been spooking the living since it was introduced last October.

Chin said Facebook was considering using software that would scan for repeated postings of phrases like "Rest in peace" or "I miss you" on a person's page and then dispatch a human to investigate that account.

"We are testing ways to implement software to address this," she said. "But we can't get it wrong. We have to do it correctly."

The scanning approach could invite pranks – as the notification form already has. A friend of Simon Thulbourn, a software engineer living in Germany, found an obituary that mentioned someone with a similar name and submitted it to Facebook last October as evidence that Thulbourn was dead. He was soon locked out of his own page.

"When I first 'died,' I went looking around Facebook's help pages, but alas, they don't seem to have an 'I'm not really dead, could I have my account back please?' section, so I opted for filling in every form on their website," Thulbourn said by e-mail.

When that didn't work, Thulbourn created a webpage and posted about it on Twitter until news of the mix-up began to spread on technology blogs and the company took notice. He received an apology from Facebook and got his account back.

These are issues that Facebook no doubt wishes it could avoid entirely. But death, of course, is unavoidable, and so Facebook must find a way to integrate it into the social experience online.

"They don't want to be the bearer of bad tidings, but yet they are the keeper of those living memories," Katz, the Rutgers professor, said.



Courtney Purvin with her Facebook page displayed on her laptop.

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