



*Soumaya Toilet* by Santiago Sierra and Yosua Okon

### SURFACE TREATMENT

What: *Zona Maco Mexico Arte Contemporaneo*  
Where: Centro Banamex, Mexico City DF  
When: February 3-7, 2016

### **¡Viva Zona Maco!**

Wow! Latin America's biggest art fair opened in Mexico City, February 3, 2016, and I had the good fortune to be there. Getting to experience some of the best art in the world gave me a transfusion of exhilaration. The *Zona Maco México Arte Contemporaneo*, hosted by the massive Centro Banamex convention center on the outskirts of the city, is the biggest art fair in South America and considered ground zero for one of the world's most important art fairs. Founded by Zélika García 2002, Zona Maco has built a bridge between Mexico's capital and the world's leading artistic institutions. This year, the fair featured 123 galleries from 22 countries and covered over 129,000 sq. ft., but was manageable with wide aisles and open booth plans. Roughly a third of all participating galleries were from outside Mexico.

The initial affect on visitors was overwhelming - where to start? The map of the fair indicated specific galleries and five major sections: New Proposals, Zona Maco Sur, Main Section, Modern Art, and Design. I hoped to discover international trends that might tell me where art is headed, or even where it is outside my own experience. Could it offer me some new truths? Yes, happily it did. A staggering variety of ideas and materials coexisted at this event with thoughtful and provocative meanings deeply embedded into each piece. Material as a sole inspiration was largely absent. I also realized at this point that in a venue of this scale, objectivity was impossible and any individual commentary would be rife with personal taste and bias.

That said, back to truths. *Zona Maco's* artworks revealed philosophical, psychological, social, and even insightful truths regarding their own construction. "Conductores," a

huge triptych by Daniel Lazama, appeared to be an angry statement in the spirit of an Orozco mural regarding the country's economic disparity of energy resources. A social commentary crowd pleaser was a carefully constructed toilet by Santiago Sierra and Yoshua Okon mimicking the shape and surface of Carlos Slim's Museo Soumaya. From Gagosian Gallery, Ed Ruscha's painting, "Other People Ruin Everything," slowly turns on the viewer, shifting the initial sense of blame into probable guilt as we consider who that other person is. Fiber showed up often; a three-panel painting in the formalist mode softened the severity of mechanical block letters by 'painting' with yarn. The brightly colored fabric produced a warm energy. An achromatic painting in the form of a classic joke started off with, "A curator\_a collector\_a critic\_a gallerist\_a museum director\_a viewer\_an artist\_and an artwork walked into a bar." It's too long to quote here, but it was a brilliant take on the future of art and I'm still laughing over it's hope, wit, and sarcasm.

A joke as art?

There was a large artistic response to the world of selfies, visually voiced by mirrors everywhere. Anish Kapoor's round stainless steel reflective mirrors were placed throughout the venue, and Galleria Continua showed pink and yellow colored mirrors by the master of the reflective medium, Michelangelo Pistoletto. Score one for world narcissism.

Alternative/altered materials abounded. At the Paul Kasmin Gallery, I loved Ivan Navarro's infinity mirror drum kits, "Tuning," that played with light and mirrors. New York's Other Criteria Gallery, displayed Damien Hirst's silkscreen prints. The large prints of butterfly wings looked oddly realistic with ink mixed with diamond powder and printed on plastic. This gallery was not for the weak of pocketbook.

On a more general note, abstract paintings were frequent; sculpture was profuse and included ceramic, "Porcelain Rebar," by Ai Weiwei. There was a scattering of photography, but the photographic drama came from Doug Aitken's "Cloud Plane," a large wall piece classified as sculpture.

Zona Maco art fairs offer an excellent window on contemporary art by the world's leading professional artists. Valley residents who are, or feel, connected to the art world should consider attending this accessible event. A quick flight out of the Valley or an inexpensive overnight bus ride will get you there safely, or how about a tour group? Plan ahead for next February.

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