An immigrant, who maintains a close connection to a culture, inhabits a strange middle ground sharing two identities. This can be very conflicting. In this installation most likely, shareable, regardless of where they come from. Culture may be a generator for identity. It is in the decisions we make on a daily basis that define us.

However, this is not an exhibition about Mexican art or history. Although Carrejo uses a traditional folk art—the paper-cut piñata purchased (out of) paper—he is not Mexican. He is American and the symbols, language, and culture that he understands as Mexican are a version of folklore. Positioned between the past and the present, the Mexican-American artist assembles a cultural identity through second-hand stories and4 second-hand knowledge that is shared with the identity of Mexican truly—his ancestors.

Although the following provides a guide to interpreting Carrejo’s individual components of this installation, it is not Carrejo’s desire for the objects to be read as isolated parts. At the core, Carrejo’s work is about a negotiation of individual identity based on a maneuvering of collective identity.

La flor
Flowers are given as offerings and gifts. Positioned on a grave—symbol of commemoration or reflection on people’s accomplishments. Flowers mark a special occasion, as they are symbols of love, adoration, acquisition, and loss. Each of the flowers in the cart is handmade by the artist, and the flowers function as gifts. Carrejo’s plum blossom symbol is intended to be admired by the viewer, as it invites us to write down a moment of indication on the paper provided on the table, and if we choose, reflect on our action by first acknowledging the plum blossom and then releasing it into the donkey through a hole in its back. It is exchange for this gesture we receive a white paper flower from the cart.

La guía
A crane is a simple machine designed to lift heavy loads for moving or manipulation. Used as a tool for destruction and construction, the crane is also induced with meaning in another context. Located on the back end of the pink cart, the crane and “crushing ball” become an extension of the donkey; maybe it’s a sunglasses for his missing tail. On the other hand, the donkey is tethered to an object that has no power to destroy. As he did with the burro piñata, Carrejo plays with our understanding of familiar objects. He makes the crane a tool of destruction and a symbol of dignity (setting it off balance), and replaces the heavy-weight metal wrecking ball with a bouquet of white paper flowers.

Our Own Worst Enemy
La flor is an exhibition about identity. A complex visual story told as an artist who is constantly challenged by what it means to be a second-generation, bicultural child, physically (movement from one place to another) and psychologically (decision-making processes). Nicolás Tolimán Yaritza Rojas defines Chicano art as “seek to link lived reality to the imagination. It intends that viewers respond both to the aesthetic object and to the social reality reflected in it.” Carrejo’s installation, Our Own Worst Enemy, invites us to participate in a nuanced intersection of old and new metaphors for identity and see utopianism to be the crux of modernity. The images— at the donkey’s back, on the crane, (and for the flower) were adapted from a children’s game involving chance and visual recognition called Lotería Mexican.

“I am looking to where my family came from as a generator of métaphysical symbols that exist culturally,” says Carrejo, who was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. Situated on the U.S.- Mexico border, El Paso creates an important point of entry for Mexican immigrants and trading between the United States and Mexico. As a border state, the city functions as both a static and transitional place, where those on the other side wait and those that stay are suspended in-between two cultures and they become Mexican-American, Chicanos, Hispanics, or Latinos. This is the place where Carrejo states that captures Carrejo's imagination and motivates him to interfere with the objects and meanings of a fluid “multi-habitat” sense of self.

Notes
1. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
2. Patricia Peralta is a professor of Spanish and Portuguese at Stanford University, and Associate Director of the Society for the Study of the Americas. She is co-editor of “The Travesty of Modernity: The Museums of Colonial Peru” and editor of “The Secret Life of the Impossible: Revisiting Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s “The Turin Travelers’ Handbook on the Museums of Colonial Peru”.”
3. A poem by the “multi-hybrid” artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña: “Today, I’m tired of exchanging identities in the net. In the body, I am alive, knowing that once the internet is not the real me. I then place myself to be myself for a few minutes, ps: my body however remains intact, untouched, unsatisfied, unattainable, untranslatable.”
5. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
6. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
7. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
8. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
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29. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
30. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
31. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.
An immigrant, who maintains a close connection to a culture, inhabits a strange middle ground sharing two identities. This can be very conflicting. It is in this liminal space that the artist works—-...
This is an exhibition about identity. A complex visual story told in an artist who is constantly challenging what it means to be African-American, both physically (movement from one place to another) and psychologically (decision-making processes).

Jaime Carrejo, Our Own Worst Enemy, invites us to participate in a nuanced understanding of familiar objects. He makes the inherent ephemerality of the piñata as something to be destroyed. Its symbol for God; and the act of destruction, or saving the piñata from destruction by making it out of colored latex paint, which tricks the eye into reading an object would be made of brightly colored paper.

Our Own Worst Enemy dates: September 2009 - January 2010

LOCATION


La piñata is a traditional folk art used in birthdays and celebrations, and is often left as an offering to God. It is made up of brightly colored paper, and contains items such as gold and jewelry, candy, or food. Nobility is emphasized in the traditional symbol for sin; and the act of destruction, or saving the piñata from destruction by making it out of colored latex paint, which tricks the eye into reading an object would be made of brightly colored paper.

A crane is a simple machine designed to lift a heavy load by confronting them. Used as a tool for destruction and construction, the crane is also induced with inherent contradiction. Located on the back end of the pink cart, the crane and "wrecking ball" become an extension of the donkey, maybe even a surrogate for its missing tail. On the other hand, the donkey is tethered to an object that has the power to destroy it. In fact, if we do not destroy the burro piñata, Carrejo plays with our understanding of familiar objects. He makes the inherent ephemerality of the piñata as something to be destroyed.

Our Own Worst Enemy invites us to participate in a nuanced understanding of familiar objects. He makes the inherent ephemerality of the piñata as something to be destroyed. Its symbol for God; and the act of destruction, or saving the piñata from destruction by making it out of colored latex paint, which tricks the eye into reading an object would be made of brightly colored paper. In exchange for this gesture we receive a white paper flower from the cart. I was thinking of the flower as a connotation or reflection on people’s lives. I've been 10 years old, 20, 42, 65. I've spoken 7 broken languages. As you can see, I need a break real bad, just want dangerous border crossers: the poetics and politics of museum display. Ivan Karp. Scoles’s The Gold Ass.

Paper piñata is cut paper, a Mexican art form in which intricate designs are cut out of sheets of colorful tissue paper. Traditionally, the icons are strong together and hung by a banner to commemorate feast days and celebrations; typical motifs include birds, foliage, flowers, angels, devils, saints, historic figures, and sometimes words. Carrejo repeats the traditional motifs (twice), but their meaning is from torn paper, from the torn paper of identification, and resurrection (turn me in) everywhere. In each image, the graphic quality of these images arises from complex narrative structures; but the design, vinyl details nonetheless read as miniature investigations of flatness.

Ultimately, Carrejo sees his work as a conduit for collective experiences. He creates spaces between these systems of identification and invites us to engage in our own retrospective analysis. Our own identities—gender, race, class, and sexual orientation—are called for in questioning see as we write down our indications, feed it to the donkey, and take a paper flower. This assumption that the once piñata has been lifted, the vessel and its contents must be destroyed in order to liberate; for, at times, we can indeed be “our own worst enemy.”

Monica Huerta

September 2009

Notes

1. Jaime Carrejo. All quotes by the artist are from an interview with the author, September 1, 2009.


4. In literature the ass provides comic relief in both Shakespeare’s Macbeth and Cervantes’s Don Quixote. As you can see, I need a break real bad, just want dangerous border crossers: the poetics and politics of museum display. Ivan Karp. Scoles’s The Gold Ass.
Jaime Carrejo lives and works in Denver, CO. Jaime Carrejo was born in El Paso, Texas. He received a BA from the University of Texas El Paso in 2002; did a post-baccalaureate year at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, in 2004; and received an MFA from the University of South Florida, Tampa, in 2007.

Carrejo was a visiting assistant professor at The College of Wooster in 2008. In addition to his solo exhibition at The College of Wooster Art Museum in 2009, Carrejo is part of a collaborative artist group whose video project, titled Neighborhood Watch, took place in Tampa in 1998, Date 1 and Date 2 of this same project took place in 2009 in El Paso, with Date 1 occurring in 2009 in Phoenix, Phoenix, El Paso, El Paso. The upcoming Date 2 (1/2 in 2010) will take place in Chicago and Denver.


Monica Huerta is a PhD candidate in the History of Art department at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She received a BA from the University of Texas at El Paso and an MFA from the University of Michigan. As a Ford Foundation fellow, she is completing her dissertation on contemporary figurative sculpture. Huerta was raised in El Paso, Texas, and identifies as Hispanic.

Our Own Worst Enemy, 2009
Wood, acrylic paint, mixed media, dimensions variable, 44” x 43” x 84 1/2”

Preserver, 2009
Mixed media, dimensions variable, 12” x 12” x 12”

Lemmings, 2009
Mixed media, dimensions variable, 44” x 43” x 84 1/2”

Border Crosser, 2009
Mixed media, dimensions variable, 74” x 12” x 12”

Reconstruction Time Again, 2009
Mixed media, dimensions variable, 96” x 60” x 30”

Take 2 and Take 2 1/2 of the same project took place in 2008 in El Paso, with Take 1 occurring in 2009 in Phoenix, Phoenix, El Paso.

The upcoming Date 2 (1/2 in 2010) will take place in Chicago and Denver.

The Acknowledgments

Fluidity of thought and the ability to synthesize disparate ideas of our world—from complex theory to observed nuance—are often common denominators among artists.

Jaime Carrejo’s installation, Our Own Worst Enemy, demonstrates these traits with humor and eloquence in this disquisition about borders, identity, and personal responsibility.

In addition to thanking Jaime for his generosity and clarity as an artist (and great laugh), I thank Monica Huerta for her elegant essay that contextualizes Carrejo’s appropriated imagery.

I also thank The Burton D. Morgan Foundation for their support of this exhibition, as well as their continued support of the exhibition program at The College of Wooster Art Museum.
Our Own Worst Enemy, 2009
Wood, acrylic paint, metal, paper, rubber vinyl decals, dimensions variable

cart, 44 x 43 x 84 1/2

Our Own Worst Enemy, 2009
Donkey (detail)

About the Artist
Jaime Carrejo lives and works in Denver, CO. Jaime Carrejo was born in El Paso, Texas. He received a BA from the University of Texas El Paso in 2002; did a post-baccalaureate year at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, in 2004; and received an MFA from the University of South Florida, Tampa, in 2007.

Currently an assistant professor of art at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design in Denver, Carrejo was a visiting assistant professor at The College of Wooster in 2008.

In addition to his solo exhibition at The College of Wooster Art Museum in 2009, Carrejo is part of a collaborative art group whose video project, titled Neighborhood Watch, first took place in Tampa in 1999. Take 1 of this same project took place in 2008 in El Paso, with Take 2 occurring in 2009 in Paris, France, and El Paso. The upcoming Take 2 1/2 in 2010 will take place in Chicago and Denver.


Group exhibitions include those at Covivant Gallery, Tampa, and the Shaw Center, Baton Rouge, LA, both in 2006.

About the Author
Monica Huerta is a PhD candidate in the History of Art department at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She received a BA from the University of Texas at El Paso and an MFA from the University of Michigan. As a Ford Foundation fellow, she is completing her dissertation on contemporary figurative sculpture. Huerta was raised in El Paso, Texas, and identifies as Hispanic.

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Kitty McManus Zurko
Director and Curator
The College of Wooster Art Museum

JAIME CARREJO
October 27–December 6, 2009
The College of Wooster Art Museum
Burton D. Morgan Gallery
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