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New Delhi exhibitions. Mexican Art in India. Vadehra Art Gallery

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New Delhi exhibitions. Mexican Art in India. Vadehra Art Gallery 'An Antipode so close…' On view till 11 January 2014, 11am - 7pm (Monday to Saturday). An exhibition of contemporary art from Mexico curated by Julia Villaseñor Bell.

New Delhi exhibitions. An Antipode So Close... Vadehra Art Gallery

New Delhi exhibitions at Vadehra Art Gallery. Preview: 12 December 2013, 6 – 9pm.

If one were to look beyond the superficial similarities between India and Mexico, beyond the obvious love for spicy gastronomical treats, vibrant street life, and passion for colours, these two countries are comparable as nations steeped in history, with indigenous civilizations dating back thousands of years, long periods under colonial rule, distinct social stratifications, multiple languages and faiths, and in contemporary times, as rapidly developing powers in the global scenario. Despite being on opposite sides of the globe, there is a strong shared semblance in the social and political forces that are shaping these developing economies in the postmodern, globalized era.

An Antipode So Close… is the first step in exploring these invisible connections, and brings to India the works of some of the most interesting artists from the Mexican scene today. The title takes inspiration from Octavio Paz's essay "The Antipodes of Coming and Going" from his book In Light of India, which brings forth some of these considerations that bridges these two countries which are on opposite sides of the world.

The contemporary Mexican art scene is socially intense and politically charged. The works emerging from this context are edgy – denouncing and exploding in your face – and yet extremely poetic. The artists are engaged in social and artistic movements – continuously rethinking Mexican identity while addressing global issues. Many of their works propose an alternative vision of Mexico that is removed from the dilapidated image of the country transmitted by the popular media. Moving beyond the question of borders, they have been active in reinventing the vocabulary of globalised contemporary art when addressing issues concerning developing nations and their paths to modernization.

An Antipode So Close… will use the gallery as a laboratory for residencies and interventions as well as a space for debate, encounter and re-activation of

knowledge during this period. While the exhibition will feature many recent works by the artists, of which some have been specifically made for the exhibition, it will also include older works which resonate with ideas and questions pertaining to India and the local art scene. Two of the participating artists – Manuel Rocha Iturbide and Roberto de la Torre – will come to India during the exhibition to create in-situ projects. They will work with local artists and thinkers to create process-based works, and will explore the relationship and relevance their practices have to and in the Indian context. Another artist from the show, Armando Miguelez, will conduct a three day seminar before the opening of the show (see Outreach Events schedule below for further details).

The exhibition is supported by the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Embassy of Mexico in India, National Fund for Culture and the Arts (FONCA), the Mexican Ministry of Culture (CONACULTA) and UPL Ltd. and aims to attract an all new curiosity to a new capital of art, Mexico.

[Antipode: Originating from the Greek words anti (opposed) and pode (foot), this word is used in geography to describe any two places on Earth's surface which is diametrically opposite to each other. Two points that are antipodal to each other are connected by a straight line running through the centre of the Earth.]

About the artists:

Artemio, Tania Candiani, Roberto de la Torre, Demián Flores, Arturo Hernández Alcázar, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Armando Miguelez, Manuel Rocha Iturbide, and TRIODO are forerunners in this art scene. Their works raise important questions about the Mexican context: How do we speak about the difficult conditions of Mexican society? What are the spaces of catharsis? How do we denounce collective rage? What is the place of the poetic and the aesthetic? Born in the 1960s and 1970s, these artists have travelled around the world but remain in synchronicity with the context they work in. They have explored different materials and used technology and social interventions to develop their practices.

The irony and sharp humor in Artemio's work is characteristic of the artists growing up in the '90s in Mexico City. His critical concerns range from considerations of the art world as an irrational bubble to clichés of the Mexican identity abroad, and the critique of the instrumental use of misery as a validating element in contemporary art.

Roberto de la Torre* specializes in social interventions with powerful outcomes. He will be on a three-week residency in Delhi, studying the city and exploring ideas in a local context; the result will be a public performance at the end of this period. Roberto de la Torre is part of the National System of Creators of the FONCA (Sistema Nacional de Creadores).

Arturo Hernández Alcázar's practice dissects some of the most complex yet absurd concepts of modern society. His works offer a critical comment on world economy, the tools and symbolism of labour and the power structures that frame it. His perspective has made him explore a complex language focused on materiality and the ephemeral.

Manuel Rocha Iturbide is one of the pioneering historians of sound art in Mexico. A sound artist and performer himself, he will develop a sound piece using local objects found in Indian markets in Delhi. A performance and a talk will also be programmed during his residency.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, one of Mexico's most recognized alternative media artists, will punctuate the exhibition with a series of rare "traditional" artworks: a photographic project comprised of thousands of fingerprints captured by high magnification surveillance equipment. While the distinctive patterns found in friction ridges of the human finger allow for the identification of an individual, here those singularities are subsumed to create an ambiguous image, representing the generalized use of biometry itself.

Oaxacan artist Demián Flores portrays a history of violence in a masterly way through his engravings, paintings and works on paper. He has managed to combine some of the most ancient motifs of the pre-Hispanic cultures in the country to the omnipresent threat of violence using popular culture and references to art history to tell the story of Mexican identity today.

Tania Candiani* and the art collective TRIODO (composed of individual practitioners Marcela Armas, Gilberto Esparza and Iván Puig) are some of the most promising artists in the fields of alternative media, exploring mechanics, sound and in situ interventions. Their works also criticize the machinery of power and social hierarchy and the various forms they take. Their use of language and science allows the viewer to extract deeper meanings.

Armando Miguelez, a Spanish-origin, US-born, Mexico-educated, Mumbai-based artist – international in all its complexities – will develop art pieces that examine the idea of the geographical antipodes as well as the multiple art pieces and the mechanical reproduction of an image. He will also be an interesting element in the knowledge and discussion programme that will be organized during the exhibition giving a three day seminar introducing Indian audiences to Mexican Art.

*Artists are part of the National System of Creators of the FONCA (Sistema Nacional de Creadores).

About the curator:

Working between Paris, Delhi and Mexico City, Julia Villaseñor Bell is now established in India, working as curator for the Vadehra Art Gallery. She completed her MA in Curating from the Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University in 2010 after a

BA in Art History in Paris 10 Nanterre. She lived 10 years in Paris where she started a not-for-profit association aiming to activate better contemporary cultural exchange between Mexico and France. Her focus on bringing together distant cultures has been the core of her professional career and she has also started exchanges between artists in Mexico and India during the last year.