

Kunsthaus Bregenz

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Austria



KUB 2013.03 | Press release

Gabriel Orozco

Natural Motion

13|07-06|10|2013

Curators of the exhibition

Yilmaz Dziewior and Rudolf Sagmeister

Press Conference

Thursday, July 11, 12 noon

The exhibition is opened for the press at 10 a.m.

Opening

Friday, July 12, 2013, 7 p.m.

Born in 1962 in Xalapa in the Mexican state of Veracruz, and living today in New York, Paris, and Mexico City, Gabriel Orozco is one of the best-known international artists of his generation. Following a major retrospective from 2009 to 2011, which was on view at the New York Museum of Modern Art, the Kunstmuseum Basel, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Tate Modern in London, in Bregenz Orozco will be showing for the most part new works that have been conceived specially for the exhibition.



Gabriel Orozco is that rare artist who can switch between classical, quasi-autonomous paintings or sculptures and transient, seemingly improvised installations, interventions, objects, and photographs. Enormously versatile in approach, he sometimes draws on atmospherically charged, found, or occasionally casual situations and objects, as well as the exact opposite: the production of precise and perfectly crafted objects. Hence, his works take up a position between analytic conceptual art and formally as well as sensually balanced artifacts. Rational engagement and the physical experience of the immediate emotional encounter with his works enter into dialog in Orozco's oeuvre.

From the very start of his career, Orozco produced such icons of contemporary art as the photographic work *My Hands Are My Heart* (1991) or *La DS* (1993), a radically slimmed Citroën DS. His early projects such as *Yoghurt Caps* (1994), or *Parking Lot* (1995), which used a ground-floor gallery as a garage, are no less legendary.

Orozco's pronounced sensibility for cultural and national or state attributions is seen in his incorporating antithetical elements into his practice of art. On the one hand, he selects motifs, techniques, and references, for instance, that are specifically Mexican or that are deeply rooted in Latin-American cultural traditions; on the other, he employs artistic strategies that were developed by modernism. He insists on cultural distinctions, while at the same time developing works that call into question over-rigid, identity-imposing definitions.

Hence, his new stone sculptures confidently stand in the modernist tradition of European sculpture from Hans Arp and Brancusi to Barbara Hepworth, and yet they can also be seen as expressing precisely the engagement with indigenous cultures. Orozco highlights this relation to these extra-European roots by, among other things, presenting his stone sculptures in a way that distantly recalls an anthropological museum's atmospheric style of display.

In addition to the predominantly new works, the Kunsthaus Bregenz is also presenting one of the artist's most spectacular installations. At its first presentation in London nearly seven years ago, his almost fifteen-meter-long synthetic resin reconstruction of the skeleton of a whale caused a sensation. The inspiration for the sculpture was a whale that had stranded on the southwest coast of Spain. The artist covered the artificial bones of the mammal with a complex geometrical pattern in graphite and thus set up a dialog between art and the whale's nature-bound, creaturely aura.



This work also brings out clearly Orozco's interest in traditional customs, rites, and cultures that are close to nature. At the same time, however, it can be viewed as an extrapolation of the concept of the readymade, a concept central to modern art, which the artist has paradoxically updated for the present day by referencing traditions that lie far in the past.

A further highpoint of the Bregenz exhibition is a new work by Orozco that cites one of his best-known earlier works in a modified version. With this startling conceptual gesture the artist not only questions his own reception – he at the same time puts the current validity of his already twenty-year oeuvre to the test.

By including a number of his earlier works in his Bregenz exhibition, Orozco anchors his new works in his own history, allowing viewers to engage more deeply with his characteristic practice of spanning all genres and media.

Following the show at the Kunsthaus Bregenz, Gabriel Orozco's exhibition will be on view at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

Text: Yilmaz Dziewior



A gray whale stranded on the Spanish coast was the inspiration for Gabriel Orozco's sensational, almost fifteen-meter long work. The giant whale skeleton installation has permitted the artist to create an impressive composition that merges art and nature. Initially the enormous bones had to be appropriately prepared by a team of experts. In order to counter any possible decay of the whale skeleton, life-size reproductions of the individual bones were faithfully cast in artificial resin. Following this process lasting three months, Orozco had the Dark Wave skeleton completely covered with dynamic graphite drawings. With the assistance of a group of art students, concentric circles were applied individually to the bones. A close examination of the fascinating skeleton reveals complex geometrical patterns resembling those of waves expanding from a stone thrown into water. The skeleton, suspended by steel cables, is reminiscent of an enormous mobile and offers visitors to the Kunsthaus the unique opportunity to encounter an enormous giant of the ocean at eye level. In this work Gabriel Orozco has demonstrated the elementary power of nature, whilst also referencing ancient myths and biblical narratives.

KUB Billboards

Gabriel Orozco

01 | 07 - 06 | 10 | 2013

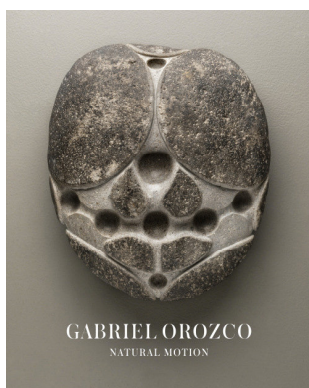
Seestraße Bregenz



Gabriel Orozco works with rocks that hold within themselves a long history. These are river stones, originating from the coast of Guerrero in Mexico. The rounded stones are a variation of a theme to which the artist constantly returns: the circle as the beginning of things, and all its derivatives: the sphere, the ball, the disc, the wheel, the planet, the orbit. They are bodies that speak of what the circle speaks: mobility, cycles, games, fullness, rotation. Their natural form and beauty persists while the carved geometrical patterns permit a tactile and visual comparison of the textures that exist within the rock and its history of natural motion: the rough outside crust eroded by nature, versus the polished internal surfaces carved by man. But what diminishes the original materiality of the stone is precisely what increases the sense of the work (it stops being a stone to become a sculpture).

KUB Publication

Gabriel Orozco



Gabriel Orozco works with materials, forms, and situations of everyday life through sculpture, photography, drawing, and installations. He changes forms and functions of things believing that everything is in natural motion and can become something else. His solo exhibition at the Kunsthhaus Bregenz brings together familiar works, such as *Dark Wave*, his intervention in an enormous whale skeleton, and a comprehensive collection of his ongoing work in terracotta. The exhibition also includes examples of his most recent work, such as carved river stones, and some new works developed especially for the Kunsthhaus Bregenz.

Internationally renowned curators and authors Jean-Pierre Criqui, Pablo Soler Frost, María Minera, and André Rottmann examine the inner aspects of Orozco's oeuvre as well as the various media and formats with which he works. In his essay Yilmaz Dziewior sheds light on the conceptual background to the exhibition in particular.

Gabriel Orozco

Edited by Kunsthhaus Bregenz, Yilmaz Dziewior,
and Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Daniel Birnbaum
Design by Paul Carlos, Pure+Applied, New York
Essays by Jean-Pierre Criqui, Yilmaz Dziewior, Pablo Soler
Frost, María Minera, and André Rottmann
German | English, Swedish | English, approx. 232 pages
21 x 26,7 cm, softcover
Publication date: August 2013
48.- EUR

KUB Online-Shop

www.kunsthhaus-bregenz.at

KUB Artist's Edition

Gabriel Orozco
Sombra Piñanona



Exclusive special editions for the KunsthauB Bregenz are a result of close collaboration with artists and their production processes.

An atmospheric snapshot provides the point of departure of this edition for KunsthauB Bregenz depicting the shadow of a leaf form. Its typically serrated form is a recurring motif in Gabriel Orozco's recent works, linking photography, painting, and sculpture within a dialog.

Photo-print

29.7 x 22.5 cm

Limited edition of 80 + 5 A.P.

Signed and numbered: 650.- EUR

Including 10 % sales tax; packaging and shipping charges extra

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Gabriel Orozco was born in Xalapa, Veracruz in 1962. He lives and works between New York, Mexico City and Paris.

From 1981 to 1984 he studied at the UNAM's Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas in Mexico and from 1986 to 1987 in the Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid.

Orozco has had solo exhibitions at the Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin (2012) moving to the Guggenheim Museum, New York from November 9, 2012 to January 13, 2013; from December 2009 through January 2011 a traveling retrospective exhibition was held, first in New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), then at Kunstmuseum Basel, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and finally at London's Tate Modern.

His most important museum exhibitions were at Palacio de Bellas Artes Museum, Mexico City (2007); Palacio de Cristal, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2005); the Serpentine Gallery, London (2004); Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (2001); the Museum of Contemporary Art of Los Angeles, MOCA (2001); the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1999); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1994); and at the New York Museum of Modern Art, MoMA (1993).

KAZ Concert at KUB

**Ich habe für dich meine Stimmen vervielfacht
(For you I have multiplied my voices)**

Tuesday, July 30, 2013 | 9 p.m.

In cooperation with Kunst aus der Zeit | Bregenzer
Festspiele



**Altenberg Trio, Vienna, Christopher Hinterhuber | Piano,
Amiram Ganz | Violin, Christoph Stradner | Cello**

Duration: 1¼ hours without intermission, Admission:
15.- EUR

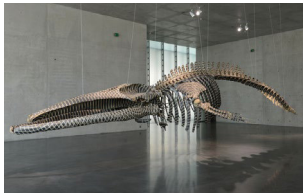
The concert program begins with *Trio op. 8* by Dimitri D. Shostakovich. At the age of fifteen, Shostakovich contracted tuberculosis and fell in love with Tatjana, also fifteen, while residing in a sanatorium. In place of a declaration of love, the shy boy dedicated this piano trio to her. The other pieces—*Sequenza Nr. 8* by Luciano Berio, and *Voiceless. The Snow Has No Voice* by Beat Furrer—also deal with the art of finding a voice in one's life, a voice that enables self-expression and communication with others. André Tchaikovsky also finds his way into the KAZ series with his *Trio Notturmo*, composed in the year of his death. »It's an honor to welcome you to our annual event on the other end of the »Bregenzer Kulturmeile.« We would like to thank our colleagues from KUB for this cooperation. I'm happy to extend a warm welcome once again to the Altenberg Trio, and especially to Christoph Stradner, who has, in addition to this series, already presented many special concert programs in this space. Hearing André Tchaikovsky's *Trio Notturmo* has great meaning for me—a cry out of the darkness. Many thanks also go to you, our viewers, who come to Kunsthaus Bregenz to enjoy one of the smallest yet most precious jewels of the Bregenz cultural scene.« David Pountney, Intendant of the Bregenzer Festspiele

Vice-Versa Bonus | Cooperation with Bregenzer Festspiele

Visitors to the 2013 Bregenzer Festspiele who present their festival ticket in Kunsthaus Bregenz will receive a one-time 4.- EUR discount on admission to the exhibition *Gabriel Orozco*. In return, tickets to the 2013 summer exhibition in Kunsthaus Bregenz will entitle the holder to a one-time reduction of 4 EUR for festival tickets to the Opera in the Festspielhaus, the Orchestra Concerts, or »Kunst aus der Zeit«. The Vice-Versa Bonus can be claimed only at the ticket center and at the evening box office. Limited availability applies. The complete program of »Kunst aus der Zeit« can be viewed at www.bregenzerfestspiele.com.

Gabriel Orozco – Natural Motion

**EG |
Ground
Floor**



Dark Wave

2006, Kalziumkarbonat und Harz mit Graphit | Calcium carbonate and resin with graphite, 304 x 392 x 1375 cm
Sammlung Essl, Klosterneuburg



Piñanona 2

2013, Tempera und poliertes Blattgold auf Leinwand auf Holz | Tempera and burnished gold leaf on linen canvas on wood, Courtesy of the Artist und | and Kurimanzutto, Mexiko-Stadt | Mexico City



Sombra Piñanona

Edition
2013, Fotoprint | Photo-print, 29,7 x 22,5 cm, limitierte Auflage von 80 Exemplaren + 5 A.P., signiert und nummeriert | limited edition of 80 + 5 A.P., signed and numbered

Treppenhaus | Staircase



From Roof to Roof | Von Dach zu Dach | De techo a techo

1993, Cibachrome, Courtesy of the Artist

**1.OG |
1st Floor**

45 Gemeißelte Flusskieselsteine | 45 Carved River Cobbles

2013, alle von der Guerrero-Küste, Mexiko | all from the Guerrero coast, Mexico, Courtesy of the Artist und | and Kurimanzutto, Mexiko-Stadt | Mexico City



Inserción orbital | Kreisförmiger Einsatz | Orbital Insertion

vulkanisch nicht-porös | volcanic non-porous, 24 x 48 x 32 cm



Glúteo doble | Doppelte Rundung | Double Buttock

vulkanisch nicht-porös | volcanic non-porous, 20 x 41 x 12 cm



Doble yoni | Yoni verdoppelt | Yoni Double

Diorit | diorite, 8 x 34 x 13 cm



Roca Tortuga | Schildkröten-Stein | Turtle Rock

Diorit | diorite, 11 x 30 x 30 cm



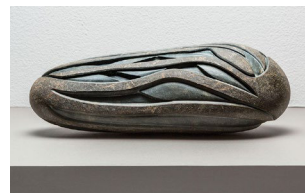
Gotas heráldicas | Heraldische Tropfen | Heraldic Drops

Marmor | marble, 14 x 40 x 28 cm



Ondas de escamas | Schuppen-Wellen | Scale Waves

Diorit | diorite, 10 x 44 x 18 cm



Papaya

vulkanisch nicht-porös | volcanic non-porous, 13 x 36 x 17 cm



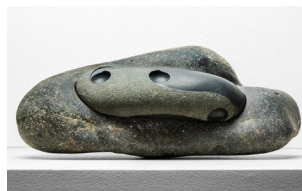
Ballena | Wal | Whale

Granit | granite, 18 x 45 x 22 cm



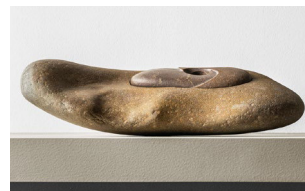
El diablo | Das Diabolo | Diabolo

Diorit | diorite, 20 x 40 x 23 cm



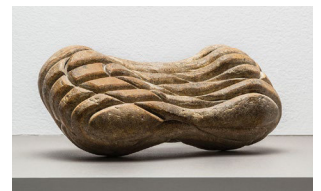
Inserción erosionada | Erodierter Einsatz | Eroded Insertion

vulkanisch nicht-porös | volcanic non-porous, 7 x 39 x 20 cm



Inserción en espiral | Spiralförmiger Einsatz | Spiral Insertion

Diorit und Jaspis | diorite and jasper, 12 x 42 x 22 cm



Hueso turbo | Turbo-Knochen | Turbo Bone

magmatisch | igneous, 12 x 27 x 16 cm



Armado | Gürteltier | Armadillo
vulkanisch nicht-porös | volcanic non-porous, 7 x 35 x 14 cm



Gotas corrientes | Strom-Tropfen | Current Drops
Granit | granite, 9 x 23 x 13 cm



Piedra balón | Stein-Fußball | Soccer Boulder
vulkanisch nicht-porös | volcanic non-porous, 17 x 13,5 x 22 cm



Tortuga | Schildkröte | Turtle
Granit-Diorit | granite-diorite, 9,5 x 25 x 23 cm, 16 x 10 x 12 cm; 25 x 23 x 23 cm installiert | installed



Cinturón cóncavo | Konkaver Gürtel | Concave Belt
Jaspis | jasper, 20 x 42 x 20 cm



Mazorca | Maiskolben | Corn Cob
Granit-Diorit | granite-diorite, 13 x 26 x 14 cm



Inserción con espiral | Spiralförmiger Einsatz | Spiral Insertion
Granit | granite, 8 x 40 x 27 cm



Abanico de ondas | Fächer-Wellen | Fan Waves
Granit-Diorit | granite-diorite, 10 x 40 x 24 cm



Gotas y bola | Tropfen und Kugel | Drops and Ball
Diorit | diorite, 9 x 35 x 26 cm, 14 x 16 x 16 cm, 10 x 17 x 15 cm



Hilado | Gespinst | Cocoon
Granit-Diorit | granite-diorite, 14 x 23 x 18 cm



Hacha doble | Doppel-Axt | Double Ax
Diorit | diorite, 22 x 41 x 26,5 cm



Metate lingam
Diorit | diorite, 9,5 x 34 x 32 cm, 9 x 26 x 9 cm; 17 x 34 x 32 cm installiert | installed



Brain Stone | Hirn-Stein
Diorit | diorite, 17,5 x 22 x 16 cm



Cochinilla | Assel | Wood Louse
Diorit | diorite, 18 x 18 x 18 cm



Calabaza | Kürbis | Gourd
Granit-Diorit | granite-diorite, 12,5 x 26 x 19 cm



Ojos espejados | Spiegel-Augen | Mirror Eyes
Diorit | diorite, 26 x 27 x 10 cm



Turbo piedra | Turbo-Stein | Turbo Stone
Diorit | diorite, 9 x 30 x 11 cm



Pájaro pescado | Fisch-Vogel | Fish Bird
Diorit | diorite, 16 x 35 x 11 cm



Semilla fruto | Samen-Frucht | Seed Fruit
Diorit | diorite, 9 x 36 x 16 cm



Curva doble | Doppelte Höhlung | Double Concave
Granit | granite, 13 x 24 x 15 cm



Erosión doble | Doppelte Erosion | Double Erosion
Diorit | diorite, 22 x 28 x 16 cm



Micro dunas | Kleine Dünen | Micro Dunes
Pegmatit | pegmatite, 11,5 x 17 x 20 cm



Semilla corriente | Wind-Saat | Stream Seed
Diorit | diorite, 10 x 28 x 10 cm



Escamas | Schuppen | Scales
Pegmatit | pegmatite, 10 x 22 x 14 cm



**Madera corriente | Wind-Holz |
Wooden Stream**
Pegmatit | pegmatite,
10 x 15 x 15,5 cm



**Cenicero azteca | Aztekischer
Aschenbecher | Aztec Ashtray**
Diorit | diorite, 7 x 18 x 16 cm



**Canto con gotas | Regentropfen-
Zyklus | Rain Drop Cycle**
Diorit | diorite, 7 x 23 x 10 cm



**Gotas simétricas | Symmetrische
Tropfen | Symmetrical Drops**
Marmor | marble, 9 x 19 x 10 cm



El Haba | Bohne | Bean
Diorit | diorite, 7 x 32 x 18 cm



**Gota ciclica | Zyklischer Tropfen |
Cyclical Drop**
Diorit | diorite, 13 x 16 x 11 cm



**Ciclos de gotas | Tropfen-Zyklus |
Drops Cycle**
Diorit | diorite, 11 x 14 x 16 cm



Hacha vagina | Yoni-Axt | Yoni Ax
Granit | granite, 6 x 20 x 11 cm



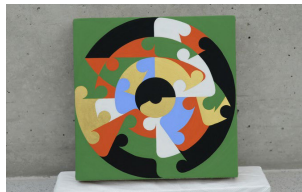
**Gota triple | Dreifach-Tropfen |
Triple Drop**
vulkanisch nicht-porös | volcanic
non-porous, 5 x 18,5 x 10 cm

Heráldico I-VIII

2013, Tempera und poliertes Blattgold auf Leinwand auf Holz | Tempera
and burnished gold leaf on linen canvas on wood, Courtesy of the
Artist und | and Kurimanzutto, Mexiko-Stadt | Mexico City



Heráldico I



Heráldico II



Heráldico III



Heráldico IV



Heráldico V



Heráldico VI



Heráldico VII



Heráldico VIII

Treppenhaus | Staircase



**Extension of Reflection |
Die Erweiterung der Reflexion |
La extension del reflejo**
1992, Cibachrome,
Courtesy of the Artist

**2.OG |
2nd Floor**

116 Terrakotten | 116 Terracottas

Unterschiedliche Maße | Diverse dimensions, Courtesy of the Artist und | and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York|Paris und | and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris



Untitled | Ohne Titel
2011|2012, Terrakotten |
Terracottas



Untitled | Ohne Titel
2011|2012, Terrakotten |
Terracottas



Untitled | Ohne Titel
Rotating Pressures
2011|2012, Terrakotten |
Terracottas



Untitled | Ohne Titel
Orthocenters Series: 1–3
2011|2012, Terrakotten |
Terracottas



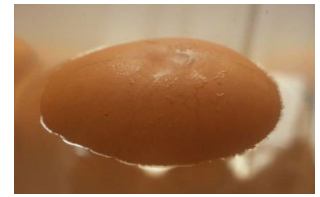
**My Hands Are My Heart | Meine
Hände sind mein Herz**
1991, Cibachrome (2-teilig |
2 parts), Courtesy of the Artist



**Sleeping Dog | Schlafender Hund |
Perro durmiendo**
1990, Cibachrome,
Courtesy of the Artist



Horse | Pferd | Caballo
1992, C-Print | C print,
Courtesy of the Artist



**La Isla de Simon | Simons Insel |
Simon's Island**
2005, C-Print | C print,
Courtesy of the Artist

Treppenhaus | Staircase



**Breath on Piano | Atem auf
Klavier | Aliento sobre piano**
1993, C-Print | C print,
Courtesy of the Artist

**3.OG |
3rd Floor**



La DS Cornaline
2013, Mixed media,
489 x 122 x 147 cm,
Courtesy of the Artist und |
and Marian Goodman Gallery,
New York|Paris

Abstracts of the KUB Publication Gabriel Orozco

Pablo Soler Frost About Gabriel

There are always brilliant exceptions to the general meanness and dullness of an age. There is always a spring in a hillside, a fountain that refreshes, enlivens, enlightens. Its water is pure. Everyone can drink from that fountain. And the fountain does not diminish by it. One thing that marvels me about Gabriel is his astonishing capacity to pour new water, so to speak. It is the same spring, but the water is always new. Gabriel has worked with bone, plant, stone, gold, wood, wax, sand, dust, ink, paper, metals, compasses, scissors, pencils, garbage, cameras. His work spirals. He likes to move. He likes movement and the stillness that those forces bring about. His art is about that: the incomprehensible music of the stars symbolized in fractal patterns. But that is not all: he has a poet's soul in the sense that he grasps all the gifts bestowed upon him by sheer chance in the streets, in the garbage containers (as in Penskes Project). He who wants to find, must first look. And Gabriel looks, intently. He watches. Gabriel is a keen observer of nature, and I believe that he really finds delight in it: in streams, beaches, mangroves. But he is there to find the lines that connect according to the strict laws of the Italian Renaissance prescriptions on perspective or the even more strict laws of Newton. This is evident from *Black Kites* to the skeleton of the whale that hangs in Mexico's City Public Library. It is even more perceivable in *The Atomists* in which the photographs appearing in Sports diaries and magazines showing the action of humans performing or struggling in a match or a game were overlaid by circles and semicircles, in duotone, if I remember correctly, and those new, superimposed figures expressed in a very Euclidian way, the nature of the effort conveying a beautiful universe of sheer forces.

His concern over form does not preclude the importance he gives to matter. In an age in which violence pervades the arts, there is no malevolence in Gabriel's work. On the contrary. There is always a sense of hope, even if there is always irony. And that irony can be extremely sharp, as in the famous empty box, or his first exhibition at Marian Goodman clearly show. Those made him a relative of the surrealists in the sense that provocation has been, since the 18th century, an essential part of the arts.

His experience with boomerangs seems to me like a reflection of a reflection. You throw the boomerang away; its ellipse may or may not be perfect; it may or may not return to your hand; but it is always you who tries to master the instrument and the instrument, although being always the same, bears the brunt of all its experiences. It is a physical event recorded by our senses. And it is one that signifies.

I think Gabriel finds significance in almost everything, from flints to dried, decaying cactuses. For me that exhibition, of the dead things he brought from the desert, stands tall among the many extraordinary exhibitions of this Mexican artist, the one who is truly the inheritor of "Los Tres Grandes del Muralismo Mexicano," Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros. And I say this without a hint of irony. The vision is global, but it is rooted locally. I know it is a cliché, but sometimes, a French diplomat once said, clichés are vital.

And there is a sense of humour, which I might perhaps explain as a sense of sharing. Gabriel wants to share: his vision, his insights into the vast universe. He neither dissects nature, nor people, nor situations. He watches and, as cosmographers before him, Gabriel brings us neat, orderly objects and pictures of things afar, of things forgotten, of things eternal.

Gabriel Orozco: Sculpture and its double
María Minera

[He] almost invariably ignored “the major sights and so-called landmarks”, simply passing them by: but not a long line of bootlasts; ... not the uncleared tables and stacks of washing-up seen in simultaneous profusion.

Walter Benjamin

Both the absence of intention and the most fully considered intentionality.

Walter Benjamin

One of the most picturesque episodes in art history took place in Renaissance Italy, where artists and theorists took it upon themselves to determine, once and for all, which of the arts stood above all the rest. As a result, numerous *paragoni* (from the Italian *paragone*, or comparison) were published in which it could be maintained, for example, that sculpture was an art form far inferior to painting because, among other things, it obliged the artist to stand –unlike the elegant painter, who could remain seated. Such a dispute would be unthinkable today; however, there is something about this particular distinction that takes on curious significance in light of contemporary art: to what degree is the character of the work defined by the artist’s position? Indeed, that which can be achieved from a chair is very different from what can be achieved without one (to mention the obvious: Action Painting). Today, the artist can even, like Gabriel Orozco, work as he walks, his work literally gaining ground as he moves. The point is not purely rhetorical: mobility is, in fact, a relatively recent conquest (fifty years at most). There had been, of course, previous attempts: Dürer and Poussin were among the first painters who dared set foot outside the studio. But even the Impressionists, who went out en masse to capture the fleeting effects of light, were chained to their canvases. The esprit, however, is akin. One might almost say that Orozco’s work is a kind of culmination of the so-called *plein air* school, insofar as getting out into nature (or onto the street, as the case may be) is concerned. And there seems to be something about the type of pursuit that also brings them together: at the end of the day, the idea in both cases is to obtain—albeit in ways that are radically opposed—images that are to some degree fashioned out of the world. And here the analogy must end, because beyond that shared desire for immediacy, there isn’t much to connect the desire of some to reconstruct reality in terms of color with another’s complex usage of his surroundings. While the Impressionist painter is content to describe the placid surface of any given piece of sensory reality that fits within his painting, Orozco establishes another sort of negotiation altogether with the outside world: it is not just that the world (one that, in the case of this tireless traveler, is no figure of speech: the world is the world; or the planet, if you will) directly supplies his raw working materials; it also provides him with the necessary backdrop, enabling him to constantly stage an idea—one that is renovated every so often—of a rather sculptural kind. If I may, I would like to point out as an aside that the use of the term “sculpture,” as Gabriel Orozco himself has said, indeed “limits us greatly”¹ when it comes to the multiplicity of objects, situations, materials, textures, positions, etc., implied in this artist’s work. But for lack of a better term, as long as he continues to busy himself generating images that reveal a particular organization of matter—as the primary reality of things—in space, we cannot help but continue to consider them sculptural, in clear opposition with the pictorial, which orders the matter at its disposal—pigment—on a predetermined plane. End of parenthesis. Do not imagine, upon reading the word “stage,” that these are spectacular or lavish acts. On the contrary, often what we have here are tiny gestures, not acts; mere signs that almost go unnoticed. This characteristic that, in fact, many of his works share (i.e. being so discrete, they could pass unseen), is not only part of their charm, but the center, I would say, of this artist’s early explorations, which clearly seem to be attempts at responding, in different ways, to the following question: what is the minimum effort required to succeed in having an object—or a situation, or a material—take on a sculptural dimension? Is it enough, for example, to show

¹ According to what he said to Benjamin H. D. Buchloh during the interview held in New York in 1998, see: *Textos sobre la obra de Gabriel Orozco*, New York/CONACULTA, Spain, 2005, p. 89.

the fog one's breath can leave suspended for a few seconds on the clear surface of a grand piano?² Orozco's way of bursting in on the life of objects can be just that ephemeral at times: vaporous, but always decisive enough to extend a bit further the flow of meaning, having reformulated the formal possibilities of that object and, thus, disrupted its context.

This is what wandering about the world has done for him: enabled him to bring the sculptural object to its most immediate or primordial expression (one might almost say natural, if it weren't a total incongruity). I am thinking of *Perro durmiendo* (*Sleeping Dog*, 1990). That inert body—a mass, in the strictest sense—sustained as if by magic over dangerously vertical rocks: what is it saying to us? May things, of course. For starters, there is a clear desire to dissolve art into life, so that sculpture will not be alien to the ways of the prosaic world (to use the expression that Georges Bataille used to refer to the world “in which we act to free ourselves, in which we act to cover and shelter ourselves”).³ Through works like this one, Orozco positions himself within a zone of full accessibility, as it was once defined by the Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, where no one “feels embarrassed at being in the presence of ‘art’”,⁴ because it deals with things “that we see every day” and that we find even without having sought them out. “A sort of communion with the environment,” or, as Orozco himself would say, daily life seen as a “functional process”⁵ in which the artist is no longer a creator of unprecedented forms but rather a kind of destabilizer of the identity of everyday objects that, upon being intervened to a certain degree (or at the very least, refocused), take on new, slippery meanings. And besides all this desire for continuity between life and work (an age-old ambition, really; isn't that what Diderot already wanted: to enter into the painting?),⁶ we find here a meditation that, while hand-in-glove, is independent in terms of the boundaries of recognizability of the work as a work of art.

That small dog—we don't know for sure whether it is sleeping or playing dead, or whether perhaps it actually is dead—seems to confirm that sculpture is a matter of degrees, according to Orozco. Asking one's self where the world ends and art begins is rather like wanting to know at what exact point a cold liquid turns warm. It depends on what liquid we are talking about, of course, but even if we are dealing with water: is there a precise instant at which we can say that it is more warm than cold? The same thing happens quite often in Orozco's work: it is one degree away from disappearing, or crossing over into the extinction of the concept of sculpture. It takes place, thus, at a moment when something can still be recognized before blending back into its surroundings once again. It is as if the dog on the hillside, for example, stopped being just a dog for an instant in order to also become a premise (of the “some dogs can be sculptures” variety) that not only broadens, shall we say, the artist's morphological repertoire but also renews, and radically so, the act of sculpture in and of itself. “That is what I do, essentially,” Orozco has said. “I pose hypotheses. Hypotheses that arise from a direct confrontation with specific objects and that must, ultimately, be proven or discarded, as in any experiment.”⁷ An experiment that, once again, takes place not in the artist's studio, but outside: in the great laboratory that spontaneously constructs and destroys itself while Orozco walks through, always with an attitude that lies somewhere between distracted and alert. Not what, but when: that is the question. And it is not that we have here any romantic notions regarding the importance of that decisive instant (as we do with Cartier-Bresson); but it is rather clear that some instants are more decisive than others. How long will the sheep forming that indistinct mound of wool in *Sueño común* (*Common Dream*, 1996) remain congregated?

Apparently it was Ad Reinhardt who said that sculpture is “something you bump into when you back up to look at a painting.” One would expect no less from a painter, of course. And yet it is surprising

² As is the case with the photograph *Aliento sobre piano* (*Breath on Piano*) from 1993.

³ Just as he describes it in the essay “The Surrealist Religion” which appears in *The Absence of Myth*, London/New York, 1994, p. 71.

⁴ Quotes by Oiticica are taken from his essay “Posición y programa,” in: *Hélio Oiticica*, Mexico City, Alias, p. 63.

⁵ As he indicated when interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obrist in 2003. Quote taken from *Textos sobre la obra de Gabriel Orozco*, see note 1, p. 200.

⁶ He says so when in the “Salon of 1767” he speaks of the painter Hubert Robert and confesses that he would have been unable to prevent himself from “dreaming under this vault, from sitting down between these columns, from entering into your painting.” Denis Diderot, *Diderot on Art*, Vol. 1, New Haven, 1995, p. 198.

⁷ From our conversation held in his Mexico City home, April 2013.

that, unintentionally, he hit upon formulating a concept of sculpture-as-accidental that very soon would find itself at the heart of the experimental drive of a great deal of artistic production during the post-war period. A concept that coincides with the surrealist belief that life and work are connected by means of a sudden discovery, and one that in Gabriel Orozco reaches unsuspected heights. The work here is not only something the artist bumps into to begin with; the viewer does so afterwards as well: suffice to recall the empty shoe box that the artist tends to leave surreptitiously on the floor,⁸ hoping perhaps someone may discover it with their feet, not their eyes (not unlike what Duchamp wanted to achieve with his *Trébuchet*).

“Reality is not surprising,” Orozco once observed, but “there is a moment in which it seems that way to us.”⁹ Here we have what might act as a title for further considerations regarding the work of this artist, whose opus hangs in the balance between coincidence and choice. It is worth observing that Orozco is not saying that reality *is* interesting, but that now and again it can seem that way to *us*. Chance doubtless plays a major role here (not knowing, as André Breton would say, what eventually might along the way “constitute... a magnetic pole in either space or time”),¹⁰ but that’s not all. Moving about the world can become an instrument that generates a reading, but also, simultaneously, a writing of the space. And that is why Orozco’s work oftentimes results in a perfect rapport between a total lack of intention and a supremely heightened intention. Let us think about *Turista maluco* (*Crazy Tourist*, 1991): a view of a series of rickety wooden tables in a Brazilian open-air market after closing time. A very ordinary scene with an element that, somehow, sets off our alarms: the arrangement of those orange dots that we see here and there looks too regular for us to be able to attribute it to mere coincidence. Only then do we understand that the artist—the crazy tourist of the title—has carefully positioned an orange on each table until a geometric landscape is attained that, all of a sudden, reconfigures the untidy surroundings right before our eyes. But I am glossing over an obvious point: how is it that we can view a scene if we are not there? Wasn’t this supposed to be sculpture? Why, then, are we looking at a photograph?

Much of Orozco’s work parts, in effect, from actions the artist has carried out at some point with the goal of arriving, in this case, at a photographic image. An image that is not only a sign of something we can perceive as having taken place “live”, but also literally a signal, a way of signaling (of “placing or stamping a sign on an object in order to make it known or distinguish it from another, or to later recall something,” according to the dictionary) what has taken place there: a sculpture that is assisted to some degree (I am borrowing, of course, the definition of “assisted” given by Duchamp to the readymades in which he had a hand). See, for example, the *Silla con bola de arena* (*Sandball and Chair*, 1995): an image, taken on the beach, where we see the metal skeleton of what was once a comfortable Acapulco chair, to the center of which the artist has added a ball of wet sand (almost as if it were a planet in the middle of its orbit); sand taken, by the way, directly from the ground where the chair rests.¹¹

Orozco uses the photographic camera to accurately register these solitary, unrepeatable actions that otherwise would have to be left behind—and then move on. But clearly the artist does not seek to empower his fulfillment by interacting with his surroundings, as if he were a disinterested passerby whose transit through a non-sublime urban setting had the sole purpose of sublimating it. There is no notion here of wandering as an artistic practice in and of itself. Its purpose is very clear: to bump into the work. And therefore, the photographs are, in counterbalance with the almost altruistic notion implied by intervening a space while leaving it untouched, the most direct way of openly lending purpose to whatever emerges, fortuitously or with the artist’s help—in fact, we may never really know how he encountered the scene, or to what point it was intervened by him. But once the photograph is taken, everything can peacefully go back to its natural state, to whatever it was before: a dog, some tables, a few oranges. In this sense, it is as if these materials or these objects or these situations that Orozco stumbles into along the way did not really belong to him, as if he could only borrow them, or only capture them for an instant—like butterfly hunters do—before letting them go. Leaving, at most, a trail behind. That is why these photographs so often produce a fleeting sensation of desertion. We find

⁸ The first time he did this was at the Aperto of the Venice Biennale in 1993.

⁹ According to what he said at the conference he gave at the Rufino Tamayo Museum, Mexico City, January 30, 2001. Quote taken from *Textos sobre la obra de Gabriel Orozco*, see note 1, p. 186.

¹⁰ André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Ann Arbor, MI., 1969, p. 32.

¹¹ There is a second version of this photograph, taken in the same place and almost at the same time, only here, the sea covers the ground and the chair seems to float on it.

ourselves before an uninhabited world, but one that was only recently abandoned; as if we had entered a room someone was in only a moment ago (a concept that is not far from Duchamp's definition of infrathin as "the warmth of a seat which has just been left")¹². So what we see is this: traces of actions. A table with a chessboard printed on it, two half-finished beers and a series of lime slices meticulously placed on the dark squares. Who played this *Juego de limones (Lime Game, 2001)*? Who drank the beers? Where did everybody go?

"To live means to leave traces," Walter Benjamin would tell us.¹³ A perception that is absolutely familiar to Gabriel Orozco. "The idea of a boat or ship navigating and leaving a wake behind. To me, that image is my work," he once said.¹⁴ A curious image, if we think that a wake is a trace that is destined to vanish. Benjamin's observation is therefore still more melancholy: if life means leaving traces, what happens when those traces are erased—as almost always is the case? Is life over? This is perhaps the reason why Orozco is determined to photograph his own traces: so that the wake, instead of breaking up, thus becomes a mark. Photography acts precisely against what is fleeting; its function is none other than that of leaving evidence, of avoiding oblivion. "It would be beautiful to think about an infinite, permanent wake," Orozco noted, "but then it would no longer be a wake." True enough, it would no longer be a wake: it would be a photograph.

These photographs act, therefore, as afterthoughts. Rather than passively registering the original event, they seem to give an opinion. Another example is *La extensión del reflejo (Extension of reflection, 1992)*: with the wet wheels of a bicycle, the artist succeeds in prolonging, in an arc, a rendering of the branches of a tree projected—as clearly as a mirror—onto a puddle. But not until there is a photograph—one that reviews what just happened—can one truly perceive that these circular traces, in effect, extend, or almost, one might say, complete the silhouette of a bare treetop partially reflected in the water. This is not about, therefore, merely identifying the sculptural quality of certain spontaneous configurations in space (although at times, it may also recur to that strategy), but about creating—or discovering—structures that express their sculptural value only once they are photographed. As Orozco sees it: photography, more than a window, is a "space that attempts to capture situations."¹⁵ If we go to the root, the sculptor is someone who "cuts" (thus, sculpture and scalpel and exculpate are all related words). The hand and eye want to see everything, to touch everything. The head cuts; that is to say, it edits, it discards. Is this not precisely what the camera does, after all: to crop? To separate from the "forest of symbols,"¹⁶ as André Breton called it, the only one that interests us here: the one that once again asks the question about the state of sculpture? Take the case of *Sundial Banana (1995)*: a close-up of a curious geometric construction¹⁷ on top of which the artist has surreptitiously left a banana that reproduces, with great accuracy, the waxing moon shape of the stone structure. Anyone else would have gone by such a construction without doing anything but feel impressed—in a best-case scenario. The artist, however, sees something else there: a possibility to create a work. Perhaps the idea of how the space should be intervened (replicating it with a banana) does not fully emerge at that first moment, but certainly there is something that, from the beginning, attracted him in terms of form. And from there to the photo is just one step.

But can we say, then, that the photograph is the work? "Yes, it is the work," Gabriel Orozco recognizes. "In certain cases, it is the only way I have of presenting something, an idea, an experience. I do not use the photograph in a 'paternal' way, as a document that can be used to show something important to others... I am not interested in that. I try to have the photograph present itself like a chair, a tree, like a fact: there it is."¹⁸ In such a way that, as was already the case in conceptual art, a photograph can even succeed in displacing the object or assuming, as Benjamin Buchloh would say, "the condition of

¹² Marcel Duchamp, *Notes (The documents of Twentieth Century Art)*, Boston, , 1983, p. 21.

¹³ Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in: *ibid.*, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, New York, 1986, p. 155.

¹⁴ In my interview with him in December 2006, published in : *Letras Libres*, VIII, No. 96, pp. 84-87.

¹⁵ "Interview with Gabriel Orozco," in: *PBS, Art:21*, 2003.

¹⁶ André Breton, *Mad Love*, University of Nebraska Press, 1987, p. 15.

¹⁷ We know that this is one of the calculation instruments from the astronomical observatory in Delhi, the renowned Jantar Mantar, from which Gabriel Orozco also took the shape he used as the foundation for a home built on the Oaxacan coast of Mexico.

¹⁸ He said this to me during the aforementioned interview.

an object.”¹⁹ And this is the case to such a degree that Orozco will often present photographs next to his sculptural objects, almost as if they were the same thing (except that one is on the floor and the other, hanging on the wall). In fact, he has even at times shown objects with the photos he has taken of them. *Mis manos son mi corazón* (*My Hands Are My Heart*, 1991) is both a sculpture in the shape of a heart made by the artist by pressing his fingers into a ball of clay held in his hands and, at the same time, a photograph—a diptych, in fact—of the object and the moment in which the action of producing the heart with his hands takes place. There is *Caja de zapatos vacía* (*Empty Shoe Box*), and then there is the photo portraying an empty shoe box on the snow (also from 1993). Why the reiteration? Despite possessing the object, it would seem as if the artist needed to reaffirm it. Could this be about having a dual entity, an alter ego of sculpture?

Constantin Brancusi thought that photography was, in effect, a transportable double of his sculptures. To him, the photo was not just a means of reproduction, but also a commentary of sorts that could go so far as to supplant all critical initiative: “Why write?”, he would ask himself. “Why not just show the photographs?”²⁰ Therefore, he decided to learn to take and develop his own photographs, with the goal of being able to document his work himself. What he was seeking through this had nothing to do with Alfred Stieglitz’s exquisite photography (“it is beautiful, but it does not represent my work,”²¹ he told Man Ray, standing before one of them); he wanted something else: that the images act as a separate discourse, or a metadiscourse, if you will. Moreover, it cannot be said that the images Brancusi produced sufficed in strictly photographic terms. As Man Ray tells it: “They were out of focus, over or underexposed, scratched and spotty.” But this is how his works “should be reproduced,” lighting them in such a way that they remained partly in darkness while producing at the same time a shadow marked enough to give the sensation of duality. In his photograph of *The Beginning of the World*, for example, the great marble egg (created around 1920) appears as if floating in an undefined space, while projecting beneath itself a shadow that is crisp to such a degree that it ends up giving the impression of being neither a shadow nor a specular reflection per se, but rather a separate body. It is evident that Gabriel Orozco has taken a similar approach when, not having been trained as a photographer, he decides to take up the camera in order to be the one who registers his own sculptural actions. The photographic representation of what has come of these actions can be seen, in this sense, as a recapitulation; or even as a second act that, although it participates closely in that of the creation of the form, ends up being an ulterior reflection that adds, with its unique point of view, a new layer of possibility to the work. The photograph, thus, not only captures: it configures—as if it had its own ideas about how things should be.

According to Brancusi, a photograph is far from being a simple shot: it is the ideal representation of the work; that is to say, the way it should be shown every time the photograph is reproduced.²² A perspective, thus, in which the figure, as Heinrich Wölfflin thought, can explain “itself all at once.”²³ In Orozco, this takes on even more importance, given that in most cases there is no separate sculpture that one can gain access to. There is only a photo. Therefore, it is an ideal representation, but it is also the only one possible. In the words of Wölfflin: “The problem of photographing the figure overlaps completely with the problem of viewing the figure.” The decision to photograph the work is thus a decision parallel to that of how the work is going to look, forever (not wanting to be overdramatic, but there it is). An example: *Monedas en la ventana* (*Coins in Window*, 1994). During a trip to Moscow, the artist took advantage of the perspective that was offered to him, most likely by his hotel room, in order to “place” a coin on the tip of each cupola of Saint Basil’s Cathedral. A minimal action that achieved, however, a surprising result: using some coins stuck to the window—which would lose all meaning if the point of view of the camera were slightly altered—the artist attained something fairly unlikely: he gave an enigmatic twist to an extremely cliché Muscovite postcard view. Here we see in all clarity how sculpture cannot exist beyond the photo—most likely, the coins were taken down from the window by the artist himself, or by whomever happened to arrive there later on; but even in the odd case that they

¹⁹ Interview, see note 1, p. 86.

²⁰ Quote taken from Roxana Marcoci, *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today*, New York, ed. by Roxana Marcoci, exh. cat. Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York 2010, p. 98.

²¹ This and the following quotes from Brancusi are taken from Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, New York, 1988, p. 165.

²² See Victor I. Stoichita, *Short History of the Shadow*, London, 1997.

²³ All quotes by Heinrich Wölfflin come from his essay “How One Should Photograph Sculpture,” in *Art History*, Vol. 36, Issue 1, February 2013, pp. 52-71.

are still there, it is highly unlikely that the action would repeat itself, because one would hardly be expected to arrive at the scene with the cleverness and creativity required to decipher the meaning of the coins. And thus it is that only within the photograph can the work take on full existence.

Baudelaire felt that sculpture had a lot of disadvantages. One, above all, especially piqued him: that being “brutal and positive as Nature itself, it has at the same time a vagueness and ambiguity.”²⁴ That is to say, it exhibits “too many surfaces at once.” And, therefore, the spectator “who moves around the figure can choose a hundred different points of view, except for the right one.” Indeed, it may come to pass, Baudelaire warns, that a trick of light, an effect of the lamp, discovers “a beauty which is not at all the one the artist had in mind.” This would never happen with a painting, he tells us, which is nothing more than what the painter wants it to be, and therefore, “there is no other way of looking at it.” Unless, going back to sculpture, it is photographed. But not in the “pictorialist” fashion—that is to say, as if wanting to produce an “artistic” effect—recurred to by many photographers, thinking that “nothing of the original could be lost,” Wölfflin advises—when only the frontal view (“exclusive and absolute”, Baudelaire would add) can provide, he tells us, the clarity that makes the work “completely convincing.”

Perhaps intuitively, or perhaps knowingly, Gabriel Orozco appropriates this need for frontality and portrays every object and every situation, rejecting superfluous aestheticisms. He, like Brancusi, is not especially interested in obtaining a perfect image in photographic terms: neither light, nor composition, nor anything is too carefully looked at in his photographs. (Nor, it must be said, is there a total lack of interest: Orozco recurs to a technique that assures him a specific image quality: the color slide, which must be developed by means of the practically extinct Cibachrome process, doubtless recurred to for that peculiar, intense, bright coloration that he wouldn't be able to get any other way). Thus, this is about making a straightforward registry, one that allows him to photographically stage the evolution of an action into form. Not in vain Roland Barthes said, “it is not by Painting that Photography touches art, but by Theatre,”²⁵ a small staging that is perfectly manifested in the nature of Orozco's photographs. Consider *Hojas durmiendo* (*Sleeping Leaves*, 1990), an image of a sleeping bag on the grass that protects within a bunch of leaves, possibly banana. Here, the artist's hand is entirely present. It is he who, possibly echoing the famous encounter between the umbrella and the sewing machine²⁶ (except that here it seems to find its place not on the dissecting-table, but on a camping trip), decides to give the leaves the animated nature of someone who might need to cover up before sleeping outdoors – an obvious contradiction that makes the image even more endearing. Similarly, *Gatos y sandías* (*Cats and Watermelons*, 1992) is also the result of a small performance completed at a New York supermarket, where Orozco took it upon himself to bring together once again a series of disconnected elements (disrupting the excessive categorization of the supermarket, where everything tends to occupy a precise, fixed space). This time, eleven cans of cat food were methodically positioned on a pile of watermelons (in the background blur we catch a glimpse of the typical produce refrigeration units). So then, either watermelons with cat-faced hats or, if you prefer, cats with watermelon bodies, the whole affair can only be described as charming.

And it is fairly predictable that the effect would not be the same if these cans and these watermelons were shown in a gallery. The hybrid form born out of this spontaneous, heterogeneous blend makes sense inside the market—the place of transactions par excellence—because the action that precedes it acts as an authentic exchange of values, albeit taken to the absurd. In the gallery, not only would this context, essential to understanding what it is we are seeing, be lost; the point of view from which the work is structured would also disappear (as is the case with *Coins in Window*) and the spectator, as Baudelaire reflected, would find himself submerged in the confusion of the multifocal. In the photographic image, Orozco shows us only one facet—the ideal one, as we already have said—of the sculptural arrangement that he has carried out at a moment's notice (transporting the cans in a shopping

²⁴ Quotes by Charles Baudelaire have been taken from his essay “The Salon of 1846,” in: *The Mirror of Art*, New York, 1956, p. 88.

²⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, New York, 1981, p. 29.

²⁶ An allusion to the renowned phrase by the Uruguayan Isidore Ducasse, Le Comte de Lautréamont, when he stated, in the third stanza of the sixth canto of *The Cantos of Maldoror*, that the adolescent Mervyn was as beautiful as “the random encounter between an umbrella and a sewing-machine upon a dissecting-table” (Le Comte de Lautréamont, *The Songs of Maldoror*, trans. by R. J. Dent, 2011). This powerful image was taken up again, as is well known, by the surrealists as a perfect example of the esprit that should govern their investigations.

cart, no doubt, from the cat food shelf to the fruits and vegetables section). But above all, it is because he has done this at a moment's notice that it doesn't make the least bit of sense to try and repeat the gesture within the context of a formal exhibition –that would be like trying to explain a joke that no one got the first time. The photograph offers a sense of access to the world that goes especially well with this “sculpture of everyday life,” as Benjamin H. D. Buchloh called it.²⁷ A sculpture in the round emits very little information regarding the place where it was made (beyond what the material itself may suggest). The photograph adds to the certainty that, literally, it did take place –only once, as Barthes would say.²⁸ The dog sleeping on the hillside, the chair with a ball of sand, the leaves inside the sleeping bag, the congregated sheep, etcetera; all those animals and fruits and things were truly there, where Orozco found them.

At the same time, in photography there is never actually an outside; everything is redirected inward, time and time again. Photography, the first cousin of painting, is capable of manufacturing, albeit momentarily, a new, fully comprised reality that runs parallel to that of the world. A situation that would seem to corroborate Paul Éluard when he says, or is thought to have said, that “there is another world, but it is in this one.” Like an island within an island. Which is exactly what takes place in the photograph by Gabriel Orozco²⁹ that bears the same name: *mise-en-abyme* of a dual landscape of sorts where, on the one hand, we see the unmistakable silhouette of Manhattan in the distance, marked against a stormy sky and where, on the other, in the foreground, a small tableaux appears upon which the artist emulates the outline of the city using materials found on site (planks, stones, rubble); all arranged with great care beside a puddle in order to lend authenticity to the island setting.

And yet, as we were saying, this is about a depopulated world. Or one populated only by dogs and, perhaps, one man whose hands are his heart –that untiring, crazy tourist. Or, rather, it is a world inhabited solely by sculpted matter. A flatworld. Because that is what photography does to sculpture physically: it flattens it out. Here, the tactile disappears in order to give rise to an unmistakable visuality. Those bodies with a specific weight and density that tend to occupy a broad, high, and deep space in photography become mock-ups of themselves (perhaps that is why Orozco decided in 1999 to directly present life-size photographic ersatz of his sculptural objects.)³⁰ Copies. Doubles. But in the same way a score acts as the double of the live interpretation of that same score. Except that here, it all happens in reverse: the action has taken place before the photograph. Which recalls John Cage's reflection about action (in opposition to recording or, in our case, photography) as a non-knowledge of something that has not yet happened,³¹ or that, in any case, is happening at that precise moment. The photographic image would then imply the contrary: a knowledge of something that has already happened. A present tense—that of action—unfolded in another, perennial present tense: that of the photograph. And thus, more than mere registers of actions, we might fairly conclude that Gabriel Orozco's photographs operate as doubles of his sculptures. Transportable sculptures, as Brancusi called them. Or traveling sculptures, as Duchamp would say.

*Epilogue*³²

First, the artist confronts a wall. That's right, just so: bringing his forehead (and, well, his torso and legs) very close to the surface. Then he raises his arms to the point where his hands meet. Did I already mention that the artist holds a pair of charcoal sticks in his hands? Well, he does, so that once they are

²⁷ In the essay of the same name from 1996, originally published in *Gabriel Orozco*, exh. cat. Kunsthalle Zürich, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, DAAD, Berlin, Zürich/London/Berlin, 1996, pp. 43–66.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁹ *Isla dentro de la isla (Island within an Island)*, 1993.

³⁰ In the exhibition *Photogravity*, at the Philadelphia Art Museum, in 1999, where he decided to present a selection of the sculptures completed in previous years but as black-and-white photographs, stuck on wooden tables that had been carved following the outline of the images. So that, although they were flat, they had to be seen frontally or, upon going around them, discover the mechanism that kept them standing.

³¹ Quote taken from his conference “Composition as Process Part II: Indeterminacy,” which took place in Darmstadt, Germany, in September 1958. Taken from John Cage, *Silence*, Middletown, CT, 1961, pp. 35–40.

³² I'm referring to *Estela (Wake)*, the action/work that Gabriel Orozco has carried out two times so far: at Villa Iris, Spain, in 2005, and at Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, in 2006.

raised, contact with the wall is inevitable. The rest happens in a single motion: pressing the charcoal to the surface, the artist slowly lowers his arms, at all times keeping them stretched out as far as he can, until his hands find themselves once again back where his thighs begin, more or less. The artist then removes the charcoal sticks from the wall and exits. Leaving behind his wake. His double.

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