제목: First Solo Museum Exhibition in Asia
날짜: June 21 – September 28, 2012

Félix González-Torres, who died at the early age of 38 in 1996, is considered one of the most influential artists of his generation whose legacy still remains strongly present in the current art historical discourse.

Born in 1957 in Cuba and immigrated to New York City in 1979, the artist did not allow his racial and sexual minority to prevent him from reaching the heights of his career. Despite the discrimination he faced, he was able to achieve international recognition in the art world, establishing his own unique body of work by appropriating the existing visual language of modernism.

At the same time, he actively engaged the viewer in his exhibitions, subverting the contemporary art practice through its endless transformation and destruction of form. The artist, who was initially trained as a photographer, was also well-versed in the theories of post-structuralism and continuously questioned the authority of the subject. Challenging tradition, modernity, and even his own authority as an artist, González-Torres emphasized the mutability of meaning and form through viewer participation in order to keep his work alive.

Utilizing everyday objects such as billboards, clocks, puzzles, candies and paper stacks, González-Torres’s oeuvre profoundly examined the ‘public’ function of contemporary art, whilst strictly private contemplations on love and death. While the loss of his partner, Ross Laycock, and his own pending diagnosis as AIDS patient were inevitable realities to the artist, the endless supply of materials and infinite possibilities of interpretation in his work reveal the artist’s own desire for permanence and renewal. From the socially critical works of the 1980s to the more contemplative and poetic works of the 1990s, his oeuvre achieves its distinct perspective through the juxtaposition of the private and public realm, as well as the poetic and political.

As the first museum presentation of González-Torres’s work in Asia, the current exhibition proposes a dual presentation at both PLATEAU and Leeum through the repetition and reconfiguration of identical works under the theme of ‘Double’. Exploring the endless possibilities of form and meaning unique to González-Torres’s oeuvre, this exhibition reflects the continuing vitality of his art, which continues to inspire countless artists in contemporary art today.

In the Glass Pavilion, González-Torres’s "Untitled"(North) and "Untitled"(Beginning) will be juxtaposed with the permanent installation of Rodin’s The Gates of Hell, presenting a dramatic contrast that is emphasized by the glass architecture’s natural lighting.

"Untitled"(North) is part of a series of 54 lightening installations the artist began in 1991, the year his partner Ross Laycock’s death. All of the works in this series are made of identical material and form, yet each work is considered unique as suggested by their individual subtitles. The method of installation also changes each time according to the preference of the curator. In this exhibition, "Untitled"(North) is accompanied by another lightering work: "Untitled"(For Stockholm), installed in the lobby of Leeum, in order to demonstrate the "maladjustability of meaning and form" that is the core of González-Torres’s oeuvre.
Gallery A1 introduces a series of photographs and paper stack installations that reflect the artist's introspection on the themes of love and death. "Untitled" (Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein's Grave, Pairs) is a photograph which captures the flower blossoms over the graves of writer Gertrude Stein and her partner Alice B. Toklas, which seem to symbolize the couple's eternal love. On the other side, the wallpaper installation "Untitled" and paper stack "Newly" (Aparition) present a vast skyscape and a lone flying bird, frequent motifs in Gonzales-Torres' work, which perhaps represent a hopeful emblem for the artist in metaphorically depicting the journey between life and death.

In Gallery A2, "Untitled" (Natural History) and "Untitled" (Go-Go Dancing Platform) from 1991, express Gonzales-Torres's critical view against the social climate of the time. The series of photographs in "Untitled" (Natural History) show the twelve public virtues (soldier, explorer, statesman, and so on) of President Theodore Roosevelt inscribed on the sculptural facade of the American Museum of National History in New York. In contrast to these images, a light blue platform on which a male go-go dancer clad in a silver lamé bikini appears and dances for five minutes everyday sets a juxtaposition between these works, which not only subverts the dignity of the photographs, but also raises a provocative suggestion, one which presents the dancer as a true 'soldier' and 'explorer' of our time who willingly and openly expresses his sexuality against social taboo.


"Untitled" (Aparition) (Print on paper, endless copies, 1989, Private Collection)

"Untitled" (Go-Go Dancing Platform), Wood, light bulbs, acrylic paint and Go-Go dancer in silver lame bathing suit, sneakers and personal listening device, 1991. Kunstmuseum St. Gallen on permanent loan from a private collection.

"Untitled" (Newly) (Print on wall, 1989, Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin)

"Untitled" (Go-Go Dancing Platform) (Wood, light bulbs, acrylic paint and Go-Go dancer in silver lame bathing suit, sneakers and personal listening device, 1991. Kunstmuseum St. Gallen on permanent loan from a private collection.)
In the video room, two photostat works from the artist’s ‘dateline’ series are on display. Arising from a generation where “there is an explosion of information, but an implosion of meaning,” according to the artist’s own words, these works attempt to demonstrate the importance of history that is being quickly forgotten. The works list seemingly unrelated events in history and pop culture in arbitrary order, rejecting the conventional linear narrative and allowing for infinite possibilities of interpretation. Mimicking empty television screens, the blanks spaces of the photostats encourage the viewers to project their own lives unto the space and reiterate the significance of the events.

Similarly, the artist’s self-portrait “Untitled”, 1989 also lists the important personal and historical events throughout his life. The unique aspect of this portrait is that its content transforms with each presentation. Like the malleability of his work, which becomes continuously renewed and reinterpreted, the portrait reveals the artist’s desire to continuously evolve with the viewers even after his death.

Presented in Gallery B is a unique juxtaposition of the artist’s monumental installations with his small but equally powerful and poignant puzzle pieces.

On the floor, “Untitled” (Placebo) is the artist’s most monumental candy stall weighing approximately 500kg. With its subtitle ‘placebo’, the work partly alludes to the unresponsive U.S. government and its delayed clinical trials during the AIDS crisis. On the other hand, ‘placebo’ also signifies the Catholic Vespers for the dead. Thus this endlessly replenished candy pile, which slowly diminishes by the participation of the viewers, at once represents the ephemeral nature of life but also reveal the artist’s desire for permanence and renewal.

In contrast to these works, the small puzzles made of photographic snapshots are presented on the walls. Capturing the fleeting moments of life, like the footprints in the snow and the hazy shadow hidden behind the curtain, the pieces serve as reminder of the fragility of life that is far flung as the puzzles themselves.
언어는 'Double'이라는 주제로 작품의 길이가 되는 세계의 의미를 추구하려고 작가의 예술 세계를 적극적으로 병렬화하자 콘서트의 전제 공간과 다양한 장소에서 작품들간의 놀라운 연계성을 지시하고자 한다. 시리즈의 빈티지와 이상, 동일한 격이 다른 장소에서 동시에 실제 가능하며 독특한 작품들로 단합되는 공감과 포스의 고유한 작품특성을 최대한 활용하여, 작품들의 새로운 연합과 복잡을 통해 의미와 형식의 구분된 가치를 제시한다.

Under the theme of 'Double', this exhibition hopes to reflect the unique nature of the artist's oeuvre, which continuously strives towards reinterpretation and new meaning. By repeating parts of the exhibition in multiple locations outside PLATEAU and utilizing the editions and simultaneous multiplication of unique works, the exhibition attempts to demonstrate the infinite possibilities of form and meaning through various ways of re-presentation and reconfiguration of Gonzalo Torres's works.