

Félix González-Torres**Somewhere / Nowhere****Algún lugar / Ningún lugar**

From September 5 to November 3, 2008

Guest curator: Sonia Becce

Room 5 (3rd floor), Room 3 (2nd floor) and deck.

Opening: Thursday, September 4 at 7pm

Press pre-opening: Thursday, September 4 at 5:30pm

Malba - Fundación Costantini presents the first solo exhibition to be held in Buenos Aires of the Cuban-born, North American artist Félix González-Torres (1957-1996). A key figure on the international art scene in the 80s and 90s, González-Torres greatly influenced contemporary art. He was selected posthumously to represent the United States at the 2007 Venice Biennale. His work is shown year after year in major museums and galleries the world over.

This exhibition was wholly produced by Malba. It includes his most emblematic series - largely created between 1987 and 1995- which are known for challenging the public to take a more active role than that of mere viewer. Works shown here include his candy and lollypop installations, stacks of printed pages, puzzles, light garlands, fabric and colored bead curtains and billboards, located both in the museum and throughout the city.

The works in this exhibition belong to public and private collections in the United States and Europe, as well as the González-Torres Foundation and the Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York (Rosen has been González-Torres's gallerist and representative since 1990). The outstanding institutions to lend work include the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the Art Institute of Chicago, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, United States, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Astrup Fearnley Museum in Oslo, Norway, and the Ellipse de Lisboa Foundation in Portugal.

This exhibition is marked, to varying degrees, by a specific conception of love. "Love understood as a constellation of emotions and experiences bound to deep feeling, to desire, to caretaking and the intense attraction to another, as well as pain due to the absence or loss of the loved one," explains the exhibition's curator, Sonia Becce. The love object is always specific: the artist's loved ones, partner, friends. "At the same time, many works include the viewer in this gesture of love, creating a one-on-one, intimate relationship between that viewer and the work," Becce states.

González-Torres's art took on an array of forms during the course of his career; a synthesis of important personal experiences and sharp political and social observations allowed him to reflect on public political concerns and the treatment of minorities, and to question and subvert notions such as private property, authorship and art collecting.

"Cuban in New York, Marxist and gay, Latin American and conceptual-minimalist, González-Torres had a unique skill: that keen 'visual power' that Brecht recognized in exiles who, forced to extraterritoriality, always 'have a good eye for contradiction'," writes Alan Pauls in the text of the catalogue published in conjunction with this exhibition.

For *González-Torres*, contradiction is a creative force, indeed a method. "There is no 'art in itself,' and if there is it never stands alone or has the last word; one idea of art is

never stated unless something else, another idea of art, is at its side, on an equal footing, challenging it or making it vacillate," observes Pauls.

This idea is also reflected in the exhibition's title, which partly replicates the title of one of his first stacks, which consisted of two piles of white paper, one placed next to the other, bearing the phrases *Somewhere better than this place* and *Nowhere better than this place*, respectively. For the curator, "Together, the two statements seem to vacillate between the promise of future happiness and life as it is right now. Time and space joined in work that, though not urgent, delicately warns that existence is also always threatened."

Between the Public and the Private

In González-Torres's art, the social and the political are bound to important events in his own life, thus blurring the boundary between the public and the private. Even in his apparently more intimate works, like the puzzles, he makes use of not only photographs and letters, but also of images and clippings from the media. When his long-term companion, Ross Laycok, died of complications arising from AIDS in 1991, González-Torres began photographing and amplifying sections of letters that Laycok had sent him.

His production also includes a number of double works that make reference to the desire for an ideal love relationship. "*Untitled*" (*Perfect Lovers*), from 1987-1990, for example, shows two identical clocks that are initially synchronized and, as time goes by and their batteries run out at different rates, become out of synch. "Time is something that scares me... or used to. The piece I made with the two clocks was the scariest thing I have ever done. I wanted to face it. I wanted those two clocks right in front of me, ticking," writes González-Torres in "L.A., The Gold Field" (1996).

González-Torres always took a piece to its final consequences, and that led him to investigate new notions of installation, production and originality. As early as 1989, he began to use the floor, a marginal space that most artists did not occupy. On the floor he placed his first stacks, producing an exhibition that would disappear entirely. During those same years he also began to use doors and windows in his works with light blue voile curtains, entitled "*Untitled*" (*Loverboy*).

The candy installations in this show include "*Untitled*" (*Placebo*), a "rug" of candies wrapped in silver paper that takes up more than 25 square meters on the Museum's ground floor; and "*Untitled*" (*Para un hombre en uniforme*) [For a Man in Uniform], a pile of lollipops wrapped in the three colors of the flag of the United States. Here, the viewers are not only invited to touch the work, but even appropriate part of it.

Much of González-Torres's work is entrusted in the viewer. Since there are no clear instructions, the public can take a candy or a piece of paper away with it. Thus, in each of his choices, the artist emphasizes the role of the viewer. Reiterated loss is a simulacrum of death and an anticipated mourning. But what we watch disappear might reappear anytime and anyplace: the work is infinitely reproducible through the logic of "endless supply."

"If his proclivity for frames, clear borders and ready-mades give him away as an advocate of distance, González-Torres extends this procedure to the domain of time and impregnates his work with a sort of hereafter, a posterity, a promise that, beckoned to come true in the future, deactivates now, in the present, the danger that meaning become isolated and crystallized. It is this temporal beyond that both pierces and sustains the work, that 'resolves' the two threats that operate in his art: the minimalist tautology (Frank Stella's 'what you see is what you see') and the universal generality of the stereotype," states Pauls.

In this sense, according to Pauls, the question is not what the work means but how it works, what it is for, what "lives" it can have beyond the one bestowed on it by the artist, gallerist, museum or art institution. "Distance is the very concept of the stacks and the candy pieces: in the moment they seem abolished they are reborn and deepened. Disappearance operates by contact; maximum presence confronts us with loss. Approaching the work, touching it, tearing out a sheet is placing it in another scene, the dimension of distance where it turns in on itself and comes back to life," writes Pauls.

The Delight of the Senses

From 1989 to 1995, González-Torres made several billboard pieces, mostly based on black-and-white photographs that he had taken. On the Museum's deck, Malba exhibits "Untitled," from 1991, which shows an empty and unmade bed with two slightly dented pillows. In the exhibition space on the third floor is "Untitled" (*Strange Bird*), dated 1993, where a solitary bird is seen flying through a stormy sky. "González-Torres's billboards act through delay. They are a silent interruption in the flow of time, enigmatic images that sneak into the artificial landscape and, since seen out of the corner of the eye, set off an association of meanings that arrives late," explains Sonia Becce

The artist determined that each time one of his billboards is displayed at an institution, whether as a poster or wallpaper, at least six copies –or a number that is a multiple of six– must be displayed in various locations throughout the city. Hence, during the almost two-month exhibition period, each one of the billboards will also be exhibited at six different locations in the city of Buenos Aires.

This exhibition also includes the performance piece "Untitled" (*Go-Go Dancing Platform*), dated 1991. A dancer wearing only a small pair of silver shorts dances on a platform surrounded by lights while listening to music on an *iPod*. He appears at the exhibition for brief periods, dances and then leaves. Although the work can be interpreted in a number of ways, for the curator it devises a situation of self-absorption and sexual exhibitionism before an unsuspecting public. Indeed, the strange sensation that this work creates is felt even when the platform, still lit up, is empty.

In the curator's catalogue text, Becce asks how it is possible for production like González-Torres's to be so very able to connect to current aesthetic problematics. She concludes that his art is more porous than it seems: "It is so permeable to its contexts that it can, albeit clashingly, accompany the particularities of the times and places in which it is exhibited."

The exhibition will also include a booklet-piece that the public can take with it free of charge. The booklet was specially made for this exhibition by Alejandro Cesarco, a Uruguayan artist who lives in New York and who, in 2000, curated a González-Torres retrospective at the Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Locations of billboards

1. 800 Adolfo Alsina
2. 347 Belgrano Avenue (and Balcarce)
3. 1610 Bonpland (and Gorriti)
4. 1889 Cabildo Avenue (and Sucre)
5. 4 Carabobo Avenue (and Rivadavia)
6. 798 Esmeralda (and Córdoba Avenue)
7. 5709 Gorriti (and Bonpland)
8. 1974 Juan B. Justo Avenue (and Córdoba Avenue)
9. 363 Paraná (and Corrientes Avenue)
10. 880 Pueyrredón Avenue
11. 2357 Libertador Avenue
12. 3552 Libertador Avenue

Biography

At the age of thirteen, **Félix González-Torres** (Güaimaro, Cuba, 1957 – Miami, United States, 1996) traveled with his sister from his native Cuba to Spain. He then moved to Puerto Rico in the mid-1970s, where he moved in with relatives and studied art at the Universidad de Puerto Rico.

From 1978 to 1985, when he first began producing art, González-Torres made experimental videos, photographs, puzzles with images, works based on newspaper clippings, as well as poems and conceptual texts published in newspapers and magazines.

In 1979, he settled in New York thanks to a scholarship from the Universidad de Puerto Rico to study at BFA Pratt Institute in Brooklyn (1983). That same year he participated in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program, and in 1987 he received an MFA from the International Center for Photography, New York. At the same time, he began teaching at New York University. After receiving a number of study and research grants, he held his first solo show at the Andrea Rosen Gallery (New York) in 1990; that gallery continues to exhibit his work and represent the artist. He later gave classes at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).

In 1991, he participated in the Whitney Biennial (New York) as both an individual artists and as a participant in *Material Group*. He also received an award from the Matta-Clark Foundation.

His individual exhibitions include, *Félix González-Torres: Early Impressions*, Museo del Barrio, New York, USA; *Félix González-Torres*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Berlin, Germany (2006); Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, USA (2004); Sadie Coles HQ, London, United Kingdom (2002); Trienal of Yokohama, Japan; *Félix González-Torres* at Lever House Lobby Gallery, New York; Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo, Brazil, and Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2001); *Félix González-Torres* at Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales, Montevideo, Uruguay; Galerie Jennifer Flay, Paris and Serpentine Gallery, London (2000); The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland; Museo Alejandro Otero, Caracas, Venezuela; Banco de la República Biblioteca Luis Angel Arango, Bogotá, Colombia, and Museu de Arte Moderna, São Paulo (1999); Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria, and Comme des Garçons, Tokyo, Japan; *PhotoSeptiembre: Félix González-Torres: Actor de Presencia*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (1998); *Jurassic Technologies Revenant*, 10th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (1996); *About Place: Recent Art of the Americas / Arte Reciente de las Américas*, Chicago Art Institute, and *Public Information: Desire, Disaster, Document*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; *Retrospective*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain and ARC-Musée d'Art Contemporain, Paris (1995); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington; The Renaissance Society, Chicago, and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA (1994); Museum in Progress, Vienna (1993); MoMA, New York (1992); *El Jardín Salvaje*, Fundación Caja de Pensiones, Madrid; *The Body*, The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, and the Whitney Biennale Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1991); Brooklyn Museum, New York (1989); New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1988).

On January 9, 1996, González-Torres died in Miami of complications related to AIDS.

Activities Related to the Exhibition**1. Encounter with curator Sonia Becce**

Friday, September 5 at 6pm. Room 5 (3rd floor). Free of charge.

Face-to-face encounter**2. A Reading through the Works of Félix González-Torres**

Under the Direction of Santiago García Navarro.

Wednesday, September 17, 6:30pm. Room 5 (3rd floor). Free of charge.

Santiago García Navarro is a writer, translator, art critic and teacher.

Face-to-face encounter**3. Outing**

Under the Direction of Cecilia Szalkowicz

Wednesday, October 1, 6:30pm. Room 5 (3rd floor). Free of charge.

One of the young artists influenced by the work of González-Torres, Cecilia Szalkowicz recently exhibited her work *Todo es posible* (Everything is Possible) –which consisted of a sequence of two billboard-size photographs– as part of Malba's *Intervenciones* program. On the occasion of the exhibition *Somewhere / Nowhere - Algún lugar / Ningún lugar*, she proposes an outing through the works of González-Torres to discover in them a different flow of time.

Cecilia Szalkowicz is an artist and graphic designer. She took studio classes with Alberto Goldenstein and received a fellowship to participate in the Programa de Talleres para las Artes Visuales C.C.R.Rojas - UBA | Kuitca (2003 - 2005). Since 1999, she has formed part of Suscripción –an interdisciplinary collective–, that has carried out collaborative projects such as El Festival de la fotocopia (Belleza y Felicidad 2001, Fundación Proa 2003) and Sábados*Ilusión (2006). In 2005, along with Rosana Schoijett, she formed the band Culto Polonia. Since 2006, she has published SCRIPT (Madrid-Buenos Aires), along with Gastón Pérsico and Mariano Mayer. In 2006, she was selected by CIFO - Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (Miami) to participate in Positions in Context: CIFO Grant Program 2007 with the project Copy-Paste: Random Wishes (in collaboration with Gastón Pérsico). In 2007, she held the *Todo es posible* exhibition at Malba. She has had solo exhibitions at Belleza y Felicidad (2004, 2001) and the C.C.R. Rojas (2002), and group exhibitions in Los Angeles and New York (United States), Santiago (Chile), Río de Janeiro (Brazil), San Juan (Puerto Rico, United States), Buenos Aires and Madrid (Spain).

Face-to-face encounters

4. Circular Friends

Under the Direction of Leopoldo Estol

Wednesday, October 15, at 6:30pm. Room 5 (3rd floor). Free of charge.

A bicycle. A remix contest and many drawings inspired on stacks, flashlights. We don't really know what is going to happen. We are the circular friends; somewhat lost and distracted, we talk around Félix González-Torres and his work. In this encounter, Leopoldo suggests ways of opening up time to share a light that never goes out.

Leopoldo Estol studied Art History at UBA, as well as drawing with Martín Kovensky. He took crit classes with Pablo Siquier and Jorge Macchi. He received a fellowship to participate in the Programa de Talleres para las Artes Visuales, C.C.R.Rojas - UBA | Kuitca (2003-2005). In 2006, he coordinated a workshop on art at the Alberto Sendrós Gallery; he has also curated exhibitions at the Alberto Sendrós Gallery (2005) and the Centro Cultural General San Martín as part of the Culture and Media program (2006). He has written about art for the newspaper *Ámbito Financiero* and he currently contributes to *Página 12* newspaper's Radar Supplement.

He has held solo exhibition in Buenos Aires and Milan, Italy. With Diego Bianchi, he created the installation entitled *Escuelita de Thomas Hirschhorn* (Small Thomas Hirschhorn School) at Belleza y Felicidad in 2005. He participated in the Bienal del Mercosur, Porto Alegre (2007). In 2006, the Asociación Argentina de Críticos de Arte awarded him the new artist of the year award (an honor he shared with Cristian Segura). He presented POXIPICS, images from the beginning of the century, at the Bienal del Mercosur, Porto Alegre, 2007 (Curator: Ines Katzenstein) and La Mañana del mundo at Ruth Benzacar Gallery, Buenos Aires, March, 2008.

Poetry Encounter

5. Love Puzzle

Under the Direction of Roberto Echavarren.

Guest poets: Gabriela Bejerman, ná Khar Elliff-ce and Romina Freschi

Wednesday, October 29 at 6:30pm. Room 5 (3rd floor). Free of charge.

Roberto Echavarren is a poet, novelist and essayist. His most recent books include: the narrative poem *Centralasia* (Buenos Aires, Tsetse, 2005, Premio Ministerio de Cultura de Uruguay); *El diablo en el pelo*, novel (Buenos Aires, Cuenco de plata, 2005), *Ave roc*, novel (Buenos Aires, Mansalva, 2007); *Fuera de género: criaturas de la invención erótica*, essay (Buenos Aires, Losada, 2007). He has taught at the University of London (Great Britain), New York University (United States), the Universidad de la República (Uruguay) and the Instituto Ricardo Rojas (Universidad de Buenos Aires).

Program subject to change

*This exhibition is presented by CLARO
Medio asociado Revista Ñ*

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Radio Mitre | TN | Knauf | Escorihuela Gascón | CraveroLanis*

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