

HENRIQUE FARIA | BUENOS AIRES


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**OSVALDO ROMBERG HASTA 1976:
Estudios deconstructivos del paisaje, el cuerpo y el color**

Opening: July 23, 2014 – 7.00 pm

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Mondays through Fridays from 11:30 am to 8.00 pm
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Henrique Faria Buenos Aires is pleased to exhibit “**OSVALDO ROMBERG HASTA 1976: Estudios deconstructivos del paisaje, el cuerpo y el color**” (OSVALDO ROMBERG UNTIL 1976: Landscape, body and color deconstruction studies). There are three axes to this artist’s works; his first works were made in Tucuman in 1970-1971 based on his studies and reflections on architecture and performance. The second axis refers to language from the perspective of the body, and the third axis relates to Romberg’s systematic analyses of the use of color in the field of art history.

**OSVALDO ROMBERG HASTA 1976:
Estudios deconstructivos del paisaje, el cuerpo y el color**

A nomad and a builder, an artist who has left traces on body, landscapes, colors, Osvaldo Romberg (born 1938) based his works of the first half of the 1970s on the experience gained when he was called to update the curriculum of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Universidad Nacional de Tucumán. He joined the Faculty bringing the lessons learnt from architect Gastón Breyer and was also influenced by architect Eduardo Sacriste (author of *Huellas de Edificios* [Building Footprints]), and, although Romberg began as an architect, he always acted from the edges: the architectural gesture never left him; however, in his practice of art, Romberg transgressed one of the prevailing myths in Western thought, rationalism, which was applied without changes to what was called “rationalist” architecture in the 20th century. Romberg undermines this dimension through body performance and heuristics

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(invention), because what is a landscape without a body experiencing it? What is a picture but the colors making it up and oscillating between local, historical and affective choices? And senses, to which field do they belong? What is it that exceeds what is rational and which would wrongly and poorly be called irrational? Colors, landscapes and bodies have their rational part (they can be measured and admit typological approaches), but also have emotional, sensory, mythical qualities. Or, to say à la Dominique Nahas, they have “somatic energy”.

Every avant-garde movement has reconfigured the body: Romberg did this by analyzing (breaking down into units) and transgressing the ideas received, joining affect and concept. In one of his typologies, Romberg draws with different parts of his body. In *El paisaje como idea* (Landscape as Idea), he intervenes a stone fence in Tucuman with different grids and blocks of color. In his analyses of canonical artworks, didactic space is worked with the rational knowledge but also with imagination and sensitivity (there where the didactic part is not transmitted but learnt in practice, by exercising it). One of the works in the exhibition, perhaps the most discursive one, stages Romberg’s method (or part of it, because the artist and viewer’s presence must do the rest). The *Análisis de “La Tempestad” de Giorgione* (Analysis of Giorgione’s “The Tempest”) of 1975, is -in principle- the text for a category which creates what Romberg called “didactic space”. The organization of that category is binary, following structuralist terms, and develops analytical oppositions between two axes: invention/duplication, syntagmatic/paradigmatic. Both axes, in a compulsive taxonomy typical of Romberg, are organized into two big categories: *phylogenesis* deals with the relationships of Giorgione with the context. This includes the relationship not only with Art History (Vasari) but also with other artists (Tiziano, Sebastiano del Piombo), styles (an anachronistic and stimulating “first romantic painter”) and the kind of innovation (Romberg would say “transgression”) introduced by *The Tempest*. The other category is *ontogenesis* and separates the work from the context (the phylogenesis) to see it in its immanence: a treatment of the landscape “through tonalities” which resulted in a “complete renewal of figurative sensitivity”. If, from a historical point of view, the work meant a new “atmospheric treatment”, a “quality of uncertainty in the borders” and an “instability of its figures’ pose”, what should be looked at now -in ontogenesis- is “pure pictoricness”. The textual development that can be followed in several works in the color study series does not go from the indications to the look in that “didactic space” created by the artist, a space that the work in its completeness transgresses and exceeds. Because what Romberg exhibits, in a non-strictly didactic space, is not a “sketch” but an *artwork*, that is, a bundle of relationships among colors, quotes and grids that the seeming category fails to complete because, in fact, being hung on a wall it can never be realized. Even if there were guides in the museum or gallery, their discourse would not be about Giorgione or Romberg’s relationship with

Giorgione, but about the works themselves: *Analysis of Giorgione's "The Tempest"*, or *Estudio del color de "La Vocación de San Mateo" de Caravaggio* (Color study of Caravaggio's "Calling of Saint Matthew") or *Estudio del color de "La Ronda Nocturna" de Rembrandt* (Color study of Rembrandt's "The Night Watch"). What is then at stake in those studies? On the one hand, the different colors (that, besides, are not a flat reproduction, but a handprint, a brushstroke) do not interact among them but with the painting itself, and the eye has to take a path whose efficiency is in the nature of the nuances or tonalities and the "atmospheric treatment" (for instance, in the whites and grays of the clouds that extend to the cloths of the two characters). It is not the black of *The Night Watch* but the different gradations of darkness, not the characters or the anecdote of *The Calling of Saint Matthew* but the surprising variety and intensity of reds, dispersed and direct. On the other hand, however, phylogenesis and ontogenesis (that is, the insertion of the work in history and its immanent values) are surpassed in order to find a diagonal path, a *sensory* appraisal that exceeds rational considerations or that is "somatic energy", as Dominique Nahas puts it. Then, the "didactic space" is not in the text, nor in taxonomies or examples, but in the relationship of the viewer with the work as a whole. An intertwining of colors, a series of indications, a canonical picture.

The works presented in "**Estudios deconstructivos del paisaje, el cuerpo y el color**" date back to the first half of the 1970s, a period when Romberg worked at Universidad Nacional de Tucumán (reformulating the curriculum of the Arts program), and were exhibited as part of *Landscape as Idea* at the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (Art and Communication Center). With the silk screens of this series, the color studies and typologies of the body, the *Medidor de espacio variable* (Variable space meter) and records from Dique El Cadillal of Tucuman, Romberg introduces us to the fundamental ideas of art so we can experience affect and concept in a single gesture.

Gonzalo Aguilar

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Oswaldo Romberg was born in 1938 in Buenos Aires. He studied architecture in the 1950s and travelled extensively the following years. In 1971-1972 he settled in Tucuman to be in charge of the Faculty of Fine Arts, an experience that forever marked his work. In 1972, he exhibited *Landscape as Idea* at the Centro de Arte y Comunicación. As from 1973 he moved abroad and exhibited all over the world: *Projects and Color* (ICA, London, 1974), *Typologies* (International Cultureel Centrum: Antwerp, 1975), *L'enseignement des Couleurs* (Galerie Staedler, Paris, 1979, Marcelin Pleynet's text), *Mythologies from Altamira to Manet: An Emotional Analysis of Art History* (presented in Tel Aviv, Vienna, Aachen and Strasbourg, 1980-1981), *Works from the 1970s* (Henrique Faria Fine Art, New York and Zemack Contemporary Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, 2011), *Theater of transparency* (ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2009), among others. Apart from curating several exhibitions (he is the co-founder of White Box Gallery, New York), Romberg was a professor at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem, between 1973 and 1983 and a visiting professor of several American universities.

In 1993, he exhibited *La Vie en Valise: "The Artist as Curator"* at Fundación San Telmo de Buenos Aires, followed by several exhibitions in Argentina. He is now preparing the "*Dirty Geometry*" exhibition, which will open in Tel Aviv in October.

He currently lives and works in New York, Philadelphia, Ilha Grande (Brazil) and Tel Aviv.