

## Perú

**Fernando 'Coco' Bedoya, Alfonso Castrillón, Rafael Hastings,  
Emilio Hernández Saavedra, Jaime Higa, Manongo Mujica,  
Herbert Rodríguez, Herman Schwarz**

September 14 - October 26, 2016



**Jaime Higa.** *Bandera*, 2007-2013. Paint and sequins sewed on canvas. 120 x 120 cm

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**Perú**

A retrospective view of contemporary Peruvian art with any memory to it would speak of it how it gathered force in the 1970s and '80s, in the wake of the Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico and France's May '68. A year in which the horizon for political utopia at first sight seem to vanish. A consolidation that appears, as in the second phase of the Cold War (1947-1989), through new forms of conduct and practices derived from an earlier moment. An era which, in Latin America and in Peru, rouses a contradictory impulse halfway between euphoria, withdrawal and a persistent siding with utopia. The exhibition *Perú*, which has brought us here, reckons with that contradictory impulse in grouping projects, works and documents of major Peruvian artists of the period: Emilio Hernández Saavedra, Rafael Hastings, Fernando 'Coco' Bedoya, Herbert Rodríguez, Jaime Higa and Herman Schwarz. Schwarz's photographs also present to us the actions and performances designed and created by the musician Manongo Mujica and the art historian Alfonso Castrillón.



**Fernando 'Coco' Bedoya.** *Mecenas*, 1979. Offset print on paper. 58 x 37 cm (detalle)

Recent works like **Jaime Higa's** *Bandera* [Flag], 2007-2013, and **Fernando 'Coco' Bedoya's** 2016 series *Cultura Trepanación* [Trepanation, but with the punning resonances in Spanish of *trepar*, climb and *nación*, nation - trans.], point toward a specific standard of radical currency. Under this exhibition heading of



Perú, the validity and applicability of that standard expand. Both works involve allegorical processes that function as icons of the local, in order to dismantle those icons and systematically transgress them. In the case of the former artist, the use of the glitter of small sequins embroidered, one by one, on the canvas, brings out the contrast between the red of the Peruvian flag (created South American creoles after the country was declared independent in the 19th century ) and the green of its coat of arms, on a scale suitably subverted from the original. That use, on the other hand, remains associated with the *glamour* (simulated, perhaps) writ large by the position of an artist who, like Higa, is being ironic with the aesthetic stereotypes attributed to him as a person marked by sexual dissidence and gay culture now that we'll well into the 21th century. With the latter artist, on the other hand, the use of a Moche ceramic piece — a *huaco* portrait from the 8th century C.E. taken straight from the bazaars of some tourist trap —, lays stress on another sort of contrast, in this instance, involving a hollowing or an open trepanation, literally obliterated by a bottle lid from the transnational Coca-Cola, stuck on the represented head. What's involved here is an indigenous Moche, the member of a local culture that existed in the north of Peru before the Spanish conquest.



Herbert Rodríguez. *Perú*, 1989. Collage. 130 x 260 cm

The recoveries of this imprint, which have taken place internationally ever since 1999, of what curators like Luis Camnitzer and Mari Carmen Ramírez, among others, from art institutions in the United States have called “global conceptualism,” have, ever from that date on, given a new visibility to projects, works and documents of Latin American artists. An artistic output which had been systematically barred from the mainstream [English in original - trans.] of European-oriented North American “conceptual art,” associated, rather, with the tautologies of analytic philosophy and a specific group of artists. Also collaborating in this new interpretation was the interesting work of the network Libertad 1628. ABH 1016. Buenos Aires | Tel +5411 4813 3251

*Conceptualismos del Sur* [Southern Conceptualisms], which, ever since 2008, has turned its gaze toward the political dimension of Latin American conceptualism. In Latin America, however, the first retrospective overview of a conceptually oriented art took place at a much earlier date, in 1981, when major critics and artists in the region, led by the Peruvian Juan Acha (1916-1995), gathered for the First Latin American Colloquium on Non-Objectual and Urban Art [*Arte No Objetual y Arte Urbano*], held in Medellín, Colombia, to debate, self-reflectively, the nature, origins and impacts of these new art forms. An important presence at this event was the art historian **Alfonso Castrillón**, with his “Reflections on Conceptual Art in Peru and Its Repercussions,” in which he stressed the roles played by **Emilio Hernández Saavedra** and **Rafael Hastings**, in the ‘70s, a critical moment, and the turning point, in this history. On view in the present exhibition is the former’s “El Museo de Arte borrado” [The Museum of Art Erased] 1970, which today has become an emblematic image of and for contemporary Peruvian art. It is a photograph of the urban space currently occupied by the present building of the Museo de Arte de Lima, which Hernández Saavedra has manually retouched and intervened in to literally erase the building. The history of the circulation of this image began in 2007, when it was exhibited again after a long absence from public view, connecting to a present-day “anachronistic” need to fill an institutional void which, locally, is retrospectively acknowledged and embraced.

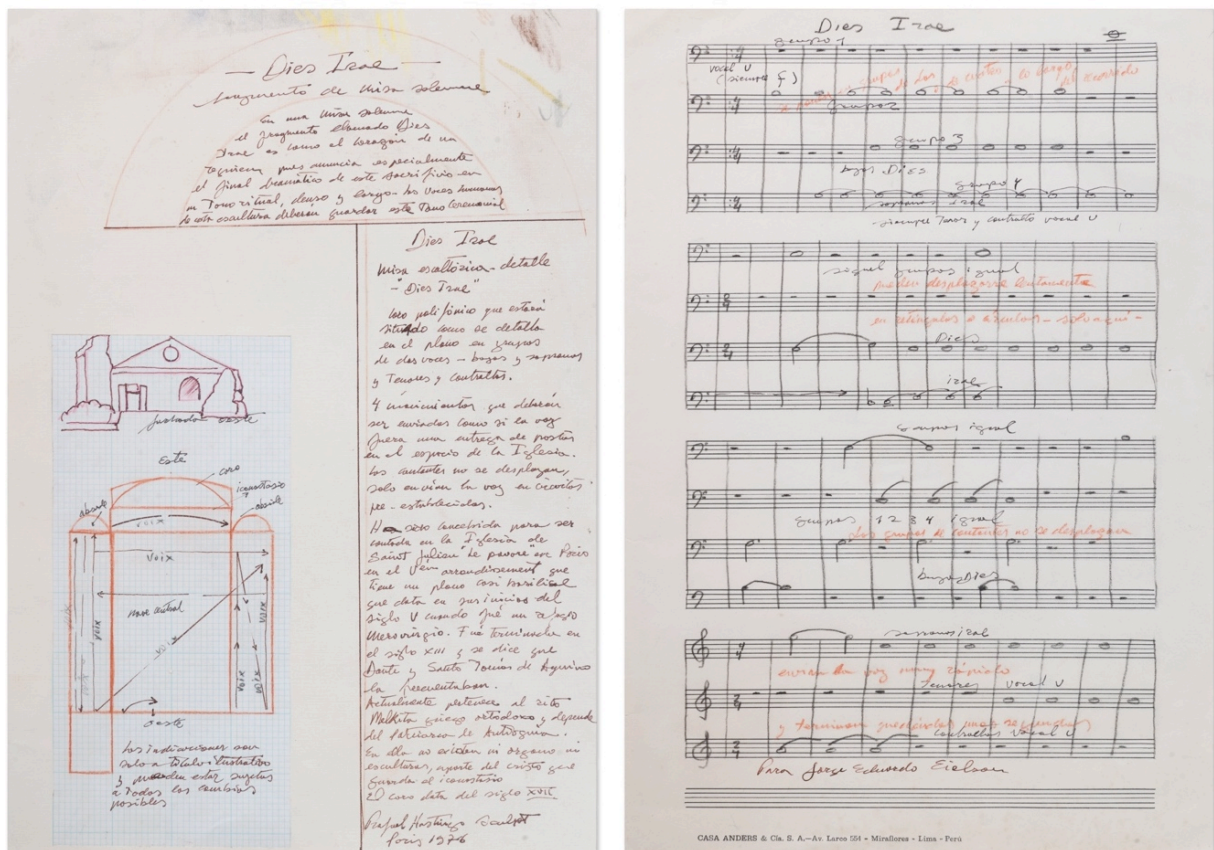


**Alfonso Castrillón.** *Acción furtiva*, 1981/2016. Inkjet print on cotton paper. 24 x 36 cm. Edition of 7. Photographs by Herman Schwarz



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What is more, in an era like the present one, which has been marked by a rage for the archive, amid every sort of “revisionism,” it fell to Hernández Saavedra to shift the political utopia of a revolutionary art — which Acha, in 1970, called “*Guerrilla cultural*,” or “cultural guerrilla warfare” — toward a fine irony, at once individual and visionary. Unlike other countries in the region, in Peru, between 1968 and 1975, a populism made up of various lefts was established under the military dictatorship of Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado, which was to implement major social reforms; the artistic vanguard Acha was fostering would remain stymied by the powerful changes, such as the Agrarian Reform, that would forever change the social face of Peru. The various pieces by Hastings on view also bring out the complexity of the situation of the artist as an individual, as in the beautiful filmed portrait, from 1978, of the musician **Manongo Mujica**, *Peruvian* [English in original -trans.], and other pieces of an introspective poetics which uses surprising scores and instructions to construct sound sculptures, i.e. non-objectual sculptures which are ephemerally interpreted by vocalists positioned at different points in some specific place.



**Rafael Hastings.** *Dies Irae*, 1976. Mixed media on paper. 35,6 x 25 cm each.

Hastings’s plans and instructions stand in contrast to others, for instance, those of Bedoya’s *Moscagrama* [Fly-gram], from 1979, a machine run by suctioning in the life force of flies. Whereas Hastings’s pieces reveal a sublime architecture in which

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utopia has been turned into ephemeral sound running from one side to another of some site, Bedoya's utopian machine does nothing to conceal, in its conception, a degradation of the material used an organic source, while nonetheless, the abiding critical potential of the social has completely subverted "clean" energy.



**Emilio Hernández Saavedra.** *El Museo de Arte borrado*, 1970/2016. Inkjet print on cotton paper. 53,5 x 50 cm. Edition of 10

The restoration in Peru, after the radical reforms, would come first under a second military dictatorship, between 1975 and 1980, and after, with democratic regimes that confronted subversive groups like the PCP-SL (Sendero Luminoso [Shining Path]) and the MRTA (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru). In this sense, with the appearance of the art "groups," in the Peru of the late '70s, documented

by the historian Castrillón and the photographer **Herman Schwarz**, we see the beginning of a different moment, in which the individual is pitted against the collective, even in the very process of making art works. Castrillón not only documents this processes, but also intervenes as an artist when, in his *Acción Furtiva*, 1981, photographed by Schwarz, he points out the arbitrary nature of the collectives accidentally formed in the lines waiting for some event to occur; the people (his students) literally form an arrow in various points of the courtyard of the Literature Department of the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM). One important space for civil resistance to the barbarism of the PCP - Sendero Luminoso once it launched its armed uprising against the Peruvian state was precisely the UNMSM campus, in which **Herbert Rodríguez**, with his 1989 project *Arte-Vida* [Art-Life], which he himself documented, clearly shows the contradictions of the decades in his collages, which were installed as murals on various walls of the campus, and which made use of various images taken from the press.

With that, a conceptual imprint is stamped over contemporary Peruvian art which today marks the selection criterion for a work in this exhibition as a set of aesthetic constellations of growing complexity which, in oscillating contradictorally between collective utopia and personal, political, and introspective utopia, thereby connects the historical with the poetical.

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**Manongo Mujica.** *El entierro del cello*, 1988/2016. Inkjet print on cotton paper. 33 x 22 cm. Edition of 7. Photographs by Herman Schwarz