

Press release - ENG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MASA GALERIA

AL AMIGO QUE NO ME SALVÓ LA VIDA: PINTURAS MEXICANAS 1976-1991

WITH WORKS BY

Adolfo Riestra
Francisco Toledo
Georgina Quintana
Germán Venegas
Julio Galán
Nahum B. Zenil
Roberto Turnbull

APRIL 11 - MAY 25, 2024

OPENING RECEPTION APRIL 11, 4-8 PM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MASA is honored to present a timely revisit of 1980s Mexican painting, centering robust work – many not previously on view this century – from a selection of artists who were vanguard and influential in their representations of self, hovering between sincerity and provocation in meditations on devotion, melancholy, and bodily function. Rather than a regional variant of postmodernism, “Al Amigo Que No Me Salvó La Vida” considers the effort of memoir in this period of Mexican art as a spiritual and aesthetic challenge in the face of political, tectonic, and existential crises. The exhibition borrows its title from the eponymous novel by Hervé Guibert, a fictionalized account of the 1980s published just before the author’s death in 1991. As in the book, the exhibition “Al Amigo Que No Me Salvó La Vida” investigates in defiant materiality a tenderness towards the visceral, and the anatomization of observation and sensation that lends itself to both eroticization and revelation. The exhibition opens April 11 and will be on view until May 25, 2024.

“Al Amigo Que No Me Salvó La Vida,” curated with MASA Curator-at-Large Su Wu, owes a great debt to the discourse of “Neomexicanismo,” particularly the curators, gallerists, and critics whose precise insights framed this period as containing not only multitudes but contradictions. It is alongside this movement that “Al Amigo Que No Me Salvó La Vida” exists, gathering moments of collapse within shared narratives: between the sacred and profane, the effort and its consequence, and also between everyday desire and rarefied art. In these works epitomizing postmodernist strategies, pastiched depictions of the built environment and vernacular objects float, frottage, and interpenetrate – sometimes physically cutting through the canvas itself – suggesting a mutual reflection between painting and the formation of difference and subculture.



In two paintings by Germán Venegas (b. 1959), the artist subverts depictions of suffering and humiliation in Catholicism, while a representative Nahum B. Zenil (b. 1947) self-portrait on sepia-toned paper presents the artist divided under the blessing of the Virgin de Guadalupe. Other veilings arise in the work of Julio Galán (1959-2006), presented in this exhibition in conversation with an erotic work-on-paper by the maestro Francisco Toledo (1940-2019), whom the younger artist admired. In Galán's exaggerated horizontal painting "Relámpagos Naranjas," an offering of oranges is arrayed as though on an altarpiece and thrust through with bandaged dildoes. Similarly, in the large-scale painting "Bañista" by Adolfo Riestra (1944-1989), completed the year of the artist's death from AIDS-related complications, a wrapped figure poses on a stool in the act of bathing, an act at once intimate and politically charged; while a large growth unbalances the human form in a stone carving by Roberto Turnbull (b. 1959). And in epic, muralistic paintings by Georgina Quintana (b. 1956) not exhibited since an exhibition at the Museo de Arte Moderno in 1985, conveyor belts and articulated machinery move like limbs, a prescient consideration of machine-interfaced existence and our place within new structures that arose in Mexico in the 1980s. Yet, the works also reflect a more humanistic longing, of Quintana illegally scaling factory walls with a sketchbook to gaze at the worlds within.

Anticipating several strains of current painting, the works in "Al Amigo Que No Me Salvó La Vida" yet do not strive for representation beyond reproach, but rather revisit an often overlooked avant garde centered in Mexico that was committed to incitement under the guise of confession: a sensibility at once poignant and funny, and just as often doomed. As the era's leading critic, Teresa del Conde (1938-2017), wrote on the occasion of Germán Venegas' exhibition "Polvo de Imágenes" at the Museo de Arte

Moderno in 1992, these are works that "allow us to apprehend with a certain irony the aesthetic sides of very serious things: beliefs, vices, childhood, sexuality, and what awaits towards the end."

For press images contact Age Salajõe at age@mmaassaa.com



ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Adolfo Riestra (b. Tepic, Nayarit, 1944 – d. Mexico City, 1989) was a Mexican artist known for his exploration of diverse elements of masculinity. Across ceramics, painting, and photographic collage, as well as in copious diaries, Riestra created a personal pastiche of images and clichés from popular culture, particularly sports and opera, and of his friends, family, and lovers, captured with bracing candor and immediacy. Trained as a lawyer, Riestra moved to San Francisco, California in the late 1960s, and then to New York, where he immersed himself in the art scene and graphics workshops. He returned to Mexico and passed away in 1989, the day after the opening of a solo exhibition at OMR Gallery.

Notable solo exhibitions include “Adolfo Riestra: Dibujante, pintor y escultor,” Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (1998, Monterrey); “Adolfo Riestra: El objeto de la percepción,” Universidad de Guanajuato (2000, Guanajuato); and “Última Década, 1981-1989,” Universidad de las Américas (2003, Puebla).

Francisco Toledo (b. Mexico City, 1940 – d. Oaxaca City, 2019) was a celebrated Zapotec artist, widely regarded as one of the most significant artists and cultural leaders in modern Mexican history, with a career that spanned more than seven decades. A noted activist as well as artist, Toledo championed his home state of Oaxaca, where he returned in the 1980s after a period living and studying abroad in Paris and New York. Known as “El Maestro,” Toledo was instrumental in the creation of several of the region’s most important cultural centers, including the Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca (IAGO), the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca (MACO), Centro de las Artes de San Agustín (CaSA), and the Jardín Etnobotánico de Oaxaca. He studied at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de Oaxaca and the Centro Superior de Artes Aplicadas del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes.

Toledo’s prolific body of work, across graphic arts, pottery, painting, and weaving, is in major private and public collections worldwide, including the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Museo Tamayo, Mexico City. He was in the Venice Biennale in 1997, received the National Prize for Arts and Sciences from the government of Mexico in 1998, and has been the subject of retrospectives at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; Whitechapel Gallery, London; and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Spain.

Georgina Quintana (b. Mexico City, 1956) is a Mexican artist who formed a key part of the generation whose risk-taking and irreverence in the 1980s created a Renaissance in Mexican art. Based out of the same studio in Cuajimalpa, Mexico, since 1988, Quintana’s paintings are known for their epic-scale and luminosity, investigating the totalizing idea of world-making, and combining philosophical and personal narratives in a reimagination and subversion of colonial imagery and categorization. Often painted on layered scraps or cardboard, her work traces the edges of human agency within taxonomies of nature and the cosmos. She studied at Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado (“La Esmeralda”) and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

Quintana's work has been exhibited widely, including at the Museo Amparo, Puebla; Museo Carillo Gil, Mexico City; the Museo de la Ciudad, Mexico City; and the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; and will be included in a forthcoming exhibition at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Germán Venegas (b. La Magdalena Tlatlauquitepec, Puebla, 1959) is a Mexican artist considered one of the most influential representatives of the generation of artists who emerged in Mexico in the 1980s. His early paintings dislocate religious iconography, resituating them in an investigation of the contours of reality and self-presentation. Subsequent work across mediums – including sculpture, engraving, and pieces utilizing his earliest training as a woodcarver – continue an irreverent investigation of non-Western spirituality and belief. Venegas attended La Esmeralda, Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado.

Notable past solo exhibitions include "Y Nuestra Herencia Era Una Red De Agujeros..." at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca (2007, Oaxaca); "Germán Venegas: Cabalgando el tigre 1983-2008" at Museo de Arte Moderno (2008, Mexico City); "Todo lo otro, Germán Venegas" at Museo Tamayo (2018-19, Mexico City); and "Polvo de Imágenes" at MARCO: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (1992, Monterrey). His work is in the public collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC), Mexico; the Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico; the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz, Spain; among others.

Julio Galán (b. Múzquiz, Coahuila, 1959 - d. Zacatecas, 2006) was among the most prominent Mexican artists of the 1980s, known for neo-expressionist works that subverted gender, Catholicism and heroic iconography. Originally trained as an architect at the University of Monterrey, Galán lived in New York City from 1984 to 1990. The artist was introduced to Andy Warhol, who subsequently championed Galán's works in *Interview* magazine. By the end of the 1980s, Galán had become one of the most well-known Mexican painters in the art world, included in exhibitions at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1989), the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1992), and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1990), among many others.

Since his death of a brain hemorrhage in 2006, Galán's work has been the subject of retrospectives at the Museo Tamayo (2002), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2006); and Museo Amparo, Puebla (2001). He was included in the Whitney Biennial, New York (1995) and the Havana Biennial, Havana (1984).

Nahum B. Zenil (b. Chicontepec, Veracruz, 1947) is a celebrated Mexican artist who has since the mid-1970s used his own visage in self-portraits that meet the viewer's gaze and return the stare, inviting the viewer to share in the protagonist's melancholies and preoccupations. Often portrayed with his partner or beneath the Virgin of Guadalupe, the works engage with conformity and freedom, homosexuality and expectations, and "mestizism" in Mexico, with the artist and his own other multiplying and transforming. In Zenil's works, which take as their primary medium ink on paper that deliberately yellows with time, the scenario is treated as a letter of communication, in the idiosyncratic hand of the artist.

Raised in a rural setting, Zenil enrolled at the Escuela Nacional de Maestros (National Teachers' School) in Mexico City, from which he graduated in 1964. He then entered the Escuela Nacional de Pintura y Escultura ("La Esmeralda") in Mexico City in 1968, with his work gaining widespread attention in the 1980s as a leader of the "Neomexicanismo" movement, in works that utilized traditional Mexican themes from religion and folk art in sometimes satirical or skeptical fashion.

Zenil's work is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, among other public collections, and he has participated in more than 450 exhibitions worldwide, including at the Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico City (1982); in "Nahum B. Zenil: Witness to the Self" at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, The Mexican Museum, San Francisco, and the Gray Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University (1996-7); "El Gran Circo del Mundo" at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (1999); and in the 31st Sao Paulo Biennial (2014). He is one of the founding members of the annual "Semana Cultural Gay" at Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City.

Roberto Turnbull (b. Mexico City, 1959) is a Mexican artist who was part of an influential generation of in the 1980s proposing new considerations of national identity in a movement that came to be known as "Neomexicanismo." Turnbull's work, primarily composed of paintings and graphic works utilizing a variety of different techniques, are distinguished and unified by a recognizable gesture of expressive force, and by an investigation of fragmentation in both symbols and language.

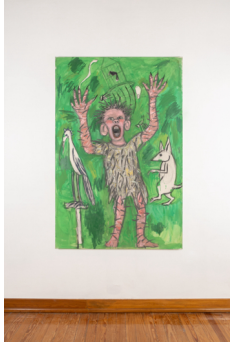
Turnbull has shown widely internationally and held individual exhibitions at major institutions in Mexico, including the Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico City; the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Oaxaca; the Museo de las Artes (MUSA), Guadalajara; and the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City. His work is held in numerous private and public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.



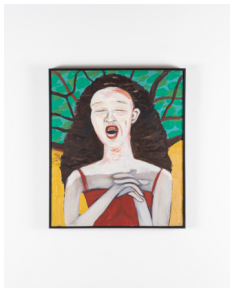
Adolfo Riestra
Bañista, 1989
Acrylic on canvas
160 x 140 x 3 cm (63 x 55 ½ x 1 ½ inches)
©Archivo Adolfo Riestra;
Courtesy of the Archive and
MASA Galería, Mexico City.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Adolfo Riestra
Picasso Bailando, 1981
Collage
24 x 16 x 2.5 cm (9.4 x 6.3 x 1 inch)
©Archivo Adolfo Riestra;
Courtesy of the Archive and
MASA Galería, Mexico City.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Adolfo Riestra
Niño Gritando, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
180 x 120 x 3 cm (70 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$
x 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches)
©Archivo Adolfo Riestra;
Courtesy of the Archive and
MASA Galería, Mexico City.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Adolfo Riestra
Soprano, 1988
Oil on canvas
70 x 60 x 2.5 cm (27 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$
x 1 inch)
©Archivo Adolfo Riestra;
Courtesy of the Archive and
MASA Galería, Mexico City.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Adolfo Riestra
Suicida de Jim Jones
(Toulouse, Francia), 1981
Collage, gouache, ink and
pencil on paper
32 x 24 x 2.5 cm (12.6 x 9.4 x
1 inch)
©Archivo Adolfo Riestra;
Courtesy of the Archive and
MASA Galería, Mexico City.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Georgina Quintana
La Tierra Se Mueve, 1985
Mixed media on canvas
225 x 182 x 3 cm (88 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 71
 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches)
©Georgina Quintana;
Courtesy of the Artist, and
MASA Galería. Photo:
Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Adolfo Riestra
Samuel, 1983
Ink and pencil on paper
24 x 33 x 2.5 cm (9.4 x 12.9 x
1 inch)
©Archivo Adolfo Riestra;
Courtesy of the Archive and
MASA Galería, Mexico City.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Francisco Toledo
Mujer y Caballo, 1984
Guache on paper
26 x 34 x 2.5 cm (10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{3}{8}$
x 1 inch)
©Francisco Toledo; Courtesy
of Francisco Berzunza.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Georgina Quintana
El Mar Habitado, 1985
Mixed media on canvas
253 x 192.5 x 3 cm (99 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 75
 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches)
©Georgina Quintana;
Courtesy of the Artist, and
MASA Galería. Photo:
Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



Julio Galán
Relámpagos Naranjas, 1988
Oil on canvas and mixed
media
214 x 132 cm (84 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 52
inches)
©Julio Galán; Courtesy of
Colección M.Jasso, Madrid.
Photo: Gustavo Garcia-Villa.



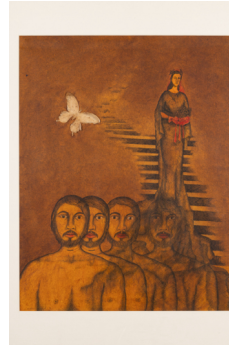
Georgina Quintana
Un Resquicio Habitable, 1985
Mixed media on canvas
204 x 162 x 3 cm (80 ¼ x 63 ¾ x 1 ⅞ inches)
©Georgina Quintana; Courtesy of the Artist, and MASA Galería. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



Julio Galán
Sin Título, 1991
Oil on canvas and mixed media
70 x 165 cm (27 ½ x 65 inches)
©Julio Galán; Courtesy of Colección M.Jasso, Madrid. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



Germán Venegas
Cristo Flagelado 1, 1982
Mix media on canvas
110 x 100 x 4 cm. (43 ¼ x 39 ⅞ x 1 ⅞ inches)
©Germán Venegas; Courtesy of the Artist and Proyectos Monclova. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



Nahum B. Zenil
Mariposa, mariposa, 1976
Mixed media on paper
64 x 49 cm (25 ¼ x 19 ¼ inches)
©Nahum B. Zenil; Courtesy of Galería de Arte Mexicano. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



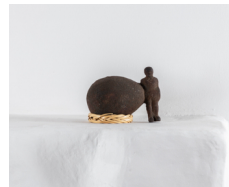
Germán Venegas
Cristo Flagelado 2, 1982
Mix media on canvas
110 x 100 x 4 cm. (43 ¼ x 39 ⅞ x 1 ⅞ inches)
©Germán Venegas; Courtesy of the Artist and Proyectos Monclova. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



Roberto Turnbull
Cuatro Bocas, 1987
Oil on canvas
130 x 100 x 3 cm (51 ⅞ x 39 ⅞ x 1 ⅞ inches)
©Roberto Turnbull; Courtesy of the Melissa Riestra. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



Roberto Turnbull
Homenaje Al Sol, 1983
Mixed media on paper
99 x 70 cm (39 x 27 ½ inches)
©Roberto Turnbull; Courtesy of the Artist and Le Laboratoire. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



Roberto Turnbull
Plomada, 1985
Stone sculpture on wicker base
16 x 12 cm (6 ¼ x 4 ¾ inches)
©Roberto Turnbull; Courtesy of the Artist and Le Laboratoire. Photo: Gustavo García-Villa.



Roberto Turnbull

Sin Título, 1988

Mixed media on paper

83.5 x 63.3 x 4.4 cm (32 $\frac{7}{8}$ x

24 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ in)

***©Roberto Turnbull; Courtesy
of the Artist and Le
Laboratoire. Photo: Gustavo
Garcia-Villa.***

[TIMELINE]

1981 - Museo Tamayo opens in Mexico City

1982 - Devaluation of the peso leads to economic crisis

1982 - A fire at Cinética Nacional, the national film archive, destroys the cinemas and a large part of the collection

1982 - Miguel de la Madrid, PRI candidate, becomes president of Mexico

1982 - Nahum B. Zenil has solo exhibition at Museo Carillo Gil, Mexico City

1983 - Galeria OMR founded in Mexico City

1983 - Feminist artist group "Polvo de Gallina Negra" founded by Monica Mayer and Magali Lara

1983 - First diagnosis of AIDS in Mexico

1984 - First Havana Biennial held, with work by Julio Galán

1984 - *La Jornada* newspaper founded in Mexico City

1985 - Magnitude 8.1 earthquake strikes Mexico City resulting in more than 5,000 deaths.

1985 - Mexico declared in economic emergency

1985 - Museo Tamayo presents *17 Artistas de hoy en México*, featuring the work of Germán Venegas and others

1985 - Galeria OMR presents the exhibition *Tres Mujeres*, with work by Rocio Maldonado, Georgina Quintana, and Estela Hussong

1985 - 140 pieces stolen from the Museum Nacional de Antropología

1985 - Roberto Turnbull has solo exhibition at Museo Carillo Gil, Mexico City

1986 - Mexico hosts the FIFA World Cup

1986 - Mexico City inaugurates new airport

1986 - Museo Casa Estudio Diego Rivera y Frida Kahlo is inaugurated

1986 - Enrique Guzmán commits suicide in Aguascalientes

1987 - Teresa del Conde publishes column with the first appearance of the term "Neomexicanismo"

1987 - CONACULTA (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes) is founded

1988 - Carlos Salinas de Gortari, PRI candidate, wins presidential election

1988 - Francisco Toledo founds the Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca

1989 - PRD (Partido Revolucionario Democrática) political party founded

1989 - Adolfo Riestra dies from AIDS-related complications

1990 - Bicentennial of the Mexican War of Independence

1990 - The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is signed between Mexico, the United States, and Canada

1990 - Octavio Paz wins the Nobel Prize in Literature

1991 - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (MARCO) opens in Monterrey, Nuevo León

1992 - A solo exhibition of German Venegas' work, "Polvo de Imagenes", opens at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey and Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City

1992 - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca opens in Oaxaca de Juarez, Oaxaca