Gabriel Orozco

MoMA

Gabriel Orozco

Ann Temkin

WITH ESSAYS BY
Ann Temkin
Briony Fer
Benjamin H. D. Buchloh
Paulina Pobocha
Anne Byrd

The Museum of Modern Art
New York

1 XII 92

4:42 P.M.

GO

6:22 P.M. TIENDA SEÑORA. PAPEL ALBANENE. FICHAS GO.

6:44 P.M. REGRESÉ CON LA SEÑORA Y COMPRÉ LAS FICHAS DEL GO (SÓLO BLANCAS). TAMBIÉN DIEZ HOJAS DE PAPEL ALBANENE QUE TIENEN ALGUNA RELACIÓN AUNQUE AÚN NO LA DESCUBRO. LA CAJA DE LAS FICHAS ES CASI UNA ESFERA. DE MADERA. LA TAPA CIRCULAR ANUNCIA LOS ANILLOS DE LO QUE FUE UN ÁRBOL. CÍRCULO TRAS CÍRCULO EL PUNTO DE LA PRESENCIA.* EL GO ES UN JUEGO DE TERRITORIALIDAD. LO INTENTÉ JUGAR UNA VEZ. HACE UNOS DIEZ AÑOS. CADA FICHA (PIENSO HOY) IMPLICA UNA PRESENCIA, OCUPAR UN ESPACIO. AL ~~DESTAPARLA ALGO~~ ESPARCIRLAS EN CUALQUIER ESPACIO OCUPAREMOS UN TERRITORIO, SIN INTENCIÓN APARENTE, COMO LAS HOJAS CAÍDAS. COMO LOS CHICLES ESCUPIDOS EN LA ACERA. (AHORA PIENSO EN LA FOTO QUE TOMÉ DE LAS HOJAS DE ÁRBOL JAPONÉS CAÍDAS EN LA ACERA ENTRE LOS PUNTOS NEGROS DE LOS CHICLES. EL AZAR (O ~~EL UNIVERSO~~ LOS MOTIVOS DEL UNIVERSO) LOS PUSO AHÍ. AHORA ES DEMASIADO TARDE.—LAS HOJAS SE HAN IDO CON EL OTOÑO— PERO ME HUBIERA GUSTADO PONER UNA FICHA DE GO EN CADA CHICLE ESCUPIDO MARCANDO UN TERRITORIO INTENCIONADO Y LA PRESENCIA DE UNA PRESENCIA. LO HARÉ MAÑANA SIN LAS HOJAS. SÓLO FICHAS DE GO BLANCAS SOBRE CADA CHICLE ESCUPIDO ~~EN UN E~~ EN CUALQUIER BANQUETA. ESCUPIR TERRITORIOS. BUSCO EN EL DICCIONARIO LA PALABRA GO EN INGLÉS: (YA LA HABÍA BUSCADO Y POR ESA PALABRA COMPRÉ LAS FICHAS):

* EL ÁRBOL SE VA EXPANDIENDO COMO EL UNIVERSO.

ESCUPIR TERRITORIOS

GO: 1. TO MOVE ALONG; TRAVEL, PROCEED. 2. TO WORK PROPERLY; OPERATE (THE CLOCK IS GOING). 3. TO RUN, SOUND, ETC. AS SPECIFIED. 4. TO TURN OUT; RESULT. 5. TO PASS; LAPSE OF TIME. 6. TO BECOME. 7. TO BE EXPRESSED; SUNG, ETC. 8. TO HARMONIZE; AGREE. (BLUE GOES WITH GOLD). 9. TO BE ACCEPTED, VALID, ETC. 10. TO LEAVE; DEPART. 11. TO ROLL TO AN END; FAIL. ETC. ~~[illegible]~~ ES IRRELEVANTE.

GO BACK; GO FOR; TO GO. GO

GO. (GABRIEL OROZCO) (ODIO ESCRIBIR MI NOMBRE). GO

GO GO GO GO GO GO. GO GO GO GO

CORCHOLATAS EN EL SUELO. ESTRELLAS. CHICLES. GOTAS. GOTAS. GO. GO. GO.

1992: Migrations

"In [Recaptured Nature] *(1990) two inner tubes take the form of a single, air-filled sphere, but this morphological transformation leaves all the elements that make up a tire intact. Created by the same gluing and vulcanizing methods used to make conventional inner tubes, the ball only emphasizes the flexible and resilient qualities of rubber and the expansive and cushioning properties of air that make these objects particularly suited to rolling smoothly across a surface. What's more, by emphasizing the tubes as containers of air, rather than things contained in something else, Orozco reverses their familiar position, the better for us to study or even admire them. What is normally ignominiously hidden is puffed impressively to capacity, and in its proud, effulgent presence attains a kind of loopy magnificence."*

Laura J. Hoptman, "Options 47: Gabriel Orozco" (1994), n.p.

OPPOSITE:
Notebook 2, p. 139. Ballpoint pen, cut-and-pasted printed paper, and coffee stains on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)

ABOVE:
Recaptured Nature. 1990. Vulcanized rubber, approx. 29 1/2 × 41 5/16 × 33 7/16" (75 × 105 × 85 cm). One of three versions

SHORTLY AFTER RETURNING FROM BRAZIL IN THE WINTER OF 1991 Orozco received an unexpected visit at his home in Mexico City from Catherine de Zegher, then director of the Kanaal Art Foundation, in Kortrijk, Belgium. De Zegher had traveled to Mexico to survey contemporary art in the capital and to select work by living artists to include in a forthcoming exhibition, *America, Bride of the Sun*, organized by the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, for which she was the co-curator, together with Paul Vandenbrock. The exhibition examined five hundred years of Latin American art and coincided with the five-hundred-year anniversary of the discovery of the Americas. A historical survey, it was unusual for its thematic rather than chronological structure. As de Zegher later explained, "This exhibition could also be considered as an attempt to focus our attention on the European side of imperialism, to question Western hegemony and the mechanics by which Europe consolidated its empire and continues to consolidate it. Capitalism may have changed, I mean the very way land is conquered is different . . . but the motivations remain the same."[1] To make this point, the contemporary art was displayed throughout the exhibition rather than isolated in its own area. When the show opened in February two of Orozco's sculptures, *Recaptured Nature* (1990) and *My Hands Are My Heart* (1991), were included alongside work by Cildo Meireles, Lygia Clark, and Lucio Fontana as well as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century masterworks.

Recaptured Nature, an air-filled sphere of vulcanized rubber, was constructed entirely from the inner tubes of truck tires, which Orozco found in an industrial junkyard just outside of Mexico City. With the help of a mechanic who regularly repaired tires, Orozco split the inner circumference of one inner tube and then, using rubber from another tire, patched it together to form an inflatable sphere. The goal was straightforward: according to Orozco it was "an exercise in topology in which everything can become everything else, where each shape can develop into something different." But the work was also an object seized from and rooted in reality. As the artist has said, "It's not a Platonic sphere, pure, and perfectly

geometric; it's very much an object of nature, dirty, recovered." Indeed, the memory of the material's previous function is imprinted on the scratched and soiled surface of the work.

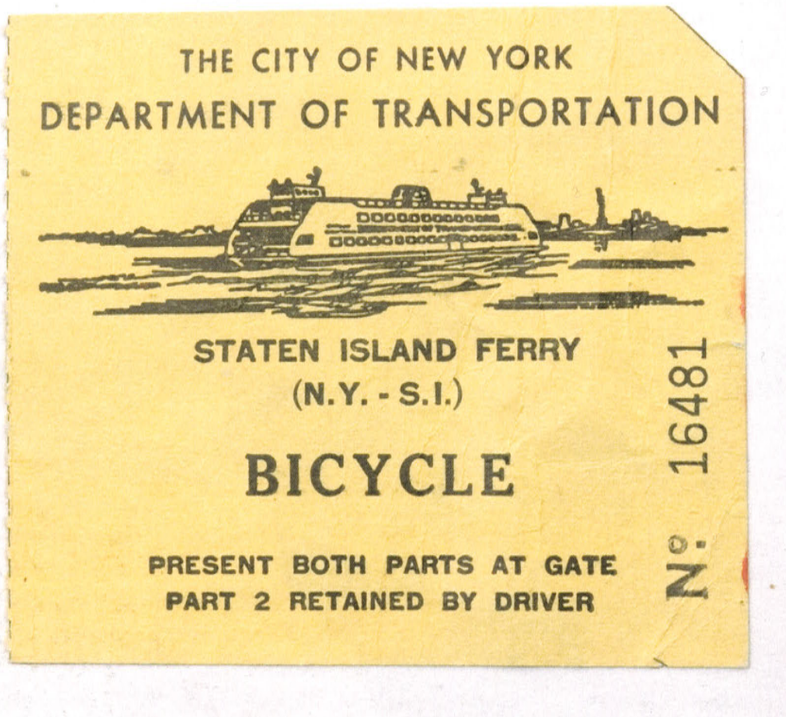
My Hands Are My Heart carries a different imprint: a terracotta sculpture, it bears the impression of Orozco's body. To create the sculpture Orozco squeezed a ball of clay in the palms of his hands, forming a heart-shaped object that reveals the processes of its making. As with the floor sculpture *My Hand Is the Memory of Space* (1991), the body is defined by the displacement of mass and presented as an absence. For the exhibition in Antwerp, Orozco's terracotta heart was placed in a vitrine in close proximity to Frida Kahlo's *Annotations and Memories* (1943), a self-portrait in oil depicting Kahlo's face contained within a cracking anatomical heart. In contrast to this fantastical treatment, Orozco strikes a keen balance between the base materiality of the object and its possible poetic implications. In a lecture Orozco gave in Mexico City in early 2001, he referenced a notebook entry in which he wrote, "The artist is first and foremost a consumer. The materials he consumes and the way in which he consumes them influence the development of his work and the subsequent implications. This consumption system is the first technique the artist has to define. Having abandoned my studio or workshop, I became a consumer of anything at hand and a producer of what already exists."[2] The clay that Orozco used here is not a traditional art material but clay taken from a brick factory in Cholula, Mexico. Like nearly all of Orozco's sculpture, it was made from scavenged components. And despite its new incarnation as an art-object, the material nonetheless carries the memory of its previous function, adding a layer of meaning that looks beyond the sculpture's physical parameters. As Jean Fisher aptly noted, "Orozco and others in the exhibition tend to use urban refuse as a medium, less perhaps for its esthetic than for its political potential."[3] *My Hands Are My Heart* is a complex but humble object whose poetic

TOP:
Futon Homeless. 1992
Silver dye bleach print, 16×20" (40.6×50.8 cm)
Edition of 2

ABOVE:
My Hands Are My Heart. 1991
Fired clay, 6×4×6" (15.2×10.2×15.2 cm)

OPPOSITE:
Notebook 2, p. 126. Graphite, cut-and-taped printed paper, and toothpaste spit on notebook page, 10 3/4×8 1/16" (27.3×20.5 cm)

VOY EN EL FERRY: 3:15 P.M. TRABAJÉ TRES HORAS. TENGO HAMBRE. (ESTOY VIENDO LA ESTATUA DE LA LIBERTAD, LA CHAPARRITA). ODIO CARGAR CON MI CÁMARA. ODIO DEPENDER DE ELLA. NECESITO OTRO LENTE. UN SEMIGRAN ANGULAR. LO QUE VEN MIS OJOS. ES INTENSO ESTE TRABAJO, ÉSTAS TRES HORAS. IR RECORRIENDO Y VIÉNDOLO TODO. (AHÍ VIENE LA ISLA). TODO EN TODAS PARTE. ENCONTRAR. VISUALIZAR EN GRANDE Y EN PEQUEÑA ESCALA. TENSIÓN CONSTANTE. RECUERDO: ENTRE 2:00 Y 2:30 ME ENCONTRÉ CON UN TERRENO-ALMACÉN DE MATERIALES DE CONSTRUCCIÓN. MONTÍCULOS ALFOMBRADOS. FOTO. RECUERDO "LADRILLOS EN TERRENO BALDÍO" ALFOMBRAS Y PIEDRAS EN MONTÍCULOS. PAISAJE. MONTAÑAS.



"A bicycle, circling round and round, crosses a manhole cover en route and passes through two puddles, one almost dried up, the other still flush. The wet bicycle tires draw circling lines of movement on the dry pavement, paralleling the gesture of the painter's brush on canvas. The trail drawn by the tires gives way to the branches and fragments of grafting reflected in the water, extending reflection both literally and figuratively as immediate, concrete mirroring and a deepening of thought processes. Before the rays of the sun can put a speedy end to his actionist scenario, Gabriel Orozco shoots a picture of this profoundly elementary rendition of the overlapping cycles of body, spirit and nature: Extension of Reflection *(1992)."*

Bernhard Bürgi, "The Extension of Reflection," in *Gabriel Orozco* (1996), p. 7

LEFT:
Detail from Notebook 1, p. 72. Felt-tip pen and printed paper on notebook page, 5 7/8 × 4 1/8" (15 × 10.5 cm)

OPPOSITE:
Extension of Reflection. 1992. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

Foam. 1992. Silver dye bleach print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

potency proceeds from the modesty of its materials and the simplicity of Orozco's gesture.

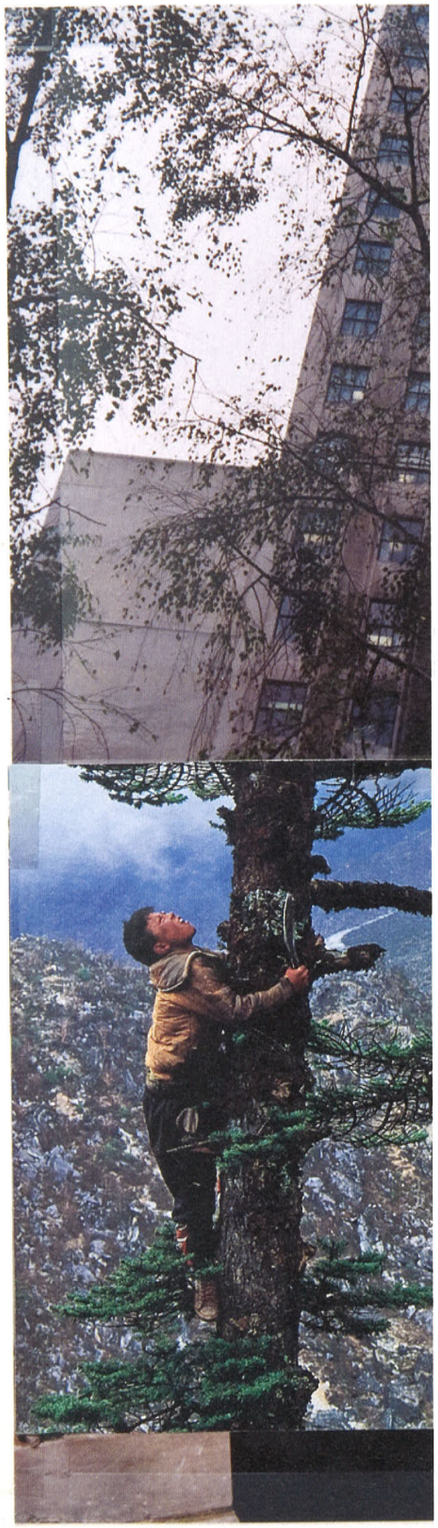
America, Bride of the Sun was a pivotal exhibition for the artist, and "the beginning of many things," as Orozco has said. "It was the first time I had a show with such good artists, in a world-class museum. For me, it was the first international exhibition on that high of a level." The show provided a small but significant amount of international recognition, and it was meaningful to Orozco that it was sited in Europe rather than North America: "I was passing through Europe and *then* coming to New York; the European filter was important and interesting." Shortly before the exhibition closed in late May Orozco left Mexico City for New York. Prompting the move were personal as well as professional reasons—his soon-to-be wife, Maria Gutierrez, had recently begun to study at New York University. Just as significant, however, was Orozco's admission that there was little notice of his work in his native Mexico City, and certainly no market. As he remembers, "There was not a single gallery in Mexico interested in my work, zero. And besides [Guillermo] Santamarina, there was not a single curator understanding my work. I wanted to do many things, but in Mexico, where I had so little support, it was not clear how I could do them." By contrast, even

P. 66:
Five Problems. 1992. Silver dye bleach print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

Cats and Watermelons. 1992. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

P. 67:
Notebook 2, p. 124. Ballpoint pen, graphite, cut-and-taped printed paper, and photographs on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)

96 Sheets
Construction
Paper
ENVELOPES



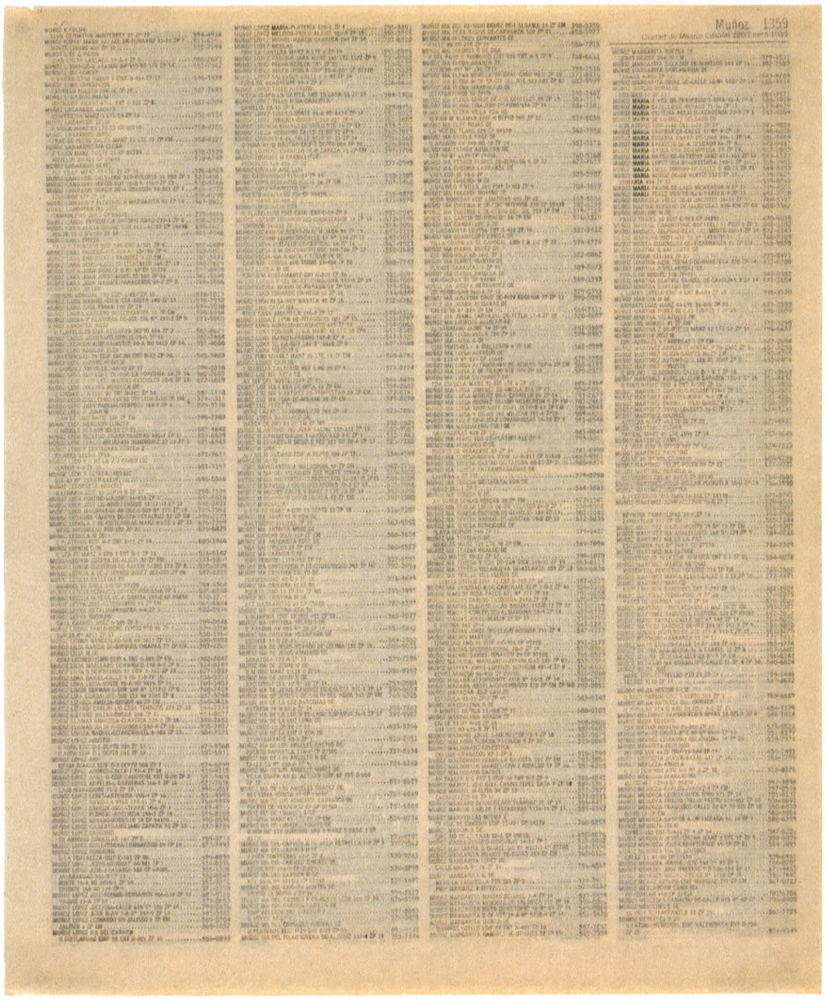
ESPUMA + ESPUMA. ÁRBOLES Y VIDRIOS AZU SOMBRA DEL CIELO. PASTA DE DIENTES SUBIR EL ÁRBOL O COSGARSE DE LA EN LA TIERRA.

prior to his arrival in New York, Orozco's work had already garnered the attention and the support of critics and curators, among them Benjamin Buchloh, whom Orozco had met in Antwerp. In many ways the cultural landscape of New York in the early 1990s was primed to support Orozco's work. The art community was still recovering from the art market crash of 1990, and ready for an alternative to the Neo-Geo and Neo-Expressionist paintings that had dominated the previous decade. Orozco's quiet, barely there sculptures and sculptural interventions provided a point of contrast.

As New York became Orozco's adopted city, Orozco became its adoptee. However, this mutual embrace was complicated by Orozco's reluctance to define himself as a "New York artist." This rejection was not only an attempt to circumvent the expectations such labels carry, whether that of the exotic outsider or the perennial art world insider; for Orozco it was also a turning away from the sensibilities of the previous decade. The artist has said, "This labeling was a way of selling a package, the tendency to present a new generation of artists from New York. I was very much against that kind of packaging. The eighties were quite cruel, quite unfair, and quite frivolous in that respect. As a '90s artist, I was very much against the '80s." Speaking of himself and of like-minded colleagues, Orozco continued, "We behaved differently, we made art differently and I think for a little while we managed very well to get rid of a mentality that was very '80s. The '90s were a time of globalization and multiculturalism. I don't like these names, but there were some good intentions—in trying to open up cultural institutions and the art industry to look at the world in a more open way." These principles, established early in Orozco's career, at once reflected and responded to the cultural zeitgeist. In November of 1992 Bill Clinton successfully challenged incumbent George H. W. Bush to the office of the President of the United States, and soon Cold War politics were replaced by a new era of globalization. In a 1997 article titled "Nomads," art historian James Meyer similarly characterized the 1990s as an era of "unprecedented mobility and migration, the expansion of multinational companies and entertainment/news oligarchies, the spread of communication technologies," and argued a link between the culture at large and the art it produced, citing Orozco's oeuvre as "thematizing a peripatetic existence in staged, poetical figurations of transience."[4] Considered in this context, Orozco's reluctance to fully identify as a "New York" or a "Mexican" artist was not so much a rejection of either culture but rather a rejection of an exhausted and rigid worldview that made less and less sense as national boundaries became increasingly penetrable and national identities more fluid.

In October 1992 Orozco participated in an exhibition titled *Si colón supiera! . . .* (*If Columbus Only Knew! . . .*), organized by the Museo de Monterrey, Mexico. The exhibition's curators, Olivier Debroise and Rina Epelstein, focused on the ephemeral nature of contemporary art. Orozco showed two new works: *Yielding Stone* and *Dial Tone*. Although *Yielding Stone*—a solid ball of gray plasticine equivalent in weight to the artist's body—was conceived in New York, he constructed the work in Monterrey. The work was not considered finished until Orozco rolled it through the streets and a patina of dirt, pebbles, and debris formed on its surface. Displayed in the museum gallery, it continued to collect dirt and dust, incorporating foreign particles until they became aggregate components of the body of the work. The idea was inspired in part by a trip to The Museum of Modern Art; Orozco has recalled, "In that impeccable museum, I was amused to find trash and dust hidden in intermediate spaces, missed by the eyes of the public. This relationship of force between resplendence, which is what is visible, and dust, which is the dullness that covers and turns into a thing in itself, is one of my favorite motifs." *Yielding Stone* embraces this motif by allowing the hidden and the undesirable to become the subject of the work.

Dial Tone engages two central strategies of Orozco's: those of topology and appropriation. For this work Orozco removed the pages of a Monterrey phone book and cut them down to remove all of the names until only columns of



numbers remained. He then pasted these columns, one abutting the other, on a sheet of Japanese paper 82 feet (25 meters) long. The work retains the attributes of a telephone book, but one reimagined as a Japanese scroll. As Orozco has explained, "When you get close you can see a kind of grid or a kind of landscape. At some point, I called it *Phone River* because you unroll this thing and you see a torrent of numbers. It represents everybody in the city, they just don't have a name." Whether using inner tubes, phone book pages, or any of the many found objects that appear regularly in his work, Orozco's physical manipulations never conceal an object's original function or transform its principal identity. Rather, the found object returns as a reconfiguration of the original. As Orozco has said, "These objects, they keep being what they were after I've cut them and reassembled them, they keep functioning. There is a continuity to the characteristics of the materials."

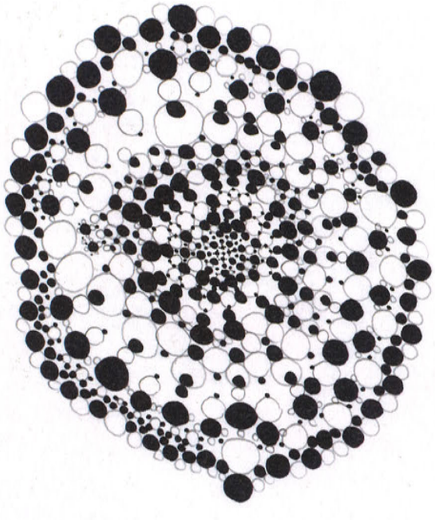
Following the show in Monterrey, Orozco returned to New York and began preparing for a group exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art that would open shortly after the start of the new year. And while several of Orozco's works would travel to Mexico throughout the course of the 1990s, the majority of the artist's activities took place outside of Mexico for the rest of the decade.

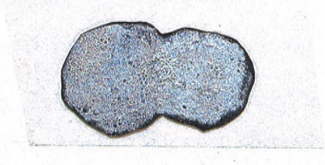
ABOVE:
Maria, Maria, Maria. 1992. Phone book page with erasures, 11×9 1/8" (27.9×23.2 cm)

RIGHT:
Dial Tone (detail). 1992. Cut-and-pasted phone book pages on Japanese paper, 11"×10' 10" (27.9×330.2 cm). Artist's proof

INSET:
Dial Tone. 1992. Cut-and-pasted phone book pages on Japanese paper, 11"×34' (27.9×1,036 cm). One of three versions

Copyright 1985





RIGHT:
Horse. 1992. Chromogenic color print, 20×16" (50.8×40.6 cm). Edition of 5

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Horseshit. 1992. Silver dye bleach print, 16×20" (40.6×50.8 cm). Edition of 5

Untitled. 1992. Ink, graphite, toothpaste spit, and tape on paper, 11×8" (27.9×20.3 cm)

Untitled. 1992. Graphite and ink on paper, 10½×8¼" (26.7×20.9 cm)

Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Gabriel Orozco*, organized by Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, with Paulina Pobocha, Curatorial Assistant, Painting and Sculpture, at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, December 13, 2009–March 1, 2010. The exhibition travels to Kunstmuseum Basel, April 18–August 10, 2010; Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, September 15, 2010–January 3, 2011; and Tate Modern, London, January 19–May 2, 2011.

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FRONT COVER: Notebook 6 (July 21, 1994–November 5,1994), p. 184. Cut-and-pasted printed paper (original photographic images by Robb Kendrick and Alberto Garcia) glued into notebook, 9 15/16 × 19" (25.3 × 48.3 cm). Collection of the artist

BACK COVER: *La DS*. 1993. Modified Citroën DS, 55 3/16" × 15' 9 15/16" × 45 5/16" (140.1 × 482.5 × 115.1 cm). Fonds national d'art contemporain (Cnap), Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, Paris, Fnac 94003

FRONT ENDPAPERS: Notebook 2 (July 17, 1992–March 23, 1993), pp. 145–46. Ballpoint pen and cut-and-taped printed paper on notebook pages, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm). Collection of the artist

OPPOSITE HALF-TITLE PAGE: Notebook 2 (July 17, 1992–March 23, 1993), p. 56. Ballpoint pen, graphite, and sticker on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm). Collection of the artist

FRONTISPIECE: Notebook 2 (July 17, 1992–March 23, 1993), p. 95. Ballpoint pen, graphite, and photographs on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm). Collection of the artist

OPPOSITE P. 256: Notebook 3 (March 1–July 24, 1993), p. 43. Cut-and-taped printed paper and graphite on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm). Collection of the artist

BACK ENDPAPERS: LEFT Notebook 2 (July 17, 1992–March 23, 1993), p. 30. Cut-and-taped printed paper and leaves on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm). Collection of the artist; RIGHT p. 29. Ballpoint pen, cut-and-taped printed paper, and board on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm). Collection of the artist

Printed in Singapore

Gabriel Orozco

Ann Temkin

SINCE THE EARLY 1990S, Gabriel Orozco has forged a career marked by constant surprise and innovation. He roams freely and fluently among drawing, photography, sculpture, installation, and painting, creating a heterogeneous body of objects that resists categorization. In works ranging from subtle interventions in the landscape to meticulously executed sculptures and quick snapshots, art intermingles with reality and idea is inseparable from experience. This volume, designed in collaboration with Orozco, offers a comprehensive examination of the artist's career from the late 1980s to the present. Critical essays by Ann Temkin, Briony Fer, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh provide new approaches to grounding Orozco's work in the larger landscape of contemporary art. They are complemented by a richly illustrated chronology that combines biographical information with focused discussions of selected objects. Each entry pays particular attention to Orozco's material practice and introduces the artist's own reflections on the work he has made.

Ann Temkin is The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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