Gabriel Orozco

MoMA

Gabriel Orozco

Ann Temkin

WITH ESSAYS BY
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The Museum of Modern Art
New York

NYC 17 VII 92

PROYECTO BIBLIOTECA: ACCION COTIDIANA. RECORRIDO PROVOCANDO CASUALIDADES, GENERANDO CONEXIONES. PALABRAS = HECHOS. (FACTS). IMAGENES. LIBROS DE ENCUENTOS. ACUMULACIÓN Y ORDENAMIENTO DEL CAOS. RUTINA, COSTUMBRE COMO FUERZA ORGANIZADORA. VOLUNTAD = GRAVEDAD. IMÁGENES, PALABRAS Y OBJETOS. DIBUJO, FOTO, TEXTO, COLLAGE, INTERVENCIONES, APROPIACIONES. DIARIO. DOCUMENTACIÓN Y REGISTRO DE LOS RECORRIDOS POR EL LABERINTO.

OFICINA EN ESPACIO PÚBLICO.— PORTAFOLIO, WALKMAN, CORBATA, LENTES.

APROPIACIÓN DE IMÁGENES Y TEXTOS EN LA BIBLIOTECA. RECOLECTOR. ASTRONAUTA EN OTRO PLANETA. PROPÓSITO CAMINANDO. CONSTRUIR EL UNIVERSO. ORDEN-CAOS-ORDEN. PREFERENCIA.

SISTEMA DE PREFERENCIAS, VOLUNTAD Y AZAR. CASUALIDAD. HILO CONDUCTOR: VOLUNTAD. ELECCIÓN. LA ELECCIÓN DÍA A DÍA ES EL HILO CONDUCTOR DE LOS POEMAS. NO NOVELA. NO CAUSA. NOVELA = CAUSALIDAD. POEMA = ¿CASUALIDAD?

APARENTE CAOS EN LA COLECCIÓN DE DATOS.

EL PRIMER DÍA LO MOTIVÓ LA VOLUNTAD Y LA PALABRA REALIA. (LA VOLUNTAD IMPORTA POCO).

· BIBLIOTECA · SUPERMERCADO · CALLES · MUSEOS. TALLER.

TRABAJAR EN UN ESPACIO DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA Y LAS POSIBILIDADES DE UN INDIVIDUO, POR UNOS INSTANTES Y CON LOS MATERIALES Y HERRAMIENTAS QUE ENCUENTRA AHÍ MISMO.

LA CASUALIDAD Y EL CAOS SIEMPRE HAN TENIDO MEJOR "GUSTO" QUE EL HOMBRE. ORDENA LO TODO.

HABITAR UNA BIBLIOTECA.

OBJETOS POSIBLES EN UNA BIBLIOTECA: (OBJETOS GENERADOS POR LA LECTURA Y LA RECOLECCIÓN EN LA BIBLIOTECA).

- LIBRO CIRCULAR DE LOMO CONTINUO.
- DIRECTORIO RÍO.
- CORAZÓN DEL RÍO.
- LIBRO HOJAS DE PLATANO. DOCUMENTO FOTOGRÁFICO.
- PLASTILINA EN REVISTAS.
- HOJA PAPEL BLANCO EN EL SUELO.
- FOTOGRAFÍAS HOJAS PAPEL BLANCO.
- DIARIO.

REALIA

18 VII 92

"HEAP OF LANGUAGE" DE R. SMITHSON.

PRONUNCIAR TODAS LAS PALABRAS EN TODOS LOS IDIOMAS AL MISMO TIEMPO, SUCESIVAMENTE, HASTA OIR EL SONIDO DE AGUA CORRIENDO, CONVERTIDAS EN UN RÍO.

SMITHSON: ACUMULACIÓN, MONTAÑA. PERMANECE. SÓLIDO.

PÁJARO: SUCESIÓN Y ACUMULACIÓN, RÍO. FLUÍDO. LÍQUIDO.

INCANTORY: PRONUNCIACIÓN SIN SIGNIFICACIÓN.

CONCIERTO DE J. CAGE EN EL MOMA. 7:30 P.M.

MÚSICA ACOPLADA A LA REALIDAD. SONIDO DE PÁJAROS Y COCHES Y VIENTO Y RUIDOS PRESENTES EN LAS NOTAS EXTENDIDAS DEL CELLO. ORDEN—ACCIDENTES—ORDEN—ACCIDENTE.

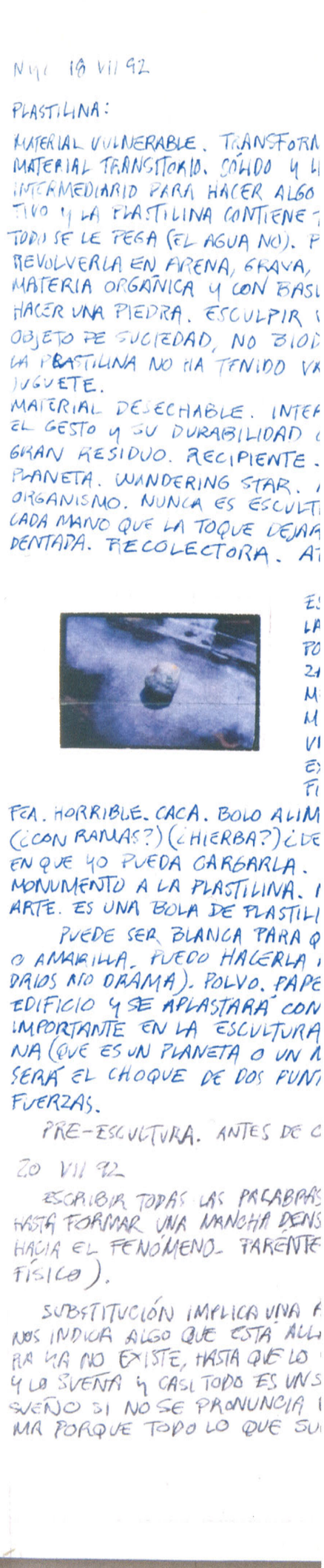
LA MÚSICA ES EL MARCO DE LO QUE SUCEDE. ES LA BASE DE LA OBRA QUE ES LO QUE SUCEDE. LO QUE SE OYE EN EL ENTORNO. SEÑALA LO QUE ESTÁ SONANDO. TODOS LOS SONIDOS DEL ENTORNO SE REVELAN. NOS INVITA A DISTRAERNOS Y ESCUCHAR LO OTRO, LO QUE NO ES "MÚSICA". LA MÚSICA SE ADAPTA A LAS LEYES RÍTMICAS SONORAS DE LA REALIDAD. LAS SEÑALA. LAS ENMARCA.

CON UN LIGERO TOQUE LA AVISPA SE ASUSTA Y VUELA. AL TOCAR Y AL OBSERVAR ACTIVAMOS LA NATURALEZA DE LO QUE NOS RODEA. TOCAR LA AVISPA Y SEGUIR SU VUELO. NO MATARLA, NO APREHENDERLA. SEÑALARLA ACTIVANDO SU EXISTENCIA. DISFRUTAR Y EXPRESAR ESE GOZO. EXPRESAR LO QUE ESTÁ ALLÁ AFUERA. REVELARLO, HACERLO AUDIBLE O VISIBLE. PRESENTARLO.

MARCO = TESTIGO

EL ARTE COMO MARCO DE LA REALIDAD.

ENTRE EL INSTRUMENTO Y EL ESPECTADOR ¿QUE SUCEDE? EN ESE ESPACIO ENTRE LA OBRA Y EL ESPECTADOR SUCEDE LO QUE SUCEDE. LO QUE SEA ES LO QUE SEA ES LA REALIDAD ESTÁ EN MEDIO. LA ILUSION LA EMPAÑA. EL SILENCIO LA ILUMINA.



NYC 19 VII 92

PLASTILINA:

MATERIAL VULNERABLE. TRANSFORM
MATERIAL TRANSITORIO. SÓLIDO Y LI
INTERMEDIARIO PARA HACER ALGO
TIVO Y LA PLASTILINA CONTIENE
TODO SE LE PEGA (EL AGUA NO). P
REVOLVERLA EN ARENA, GRAVA,
MATERIA ORGÁNICA Y CON BASU
HACER UNA PIEDRA. ESCULPIR
OBJETO DE SOCIEDAD, NO BIOD
LA PLASTILINA NO HA TENIDO VX
JUGUETE.
MATERIAL DESECHABLE. INTER
EL GESTO Y SU DURABILIDAD
GRAN RESIDUO. RECIPIENTE.
PLANETA. WANDERING STAR.
ORGANISMO. NUNCA ES ESCULT
CADA MANO QUE LA TOQUE DEJAR
DENTADA. RECOLECTORA. A

FEA. HORRIBLE. CACA. BOLO ALIM
(¿CON RAMAS?) (¿HIERBA?) ¿DE
EN QUE YO PUEDA GARGARLA.
MONUMENTO A LA PLASTILINA.
ARTE. ES UNA BOLA DE PLASTILI
PUEDE SER BLANCA PARA Q
O AMARILLA. PUEDO HACERLA
DAIOS NO DRAMA). POLVO. PAPE
EDIFICIO Y SE APLASTARÁ CON
IMPORTANTE EN LA ESCULTURA
NA (QUE ES UN PLANETA O UN A
SERÁ EL CHOQUE DE DOS FUN
FUERZAS.
PRE-ESCULTURA. ANTES DE C

20 VII 92

ESCRIBIR TODAS LAS PALABRAS
HASTA FORMAR UNA MANCHA DENS
HACIA EL FENÓMENO. PARENTE
FÍSICO).

SUBSTITUCIÓN IMPLICA UNA
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Y LO SUENA Y CASI TODO ES UN S
SUEÑO SI NO SE PRONUNCIA
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Constellations in Dust: Notes on the Notebooks

Briony Fer

GABRIEL OROZCO'S NOTEBOOKS ARE BOTH at the very heart of his activity as an artist and slightly to one side of it. They are only notebooks, after all, and it is usual to see notebooks and sketchbooks as much less important, to say the least, than an artist's main work. And yet I think Orozco's notebooks are different, or at least I want to suggest here that they beg at least as many questions about what they *are* as they do about what they contain. I'll start by picking a single word from one of the earliest of them that he wrote out in neat capitals: REALIA. It heads an entry made on July 17, 1992, and is followed not by a definition but by a series of examples: ". . . include such items as objects, specimens, samples, relics, artefacts, souvenirs and even models and dioramas. And realia which one used in construction of exhibition and bulletin boards. Real things, actual facts."[1] The word is used by librarians to describe all those everyday artifacts that are not books but that can serve as teaching aids or demonstrational tools of one kind or another. As Orozco notes, realia cannot be learned in books. As visual supports or props, they are set apart from the idea of a library solely as a repository of the word. They are physical things, which makes them sound more like the contents of older cabinets of curiosity. And as in those earlier collections, there is often something immense and mysterious to be observed in the kind of small and mundane objects that interest Orozco.

Realia is a specialist term that is not in general use and looks outdated: a dusty word. The fact that it could now apply to things like video aids or digital media or other modern equivalents seems a bit absurd. Orozco came upon this odd word and breathed his own life into it. By picking it out he holds it up for inspection as if it is a material thing, or an actual bit of the (English) language that got caught in the net of his thought. This and other small, handwritten words, printed in black or blue ink, often in capital letters to mark their significance, however temporary, gather in his notebooks, but they are only a part of what is collected there. The notebooks themselves are made up of numerous and disparate elements, including writing, photographs, drawings, found images, collage scraps, diagrams, plans, lists, and other ephemera.

It is telling that the term realia has an indirect connection to the idea of a library. For whatever else they are, Orozco's notebooks are first and foremost books, to date seventeen of them, each the same standard format bound in plain gray linen. The notation "Biblioteca. DIA UNO: REALIA" appeared at the very beginning of the second volume. The word realia lingers for a page or two, then disappears almost as fast as it appeared. But still, if the word gets set aside, its associations do not. For example, in 2002, Orozco made a folio of twelve etchings, which he called *Polvo Impreso* (Pressed dust), and then in 2006 he installed a huge public project in the Biblioteca Vasconcelos in Mexico City: a whale skeleton overdrawn in graphite with intricate circular patterns that is suspended in a vast space between the hanging structures of open bookshelves. The result is that the whole building has become a vast skeletal body housing another. Even more than the enormous size of the whale, it is the huge differential of scale between the different kinds of things Orozco makes that is striking—and which, of course, the notebooks themselves, as small repositories of not only a vast number but also a huge network of connecting works and projects, also act out.

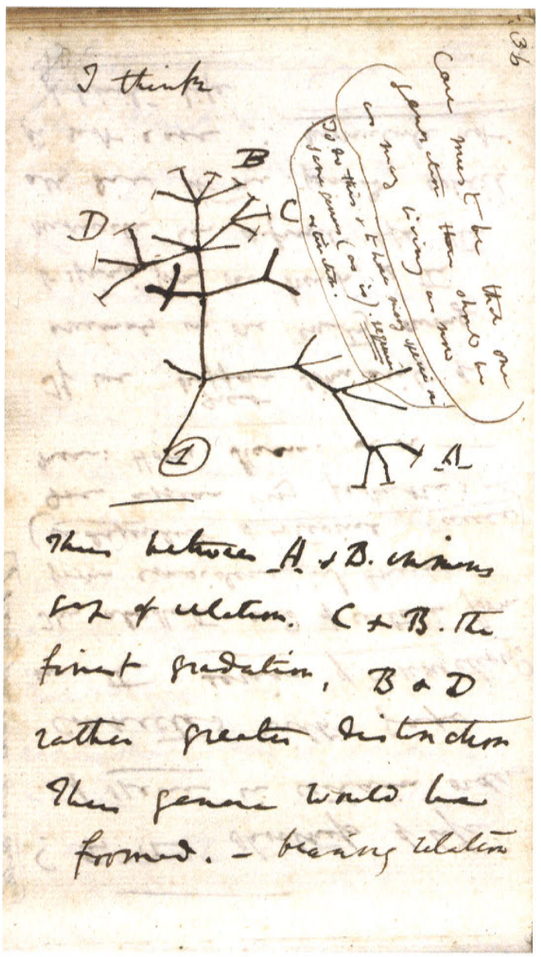
Orozco dates the first of his notebooks to January 1992. Though he had made many conventional sketchbooks before then, filled with drawing rather than writing, 1992 is established (retrospectively) as a fictional starting point for these works. The notebooks follow a strict sequence: each entry dated, each page numbered by hand. The first notebooks are denser than the later ones, and filled with more words. The notebooks are all a standard size, but the time each takes to fill varies greatly: some earlier volumes contain only a few months of work, while the later ones may contain up to two years' worth. After having been built up

slowly over many years they now sit consecutively on the bookshelves in the room where Orozco works in his apartment in New York. It is not so surprising that prominently represented in that extensive library is Jorge Luis Borges, the greatest keeper of libraries in the literary universe.

In 1939 Borges wrote an essay titled "The Total Library," the bare bones of which would become the short story "The Library of Babel," published two years later. To call one nonfiction and the other fiction suggests a border where there is none (it is more like one is inside the other). The story is annotated with footnotes, which creates the illusion of a certain kind of factual document, but in the supposedly nonfictional piece Borges imagines a library or utopia that was "of astronomical size," that would be all-encompassing: "Everything" he wrote, "would be in its blind volumes. Everything: the detailed history of the future."[2] Even future time does not escape the unimaginable scale of it. What Borges does in the story is take the impossibility of describing the infinitely vast and overwhelming totality and make that problem—the problem of writing—the motor that drives the words onto the page. The narrator is in an impossible position, as are we. It is well known that Borges's texts are themselves intricate labyrinths of words, which invite readers in only to make them more lost. The author might tempt you with the promise of finding a way through it, but this path is always thwarted in the end. This is a bit like being inside Orozco's notebooks, which are also like mazes. Words pile up. Drawings pile up. Words take shape, and they also make shapes. And though the pages are sequential, little else is. Like Borges's library, they are "unlimited and cyclical."[3]

Orozco's notebooks are full of the beginnings of things, of plans for work in the making or yet to be done and hypothetical projects. They are a history of the future in Borges's sense, but of course they are also full of residues from work already made and of the ideas that have gotten lost in translation as others have evolved. Although often densely packed with writing, the blocks of text are also shaped around drawings, photographs, and other bits and pieces that have been pasted into them. Orozco is careful to call these books notebooks and not sketchbooks, their status indeterminate. The artist's large retrospective at the Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City in 2006 was the first time that he exhibited a selection of them alongside other plans and diagrams of his exhibition installations.[4] For Orozco the exhibition is not just where work ends up but a medium through which it continues to transform itself in each new architectural setting. Demonstrating something about those shifting conditions and contingencies is not external to the work but a part of it.

Although artists' sketchbooks and jottings, like writers' notebooks and manuscripts, are generally thought of as secondary to the work proper, they also are the subject of intense fascination. They invite elaborate footnoting and explanatory marginalia from scholars sitting in archives and libraries, who like to identify the most arcane detail or the least likely connection to make a vast map of the inner workings of the creative mind. Sketchbooks, often undated, offer the art historical detective the opportunity to try to resolve conundrums—the blind alleys, the frankly obscure—and to identify every (usually) iconographical source for the artist's proper "work," betraying a deep-seated desire to make out of them the totality of an "oeuvre." Of course, this is a two-way street, and for all the attempts to order disorder, sketchbooks are disobedient—they tend to resist the urge to tidy them up and pull instead toward some kind of fugue state. I am not denying that a sketchbook, however chaotic it may look, obeys certain conventions. It is not so provisional an artifact as to escape the constraints of the time in which it was made. Part of what interests me is how these conventions have changed radically over the twentieth century, and certainly irrevocably since the 1960s. In some ways these changes have been fueled by the precarious status that sketchbooks have had as the underside of art practice. One need only to look at the role of the fragment in books of artists' drawings, or the collage effect of the page, or the remarkable freedom to rotate one fragment against another to see how a peculiar and complex order runs counter to regimes of representation at work elsewhere in the culture (a Cézanne drawing, for instance, with an intricate rendering of a



P. 22:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 2 (1992–93), p. 2. Ballpoint pen, graphite, and cut-and-taped printed paper on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

P. 23:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 2 (1992–93), p. 3. Ballpoint pen, graphite, and cut-and-taped printed paper on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

ABOVE:
Charles Darwin. *Tree of Life*. c. 1837. Ink on paper, 6 9/16 × 3 11/16" (16.6 × 9.3 cm)
Charles Darwin Papers, Notebook 'B,' p. 36, MS.DAR 121. Cambridge University Library

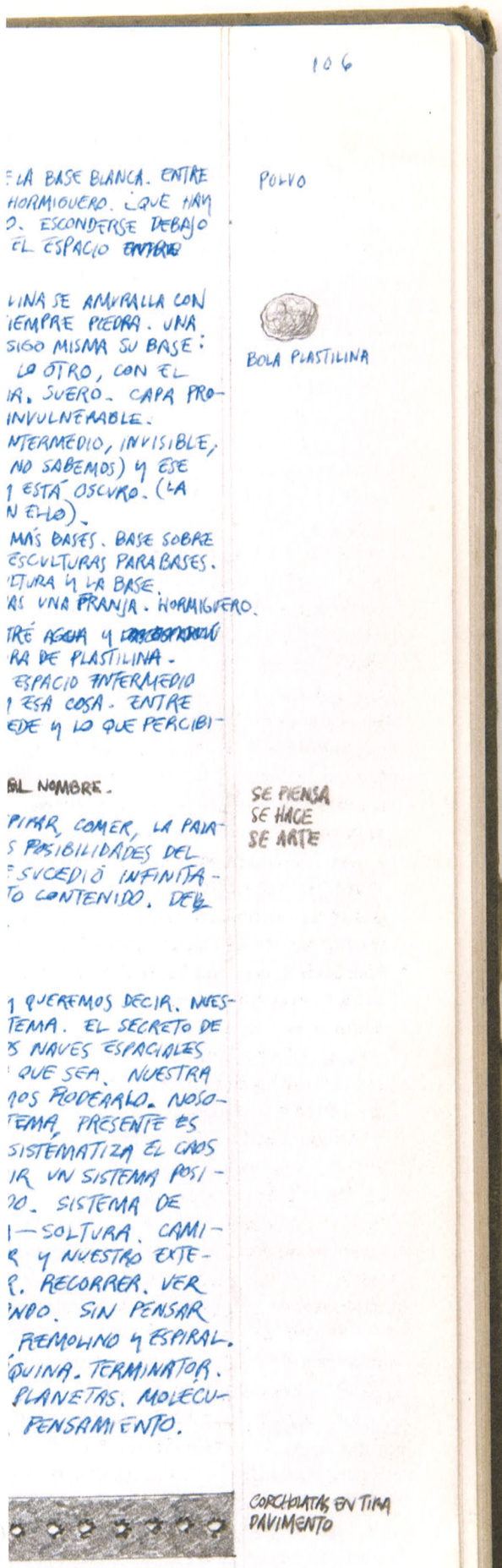
OPPOSITE:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 2 (1992–93), p. 106. Ballpoint pen, graphite, and cut-and-taped printed paper on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

spoon at a right angle to the incomplete, fleeting sketch of the head of his small son, marooned on an empty page, quite out of proportion one to another).

It is also worth remembering that we are all in the impossible position of Borges's narrator in relation to so compact an object that nevertheless seems to contain *everything*. The world opened onto is at once concrete and as vertiginous as any fictional one. It is an equally dizzying prospect to try to say something about the sketchbook's history, even its modern variants, ranging from Antonin Artaud's "*dessins-écrits*" to Marcel Duchamp's vast note-world to Hannah Höch's scrapbooks to Pablo Picasso's prodigious cahiers to Jasper Johns's elegant reductions to Ellsworth Kelly's panoramic "tablets" to Mel Bochner's working drawings.[5] Even that list barely scrapes the surface. It is a history that is reasonably uncharted, and that Orozco's notebooks not only act within but upon—that is, they demonstrate not only something about his own work but about how we might think about the *work* that is art. After all, as I said at the outset, notebooks and sketchbooks are at the center of art as an activity but also at its edge, both the main work and the marginalia to the main work. As a direct consequence of this ambiguous position, they have been the site of some seismic shifts in the conceptual status of the artwork. Most famously, Duchamp made his notes his art in his Green and White Boxes, in which tiny scraps of his writings and diagrams and drawings from the period preceding World War I were reproduced exactly (as torn and scrawled) in facsimile editions. Then Bochner's show *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art*, of 1966, exhibited as his own work photocopies of drawings by a number of other artists as well as anonymous technical drawings. This was never about making something that was pure idea at the expense of the physical object of art but rather about reimagining the kind of work that drawing can do.

It would be neat enough to situate Orozco's notebooks at the end of this conceptual lineage, but they defy such straight lines. And though Conceptual art's attacks on the object can never be "unthought," it is clear that Orozco's notebooks gravitate elsewhere. Partly this is because they are so militantly handmade rather than mechanically reproduced in multiple copies. In this respect, they are more reminiscent of Picasso's sketchbooks of the 1920s, with their hybrid collections of drawings—especially his abstract line drawings that plot out a page at the same time as they reference his sculpture. These graphic constellations coexisted with drawings *of* his collages, as well as the occasional collaged element literally stuck into the back of a book. Even the powerful idea that drawing is the materialization of thought deviates from a Duchampian model in favor of other kinds of artifact, like travel notes or *carnets de voyages* or the famous page from Darwin's notebook that he kept on his travels to the Galápagos Islands that comprised a schematic diagram of a few lines pointing downward and then dividing into smaller lines, like a basic root system, above which is written simply "I think." Few ideas could be bigger than Darwin's theory of evolution, yet even a schema like Darwin's, which has come to represent the first "eureka" moment of an idea taking shape, can only be seen as such after the fact. And seen from a graphic rather than a scientific perspective, it is a drawing that delineates the paradigmatic shape of a thought at a given time as it is caught in the act of self-recognition.

Orozco's notebooks demonstrate how a page can plot out, in its shape as much as by the content of what is actually written, an intricate pattern of thought. Definitions of words fix a thought for a moment by taking it out of circulation and noting it down. In one notebook from 1992, for example, Orozco writes, "Methonymy [*sic*]": "Things that are contiguous, related only by proximity or juxtaposition."[6] The word not only creates a space on a page but also describes a spatial way of thinking (linking by adjacence or nearness). Metonymy names a powerful drive in Orozco's work, but it is also a term that gets caught up in the larger drift of a lexicon in the making. Collecting the word is not the origin of the idea, but a moment of recognition of a process that has been at work all along. Working something through is not about finding an answer but of making a space for new questions. Naming or finding words for things is a part of figuring



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HAMACA (LINEA AGUA FUENTE)
VASO AGUA
RAYAS BICICLETA
RAYA POLVO

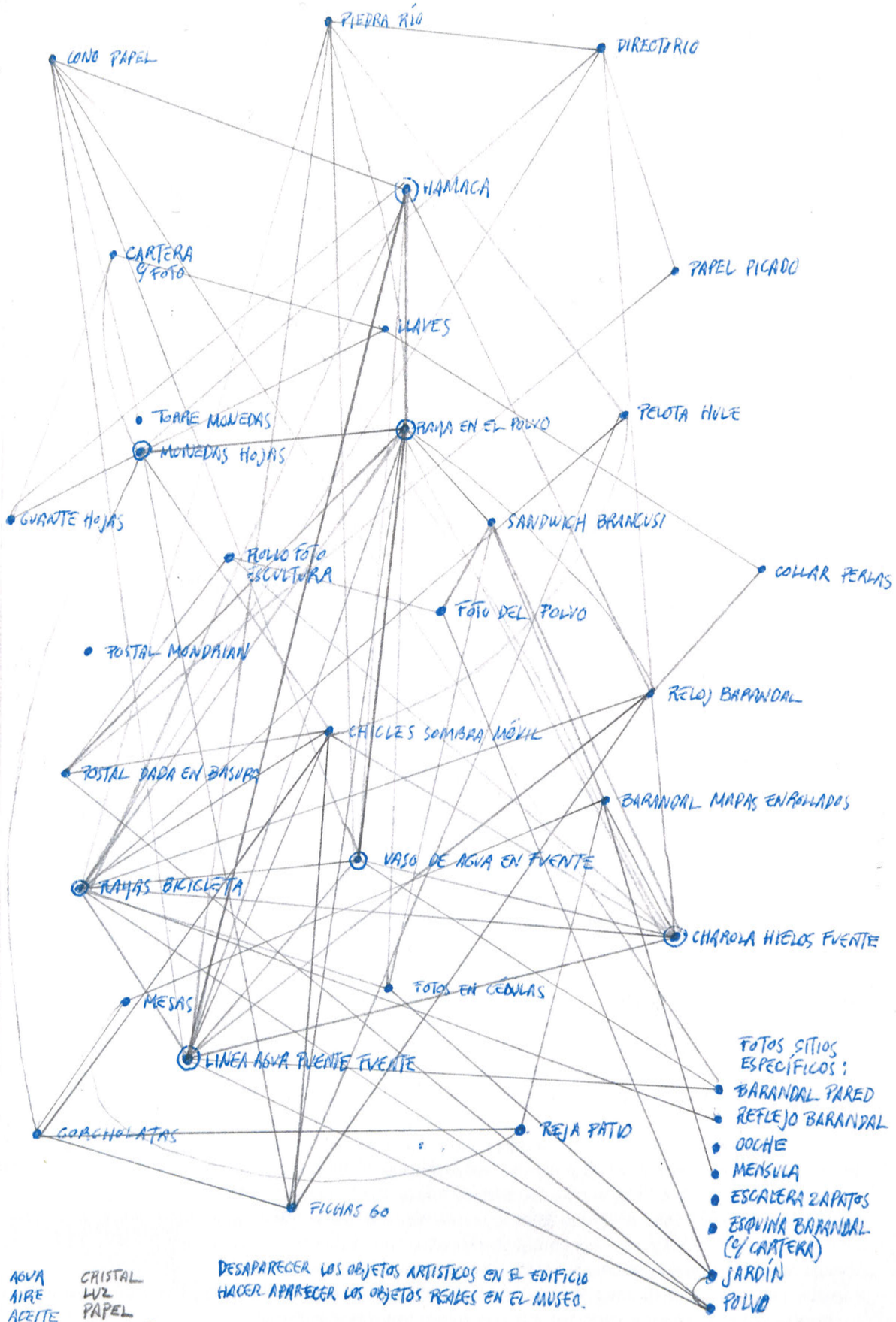
PIEDRA RÍO
DIRECTORIO
RELOJ BARANDAL

MONEDAS HOJAS
CHAROLA HIELOS
CHICLES SOMBRA

CORCHOLATAS
60

O. ARTE:
CORAZÓN BARRO
PLASTILINA
DIRECTORIO,
CORAZÓN RÍO
DIBUJO MANO
TELA ALBÓNDIGA

O. REALES:
RELOJ
CARTERA
COLLAR
LENTES
CASSETTE
ZAPATO



SENTIDO LIMITADO
SINSENTIDO LIMITADO

ACEPTAR EL SENTIDO ENCUBIERTO. NO SABERLO. DISFRUTARLO

TODAS ESAS COSAS QUE POR ESTAR CONTIGUAS SOLEMOS LLAMAR UNIVERSO

TODAS ESAS COSAS, QUE POR EL HECHO DE ESTAR JUNTAS, LLAMAMOS UNIVERSO.

¿QUE ES ESO?

AGUA	CRISTAL
AIRE	LUZ
ACEITE	PAPEL
TIERRA	CONCRETO
POLVO	PIEDRAS

DESAPARECER LOS OBJETOS ARTISTICOS EN EL EDIFICIO
HACER APARECER LOS OBJETOS REALES EN EL MUSEO.

DOBLE CAMUFLAGE

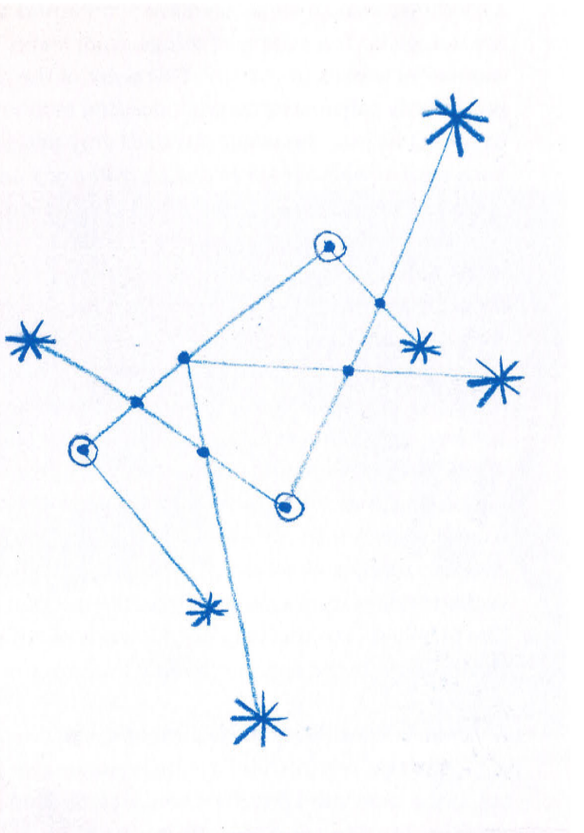
NO HAY PROBLEMA.

out what the artist is doing as he is doing it, or making sense to himself of things that he has done. The process can be surprisingly concrete or barely graspable. And what in retrospect have come to seem like pivotal points in his work are often accompanied by a sudden flurry of extensive and expansive working notes on a particular project.

At times these disturbances are particularly turbulent: in late 1992, for instance, in preparation for his exhibition in Kortrijk in Belgium, the proliferation of possibilities includes a page of drawings of irregular stones—graphite forms that resemble prehistoric flint arrows—alongside the term "resting sculptures."[7] Elsewhere, we find words like "by-product" or "waiting sculpture." Often they point not to active processes of making but to the way objects can *do nothing*, giving the sense of something that is lying in wait or dormant, temporarily out of circulation but far from quiescent. This is, incidentally, in striking contrast to the active doing of Richard Serra's famous *Verb List* (1967–68), where the handwritten descriptions of his activities—"to roll to crease to fold to store to bend" and so on—accumulate over the space of two pages. In Orozco's notebooks it is, of course, only retroactively that the full force of what has erupted onto the page becomes apparent, just as a language evolves amid any number of false starts and other words and phrases that seem, equally only in retrospect, to have since fallen by the wayside. Ideas come and go, but it is often that which seems to have drifted completely out of sight that returns with the greatest force, even many years later.

Words are as much visual elements on a page as anything else, just as drawings extend through a seemingly never-ending metonymic chain of associative connections and slippages. Words and images are carried over from one page to another, or one book to another. As ideas unfold, they leave a trail. Threads of thought interweave, just as texts and images are interleaved. In the second volume of Orozco's notebooks, for instance, the Spanish word "*polvo*," or dust, is written at the top of the right-hand margin of a page of notes on *Yielding Stone* (1992), and just below it is a tiny sketch of the Plasticine ball that would collect all kinds of dust and debris when rolled through the street. And then almost ten years later, in the twelfth notebook, from 2002, those dust particles have drifted again. At the time, Orozco was working on both *Polvo Impreso*, made from the fibrous residue from industrial drying machines, and *Cazuelas (Beginnings)*, the terracotta pots he has described as "starting pots." He calls this drift of thought the "perspective of dust/*la perspectiva del polvo*."[8] This is a way of describing (in two languages) a direction and a movement that are not only spatial but also temporal, revolving around beginnings and endings, where there is a precise correspondence between coming into being and being leftover. Seen from that point of view, the photograph of his handprint on the inside front cover of the notebook registers not only the primordial mark but also the fact that it is already a residual trace. In the end, being between languages is only one possible act of translation among many (this to that, now to then, and so on).

The notebooks not only bear witness to the process of making the work but are themselves a part of the work. Then gradually, over time, as well as being a part of the work, they seem to have become something more like *a* work, albeit a permanently incomplete one whose status is permanently unresolved. It is inconceivable to think this without Conceptualist precedents, such as Bochner's working drawings, and yet the notebooks operate entirely differently, as if the handmade and the artisanal form of the book could be the most risky way to reimagine what the work of art might be now. They are not strictly speaking "working books"—as opposed to simply workbooks—or at least Orozco does not call them by that name. But still there seems, at least in the operation they perform, a striking and profound link to his *Working Tables*. The first of these was made in 1996 at an exhibition in Zurich. There are Polaroids of it in the making in the notebook from March of that year, annotated with the words "*como basura tirada*/by-products/*modellon y maquetas*/*reciventes*."[9] All these terms have previously appeared in the notebooks at various intervals, and they gather again here. It is not just the fact that there are containers on the table, but that the table itself becomes



OPPOSITE:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 2 (1992–93), p. 137. Ballpoint pen and graphite on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

ABOVE:
Pablo Picasso. *Sketchbook No. 92*. 1926. Cardboard-covered notebook; p. 14, colored pencil on paper, 19 5/16 × 12 3/16" (49 × 32.5 cm)
Private collection

a container or receptacle. Books are containers too, of course, and inserted into the notebooks is a variety of things, from leaves to seedpods to a barcode to any number of leaflets or cutouts. This sense of the notebooks as containers is made particularly palpable by Orozco's decision to insert the pages of the first notebook in the series into the larger standard gray notebook that he subsequently used. Each page—whether stained with coffee or barely marked—was meticulously cut out of the original and slotted into the new book.

Although the book is perhaps the most conventional format in which Orozco works, he treats it the same way as any other: as a living thing. It is worth remembering that we talk about the pages of books as leaves, and about books having spines. A book has a symmetry that can be worked as much as it is worked in the artist's paintings, which also often rotate around a central spine. And although books are sequential, we know that narrative is not. When Orozco has, over the last few years, come to fill his notebooks with photographs of work already done, maybe the phenomenon is not so different from the way sketchbooks traditionally often served as inventories. He frequently arranges the images two on a page, so that each spread consists of four photographs, which, as he has remarked, creates a rotation. A spread of photographs demonstrates the circularity of time, as the rotation tracks, for example, the melting of ink-filled ice cubes that look like dirty gem stones lying on the window sill of his apartment.[10] This layout has its origin in the notebooks but has become one way to show his photographs as well.

There is something archaic about the notebooks. They are bound books in a computer age, reminiscent of a library or archive. It is easy to get lost in them, and yet at the same time they function as some kind of mnemonic tool or prosthetic memory. Increasingly, they have become a means to inventory the work through

ABOVE:
Pablo Picasso. *Sketchbook No. 92*. 1926. Cardboard-covered notebook; p. 17, leaf collage, 19 5/16 × 12 3/16" (49 × 32.5 cm)
Private collection

BELOW:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 13 (2002–03), p. 180. Ballpoint pen and photographs on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

CAJA TENIS CONVERS
ESCUPIDA EN TORTILLA
MASA QUE CRECE
LIMONES Y NARANJAS
NIDO INCOMPLETO - ROTO.
PUNTOS NEGROS EN TELA.

CEBOLLA CORONA
D.S.
TAZAS DE TÉ
SEMILLAS - HOJAS
TAPA REFRESCANTE
CUATRO CAJAS

LUNAR LANDER
DOS PIEDRAS
RECIPIENTE Y
NEGRO.

COMO BASURA TIRADA.
BY PRODUCTS.
MODELOS Y MAQUETAS
RECIENTES.

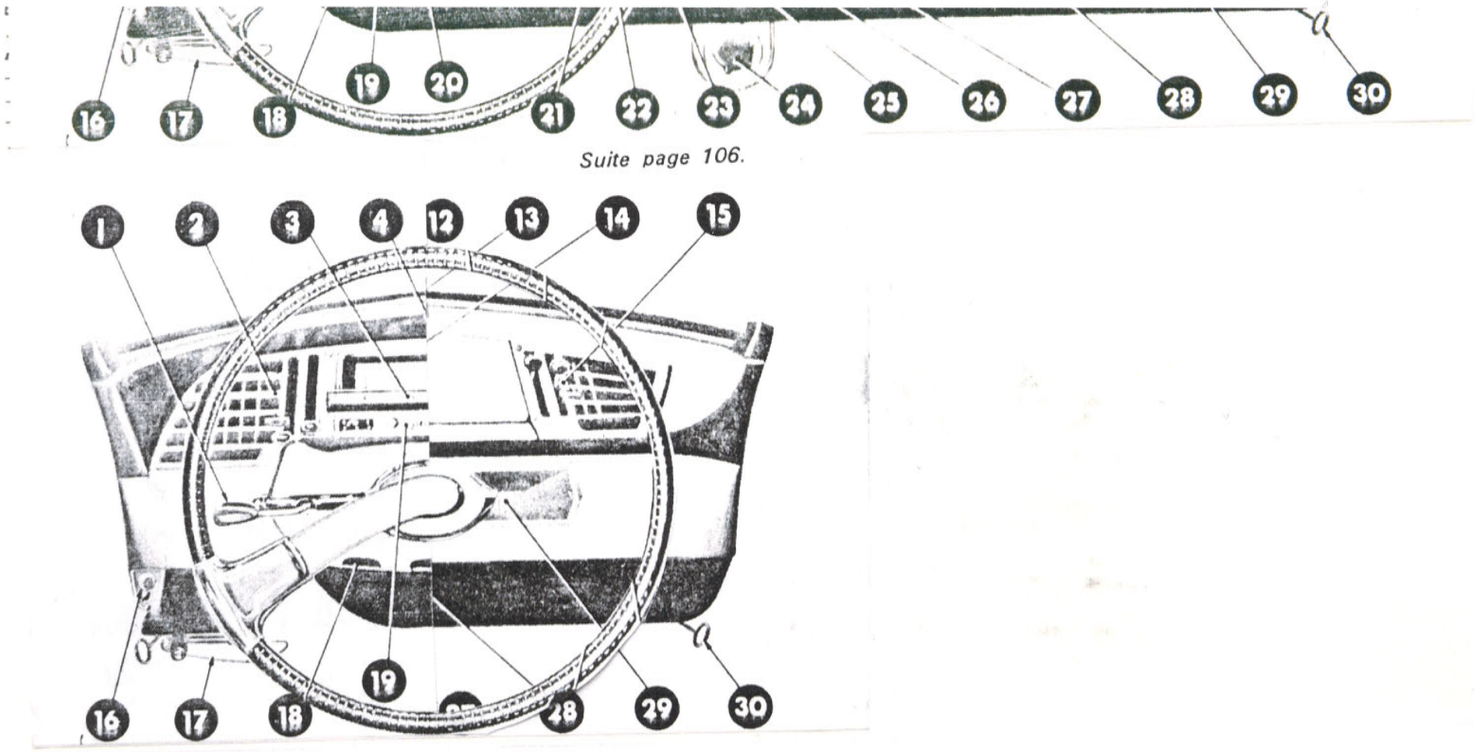
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 8 (1995–96), p. 51. Ballpoint pen and graphite on Polaroids on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

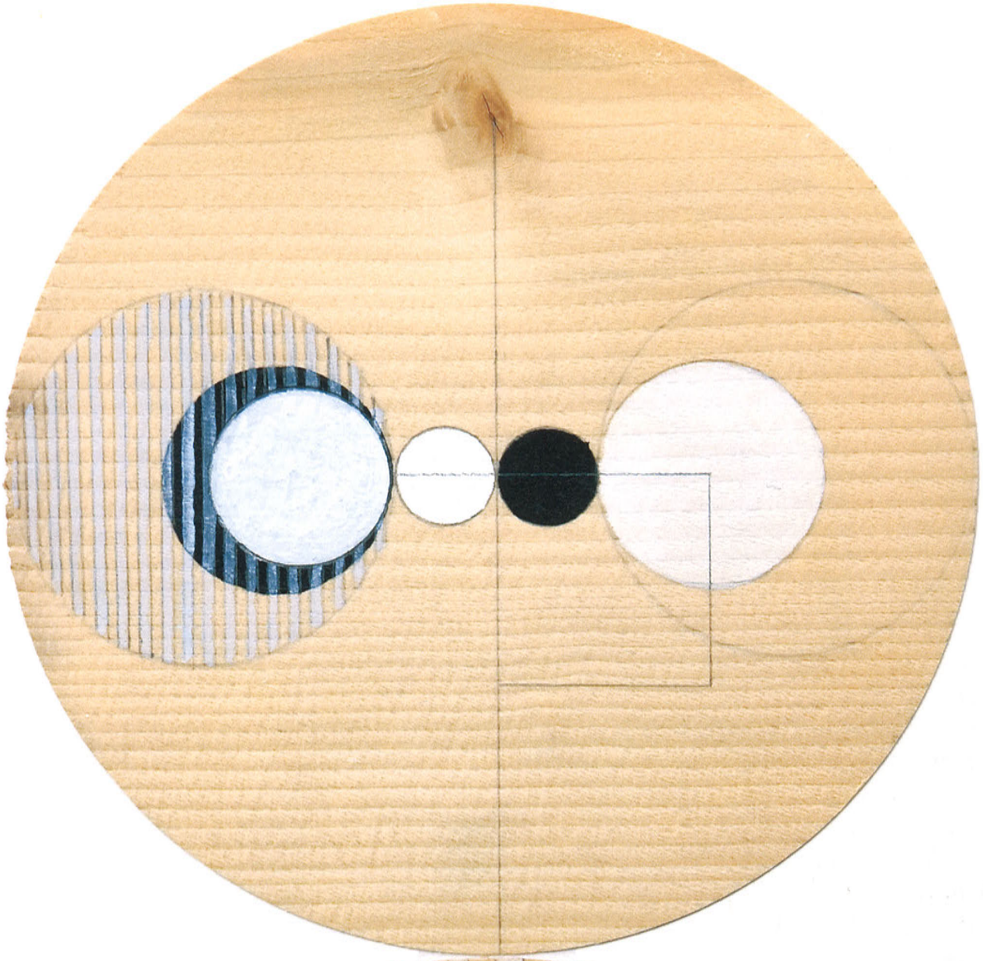
photographs. And yet Orozco's sense of realia as "real things, actual facts" transforms this demonstrational model into a radically different realm. I admit the notebook is an unlikely critical weapon. But precisely because it occupies such an unexpected and indeterminate place it becomes possible to think of a handmade notebook as a means to reflect on the conditions of art production now—and as a way of resisting the high-scale production values that have become dominant. After all, Orozco is an artist who uses computer programs to generate the variations within the geometric patterns of his paintings, and he has long made drawings out of paper printed with digital templates filled in with patterns by hand. But it was just when he found himself increasingly working with the computer that he decided to exhibit his notebooks, as he did in 2006. This bears on his own practice by making even more volatile the distinctions between the handmade and the machine-made, which so much of his work blurs.

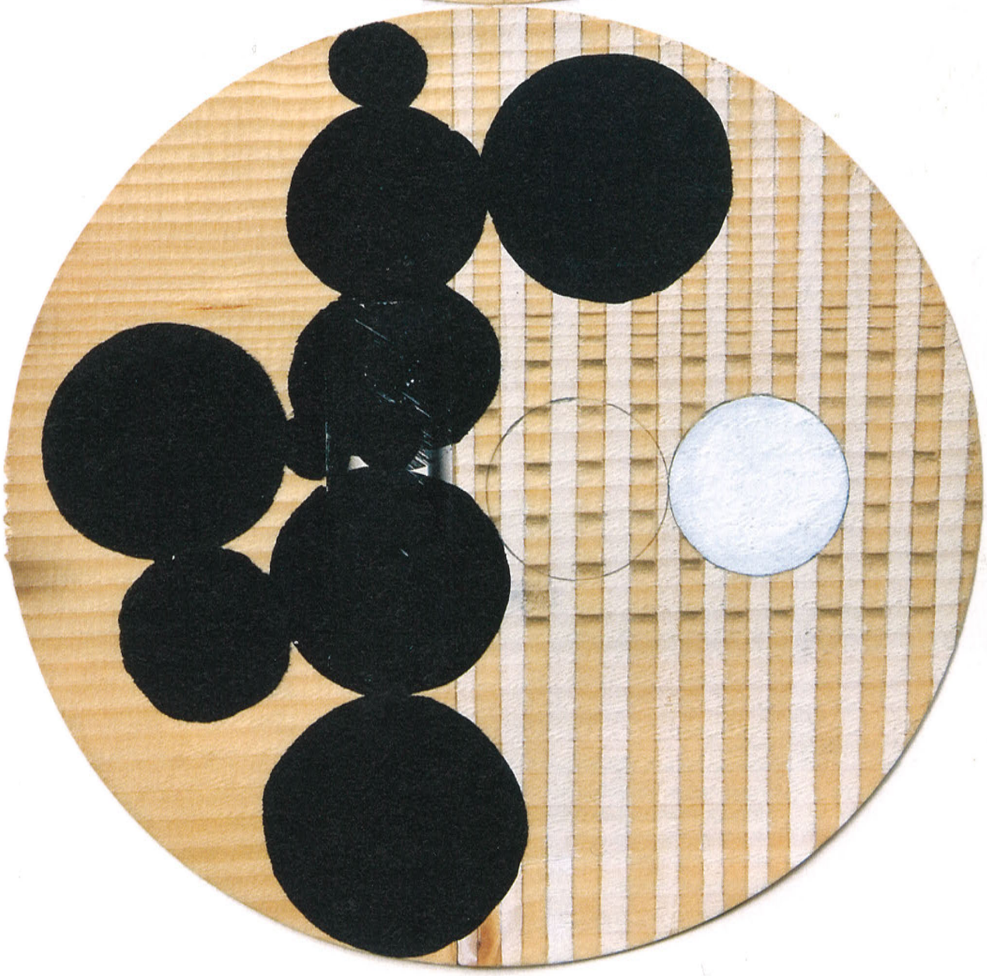
Orozco reflected on this in a note from 2005, saying, "If the artist does not make, it means there is no process (no research) there is just production. And the artist's brain dries out, because it is in the mistakes and accidents of the process that we get the ideas for the work to follow."[11] The act of making things by hand is not some nostalgic throwback to a more authentic form of creativity, but a strategic way of demonstrating the radical efficacy of the opacity of making art. The notebooks contain the work *in* the work: the thinking it, the writing it, the drawing it. Loose ends, even dead ends get you closer to what is at stake, not because they dramatize or inflate the creative process but because they ground it at a micro level. Plans for exhibitions and diagrams of installations plotting out an arrangement of interconnecting points are both works in progress and what is remaindered after the projects have been completed. Projects that work often get made out of others that are abandoned or long delayed. A case in point would be the circuitous route by which Orozco came to build his house, which he calls Observatory House, on the Pacific coast of Mexico in 2006—a winding path that

BELOW:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 4 (1993–94), p. 94. Ballpoint pen and electrostatic print on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

OPPOSITE:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 4 (1993–94), p. 95. Graphite, gouache, and wood veneer on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist







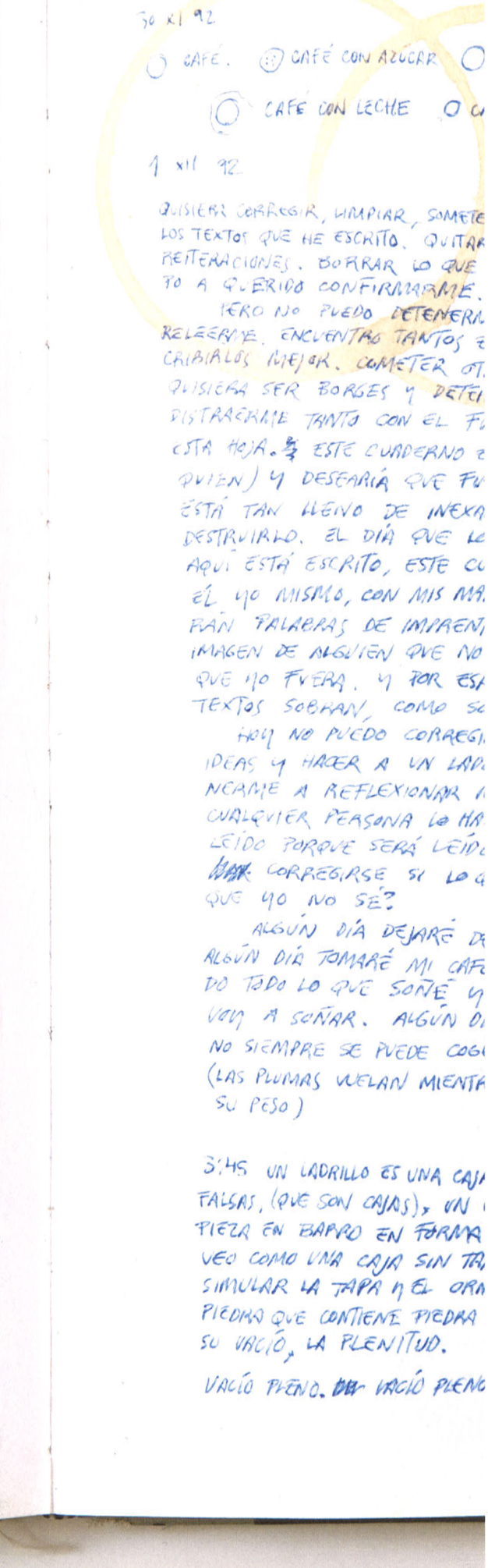
66 16 VIII 94

10 • 14 • 94

Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 6 (1994), p. 66. Ballpoint pen and photographs on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

OPPOSITE:
Gabriel Orozco. Notebook 2 (1992–93), p. 138. Ballpoint pen, graphite, and coffee stains on notebook page, 10 3/4 × 8 1/16" (27.3 × 20.5 cm)
Collection of the artist

OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT:
Stéphane Mallarmé. *Jamais un coup de dés n'abolira le hasard: poème.* Paris: A. Vollard, 1897. Proofs with corrections and annotations by the author, pp. 6–7
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris


30 XI 92

CAFÉ. CAFÉ CON AZÚCAR

CAFÉ CON LECHE

1 XII 92

QUISIERA CORREGIR, LIMPIAR, SOMETE
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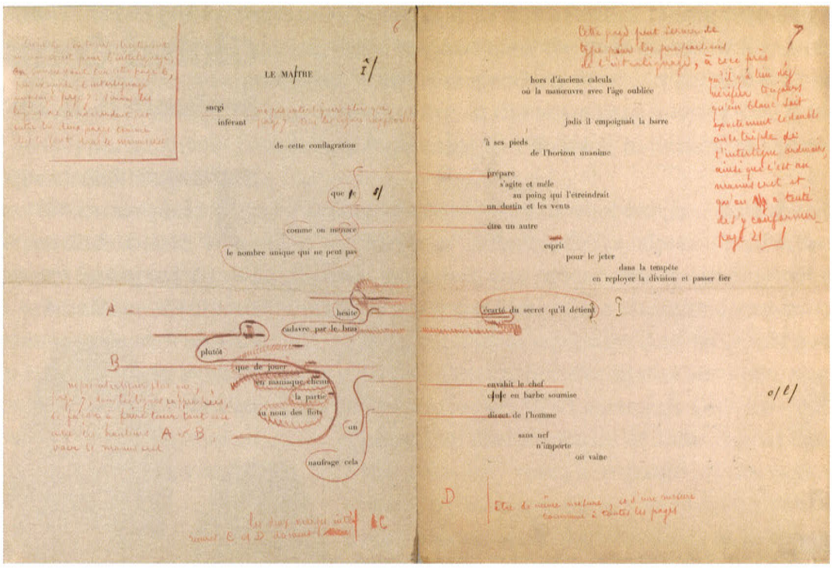
REITERACIONES. BORRAR LO QUE
YO A QUERIDO CONFIRMARME.
PERO NO PUEDO DETENERA
RELEERME. ENCUENTRO TANTOS
CRIBIRLOS MEJOR. COMETER OT
QUISIERA SER BORGES Y DETE
DISTRAERME TANTO CON EL F
ESTA HOJA. ESTE CUADERNO
QUIEN) Y DESEARÍA QUE FU
ESTÁ TAN LLENO DE INEXA
DESTRUIRLO. EL DÍA QUE LE
AQUÍ ESTÁ ESCRITO, ESTE CU
ÉL YO MISMO, CON MIS MA
FÁN PALABRAS DE IMPRENT
IMAGEN DE ALGUIEN QUE NO
QUE YO FUERA. Y POR ESA
TEXTOS SOBRAN, COMO SO
HOY NO PUEDO CORREGI
IDEAS Y HACER A UN LAD
NERME A REFLEXIONAR
CUALQUIER PERSONA LO HA
LEÍDO PORQUE SERÁ LEÍD
CORREGIRSE SI LO
QUE YO NO SÉ?
ALGÚN DÍA DEJARÉ D
ALGÚN DÍA TOMARÉ MI CAF
DO TODO LO QUE SONÉ Y
VOY A SOÑAR. ALGÚN D
NO SIEMPRE SE PUEDE COG
(LAS PLUMAS VUELAN MIENTR
SU PESO)

3:45 UN LADRILLO ES UNA CAJ
FALSAS, (QUE SON CAJAS), UN
PIEZA EN BARRO EN FORMA
VEO COMO UNA CAJA SIN TA
SIMULAR LA TAPA Y EL ORA
PIEDRA QUE CONTIENE PIEDRA
SU VACÍO, LA PLENITUD.

VACÍO PLENO. VACÍO PLENO



takes us from his first visit to India and his earliest notebook entry, in early 1996, recording the great Jantar Mantar observatory in New Delhi, on which the house is based, through to a quick sketch on a paper napkin stuck into the fourteenth book, in December 2003. It is entirely characteristic that a giant instrument created to measure the movement of the stars should lead to a throwaway doodle on a napkin.

It may have been because I had been looking at the notebooks for too long and for days on end: with several of them open and placed at random on the desk before me, the end of one spine almost touching another, the notebooks came to look as if they were themselves splayed open like vertebrae. And in the end I don't think it is too implausible to see them as working parts within the body of Orozco's work as a whole. The notebooks might be inanimate objects, but they also continue to grow as if they are living things. They may not take up much shelf space, but they open onto the astronomical capabilities of the imagination. The layouts for installations show how the work is brought together, but also how the work disperses on the page—gathering in only temporary constellations, not so different from the way exhibitions collect works for just a short time. When Paul Valéry was confronted with the proofs of poet Stéphane Mallarmé's great word experiment "Jamais un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard," he commented, "[Mallarmé] has undertaken . . . finally to raise the printed page to the power of the midnight sky."[12] In the poem a little galaxy of words like "*C'ÉTAIT/ issu stellaire*" (IT WAS/born of the stars) are suspended at the top of a page full of blanks. The constellation *is* the page. The empty spaces between the words are full of frenetic activity, just as they are for Orozco in the intervals between his works. His notebooks only serve to highlight this impulse to constellate and reconstellate that is the overwhelming direction of the work. It is not an infinite vastness, let alone the cosmos, that is at stake here. Rather, it is the sense of the notebooks as an impossible object, which in turn reflects upon our own impossible position as subjects in relation to them.

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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