Gabriel Orozco

MoMA

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The Museum of Modern Art
New York

2007: Imprints

After having spent more than two years primarily in Mexico, Orozco and his family went to Bonn, Germany, where they would stay for approximately five months. His wife, Maria Gutierrez, who completed her PhD in anthropology, was working at the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat, whose offices are located in the former West German capital. Orozco interrupted this stay only with occasional visits to Paris and one to Ecuador.

That April David de Rothschild, a friend of Orozco's, invited the artist to join him on an expedition to explore the Ecuadorian rainforests ravaged by the oil industry. Along with Orozco, Rothschild invited photographers Oliver Chanarin and Adam Broomberg, filmmaker Dustin Lynn, and ethnobotanist Maria Fadiman "as a test of what artists could accomplish when brought face to face with ecological disaster."[1] After traveling throughout the Amazon, the group ended up in an Achuar Nation settlement in the village of Sharamentsa. There Orozco created a series of drawings that eventually became an installation reminiscent of the *Working Tables*. Borrowing a small notebook from Rothschild and using dried twigs as brushes, Orozco stained the paper with an ink that the people of Sharamentsa traditionally used as body paint. A group of children watched him work. He asked the children to grab handy pieces of clay to hold the paper in place while the ink dried. They brought him the broken bits of pottery and placed one piece per paper. As Orozco has recalled, "The moment I put the paper on the table, they tried to be the fastest to put the piece of pottery on top of it. Probably they liked that I was doing my own thing and they could check me out, instead of me looking at how they work the land or how they do their own things."[2] Admiring the pieces of red-stained paper weighed down by red pottery shards, Orozco decided

ABOVE:
Home. 2007. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

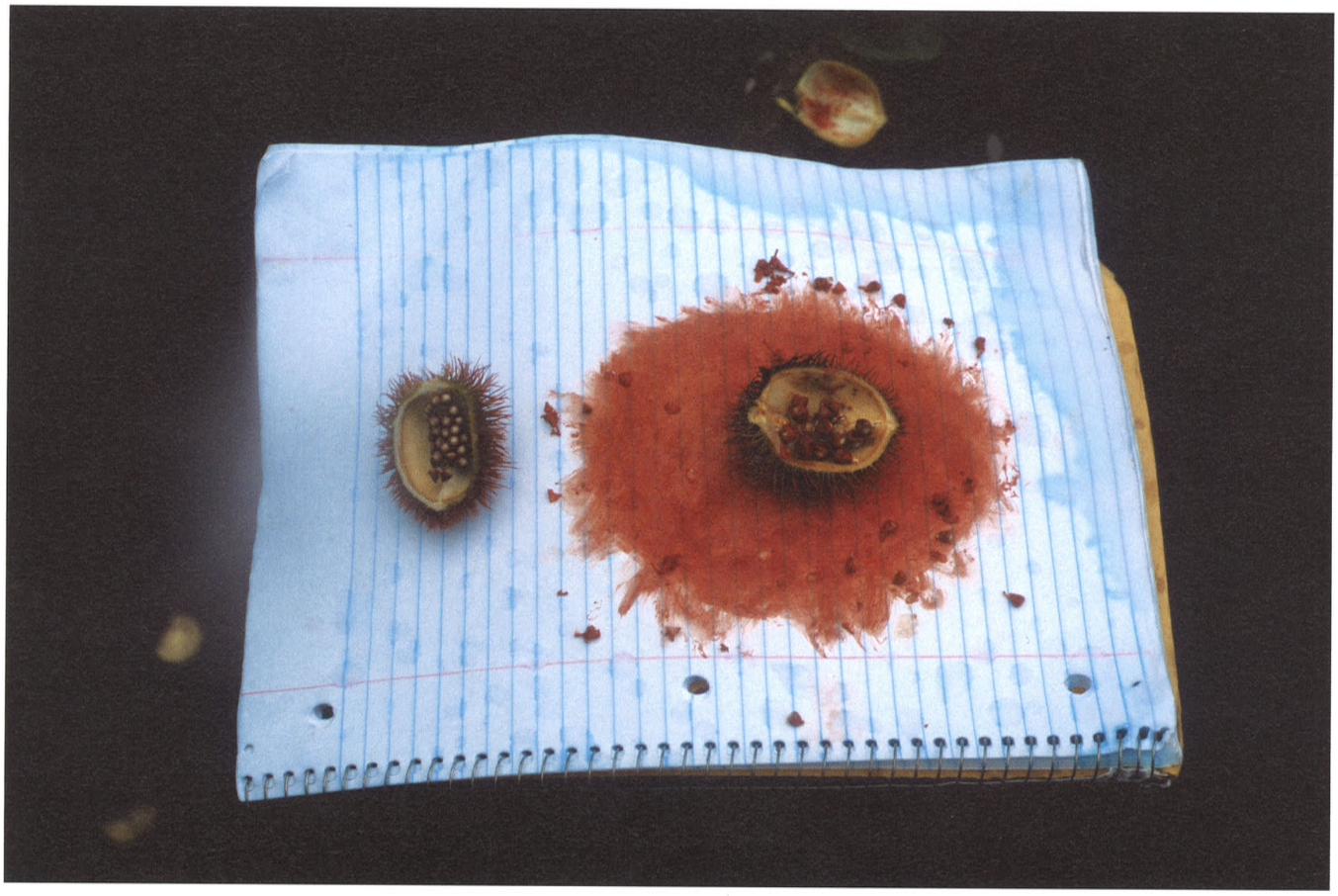
OPPOSITE:
Untitled. 2007. Ink on paper with pottery shards, sixty sheets, each 5 1/2 × 3 3/8" (14 × 8.6 cm)

P. 224:
Drawing. 2007. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

Oil Beetle. 2007. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

P. 225:
Bus Stop. 2007. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

Inner Tire Garden. 2007. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5



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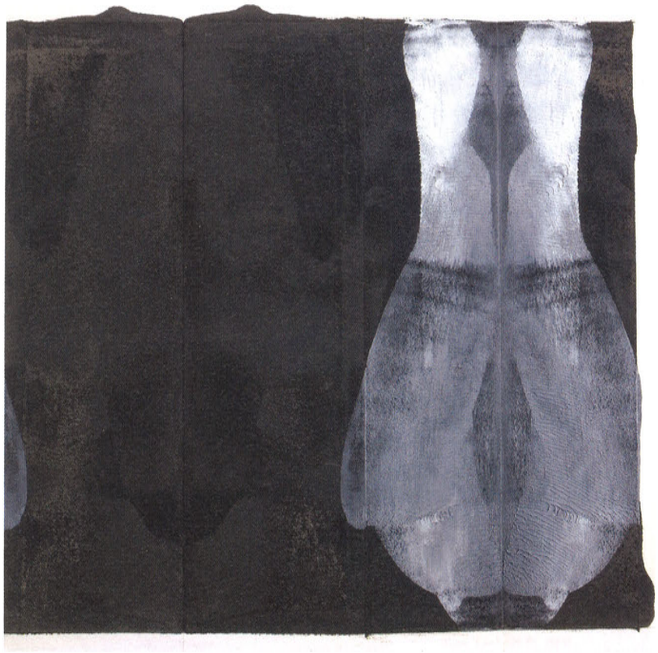
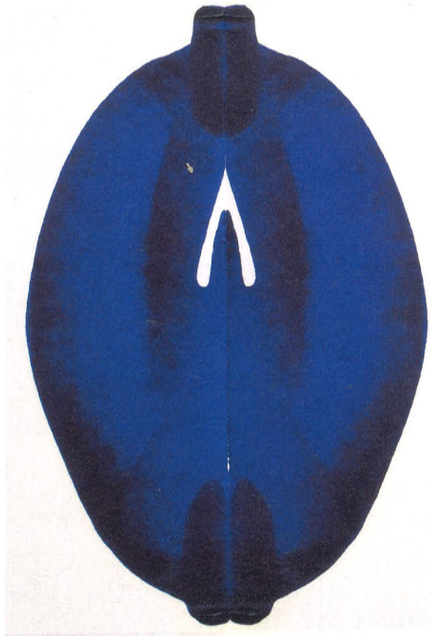




"Orozco's technique makes one think of Rorschach blots, and the abstract figures do invite contemplative and perhaps revealing free associations. If we take the test, the standard Freudian response is not long in coming. Sex is everywhere. From the bow of the legs to the curve of the hips, from the folds of the female sex to languid penises, the shapes of 'Dépliages' cannot help but appear as abstract and highly stylized bodily portraiture."

Aaron Schuster, "Gabriel Orozco," *Frieze* (2008), p. 195

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

BONN180820072110. 2007.
Oil on folded and unfolded paper, 9 3/4 × 9 11/16" (24.7 × 24.6 cm)

PARIS010820071600. 2007.
Oil on folded and unfolded paper, 9 13/16 × 9 13/16" (25 × 25 cm)

BONN160820071630. 2007.
Oil on folded and unfolded paper, 9 13/16 × 9 13/16" (25 × 25 cm)

PARIS050820071800. 2007.
Oil on folded and unfolded paper, 9 13/16 × 9 13/16" (25 × 25 cm)

Dépliage, White 4. 2007.
Oil on canvas, 26 × 26"
(66 × 66 cm)

that the drawings should remain in this configuration. The tabletop installation was exhibited at Marian Goodman Gallery the following year.

Orozco also returned from Ecuador with several new photographs. As usual his goals were not journalistic. In works such as *Oil Beetle* and *Inner Tire Garden*, the viewpoint is close and the spirit is intimate.

Back in Bonn, Orozco continued a series of works on paper that he had begun during short trips to Paris earlier in the year. The *Dépliages*, as they are titled, exist somewhere on the continuum between drawing, painting, and sculpture. Orozco would begin with a piece of white paper onto which he would drop a bit of oil paint straight from the tube. Next he would fold the paper, sometimes once but often several times, and, using his hands or a spatula, smooth out the paint, now trapped within the folds of the paper. He would then unfold the paper to reveal the image. The process of folding is inherently sculptural: the flat sheet of paper becomes three-dimensional. As Orozco has said, "The moment you fold the paper

ABOVE:
Views of *Head*. 2007. Bronze, 7×9×7" (17.8×22.9×17.8 cm). Edition of 7

RIGHT:
Face Imprint. 2007. Black makeup, 7 11/16×5 13/16" (19.6×14.7 cm). Edition of 3

to become an envelope, it is an object, but then when you unfold it, it becomes an image, hidden in the envelope. There is a circular movement between an object and a picture, folded and unfolded."[3] While the resulting images might evoke Rorschach tests, the imagery is not revelatory, nor is it meant to be. Rather it is a remnant or trace of an encounter between body (Orozco's) and material. The paint registers the pressure the artist has applied, abstractly mapping the movements that generate the stains. In this way the work harkens back not only to his red terracotta sculptures of 2002, which were inspired by a trip to Mali, but even further to early works such as *My Hands Are My Heart* (1991) and *Yielding Stone* (1992). With the *Dépliages*, there is also an important temporal component. Because Orozco used oil paint the image continues to change long after it has been completed, as the oil soaks further toward the edges of the paper, creating a ghostly aura around the central image. The temporal component is also explicit in the title of each work, which generally records the place where it was made followed by the date and the time, as in *BONN160820071630* or *PARIS010820071600*. The *Dépliages* thus function as a type of diary marking Orozco's movements over time and through different cities.

Orozco first showed the *Dépliages* in an exhibition at Galerie Chantal Crousel that opened in September. Also on view was a new group of black terracotta sculptures—a series he had begun three years prior and had been working on intermittently at the ceramic workshop in Burgundy, where he first had worked in 2002. Like the *Dépliages* on view, these new sculptures concern themselves with the play between Orozco's body and the mass of clay. To create the forms, Orozco pressed his palms and fingers, or sometimes his elbows and knees, against the clay, rolling and unrolling it, occasionally aided by an old wooden ball. During the

"It's not the diversity of genres he has explored over time that surprises me as much as the variety of directions he takes, occasionally leaving behind some enigma that happily forces us to delve back into his earlier work when some new piece sheds light on his initial agenda."

Christine Macel, "Gabriel Orozco: Space-Time-Matter, from One Instant to the Next," in *Time Taken: Time at Work in the Work of Art* (2008), pp. 108–09

Pelvis. 2007. Bronze, 9 3/4 × 12 1/4 × 6 1/2" (24.8 × 31.1 × 16.5 cm). Edition of 7

firing process, ashes were thrown on the sculptures, producing a deep black surface. As much as these works record the processes of their making, they are also formally evocative of body parts. Acknowledging this, Orozco titles them accordingly: *Torso*, *Pelvis*, or *Head*, for instance. (He later cast *Pelvis* and *Head* in bronze.)

The show also included four new *Samurai Tree* paintings as well as a new video, *Samurai Tree Animation*, which again showed all six hundred seventy-two possible *Samurai Tree* permutations, but this time with three-dimensional graphics. It is as though the video served as a reminder not only to the gallery's visitors but also to Orozco of the vastness of the enterprise.

Continuing with what could be considered the exhibition's meditation on time, Orozco decided to remake an ephemeral work from 1993, conceived and executed in the weeks leading up to his first exhibition at the gallery. The work, alternatively titled *Face Imprint* or *Corner Face*, was originally realized in Chantal Crousel's home, where Orozco stayed while constructing *La DS* (1993). For the 1993 version, Orozco had applied black acrylic paint to his face and then pressed his face against a corner of the room. In 2007, he recreated the work in the gallery, this time using a greasy face paint. As Orozco has pointed out, *Face Imprint* can be related to *La DS*. Despite their material differences, both works are, among other things, explorations of symmetry. Taken together, a parallel is drawn between the body and the machine. But, in the context of the current exhibition, the work also signaled the consistency of Orozco's enterprise; both formally and conceptually, *Face Imprint* was congruent with the recently made works on view.

Around this time, Orozco and his family returned to New York. The Museum of Modern Art had proposed a twenty-year retrospective exhibition of his work and he was eager to begin the planning for it.

2008: The Obituary Collector

IN NEW YORK OROZCO BEGAN TO PREPARE a new series of works for his forthcoming exhibition at Marian Goodman Gallery, which would open in May. Orozco had long been fascinated by obituary headlines and had begun to casually collect them in the early 1990s. To Orozco, it seemed quite astonishing that a person's life can be summed up with these pithy phrases, his or her life's achievements distilled to a few words. He decided that these headlines would be the subject of his next project, and began to expand his archive of them. With assistance and over the course of several months he scoured current and past issues of the *Times*, collecting any headline that seemed particularly intriguing.

Most *New York Times* obituary headlines follow a standard format, which begins with a person's name, followed by his or her age at death and the summary phrase. For example, a headline could read: "John Doe, 82, Unknown Man of Unknown Origins." Orozco decided to reproduce a collection of select obituary headlines on large sheets of Japanese paper, but rather than reprint the entire headline he excised only the qualifying phrase. Each sheet contained exactly twenty-seven such phrases printed on an off-white ground so that each one's size proportionally reflects the size of the headline as it originally appeared in the paper, as if to suggest that certain lives were more significant than others. At first glance, the texts appear remarkably familiar although their source is not at

Installation view of *Obits* at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, 2008

INSET:
Obit: 'Bleak, Explosive Playwright'. 2008. Ink-jet print on Japanese paper, 6' 11" × 43 3/4" (210.8 × 111.1 cm). Edition of 3

Bleak, Explosive Playwright

Executive Who Oversaw Apache Copters

Ex-Chief of Soap Maker

Much More Than Just a Hall of Famer

Statistics Authority

Impersonator of Screen Divas

Had Style in and Out of the Ring

a Voice of Cheer and Cheese

Wrote Patriotic Chinese Music

Irish Actor With Powerful Style

a Comedian Known for Unorthodox Skits

Trumpeter and Symbol of New Orleans

One of Highest-Paid Portraitists

Expert On Psychology of Prostitutes

Deviser of Two-Way Radios

Legal Giant in a City of Lawyers

World Authority on Art of Tibet

Author of Many Suspense Novels

Philosopher, Author and Friend of Popes

Expert on Sun's Ingredients

the Maker Of Corgi Toy Cars

Dumbo's Creator

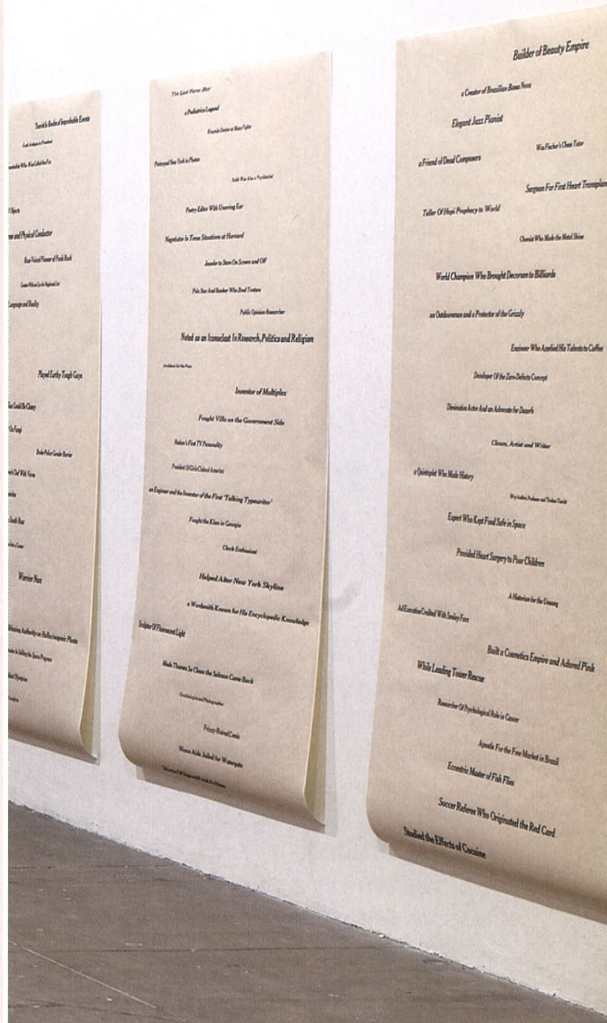
Defied Army and Kept His Land

Famed Rainmaker in Drought

Art Dealer In Big Pollock Sale

Microbiologist and Expert on African Swine Fever

Champion Archer Who Shot for Errol Flynn



Tuttifruti. 2008.
Tempera and gold leaf on canvas, 6' 6 3/4" × 6' 6 3/4" (200 × 200 cm)

"There is an obvious telescoping of time in that counterintuitive graft of a Quattrocento practice onto that of a Mondrian, but this telescoping, in itself, signals that it is from the point of view of a stranger that Orozco looks at the whole development of Western painting, and that this exogenous, oblique point of view is perhaps the only one able to rekindle its flame."

Yve-Alain Bois, "The Tree and the Knight," in *Gabriel Orozco* (2006), p. 256

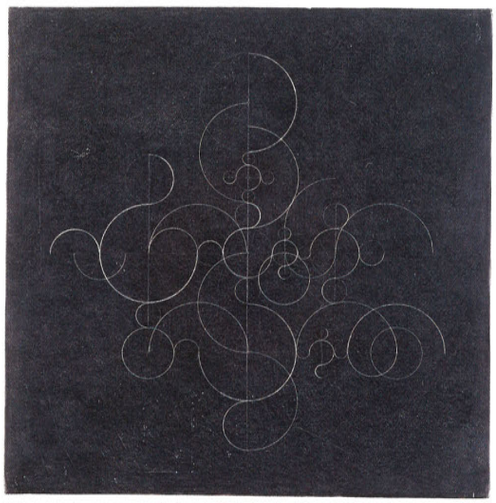
ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Tronco 3. 2008. Tempera and gold leaf on wood, 35 7/8 × 11 5/8 × 5 7/8" (90 × 29.5 × 15 cm)

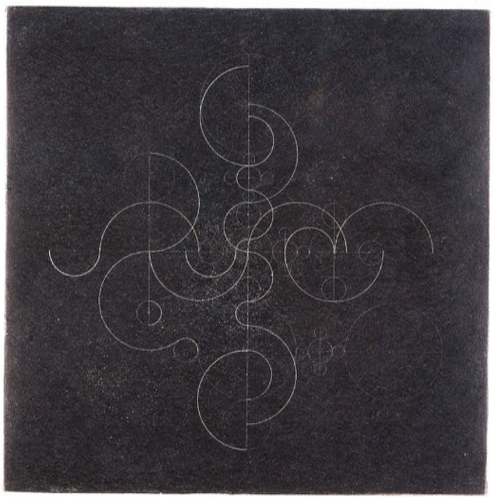
Tronco Verde. 2008. Tempera and gold leaf on wood, 35 7/8 × 8 1/4 × 5 1/2" (91.1 × 21 × 14 cm)

Tronco 2. 2008. Tempera and gold leaf on wood, 35 × 11 × 5 7/8" (88.9 × 27.9 × 14.9 cm)

all obvious. The viewer then reads a long succession of phrases—"Who Wrote of Trips At Sea/Battled to Improve Varied Laws/Devised a Convention Used in Bridge Games/Pastor Who Pressed for Social Harmony/Expert on Young/Princess Founded Convent in U.S," and so on, and eventually recognizes them as obituaries, reproduced in the newspaper's characteristic fonts. Sixteen sheets covered all four walls of the north gallery. Orozco titled each work in the series *Obit*. On the one hand, the title is entirely self-evident but, also a mere consonant away from the word "orbit". Considering Orozco's fascination with astronomy and his penchant for word play, this slippage was not accidental. By indirectly evoking orbits—with their allusions to both the solar system and the life cycle—alongside the earthly obituaries, Orozco softens the line between the cosmic and the everyday, where nothing more than a gathering of newspaper clippings evolves into a meditation on life.

The south gallery of Marian Goodman featured a new selection of paintings. With their profusion of spiraling circles they depicted another kind of orbit. One work in particular broke with expectations. The painting *Tuttifruti* diverged from Orozco's until now standard palette, and featured green, orange, and black alongside the requisite red, blue, gold and white. Perhaps the biggest surprises were the *Troncos*. Positioned on a large tablelike platform in the center of the gallery, these objects were a hybrid between painting and sculpture. Like the vast majority of the *Samurai Tree Invariants*, the *Troncos* have wooden supports. Unlike the paintings, the wood used for each *Tronco* is a stout block, one side of which is covered in gold leaf and painted, and the remaining sides of which are raw wood.





ABOVE:
Graphite Sequence. 2008. Graphite and plaster on three canvases, each 15¾ × 15¾" (40 × 40 cm)

OPPOSITE:
Shower Head. 2008. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

Bubble on Stone. 2008. Chromogenic color print, 16 × 20" (40.6 × 50.8 cm). Edition of 5

Early in the year and concurrent to his preparation for the exhibition at Marian Goodman, Orozco began meeting regularly with curator Ann Temkin, to discuss the forthcoming exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art. The show was scheduled to open in New York in December 2009, after which it would travel to the Kunstmuseum in Basel, Switzerland; the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, in Paris; and Tate Modern in London. From the beginning, Orozco and Temkin, in conversation with Bernhard Bürgi in Basel, Christine Macel in Paris, and Jessica Morgan in London, knew they wanted to present the artist's career in an unconventional way. With a nod to Orozco's constant travels and to the heterogeneity of his oeuvre, they decided that the exhibition should vary at each venue. While there would be a core group of works installed in every city, if a museumgoer visited all four sites the effect would be akin to seeing four different exhibitions. This strategy also reflects Orozco's interest in site-specificity and its effect on his work. As he has said, the character of a city has a tremendous impact on the tone of the work he produces. Thus, the selection of objects and the installation at each of the four venues would respond to the particularities of each setting.

Although planning the exhibition took a great deal of Orozco's attention, he also produced a new series of works at the studio in Mexico City, directed by Christian Macia, who had first worked together with Orozco on *Mobile Matrix* (2006). Titled *Grafitos*, these merge painting and drawing while also alluding to sculpture. Each begins with a canvas or wood panel primed with plaster. Its surface is then covered with a thick layer of graphite. Using a metal-tipped compass, with one point positioned in the exact center of the board, the artist creates circles, half-circles, and arcs by scratching away at the layers of graphite to reveal the white plaster beneath. Moving outward from the central point, the process is repeated until the composition is complete. As Orozco has pointed out, the experience as well as the result is not unlike drawing on bone—a process he engaged in the creation of *Black Kites* (1997) and, later, *Mobile Matrix*. Due to the shiny metallic finish and the thick supports, the finished *Grafitos* become resolutely object-like.

The year began in New York but ended in Mexico City, where kurimanzutto inaugurated its new, permanent exhibition space. From the time of its founding in 1999, the gallery had lacked a fixed location. In the nine years since the opening of the exhibition *Market Economics* at the Mercado de Medellín, Mónica Manzutto and José Kuri had organized exhibitions in places as unlikely as Mexico City's airport, a carpet store, a subterranean parking lot, and a movie theater. Any location fell within the realm of possibility as long as it suited the work on view. For years the gallery had been described as "nomadic," and its sensibilities echoed those of the artists it represented, including Damián Ortega, Daniel Guzmán, Gabriel Kuri, Dr. Lakra (Jerónimo López Ramírez), Rirkrit Tiravanija, Monika Sosnowska, Minerva Cuevas, and Jimmie Durham. After years of operating from a small office in the same complex where Manzutto and Kuri had an apartment, they decided that it was time to concentrate the gallery's activities in one building. After the months of renovation necessary to transform a 1949 timber yard into a gallery, the space opened in late November with a group exhibition featuring twenty-two artists. Works by gallery artists commingled with those of invited guests like Pawel Althamer, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Wilhelm Sasnal, among others. The installation paid tribute to the gallery's history and particularly to the show at the Mercado de Medellín. In that first exhibition, artworks were sold from a stall in the market. At the new gallery, the art was placed on industrial shelving units, approximately thirty in all. Even in the airy architecture of the newly opened gallery, the overall effect of the installation brought to mind the interior of a storage facility or a mysterious archive that held such oddities as cases of eggs (Tiravanija), old and dusty photographs (Dr. Lakra), and empty ink containers (Orozco).

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

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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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