

Galerie Francesca Pia

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El Tercer Convoy – The Third Convoy

Juan José Gurrola and James Metcalf, Ana Pellicer, Bill Copley

Galerie Francesca Pia, Zurich
23 January – 8 March, 2014
Opening reception: Wednesday, 22 January, 6pm – 8pm

The Third Convoy is the second delivery of a project that began in 2013 with the exhibition *building the sukka* in Gaga, Mexico City. This installment continues the research of a cultural constellation that takes as its departure point four agents who have been active since the second half of the last century up until today, who shared notions of artistic and interdisciplinary practices and physical spaces of collaboration. This exhibition is neither a historical essay nor can it be understood as academic research, but rather as an attempt at drafting a complex system of energies, influences and relationships between a series of artists who played many roles, inhabited different characters and whose histories were often intertwined.

Responding to an invitation by Francesca Pia to have an exhibition with works by Juan José Gurrola, we decided that it would be best to first introduce the vast and complex collaborative and referential system of the artist, both locally and internationally, in order to facilitate the understanding of a period in Mexico's art history that was hardly known, studied or represented.

The Third Convoy operates according to an infra-realist principle: it backtracks without knowing where it is heading, whilst knowing what it is distancing itself from. The exhibition postulates a separation from power as a strategy of resistance and proposes imagination as an opposite force to the logic of reason and economics. It mocks reality and its possibilities and uses a sense of humour to celebrate life itself. In 1990 Juan Jose Gurrola walked around Piccadilly Street and bumped into the British poet William Blake (deceased more than a century ago). Blake told Gurrola: You are doing just fine.

Gurrola used to say that Duchamp was his mother and Picabia his father; both preceded him together with other Surrealists and Dadaists who departed towards the pantheon in the Second Convoy; the First Convoy was of course lead by Alfred Jarry, King Ubu and Doctor Faustroll. They are all having a big laugh while staining the tables with a tincture of the cheapest wine.

Fernando Mesta, Mauricio Marcìn

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Juan José Gurrola (*Mexico City, 1935 - 2007) was mainly known as a theatre director, playwright, translator and *metteur en scene*. He started his career in experimental theatre in 1957 and directed and designed sets for more than 200 plays and operas from such diverse luminaries as John Ford, Ionesco, Picasso, Klossowski, E.E. Cummings and Nino Rota amongst others. Gurrola also developed a very prolific career as an artist, mainly as a painter, performer and in *non-objectual art* (a term used in Mexico in the 60s to describe alternative practices). He collaborated with figures such as James Metcalf, Victor Fosado and David Hockney. He was a lecturer on various subjects, wrote articles and essays, and acted in different films and plays.

Bill Copley (*New York City, 1919 - 1996) was an artist, art dealer, collector, painter and editor. Throughout his life he was related to and involved in many ways with Surrealist and Dadaist groups, the pop movement and several conceptual artists both in Europe and in the US. He held long and close friendships with characters such as Man Ray, Magritte, Marcel Duchamp and it was his foundation who donated *Étant Donnés* to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. His close friendship with James Metcalf lead Copley to visit Mexico on several occasions in the 60s until his death. During that period he produced the works that are currently exhibited in Francesca Pia's gallery, they form part of the Pellicer Metcalf Collection. Until the end of his life he exhibited his unique paintings with their poignant sense of humour and recognizable style and took part in several exhibitions with Alexander Iolas, Michael Werner and Paul Kasmin. Selected group exhibitions include Documenta V and VII.

James Metcalf (*New York City, 1925 - 2012) Both his parents were stained-glass artists. After enlisting in the army during WWII, Metcalf studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and then at the William Morris Central School of Arts and Crafts in London. Later he moved to Majorca where he befriended the poet Robert Graves for whom he made wood engravings and illustrated his books *Adam's Rib* and *Homer's Daughter*. At a later stage in Barcelona, he met Copley and invited him to participate in what would be his first exhibition. He then moved to Paris where he settled in Copley's old studio which was formerly Max Ernst's, located in the Impasse Ronsin area, with neighbouring studios of Brancusi, Niki de Saint Phalle, Tinguely and les Lalanne. In Paris he also established a close friendship with a group of Mexican and Latin American intellectuals who lived in the French capital during that time. It was Metcalf who introduced Duchamp to Octavio Paz. In the 60s he permanently moved to Santa Clara del Cobre in Mexico upon the recommendation of Victor Fosado. Once in Santa Clara and together with Ana Pellicer, he became engaged in creating a school that in many ways permanently changed the way coppersmiths were taught, aiming at erasing the division between artists and artisans, fine and popular arts and so on. He exhibited his work at Alexander Iolas, Galerie du Dragon, Documenta II and Galerie J owned by Janine de Goldschmidt Restany.

Ana Pellicer (*Mexico City, 1946) Studied art at the Arts Students League and the New School for Social Research in New York and currently lives and works in Santa Clara del Cobre, Michoacán. Based on the writings of Adolfo Best Maugard, William Morris and their experience as contemporary artists, Pellicer and Metcalf founded the Adolfo Best Maugard School of Arts and Crafts. Thereafter she developed a complex practice as a sculptor, goldsmith and teacher. In 1986 Pellicer started the project that featured jewels for the Statue of Liberty, the earring is part of this exhibition. Ana has published books on actress Pina Pellicer and together with Roy Skodnick she is currently preparing the first monograph on James Metcalf. She is now engaged in reforestation, ecology and art projects and her work is featured in the sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City.