

Yoshua Okón

Born in Mexico City in 1970 where he currently lives.

Education

2000-2002 MFA, UCLA, Los Angeles, USA.

1990-1994 BFA, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2010 Yoshua Okón: 2007-2010, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, USA.

2009 Chile, Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago, Chile.

Ventanilla Única, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico.

Hipnostasis, in collaboration with Raymond Pettibon. Armory Center for the Arts, Los Angeles, USA.

Canned Laughter, Viafarini DOCVA, Fabbrica del Vapore, Milan, Italy.

2008 SUBTITLE, Lothringer 13 - Städtische Kunsthalle München, Munich, Germany.

MAVI, Galería Revolver, Lima, Peru.

2007 Bocanegra, The Project, New York, USA.

2006 Saldo a Favor, Galería Espacio Mínimo, Madrid, Spain.

Gaza Stripper, Herzeliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Herzeliya, Israel.

2005 Bocanegra. Galleria Francesca Kaufmann, Milan, Italy.

Lago Bolsena, The Project, New York, USA

2004 Yoshua Okon, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico City, Mexico.

HCI, Galería Enrique Guerrero, Mexico City, Mexico.

Shoot, The Project, Los Angeles, USA.

2003 Art Statements, Art Basel Miami, Galleria Francesca Kaufmann, Miami, USA.

Cockfight, Galleria Francesca Kaufmann, Milan, Italy.

2002 Oríllese a la Orilla, Art & Public, Geneva, Switzerland.

Yoshua Okon, Galería Enrique Guerrero, Mexico City, Mexico.

New Decor, Black Dragon Society, Los Angeles, USA.

2000 Cockfight, Modern Culture, New York, USA.

Oríllese a la Orilla, Centro de la Imagen, Mexico City, Mexico.

Lo Mejor de lo Mejor, La Panadería, Mexico City, Mexico.

1998 Rise & Fall, Brasilica, Vienna, Austria.

1997 KOBLENZ, La Panadería, Mexico City, Mexico.

Beautiful Fluffy Stylish Hairy Butts, Chorus, Minneapolis, USA.

A Propósito, in collaboration with Miguel Calderón. La Panadería, Mexico City, Mexico.

Selected Group Exhibitions

2010 En cada instante, ruptura, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico City, Mexico.

Proyecto Juárez, Carrillo Gil Museum, Mexico City, Mexico.

Crossing, Paco de las Artes, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Arsenal, Baró Galería, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

La Frontera: the cultural impact of Mexican migration, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, USA

The Mole's Horizon, Palais des Beaux Arts. Brussels, Belgium.

The Moving Image part two: from scan to screen, pixel to projection. Orange County Museum, Orange County, USA.

I don't know whether to laugh or cry, London Museum, Ontario, Canada.

Noise - Sfeir - Semler Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon.

2009 Manimal, National Center for Contemporary Art in association with the International University of Moscow, Moscow, Russia.

O riso e a melancolia, Galeria Iberê Camargo, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Tragicomedia, Cajasol y Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla, Spain.

Yoshua Okon + Barry Johnston, N.T.B.R., Los Angeles, USA.

2008 Art Wrestling, Art Perform, Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami, USA.

Amateurs, CCA Wattis, San Francisco, USA.

White Russians, HDTs, California Biennial, High Desert, USA.

Escultura Social, Museo Alameda, San Antonio, USA.

Laughing in a Foreign Language, Hayward Gallery, London, England.

Laugh Track, YUM21C, Brussels Biennial Off program, Brussels, Belgium.

Electioneering, Fort Worth Contemporary Arts, Texas, USA.

The Station, Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami, EUA.

- 2007** Luz y Fuerza del Centro, Charro Negro, Guadalajara, Mexico.
Mercosur Biennial, Porto Alegre, Brazil.
Eventos Sociales, GAM, Mexico City, Mexico.
Escultura Social, MCA, Chicago, USA.
Era de la Discrepancia. Arte y Cultura Visual en México 1968-1997. MUCA,
Mexico City, Mexico. Fine Arts Museum, Houston, USA. Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada. Malba, Buenos Aires,
Argentina.
The Believers, Mass Moca, North Adams, USA.
Black Sphinx, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA.
- 2006** Coyotería, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany.
Diálogos Fronterizos, Palacio de Congresos, Madrid, Spain.
Don't Missbehave, SCAPE- Biennial of Art in Public Space, Christchurch, New Zeland.
Neo Con, Apex Art, New York, USA and Brittish Academy, Rome, Italy.
Ruby Satellite, Hyde Park Center, Chicago and California Museum of Photography, Riverside, USA.
Los Angeles/Mexico: Complexities & Heterogeneity, Jumex Collection, Mexico City, Mexico.
Blessed Are The Merciful, Feigen Contemporary, New York, USA.
Próximamente..., Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico.
- 2005** Day Labor, PS1 MOMA, New York, USA.
Pantagruel Syndrome, Torino Triennale, Castello di Rivoli, Torino, Italy.
America Tropical, Centre Culturel du Mexique. Paris, France.
Surveying the Border, Getty Center, Los Angeles, USA.
Oracle of Truth, Aeroplastics, Brussels, Belgium.
SCAR, Parkeergarage De Appelaar, Haarlem, Holland.
Boosts in the Shell (The Pursued), DeBond, Bruge, Belgium.
Monuments for the USA, CCA Wattis, San Francisco, USA.
Human Nature, Pump House Gallery, London, England.
Register the Distance, Borusan Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey.
- 2004** Adaptive Behaviour, New Museum, New York, USA.
Fishing in International Waters, Blanton Museum, Austin, USA.
Don't Call It Performance, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain and Museo del Barrio, New York, USA.
- 2003** Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey.
First ICP International Triennial of Contemporary Photography, International Center of Photography, New York,
USA.
Terror Chic, Spruth/Magers Gallery, Munich, Germany.
This Is Not a Movie, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA.
The Virgin Show, The Wrong Gallery, New York, USA.
Female Turbulence, Aeroplastics, Brussels, Belgium.
- 2002** Big Sur, The Project, Los Angeles, USA.
Mexico City: an Exhibition about the Exchange Rates of Bodies and Values, PS1
MoMA, Long Island, USA and Kunstwerke, Berlin, Germany.
8 x 2, Minnesota Center for Photography, Minneapolis, USA.
Use your illusion, Vedanta Gallery, Chicago, USA.
California Biennial, Orange County Museum of Art, Irvine, USA.
Pictures of You, Americas Society, New York, USA.
ALIBIS, Centre Culturel du Mexique, Paris, France and Witte de Witt, Rotterdam, Holland.
- 2001** Pay attent[on] Please, Museo d'Arte Provincia di Nuoro, Italy.
ZONING, The Project, New York, USA.
Políticas de la Diferencia, Arte Iberoamericano fin de Siglo, Generalitat
Valenciana, Spain, Pinacoteca del Estado, Río de Janeiro, Brazil, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires,
Argentina, Museo Sofía Iber, Caracas, Venezuela.
Sala de Recuperación, Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico.
City of Fictions, Mercer Union, Toronto, Canada.
BURIED MIRRORS, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, USA.
- 2000** ACTION VIDEOS, Artists Space, New York, USA.
c/o la ciudad, SAW Gallery, Ottawa, and Blackwood Gallery, Toronto, Canada.
EXTRAMUROS, La Habana, Cuba.
- 1999** Sous la grisaille de Mexico, Passage de Retz, Paris, France and Capella de l'antic
Hospital de la santa creu, Barcelona, Spain.
Paradas Continuas, Museo Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico.
- 1998** MEXELENTE, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, USA.
OKON CALDERON OCAMPO, Galerie Philomene Magers, Colone, Germany.
Vidéos d'art du Mexique et des Etats-Unis, Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon, France.
- 1997** CAMBIO, 526W 26th Street, NewYork, USA.

Selected Collections

Blanton Museum Collection, Austin, USA.
Colección Fundación ARCO, Madrid, Spain.
Colección Lopez Rocha, Guadalajara, Mexico.
Collection Pierre Huber, Ginebra, Switzerland.
CIFO, Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, USA.
Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples, Italy.
Colección Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico.
Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, USA.
Colección Teófilo Cohen, Mexico City, Mexico.
Colección Juan Carlos Verme. Lima, Peru.
Tate Modern, London, England.

Awards / Grants

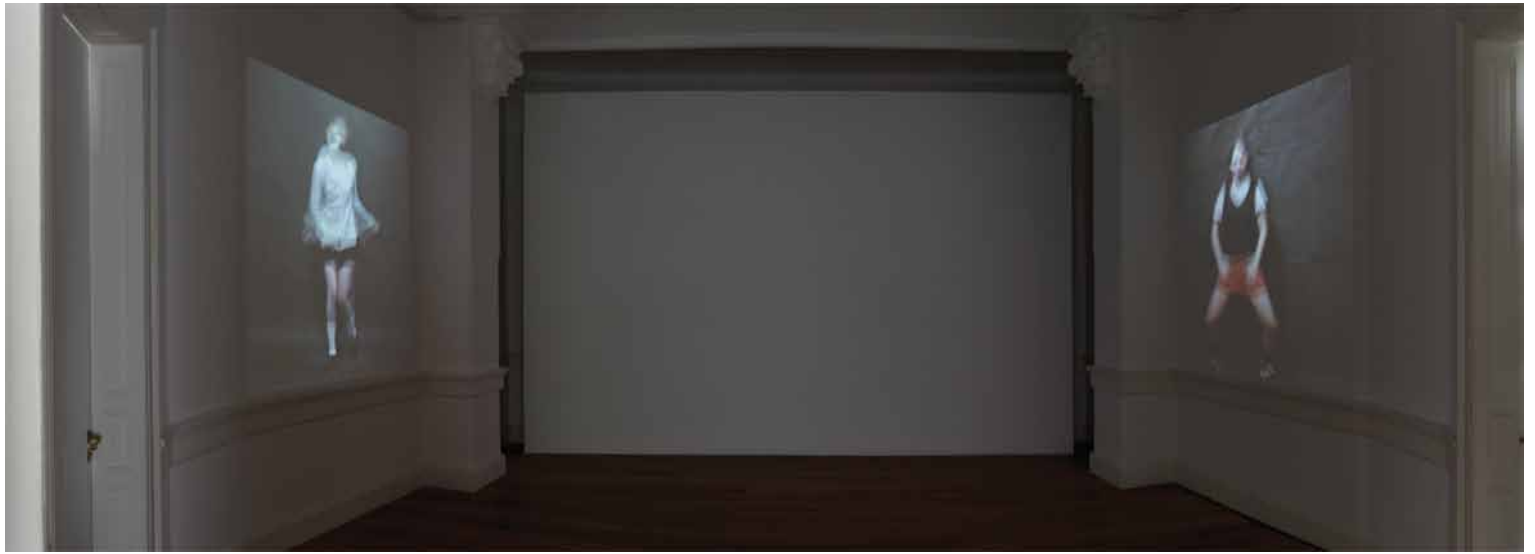
Fideicomiso para la cultura México/USA, Fundación Rockefeller,
CONACULTA y Fundación Bancomer.
Jóvenes Creadores, FONCA.
Fulbright.
Sistema Nacional de Creadores, FONCA.

Professional Service

Advisor in New Genres, National Found for Culture. Mexico.
Artist Council Member, Hammer Museum. Los Angeles, USA.
Advisory Committee Member, CIFO (Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation), Miami, USA.
Artist Council Member, SOMA, Mexico City, Mexico.



Cockfight, 1998
Diptych.
Lightjet c-print.
60 x 40 in. each
Edition: 3 + 1AP



Cockfight, 1998
Video Installation.
2 frontal projections.
Duration: 3 minutes, loop.
78.7 x 59 in. each
Edition: 3 + 1AP

Fundado en el año 2000, el LASGMM (Movimiento de Meditación de Guardias de Seguridad de la Ciudad de Los Angeles), forma parte del sindicato de Guardias de Seguridad de los Estados Unidos de América, representando cerca de 5,000 guardias con el propósito de organizar sesiones de meditación. El LASGMM provee apoyo técnico y espiritual para el desarrollo de sesiones de meditación grupal, programas educativos y un entrenamiento para que los guardias de seguridad adquieran las herramientas necesarias para cumplir con sus tareas y responsabilidades, además de ayudarlos a comenzar una vida plena y saludable. La existencia del LASGMM está justificada por el simple hecho de que los guardias de seguridad son seres sensibles que tienen la necesidad de reconectarse con la esencia de la vida y de ejercer control sobre su existencia. Los guardias de seguridad de Los Angeles arriesgan sus vidas cotidiana y no hacen ejercicio de cambio, ni hacen ejercicio de ningun tipo de (generalmente se les ordena quedarse por nueve horas seguidas en un mismo lugar sin moverse). Esto desencadena en graves problemas de salud tales como almorranas, várices, mala circulación, obesidad y hasta depresión. Cansados de vivir en una sociedad brutal preocupada por el dinero y no por la salud mental, física y espiritual, los líderes sindicales fundan el LASGMM con la esperanza de compensar tan mala situación y crear mejores condiciones laborales. Las actividades del movimiento consisten en tomar tiempo del almuerzo, para que los guardias hagan media hora de meditación en los estacionamientos que cuidan. Lo único que se necesita es un tapete de yoga y un poco de inspiración. Al meditar, van más allá de su contexto, trasformando la fealdad y el estrés del estacionamiento hacia el reino de la paz interior.



Parking Lotus, 2001

Photo Installation.

Series of 8 photographs and manifesto.

Lightjet c-print.

Photo installation dimensions: variable.

Dimension of each print: 40 x 30 in.

Edition: 5 +1AP





Parking Lotus photo installation



Parking Lotus, 2001
Videos 1, 2 & 3
Duration: 3 minutes, loop.
Variable dimensions
Edition: 3+1AP



Coyotería, 2003
Video Installation
Edition: 3 + 2AP
Vendida: 1 copia



Coyotería, 2003
Lightjet c-print.
30 x 40 in.
Edition: 5 + 1AP

The relationship between the artist and his subject is a complex one. Particularly in the domains of photography and film or video, the responsibility of the artist to fairly or ethically represent the person portrayed remains a topic of heated debate and discussion. When Diane Arbus focused her lens upon the misfits and outsiders that so fascinated her, some questioned whether her intentions were sympathetic or callous. Robert Mapplethorpe's depictions of the black male body provoked accusations of fetishism and even racism. The genre of documentary film has been criticized repeatedly for the ways in which it can be manipulated so that subjective perspective masquerades as objective truth. This highly charged terrain revolving around issues of power and prejudice both within cultural production and the culture at large is at the heart of Yoshua Okón's work.

Okón creates video installations that explore controversial social and political issues—immigration, colonialization, labor, class, gender—by focusing on particular groups that have been marginalized or disenfranchised from mainstream society. But Okón's approach to representation falls outside the realm of the documentary to be more aligned with surrealism and the absurd. Exploring conventional viewpoints and assumptions, he intends his work to "invert the gaze," as he has described it, so that the experience becomes more about the audience and the process of viewing than the groups or individuals who appear in the work. Rather than straightforward portrayals of the concerns that impact his subjects' lives, he enlists his participants in theatrical and deliberately confusing scenes that appear to be entirely fictive but nonetheless call attention to the realities of their daily lives. In fact, more than mere participants, Okón's subjects are often pulled into specific aspects of producing the work so that they function as active collaborators instead of passive sitters.

The earliest work included here, *Cockfight* (1998) features two young girls—each on a separate screen arranged to face one another—yelling crude insults and provocations at each other. At once shocking and humorous, the improvised comments are inspired by the types of offensive remarks commonly directed at women by men. By upending the gender dynamic within a distinctly theatrical space, the intimidation and aggression of the language is reduced to an innocuous word play. For the series of photographs *Parking Lotus* (2001), Okón worked with security guards in Los Angeles to underscore the intense solitude and extreme focus required for their jobs. Asked to sit and meditate in a lotus position, these often overlooked figures become transcendent, held aloft with inner peace. *Coyotería* (2003) is a recasting of Joseph Beuys' infamous work from 1974, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, in which the artist lived in a New York City gallery with a coyote for three days as a commentary on the Colonial history of the United States. For Beuys, the coyote was a creature that straddled different cultures and different time periods, and *Coyotería* suggests current day understandings of the coyote as a figure that is both benevolent and dangerous, operating in an ambiguous space where ethics and boundaries are murky. In the work, Okón enlists a "coyote" (someone hired to mediate between ordinary citizens and bureaucratic institutions) to act out the aggressive canine while the artist, covered in a synthetic blanket with patterns alluding to Native American cultures, plays the role of the shamanistic Beuys. The dynamic between the two characters becomes a microcosm of the tensions between cultures and between humans and nature that is the central narrative to the history of Western civilization.

Anne Ellegood
Senior Curator
Hammer Museum