

BERTHA AND KARL LEUBSDORF GALLERY

132 East 68th Street New York, NY 10065

Open Work: An Invitation to do it Yourself By Claire Breukel

May 2013

Looking at a decade of artistic production over forty years ago, *Open Work in Latin America, New York & Beyond: Conceptualism Reconsidered, 1967-1978* features thirty-six artists affiliated with Latin America, making work on the continent, abroad or in a situation of transience.

Despite featuring work created disparately, the exhibition is cohesive in its focus on interpersonal interaction that is incited by the presence of common signifiers of visual language—specifically text, color, form and the body.

Curated by Harper Montgomery, a Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Professor in Latin American Art, the exhibition is a nod to critic Umberto Eco's concept of "open work". Instead of lively participation the exhibition invites perceptual collaboration—a collaboration that requires the viewer to help situate the meaning of *place* and delineate a relationship with each work in order to make it complete.

This is most palpable with Antonio Dias' *Do It Yourself: Freedom Territory 1968* that forces the visitor to traverse a territory demarcated by a series of grey vinyl 'T' shapes on the gallery floor. These symbols offer the perception of a safe space that can be expanded by simply duplicating the plan. Luis Camnitzer chooses words to demarcate space within the architectural mock-up *Living Room (Living-Comedor): Model For An Environment*. Textual designations such as "mesa" and "ventana" announce the existence of domestic objects alluding to their



visual presence, and inviting the onlooker to imagine the contents of this idiomatic space. Jaime Davidovich offers himself as the subject in the documented performance *TV Wall* that follows the artist covering a television monitor in black tape to block out, and so erase, the flashing image below. This simple activist gesture conjures political censorship, however Davidovich re-appropriates this action to negate mass media, carving out a renewed relationship to the action that elevates the passive onlooker to coconspirator in his protest. In this way, we the onlooker become Davidovich's subjects.

"Open Work" is at once visual—including drawings, books, videos and installation—and elusive, offering propositions to access what Umberto Eco describes as a world of ambiguity.

http://www.artaldia.com/International/Contents/News/Open_Work_in_Latin_America_New_York_Beyond_and_the_Historic_artwork_Citrus_6906_by_Hector_Fuenmayor_at_Hunter_College