

Ambiguous Objects in Argentine Art of the 90's

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by **Elena Oliveras***

...More than 70 years after Duchamp's Bicycle wheel, the theme of ambiguity reappears with full force in the art of the 90s, following in this regard the impulse of the '60s. We likewise observe that, in Argentina, ambiguity appears consistently in the work of numerous artists. Marked by a more unstable social position, they appear as legitimate bearers of questioning to the system of objects. Through different approaches, the artists use a fluid and free subjectivity that renounces the need to classify. They move comfortably in the scope of an aesthetic of uncertainty, supported in the deterritorialization of the object and subject for whom that object is set aside.

The object is not the only territory of ambiguities. Painting is too. **Alicia Herrero** use to the multi-sensed condition of the work, to the multiplicity of meanings that constitute its essence, but we do not ignore what we are in fact seeing. Hence the confusion promoted by these artists, from the exercises in mental expansion to the genetic manipulations, everything makes it possible for the most extravagant fantasy to be able to commingle with the real.

Alicia Herrero, for her part, does not relate ambiguity with the body, but rather with the category of art itself. Parodying her own last name [herrero means blacksmith], she opposes iron models. She is interested in questioning the titles of nobility that grant specific classifications. What allows some objects to be seen as artistic, appropriate for a collection, and not others? By juxtaposing in one display prestigious pieces (a Chinese vase from the seventeenth century, a Wedgwood ceramic piece, a Kamares glass, or a Limoges sauce dish) with industrial objects that housewives use every day (a cup, a teapot, a carafe for wine), she questions institutionalized classifications, legitimizing at the same time the subject's action in the free play of his or her power to choose.

The distinction between greater artistic object and lesser artistic object is, for **Herrero**, always ambiguous. The question is also present in artists like Gerhard Richter. His Atlas, begun in 1962, is an infinite work in progress, a paradigm of the archive aesthetic, made up of approximately 5,000 images, including small drawings, sketches, and photographs. These preparatory outlines of his finished pieces were presented at the Fridericianum Museum during the 10th Documenta in Kassel (1997) as a main work. Maintaining the same delimitation, Hans Haacke presented simple street posters denouncing the unhealthy effects of sponsorship. All in all, both seemed to defend us from the need to classify.

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