

HEART SURGERY: L FACTOR

by Papo Colo, 2003

New York City

L Factor is inspired by the multiplicity of Latino cultures. They represent variations of languages, accents, countries, and races dispersed around the world.

These multi-origins are what L Factor is about. Latinos are here to stay, we are Americans and we make American art.

Personality is universal and as in any group of individuals with a lot in common, we portray ourselves to know who we are and where we belong in the American landscape

Every group in the United States has gone through a process of assimilation. It is a struggle to recreate something different in a new environment. We recreate ourselves and rebuild our notion of American culture. Most immigrants surrender their language, but Latinos have not, because Latinos are not “foreigners,” we are just coming from the South of the Americas. Spanish is the language that has the most influence on English and it is rooted in the United States. The abundance of Spanish TV and radio stations in this country confirms that. Spanish was the first Western language that was transplanted in the Americas. It was the first European language that began the colonization of the new world.

The Spanish new world was about conquest, possession, extermination, and exploitation. The English new world was about that as well, but it was also about liberation through immigration and faith in a new life. There is no blame here, only historical circumstances. The Spanish came as conquistadors, the English, as colonists pursuing religious freedom. These are some of the differences that rule us to this day.

This exhibition’s purpose is multi-focal. One objective is to focus on how Latino cultures populate and influence English-speaking America and how each is influenced by the other. Another is to present the synthesis of the two languages, and the formation of a new one, Spanglish? There is a new union resulting from the combination of different influences, ideas, and objects.

L Factor presents iconic figures of popular Latino culture as interpreted by a young generation of Latino artists whose work offers a context for this dialogue. These artists have done this through a process of convergence and differentiation of various conceptions of Latino.

L Factor as a whole is a body of work, reflecting affinities of the new multi-brid state of American cultures and exposing conflicts between those of Latino immigrants and those of United States citizens refusing to recognize each other’s idiosyncrasies. L Factor is an exhibition without walls. This is not an exhibition of isolated objects, each artist’s work is related to the others. This installation without walls mirrors the contemporary interdependency of Latino cultures and American cultures.

L Factor is about parody, criticism, and sublimation.

L Factor is about deconstructing the clichés of Latino cultures and adding new mythologies to

American cultures.

L Factor assumes a universe of existing myths and new myths.

L Factor is a sphere of activity that is centered on and includes everything associated with the influence of language and culture on social life.

The shock and delight caused by Latino cultures demonstrates how cultures evolve by drawing on differences, surprises, exaggerations, and modifications and it is a metaphor for the accelerating cultural crossovers occurring in all societies.

Crossbreeding is the key; mixing methods and mediums is the underlying theme of L Factor. The exhibition is a celebration of ideas about popular, aesthetic, and historical characters of the Americas. In this show, the influence is measured in personalities. Every character is an idea. This exhibition is the sum of all these ideas.

The common and the banal run deep in our thoughts. Reaffirming historical and contemporary values and influences through characters, L Factor is the dialectic of the high and low with a twist--the Latin twist.

L Factor is related to pop culture and conceptualism, creating conceptplus-- conjoining the cerebral and the optic nerve. Conceptplus is the production of a specific body of work for a precise idea, transforming a subject into an object. For L Factor, artists created in a focused environment a body of work with a precise idea. An exhibition dealing with this type of "conceptual art" allows for a premeditation so that all the work enhances the show's subject and because it is constructed in a "conversation" with the artists, there is a spontaneity at the same time. Specific themes are staged to make a representation/installation--a conceptplus exhibition.

Our Americas have a short history. They are continents where populations are still in formation. Latinos discovered the Americas and then were outlawed in the North. Latin America has remained the North's colony. This produced a mirage feeling of not belonging. This condition rules Latinos life and art. We are accepted or tolerated if we imitate. This kind of creativity is measured by the likeness to the dominant culture and its vision of others.

In the Latin world originality is too often aborted by economics. But with the artist's will, sparks can fly, producing incubators of history. These pockets of imagination keep Latin culture on track. South America is in a state of evolution = revolutions, and it is a fertile ground, but one that sometimes makes it difficult to create.

The answer for many is to move or migrate--a gypsy caravan to the North, looking for the promised land without Moses, but with a great faith in art and possibilities. Change is the mother of invention. The story repeats itself in the United States. These migrations are from inside the Americas. North America wants the business of the South and the South wants the lifestyle of the North. This fascinating story is told every day in the Spanish media throughout the country, en espanol. Finally, North America is discovering that their allies are the South of the Americas.

Americanos is a state of mind, geography determines history, and the Americas are their own sphere, with their languages, attitudes, and possibilities. L Factor is beginning to flow.

In the Americas almost everything is foreign. The two continents have parallel histories and different traditions that converge. This civilization began with many cultures becoming one, the united Americas? This unity has been suppressed, and this exhibition's purpose is to show the

relationships among the cultures of the Americas. The powerful and the subservient, the ice and the water, a multi-catastrophe, a collision that creates a new civilization for us in the Americas?

And here we are, at the gates of this event. Looking into us, in parody, smiling as witnesses of the new thinking, because the change is evident. Are we terrorized by the cost of that mutilation? Are the Americas that we knew, unknown again? The mechanics of history are making a new story of the Americas and we, like ants, are marking a path into an unfamiliar territory.

In this exhibition, artists have focused on a collective idea, a cultural icon, and produced an individualized creation. Is an exhibition like this one the historical incubator we are looking for? Will these collisions transform us? Is this the art that is left for us?

Cheer up! Consume yourself, take a break, smile and contemplate the wound of your surgery.

Text for the exhibition at Exit Art NY

L FACTOR

11/22/2003 - 2/15/2004