

REGINA JOSÉ GALINDO AND US
by Papo Colo, 2009
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ARTISTS are entities that perceive the reality of the country they are from and manifest its view in their own way. **Every action that we humans do is an historical achievement. That is why art is a political statement, because it is anthropology.**

R.J.G. is an extraordinary example of this statement. She possesses history with her body that contains concepts, showing us the story of a country that becomes a continent and transforms it into a universal metaphor of the struggles of the human spirit.

I am not taking the route of “art history” because it is fiction, but there are precedents in this kind of art: Performance Art, Body Art, and Actions. What began in Europe in the beginning of the XX century as poetic bodily gestures, in the works of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, was a way for poets and visual artists to perform their thoughts, in a playful subversion of traditional values. Today **this kind of work is a social illustration of the magical body, the aesthetics of political vocabulary, and the urgency of the endurance of the will.**

A lot of artists practice this approach and more will. It is easy and difficult, and like poetry every one can do it but few can make it happen. This kind of art demonstrates the ability of artists to perform something dramatic and significant without the artifice and rehearsal of theater. It is an instant idea that becomes movable memory growing from person to person, as its image is interpreted in a different way every time it is told or seen.

Performance art is the story telling of a premeditated action to create a reaction. It is the antithesis of the market because the substance is painful and cannot be controlled. We at Exit Art have a tradition of presenting this kind of artist, the ones that are “political,” strange, foreign, outlandish or awkward. As in our historical performance exhibitions such as Endurance (1995) and Renegades (2007) and our experiments in our own **Trickster Performance Theater** in the last two decades, R.J.G.’s work is up our alley, a unique body of performance work full of immense beauty, of history and actual references to her reality. She is from Guatemala, a country in the center of our Americas, which makes her an American artist. The most guarded secret in this country is that we are a bilingual cultural empire. We are Elizabethan theater and theater of the Golden Age of Spain in a mix of English witch hunting Protestantism and Spanish Inquisition. The conflict between the “invincible” Spanish armada and the English fleet in 1588 is still defining the power struggle of the Americas; it will converge or self destroy.

History is catching its tail. The past defines the present and forecasts the future. Performance Art tells truths with images that the artist articulates with a supernatural force of survival, transforming this art from its common origins into a sophisticated ritual of post-colonial aesthetic. R.J.G. is a messenger of this thought and documents it with her actions: performances that put her life in danger. She does not live in a liberal democratic territory but in a repressive and dangerous authoritarian state that is defined by acts of institutionalized violence and sectarian criminal gangs. R.J.G. is a valiant soul of critical extraction. She is redefining risk and showing us in this comfortable metropolis that the purpose of the artist is not only to please the powerful with beautiful objects and intellectual meditations but to **practice the poetry of one’s circumstances even if your life is in the line of fire.**

Text for the exhibition at Exit Art NY
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