

GENERAL IDEA: BROKEN TIME

27.OCT.2016 – 12.FEB.2017

GALLERIES 1, 2 AND PLAZA

Mexico City – October 27, 2016 – The Museo Jumex presents the first retrospective of the Canadian collective General Idea in Latin America. The exhibition surveys their trajectory throughout a twenty-five-year career that grappled with such topics as communications systems, sexual diversity, race, disease, self-representation and the myth created around the collective itself.

General Idea was formed in 1969 by the artists A. A. Bronson (n. Michael Tims; Vancouver, 1946), Felix Partz (n. Ronald Gabe; Winnipeg, 1945 – Toronto, 1994), and Jorge Zontal (n. Slobodan Saia-Levy; Parma, 1944 – Toronto, 1994). The group produced an important body of work in different media and formats, opening new pathways and continuing to serve as a point of reference for current generations of artists around the world.

Curated by Agustín Pérez Rubio, artistic director of the MALBA, *General Idea: Broken Time* attempts to broaden the horizon and the scope of General Idea's legacy through the broad, ambiguous idea of time found in their work, from their first pieces as a group to their final works in 1994, the year when Partz and Zontal died of AIDS-related complications.

The exhibition features more than 120 pieces covering all of the media in which the group worked, including video art, photographs, publications, installations, and multiples of objects of mass consumption. The ideas and themes that inform this show are: the creation of myth in art as a reflection of society; the construction of identity; the non-linearity of history; fiction as an artistic resource; the construction of history through memory, archaeology and documents; sexuality; race; and AIDS and viralization as an artistic medium. General Idea grappled with these themes through advertising, design, fashion, beauty pageants, and the mass media.

As Agustín Pérez Rubio noted, "General Idea worked with the notion of a mutating time that constantly changes and undergoes modification until we come to a state of loss. In the same way, their structure –the aim of which was the construction of the myth of the group itself– used glamour and iconography as tools necessary for reflecting back bits of the reality of a society that has been standardized through capitalism, on which their subtly and hilariously ironic works have a strong impact."

The exhibition starts at the end of the collective's career and continues on toward the group's early years, following the idea of synchronic and diachronic time. This non-linear idea of history provides the title of the exhibition: *Broken Time*. This is why the first hall features a piece by A. A. Bronson, *Untitled (for General Idea)* (1997) –an homage to his partners in the group– which shares space with *Pilot* (1977), a video work that takes stock of the group's beginning and introduces a break between this period and their mature years.

At first, General Idea made pieces related to the language of the mass media, using a Sony Portapak camera and a telex as well as establishing relationships with other artists through mail art. Starting in 1970, the group undertook one of the most significant projects of their work, making apparent the relationship between myth and time: *Miss General Idea*, which served as the crucible for much of their artistic practice from the performance *What Happened* (1970) to the 1977 destruction of *The 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion*.

Miss General Idea reflects on competition as an art world strategy for staking a claim and surviving on the artistic terrain. The event derives from a popular activity (beauty pageants), demonstrating once more the relationship between the real and the artistic, between what art imitates and what

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gets imitated, and their mythological action. The collective organized this great, mass cultural spectacle as a predecessor to *The 1971 Miss General Idea Pageant* and established the genealogy of beauty pageants as its iconography and its legend.

Another one of their iconic projects is *FILE Magazine*, which the group published from 1972 to 1989, appropriating the design of the famous *LIFE* magazine. Some of the era's most radical artists collaborated on this project, including the collective Art Language, the writer William S. Burroughs, the rock groups Talking Heads and The Residents, and many others.

General Idea used self-representation as a means of expression in their work, creating fetish images that accompanied them throughout their career. Some of these were made specifically for *FILE Magazine*. In many cases, they themselves are the ones acting and posing, but in others they are represented by images, as in the case of the photograph in the installation *Reconstructing Futures* (1977). Other examples are the cover of the book *General Idea's Ménage à Trois* (1978); the self-portraits in the works *General Idea's Dominant Dream* (1979); *Playing the Triangle* (1979); *Self-Portrait with Objects* (1981/1982); *P Is for Poodle* (1983/1989); *Baby Makes 3* (1983-1989); *Nightschool* (1989); and *Playing Doctor* (1992).

General Idea were pioneers in incorporating the theme of AIDS into art. In 1987 the artists took the letters of the acronym A-I-D-S and rearranged them in the form of a logo that replicated the American artist Robert Indiana's famous 1966 piece, *LOVE*, whereas *One Year of AZT* (1991), made up of 1,825 pills in a wall, resulted in a calendar of the disease, the passage of time and dissolution.

The group's work related to the AIDS crisis, from the end of the 1980s until the deaths of Partz and Zontal, also involved commodities and other reproducible formats, in these instances establishing a connection between the crisis and the market by way of the concept of the virus. The group explored themes relating to healthcare, the visibility of gay identity, and AIDS through pendants, balloons and pillboxes.

Media like posters, magazines, artists' books and videocassettes enabled artists with limited resources to disseminate their work, and they constituted one way of grappling with the implications of the mass media and consumer culture.

Another one of General Idea's themes was sexual liberation, explicit in works in which sex and race were read according to concepts derived from post- and decolonial readings. The project *El Dorado* (1992) –in which *Maracaibo* (1991) is implicit– is the only work completed with sources and artists from Latin America.

In addition to the works in the exhibition halls, *General Idea: Broken Time* also occupies other spaces in the Museo Jumex. Gallery 1 features *Fin de siècle* (1994). In this installation, which is also a self-representation, the artists have turned themselves into three small seals located in a mythical time, or even a non-time, in a romantic, glacial landscape, based on a painting by Caspar David Friedrich.

The Plaza of the Museo Jumex features *Pharma@opia* (1992), a gigantic reproduction of three antiviral pills, which communicates and makes apparent the dosage that had to be taken personally and sometimes almost in secret. This work is a reminder not only of the conditions that were experienced in the past by those living with AIDS, but also of the virus's persistence in the present day.

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As part of the co-production of this exhibition, after the Museo Jumex, *General Idea: Broken Time* will travel to Buenos Aires for its presentation at the MALBA, the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, from March to June, 2017.

CREDITS

Exhibition co-produced by MALBA, the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires and Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo, with support from the National Gallery of Canada.

At the Museo Jumex, the exhibition has been coordinated by Gabriel Villalobos, curatorial assistant.

ALSO AT THE MUSEO JUMEX

WALID RAAD

OCTOBER 13, 2016 – JANUARY 8, 2017

This exhibition is a comprehensive survey of work by the artist Walid Raad (Lebanon, 1967). It consists of photographs, videos, sculptures and performances that span a period of 25 years. His work explores the veracity of photographic documents and video archives in the public domain, the role of memory and narrative in discourses of conflict, and the construction of the history of art in the Arab world.

This exhibition has been organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

MUSEO JUMEX

The Museo Jumex is the Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo's main platform. It opened its doors to the public in November 2013 as an institution devoted to contemporary art, whose aim was not only to serve a broad and diverse public, but also to become a laboratory for experimentation and innovation in the arts. Through its exhibitions and public programs, the Museo Jumex aspires to become a relevant institution in the field of art by producing and co-producing original exhibitions and research, familiarizing our audiences with the concepts and contexts that inform current art practice. Through the use of critical and pedagogical tools, the museum's educational programs further the institution's commitment to build links between contemporary art and the public.

ADMISSION

General admission / \$50 pesos

Mexican citizens / \$30 pesos

Teachers* / \$15 pesos

Free for: Children under 15 / Students* / Senior citizens*

*with valid ID

Sundays free

HOURS

Tuesday - Sunday / 11AM – 8PM

Monday / Closed

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