



LIGHT HOUSE STUDIO

SIGNS OF KADIR

By: Jorge Rivas Rodríguez

“Like you, I have tried with all my strength to fight oblivion. Like you, I have forgotten. (...)

Why deny the obvious need for memory?”

Hiroshima Mon Amour (1)

Throughout the history of art many creators have taken the past as a source of inspiration. Images and symbols belonging to olden times in the Island’s capital, in becoming “recovered” remembrances through artistic imagery, also acquire a novel expressive and conceptual potential channeled in the recent work of the artist, painter and sculptor Kdir López Nieves. His presence has become essential not only in the local contemporary art scene, but also at the international biennials of Havana where he routinely surprises critics, spectators, gallery owners and collectors with his recurring iconographic experiments.

In the show entitled *Signos* (“Signs”) —collateral to the Biennale— and exhibited in one of the most important galleries in the city, La Acacia, the young artist recreates his project on the basis of an eminently critical discourse with regard to the relation between the individual and his memory, as a way of upholding personal and social identity in light of the ever growing tendency to steep artistic interest in historical processes, one of the most disturbing consequences of the unrestrained race that characterizes this global era, and a topic broached by many of the art works exhibited in the tenth edition of one of the main events in visual arts in this hemisphere.

📍 Ave. 47 No. 3430 e/ 34 y 41, Kohly, Havana, Cuba
☎ +5372065772 | +5352816686 | +1 310 525 6367
✉ kdirkolor@yahoo.es 🌐 www.kadirlopez.com



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Kdir's pieces are made on top of original publicity signs of the 1950s as supports. Manufactured with serigraphic engraving, instead of traditional pigments for painting the signs, the technique of porcelain baking was used, wherefore the colors were actually baked separately once applied over the steel, in different consecutive layers, until the desired design was achieved. It is on those aging supports that Kdir paints, draws and makes his own prints with ceramic pigments, resins, enamels and other materials that naturally allow for transparency in order to let the photographic images of the Havana of those days show through.

Thus, these extraordinary *Signs* arise, causing an impact on the beholder. These works are not intended as a wink at longing or nostalgia or the values associated with the recent past. Rather, they arise from –and promote further- serious and daring research on an era that absolutely requires much more scrutiny yet, in order to better apprehend its derivations and determinations over the Island's current life. The signs stand in an insightful pictorial confrontation against the mechanisms of oblivion and in a way contribute, from art's perspective, to the reconstruction of a memory banned by many or unknown to newer generations –among them, that to which the artist, who was born 20 years later in 1972, belongs.

These works seek out their space and find it in the spectator's reason and thought – regardless of his age; as if each of these signs-paintings, or paintings-signs, cropped out of the convergence of encounters and evocations, of the fusion between matter and awareness, before and after, the playful and the shrewd. Hence, the project establishes a connection or a dialogue with the audience, who Kdir tries to stock with images and objects that pertain to recollections, to his past or the past of his ancestors. “The city enters the sign that was once in it. Each work completes a cycle: past, future, present; and also oblivion, recollection, memory... it is like infinity”, the creator has said.

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This interest in experimenting with art's possibilities for reflecting on society –sparing no technique, language or instrument whatsoever- has always prevailed on Kdir's plastic endeavors, who now urges us to shed new light on an era gone by, already faded in the minds of many. The immediate precedent to this series is found in *Kasting*, his last production, in which he undertook a substantive study on the “miraculous” and at times corroded presence of the facades of certain Havana movie theaters of the 1940s and 1950s.

But *Signs* is not conceived just as a result of the thorough review of extant records, such as the originals of these commercial signs or photographs from the latter years of the first half of the last century; rather, it is borne out from a perspective that is even more closely related to the artist's aesthetic creativity, placed at the disposal of individual and collective introspection through a provocative incursion of the past into the present.

Just as Marcel Duchamp never tried to “compete” with (ready-made) objects (recycled by him), but instead devoted himself to ascertaining whether they had an aesthetic use of their own and creating an amazing reaction on audiences, Kdir appeals to his proven ingenuity to begin working on these signs on the same principle, intervening them with his plastic imaginary and creating a legitimate, daring and different work of art that tries, above all, on the basis of the recognition of the past from the outset, to place man at the center of contemporary dilemmas, to resist and to urge him to save our destiny.

(1) Hiroshima Mon Amour (1) Excerpt from the screenplay for the film Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959) by Alain Resnais.

Source:

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