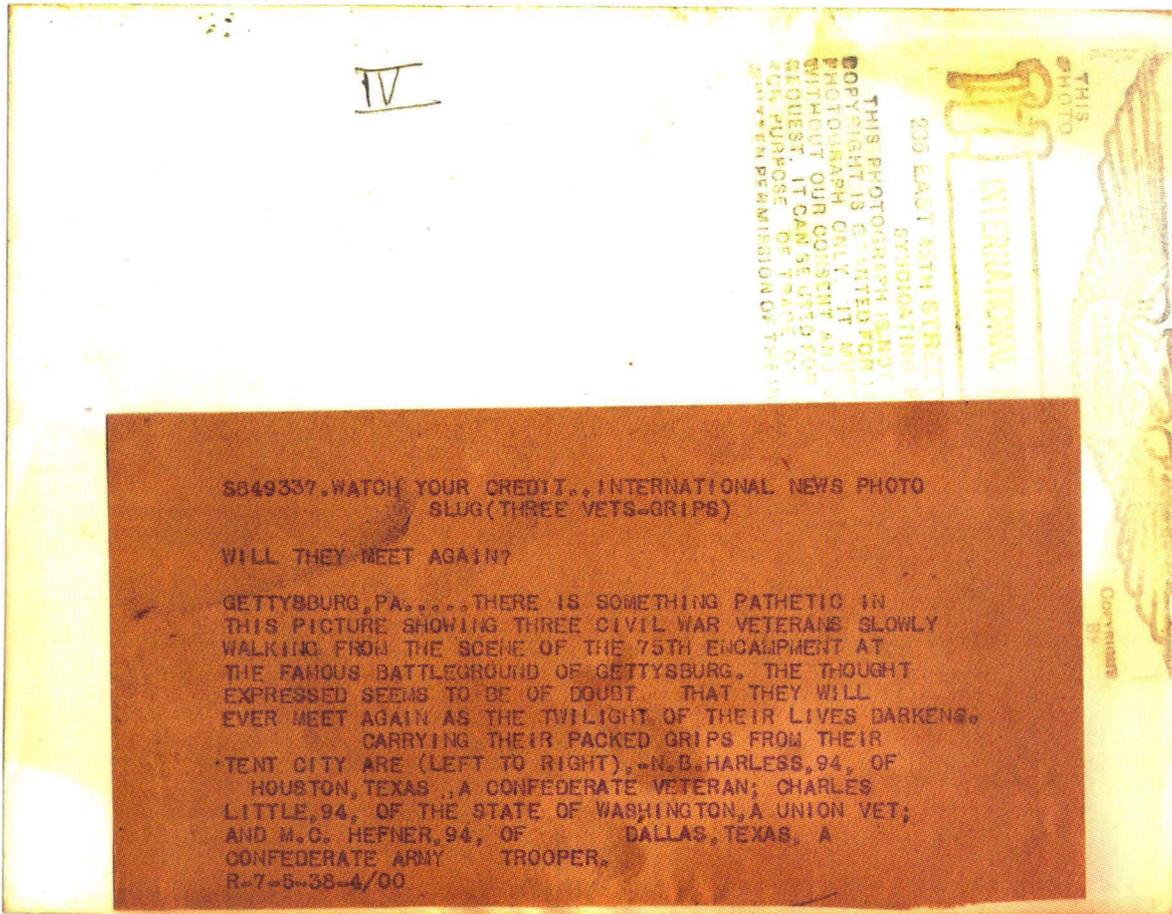


**THE CONFLUX OF ETERNITIES:  
HISTORICAL DISCOURSE IN THE WORK OF KADIR LÓPEZ**

Palm Beach Photographic Centre – West Palm Beach

By Raisa Clavijo



Kadir López, *Will they Meet Again...?*, From "Palimpsestos" series, 2013, aluminum print, 16" x 24". Courtesy of the artist.

The oeuvre of Kadir López is based on a reflection of history and memory. In it, the act of investigating, gathering and classifying documents from the past becomes an artistic strategy and expressive resource. This is evident in his recent exhibition at the Palm Beach Photographic Centre, which assembled both works from recent series like *Palimpsests* and *Molotov* and pieces from prior series like *Havana Monopoly* and *Capitol*. An exhibition of photographs showing the American presence in Cuban life and customs until the 1950s and curated by the artist was simultaneously exhibited in an adjacent hall. The aim was to present the visitor with a panorama of some of the images and documents that have served as a basis for the creation of many of his works.

Interested in historic research since the beginning of his career, López proposes the necessity of constructing the future based on extensive and significant knowledge of the past. His works are preceded by a long and detailed search for documents and images in public archives, antique shops and secondhand bookstores. It is a process that has taken him years, during which time he has created a vast archive of the vestiges of the history of the 20th century.

"This oeuvre proposes transparencies between time and space, between content and form," López said in a recent interview. "In

it, past, present and future are fused one on top of the other in layers of content that propose an eternal future and at the same time an infinite past. On the one hand, I collect and compile images and graphic information with the voracity of a historian, and on the other, I evaluate the possibilities of converting these themes into metaphors on visual supports, whether they be photographic, pictorial or sculptural, obtaining as a result a piece that satisfies my artistic expectations while revealing opinions on how history, time and memory constitute an indispensable foundation on which to advance a different type of evolution. (...) In a long path to synthesis, my oeuvre has been inspired by the past and has evolved into themes that interest me now."<sup>1</sup>

Document retrieval has led him to a reassessment of history and revision of the self-defining facts and elements that until now had appeared unshakable. In series such as *Palimpsests*, he delves into the history of the historic document itself, the object of his research. Basing his work on photos gathered from various archives, he prints on aluminum plates not the photo itself, but rather its reverse, the annotations and commentaries left on the photo over time by people who have referred to it for different reasons, whether to illustrate reports in newspapers and magazines or ex-

plore the details surrounding specific historic events. The artist has focused on the history that the photo hides and the multiple interpretations it can generate.

Standing before these pieces, the viewer is obliged to imagine the photo and the details of the historic event based on the interpretation of individuals who have interacted with it over time.

In *Molotov*, López reflects on the implications and consequences unleashed by the history that we now see passively archived. The installation consists of a collection of 100 bottles in which the artist encapsulates the vestiges of different key moments in universal history. Through the glass of the bottle, the viewer can see fragments of photos that refer to man's first voyage to the moon, the explosion of the first atomic bomb, assassination of John F. Kennedy, discovery of penicillin and creation of the Internet, among many other occurrences that have changed the course of human history. It is a collection of events whose vestiges are presented to us encapsulated in containers that could "explode" at any moment.

For its part, *Havana Monopoly* consists of a Monopoly board constructed out of historic photos of the Cuban capital and the reproduction of stock certificates of companies that dominated the economic and social activity of the country in the 1940s and '50s. In this work, instead of buying shares to gain control of the monopoly, the viewer is invited to "purchase" the past, recollections, a passive archive of memories.

Finally, López presents *Capitol*, which consists of two large Rubik's Cubes comprised of photos and documents corresponding to the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., and the one in Havana, which is a replica of its American counterpart. A visual dialogue among the different documents that comprise it is produced in each piece: photos of the construction of these buildings, testimonies of historic events that have taken place in both sites, reproductions of laws, among them the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions that have governed Cuban life throughout history. "Each cube is a commentary on the different layers of power, politics and their algorithms that, just as with a Rubik's Cube, we are not all able to solve," the artist notes.

Basing himself on the exploration of recent history and the dissection of the vestiges that have remained from different memorable events, throughout his prolific oeuvre López connects personages and events not temporally associated, but intertwined in a cause/effect relationship. By making the archive his field of action, the artist becomes a significant and active figure in the construction of memory. His actions denote the existential anguish afflicting the human being before the imminent disappearance of the past. At the same time, they are a catalyst for the demythification of the traditional structures of power associated with the construction and preservation of collective history. Viewers are invited to participate in this process, which is not limited to cataloguing the past, but which instead strives to understand and re-order history, memory and life. ■

(August 23 – November 16, 2013)

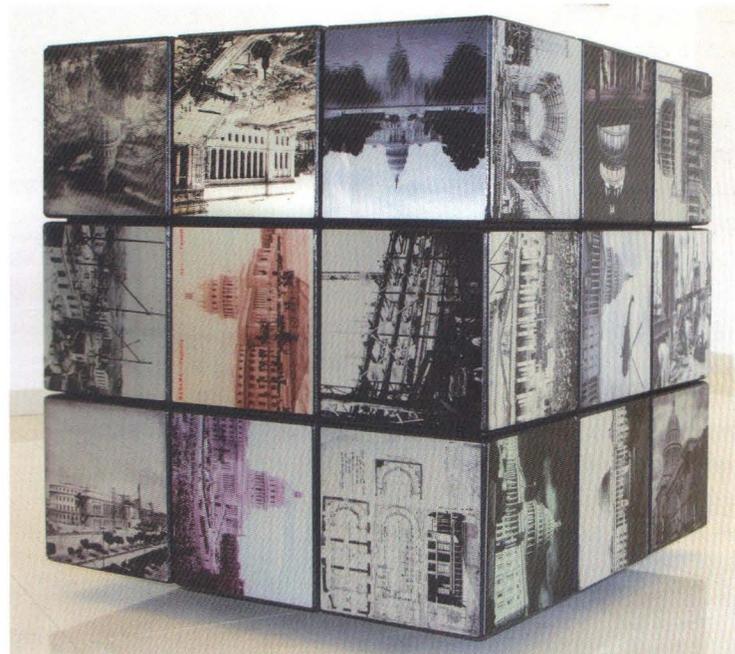
#### NOTE

1. Excerpts from the author's interview with the artist. September 2013.

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Kadir López, *Molotov (detail)*, 2013, mixed media installation, 100 pieces (bottles, photographs, resin), variable dimensions. Photo: Denise Felice.



Kadir López, *Capitol (Rubik Cube)*, 2013, mixed media sculpture. Photo: Denise Felice.