

MUSEO SALINAS



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Some Words from The Director

During the Mexican Revolution General Francisco Villa was faced with a grave problem: there was a serious shortage of money throughout the territory he had liberated. His political counsellors were highly concerned that this situation might hinder the progress of the revolution and General Villa – a great military strategist – came up with a simple answer to the dilemma: he ordered the manufacture of more money. Why raise funds when you can create your own?

The same logic can be applied to the creation of a museum. Why seek out museums as an artist or wait for museums to seek you out when you can start up your own?

To form an autonomous zone, a possible space of power and resistance, all you need is an idea.

In March 1996 I opened the Museo Salinas (Salinas Museum). In honor of Carlos Salinas de Gortari who was president of Mexico between 1988 and 1994, but his election and term of office was embroiled in scandal and controversy. In his last year of government masks and dolls began appearing all over Mexico depicting the president in caricature and often emphasising and distorting certain features such as his eyes or ears. I began to collect these Salinas trinkets – models, decorations, masks, t-shirts, lollipops and sweets – everything bought in the streets of Mexico, and arranged them in the bathroom of my apartment. I hung a sign on the door and eventually had business cards made with the inscription: Vicente Razo, Museo Salinas Director. This is all I needed to do to create an autonomous space.

I found that the response elicited by the word ‘museum’ was very similar to the response of Pavlov’s famous dog to a whistle, people would immediately respond. An invisible pedestal is created thanks to the power of the word ‘museum’. The simple act of christening my toilet a museum had a magical effect: everyone from artists and homemakers

to bureaucrats and reporters, from all over the world, filed through the bathroom-museum.

When I founded the Museo Salinas, I had in mind the importance and function of the museum-institution within society’s psyche. Psychologically, the museum can be seen as a filter that regulates and selects which objects or historical documents migrate towards societies conscious or articulated side. By this selection process the museum also uncovers those objects and documents which are forgotten and ignored, cast onto the rubbish heap of a societies unconscious or latent side.

Considering this and bearing in mind the torpid state of museums – which are immersed in a colonised and elitist agenda with an atrophied bureaucratic corps afraid of any fragment of reality they might be expected to represent – I decided that it would be a healthy and necessary act to grant these President Salinas objects, singular testimonies to contemporary Mexican history, a space in a museum.

I wanted to ‘activate’ these objects, documenting and safeguarding a key strand of the country’s art practice; to preserve these radical works, beautiful and ephemeral in their street-based lifespan. Without being collected, they might have been forgotten or doomed to be scoffed at by the powers that be.

Museo Salinas and its public dissemination which you see here, the posters and ephemera that advertised the Museum, functions in the manner of myth making – like an ongoing trench of resistance. An army of knick-knacks that explore the notion of the public and political.

To paraphrase artist Diego Rivera writing about revolutionary printmaker and cartoonist Posada: “Certainly this president has been so unlucky to have the incomparable makers of these objects as the narrators and judges of his ways, deeds and adventures.”

Vicente Razo

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ORGANIC LAWS AND STATUTES

Museo Salinas is a consummate archaeology of political statements. It is an ethical installation of popular poetry negotiated through the conceptual avant-garde.

The Museum, as an institution, is consecrated to assemble and treasure trinkets turned into sabotage acts against the state. To build a collection of street spells against the Executive Power. To investigate the point of contact between memorabilia and public intrigue.

Its activities include the articulation, classification and preservation of plastic toys conceived as alternative means of political participation.

Besides functioning as an archive for the preservation of seditious souvenirs, other important institutional aims of the Museo Salinas are:

- 1) The popularisation and promotion of its collection
- 2) To support the creation of political trinkets
- 3) To promote the insolence of children and youths towards the powerful
- 4) To raise the level of derision and obscenity in political dialogue
- 5) To engage in continuous witchcraft against Presidents and those in political power
- 6) To foster street exorcisms of our revolutionary institutional nightmares and to unleash the forces of moral excess in the political arena
- 7) To promote and to protect the free circulation and trade of sinister jokes

STOP DOING READY-MADES, START MAKING MUSEUMS

Sincerely

The Director