



CANCER

A FILM BY GLAUBER ROCHA

February 7 - March 28, 2013 - ALEJANDRA VON HARTZ GALLERY 2630 NW 2nd Avenue, Miami FL 33127 USA

La Ville Souvenir

Gean Moreno & Ernesto Oroza

What happens if all the souvenir shops and stands are invaded by an abstract souvenir, something that everyone, even children, recognize as a malefic mass? And what if this mass all of a sudden is acknowledged by a baffled population as a proper sign to identify the city by? What if, magically eliciting little hostility, it is simply accepted and reproduced, despite the diffuse disgust and fear that it generates in everyone? Imagine hundreds of thousands of malefic and possibly animated masses—with a range of physiognomic variations of course, as souvenir economies demand—cast in plastic and in polychromed clay, produced in blown glass and in treated and pressed metal, all taking over the shelves and pushing past the doors of the establishments where they are housed and sold, leaving mucus trails behind, climbing over Mexican sombreros and sliming rows of postcards, sullyng flamingo towels and defiling squeaky rubber sharks, altering the temperature registered by the map-thermometers and rendering inconclusive the “deadness” of the alligator paw-bottle openers. What condition in the city, in its geography, in the behavior of its inhabitants, is suppurating these terrifying souvenirs? What dark underbelly of collective identity demands such an object? Is it rightful compensation for their wretchedness?

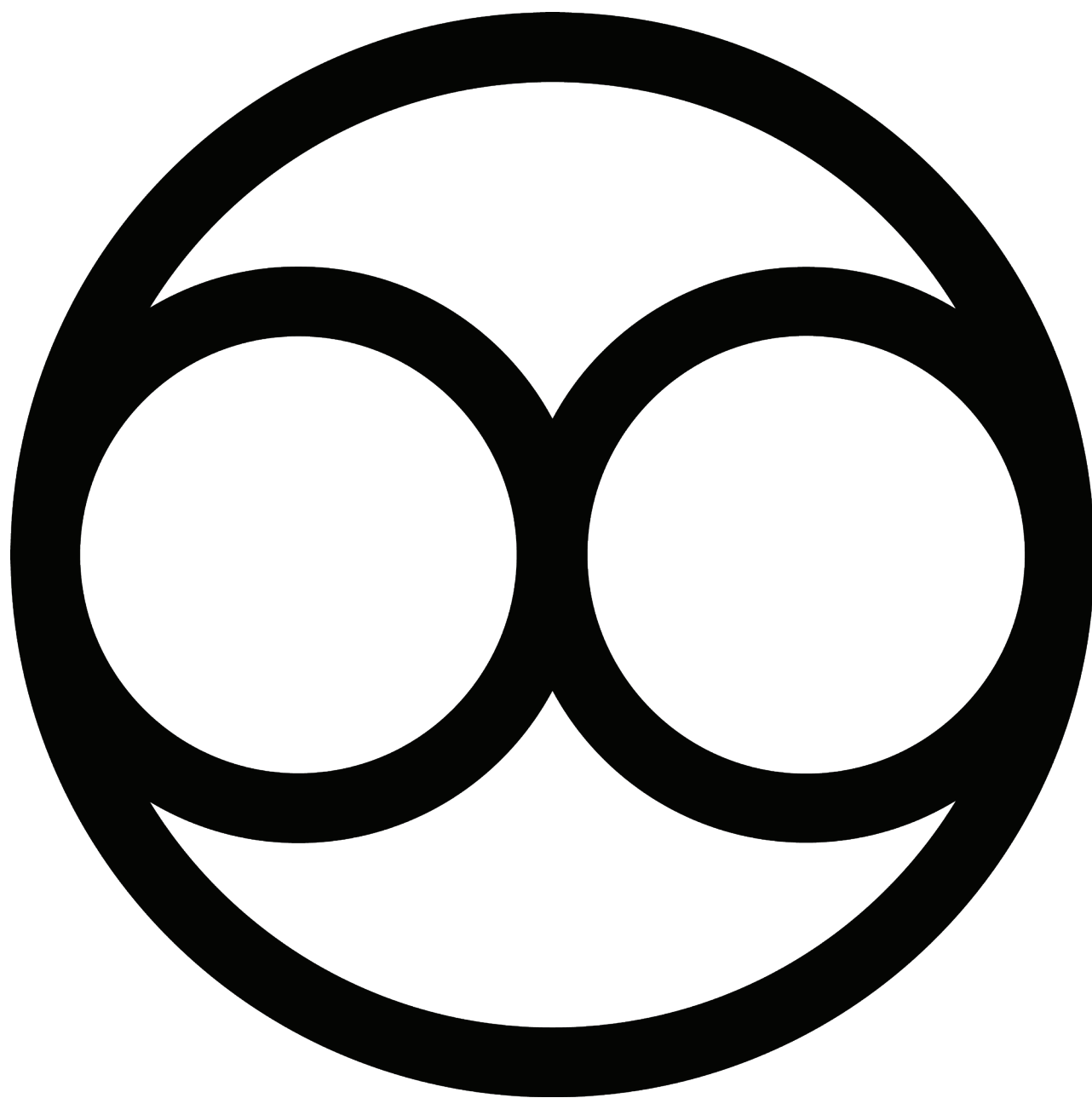
The questions can come from a different place: Is this souvenir even bound to the city which it purportedly represents? What if it was intended for some other place and the containers it was shipped in were accidentally sent to the wrong port? What if Somali pirates, a risk-averse subset among them, took cargo in lieu of hostages and abandoned it at sea when they realized what they had in their hands, and the materials simply drifted

onto shore and began to radiate out as they were absorbed by the local economies? What if this shapeless souvenir arrived like an invasive plant species, through clandestine channels, outfoxing border control agents, and settled in, put down roots and spread seed, overwhelmed the local ecosystem of representational characters, eliminating alligators, flamingos, dolphins, mermaids, and manatees, and now nothing can ward off its steady advance?

Imagine that these malefic masses, chromatically muddy and screen-printed with putrid and matte inks on rows of towels and t-shirts, begin to absorb all the light in the storefronts in which they are sold. They even ingest the sunlight that pours in through the windows and photosynthesize it into waste product. They slurp the neon gas as if the glass tubes were straws. They recast the souvenir shop as a zone of swelling opacity, of encroaching dark forces, of fading

details, of extravagant expenditures of energy without positive outcome: things are only eaten away and blinked out in there. Are these souvenirs evoking a buried past, ancestral sins and distant atrocities that are clawing their way out of the deep caves of repression? Or, are they pointing to something that is slowly materializing on the horizon, coming catastrophes? Are they inventing a dreaded condition, prefiguring or courting dark disaster, and forcing the city to assume it? Maybe they are pointing to the very end of the city, to that moment in which urban texture is so generic that to attempt to produce any kind of coherent sign system to represent it is a ludicrous task.

Hundreds of thousands of shot glasses and refrigerator magnets begin to arrive from China. (We always know where they come from, that's the one certainty we have these days, but we are unsure of the intended destination.) All of them are stamped with an image of the malefic mass. Leaving the port, trucks carrying container after container with screen-printed



Symbol system – Tomás Maldonado, 1962

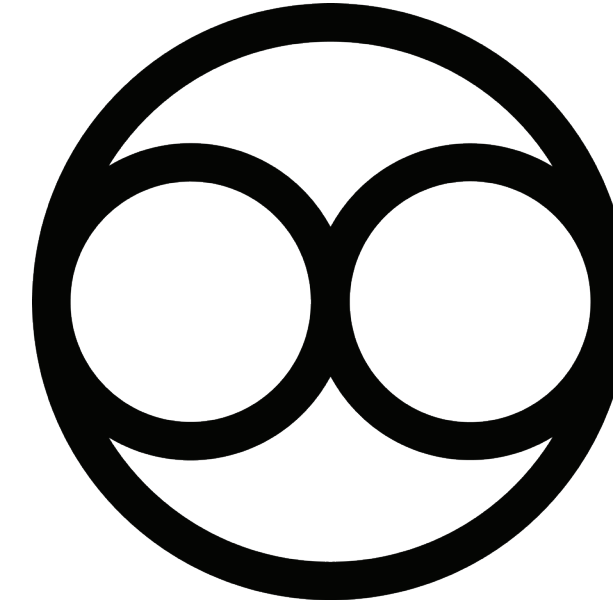
p. 2 p. 3

t-shirts and bathing suits drag this malefic mass across the city and into all the shops and bars by the beach. Lincoln Road mall becomes the largest deposit of layers of malefic masses, a kind of sedimentary diagram of this unstoppable abstraction. An image of it is printed on a massive vinyl mesh sleeve and draped over the Herzog and de Meuron parking garage, replacing one icon with another. Masses are also painted by famous street artists on foreclosed and abandoned buildings throughout the city as part of beautification campaigns sponsored by the major's office and desperate developers. They are cast in concrete so that they can be used as lawn ornaments and as camouflaged obstacles in pedestrian malls. The unstoppable invasion of malefic mass happens slowly, as slowly as the invasion of Mexican sombreros in Barcelona and Sevillian castanets in the Bahamas and Sphinxes in Las Vegas.

In time, the malefic mass will go global, like certain celebrities. Eventually, the Swedes and the Japanese and the Egyptians will take the malefic mass back home with them, across the ocean, through customs checkpoints in which bored agents will confuse it for a benign blob without the dark intention of swallowing differentiated urban texture. Perhaps, the true depth of mass's terrifying quality will only be obvious to us, who blew life into it, who can perceive it in its totality, who understand the invasive drive that animates its ability to generate reality. It's a supermass that overtakes everything, but slowly enough to curtail the possibility that any desperate call to action be put to the city's inhabitants or for product recalls to be issued. It alters the weather at a measured pace. It absorbs massive amounts of sunlight and heat but never in a single swoop. And it becomes increasingly and slowly less visible, less image, and, in

time, it is only a terrifying entity, a blank space without identity, and it makes the city like this as well. It incorporates the object it stood for into its fundamental formlessness.

And what if the hordes of



flamingos that have slowly taken over our shot glasses and towels and lottery tickets, invaded our landscape and imagination, are a temporary stage in the slow emergence of a malefic pink mass that will eventually overtake the city? What if it is waiting at the moment for someone to blow life into its melted-together body? Isn't this already happening? PortMiami just announced that the four Super Panamax cranes that it's having built in Shanghai--they arrive next summer--will be painted flamingo pink (along with the two that are already there) so that we can have a flock of gigantic souvenirs permanently tattooed against the horizon. A towering image to represent the city: crane-flamingos against a beatific sunrise. In no time, this image will begin to grace postcards and flickr feeds, and it will migrate to t-shirts and keychains and towels. Tropical typographies will dance around it. Eventually, it will mutate into the city's official logos and campaign signage. It will seep into our neural lines and be distorted in our night terrors. It's numbers--of the images, but also of other flamingo-structures and souvenir-buildings--will swell to such a degree that it will make little sense to speak of differentiated specimens, of individual manifestations. It will just be

one massive pink mass invading the city, assuming the shape of birds and buildings only as a way to disguise its dimension and extravagant force.

Crane-flamingos. A souvenir that is both a sign of the city and an element inscribed in the urban texture itself. The souvenir as no longer only a reflection of the city, but as the city itself. Which is to say as the end of the city. When the souvenir seeps into the chromosome sequences of contemporary architecture we've left behind the fable of the Generic City and the detrimental effects of speed building; we're beyond starchitects and urban planning. We've entered much stranger territory. We've butted up against the possibility of living inside souvenir-world--on palm tree-islands and tropical Alpine villages. The duck shed has exploded into the flamingo skyline, oddity has become norm. New buildings will be erected to resemble the souvenirs of buildings that no longer exist. Not Mies, but the Mies plastic keychain skyscraper as source and inspiration. A malefic mass of souvenir-architecture spreads and layers the globe with a new crust. We will be able inhabit this souvenir-world the same way we once thought we could live inside the Ville Spatiale. But, of course, with this difference: La Ville Souvenir has arrived through stealth and not through theoretical proposal and museum installations, or stowed away in styles friendly to it, like postmodern architecture or Memphis design. It never got stuck in the swamp of the manifesto or in reams of drawings. La Ville Souvenir, like a malefic mass that no one noticed until it was too late and it had overtaken everything, simply spread itself cunningly across the hard surface of reality. ■

TABLOID #24
Gean Moreno and Ernesto Oroza
This issue was produced for the exhibition
Drywood at Alejandra Von Hartz Gallery,
Miami. February 7-March 28, 2013
First printing: January, 2013

www.thetabloid.org info@thetabloid.org