



be called the “parachute effect”: What effect does the documentarian, the anthropologist, the interloper in a foreign region have on the lives of the people who do live there? Collins, though British, has lived in Barcelona—so *La Mina*, at least, may be immune to the potential criticism implied by this question. The works dealing with Africa and Russia are another matter. Does the artist have the informed consent of the people she represents? Have they participated in deciding on how their lives are presented and exhibited? Can art alter or leave a trace on the subjects it portrays, such as the three protagonists of *Parallel* (Constantine Diomonde, Dewa Abdousalaam, and Pamela Anyoti, who emigrated to London, Madrid, and Rome, respectively, from different parts of sub-Saharan Africa)? What does “leaving a trace” mean? These are difficult questions, and while Collins’s work is to be admired for raising them, that is not enough. For some time, she has been drawn to places that convey a sense of desolation and melancholy, places where the stories of people largely unknown take place. Yet the artist’s predilection for presenting her imagery on a monumental scale creates a kind of dissonance: These formats give the work a spectacular quality out of keeping with the intimacy implied by the narratives.

—Juan Vicente Aliaga
Translated from Spanish by Jane Brodie.

MEXICO CITY

Moris

EL ECO EXPERIMENTAL MUSEUM

Moris (Israel Meza Moreno) is a thirty-year-old Mexican artist whose work rapidly caught the eye of gallerists, collectors, and the general public. *Un animal muere porque otro tiene hambre* (An animal dies because another is hungry), 2008, his baroque, socially charged installation at El Eco Experimental Museum, contrasted sharply with the modernist aesthetic philosophy of the museum’s designer (Mathias Goeritz [1915–1990]), embodied in the building’s stark lines and monastic simplicity. Moris uses a repertoire of materials found along the sprawling streets of Mexico City (cardboard boxes, tin cans, cigarettes, glue, silicon, wood, masking tape, mattresses, weapons, figurines—“materials from hell,” as the artist called them in conversation) that tell of his constant traveling across geographical, physical, spiritual, and imaginative boundaries. From his home to bars, museums, galleries, discos, and parties, his ever-expanding circuit of movements has also taken him to jails, gang meetings, police headquarters, and drug markets. He knows Mexico City’s streets well and has developed the ability to merge with different communities.

Moris explores territory to detect and act on problems. He collects objects, forms relationships, and derives his works from these experiences. As an individual who moves within an increasingly sensitive and reactionary social body, he is a combination artist/sociologist/anthropologist/archaeologist whose work’s organizing principles lie beneath the surface, though its performative dimension is always the determinant. Emphasizing process and offering precarious assemblages, Moris never completes his work, underlining the insecurity of viewers and their social dynamics as well.

One part of *An animal dies* is a cardboard box simulating a living space, with an old mattress as roof; a ragged red blanket that lies on the floor is pierced by ice picks, “inviting” the audience into this frail habitat. Inside hang two amateur oil paintings of banal landscapes and a furry blanket with a tiger’s face; words such as TERRIFYING, BRUTAL, DECAPITATED, and MASSACRED, cut out from local newspapers, are collaged to the surfaces of the paintings. The second part of



Moris, *Un animal muere porque otro tiene hambre* (An animal dies because another is hungry), 2008, mixed-media installation, 78 1/2 x 59 1/2

the installation is a fragile square arrangement of six levels. The entire ensemble evokes the intertwining of religious hierarchy, power, money, politics, corruption, and conspiracy, typical of this country in which the government’s relation with the church is so twisted.

Moris questions the way in which we inhabit our big cities; he asks who the predators are and who the victims. Yet he accuses no one, displaying instead our destructive and alienated nature, which conditions our interactions with the metropolis. His strategies challenge the dynamics of domesticity that have dictated our “civilized” daily lives. Disrupting the safe, soft space of the museum, this is an exhibition about raw perceptions, the apparatus of domination, the logic of resistance, and a dark desire to see in all of this a particular kind of poetics.

—Jessica Berlanga Taylor

SHANGHAI

Michael Lin

SHANGHAI GALLERY OF ART

In Michael Lin’s first solo show in Shanghai—two years following his arrival in the city—his usual colorful flowers and patterns were nowhere to be found. Lin seems to have discovered a new formula with which to transform the vernacular into the spectacular, using ready-made objects, video, music, and performance as an ensemble in his new work, *What a Difference a Day Made*, 2008.

Entering the exhibition space, one experienced a sudden sense of displacement as a minimally furnished reception area led to a small, low-ceilinged room densely crowded with shelves of thoroughly banal mass-produced kitchen supplies and household goods. Piles of vividly colored plastic baskets lay scattered on the floor, below shelves packed with dozens of rice cookers and teapots. The artist had essentially transplanted to the gallery one of the local daily supply stores near his Shanghai residence, buying some 8,400 items from the store and reinstalling them here. As Lin comments, these mom-and-pop stores—on the verge of disappearance as convenience-store chains expand to supply international products—cater to the specific needs of their locales, forming a kind of commodity vernacular.

In his earlier work, Lin had appropriated ornamental flower patterns from Taiwanese or Japanese textiles and enlarged them to fit spaces of modern social engagement, and the work’s significance derived mostly from its temporal and cultural decontextualization as well as its often overwhelming visual presentation. In the current exhibition, too, the artificially insulated context of a gallery situated in an