

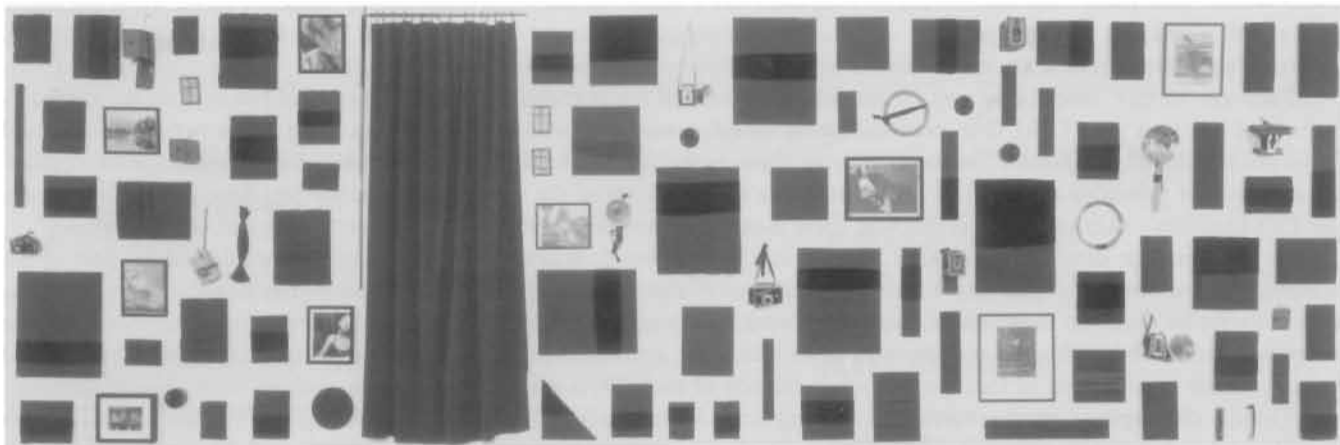
LISA SETTE GALLERY
4142 NORTH MARSHALL WAY
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA 85251-3838 USA

BULK RATE
US POSTAGE PAID
SCOTTSDALE AZ
PERMIT NO 635



LISA SETTE GALLERY NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, 1999/2000



Maurizio Pellegrin, *Camera's*, fabric, gelatin silver prints, objects, 79" x 252"

MEMORY AS IDENTITY

Venice, present in a variety of elements in Maurizio Pellegrin's works, never appears there in ways taken for granted, ...but essentially in the form of traces of a conceptual abstraction. Among Venice's colours Pellegrin takes two: the gold of thirteenth century gildings, which echo the glories of the old Venetian Republic, and the funereal black of gondolas.... Fragments of gilded Venetian objects are inserted everywhere in Pellegrin's assemblies as guide fossils, precious finds in a hard and shining metal, incorruptible and therefore worthy of eternity, thus preventing the disappearance of a sumptuous past, its total loss, that definite death that could be symbolized by the black ribbons which wrap them.... Pellegrin clings to the great past of Venice, bridgehead toward the Byzantine civilization and further to the Far East, thinking also to ward off its death, by extending conceptually Venice to Western civilization and hence to the existential dimension of humanity.... Yet Venice, besides being the place of existence and hence of death, is also the place of memory, another important constituent element of mankind. Memory overcomes death because it represents the function which assures the individual and the community...that identity which is perhaps the only element of continuity within a general process of flow and change.... This thoughtful attitude leads man, through the intermediary of language – either verbal or artistic – and symbolic representations, to the awareness that to exist means to experience temporality, to be capable of memory. Through memory, that function assigned by the mind to the arrow of time and thereby linking together the past, present and future of individuals and groups, man assimilates and “remembers” all the outside and inside stimuli to which he reacts consciously or unconsciously, accepting or refusing them and embedding them after their transformation into a complex of infinite partial memories identifying him as a member of a group, as speaking a language, as part of a collective memory and hence of a history, a literature, and art.... Thanks to memory, one might draw the conclusion – as it is true for Pellegrin's art – that man is what he has been or, more precisely, what he remembers he has been.... Pellegrin, on the concrete level of making art, does not try to *reconstruct* a context, as a historian would do, but he *constructs* its form starting from the materials of memory.... For Pellegrin making art consists of creating a context for objects, which allows establishing a relationship between them and man, because within such relationships repeated gestures and silent stories were important, whose weight was great and whose noise was almost inaudible.

by Igino Schraffl

excerpted from *Maurizio Pellegrin, Reflections and Intentions, 1999*

LISA SETTE GALLERY

4142 NORTH MARSHALL WAY
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA 85251-3838 USA
480 990 7342 telephone
480 970 0825 facsimile
sette@getnet.com
www.lisasettegallery.com

GALLERY HOURS

TUESDAY– FRIDAY 10:00 AM TO 5:00 PM
THURSDAY 7:00 TO 9:00 PM
SATURDAY NOON TO 5:00 PM

CLOSED THANKSGIVING,
CHRISTMAS & NEW YEARS DAY

Design by OLD SCRATCH BOOKWORKS

ABEL BARROSO'S VIDEO ART FROM THE THIRD WORLD

Step up close to any one of the unpretentiously carved wooden television sets that are part of "Video Art from the Third World" and you'll immediately notice that each has a crank handle or a wind-up key attached to it. Turn the crank or key and, magically, strategic parts of wooden cut-out images inside the faux folk art TV's bob, dip, advance or retreat. But make no mistake. These are not children's toys spawned by some eccentric avuncular urge.

They are, in fact, revealingly wry, masterfully understated meditations by Cuban artist Abel Barroso on his country's coming-of-age in a post-Cold War, post-industrial world, a world in which the ever-expanding abyss between haves and have-nots is painfully apparent. As the creator of these funky, but workable TV's, which are adorned with wooden rabbit-ear antennas of pre-cable days, points out, "Ironically, the video art of the third world is primitive, done in wood; however, the TV's function – they operate. In this way, there is contrast between them and the high technology of the first world."

Part printmaker, demi-sculptor, Abel Barroso is a master woodcut artist who, by using the usually hidden part of his printmaking craft as an integral part of his sculptural installations, has stepped over the boundaries historically imposed by the planographic medium in which he chooses to work. Barroso's unconventional wooden televisions are constructed, for the most part, from handcarved wood plates from which the artist also pulls woodcut engravings; hard mahogany is used for the interior mechanisms of these works, while the rest of each TV is made of softer cedar, valued for its ease of carving.

Though they appear earthy, naïve and uncomplicated, Barroso's technologically challenged TV's are in reality both visually and conceptually complex. Even a cursory glance at them instantly brings to mind work by art history's most notorious social satirists, including Spain's Francisco Goya, France's Honoré Daumier and England's William Hogarth. However, Barroso's nuanced satirizing of his homeland's social and political shortcomings, as well as the swooping raptorial style of foreign interests in Cuba, bears little relationship to the grotesqueness or seething rage of Goya, the often tedious moralizing of Hogarth or the raucous, spit-in-your-eye political mockery of Daumier.

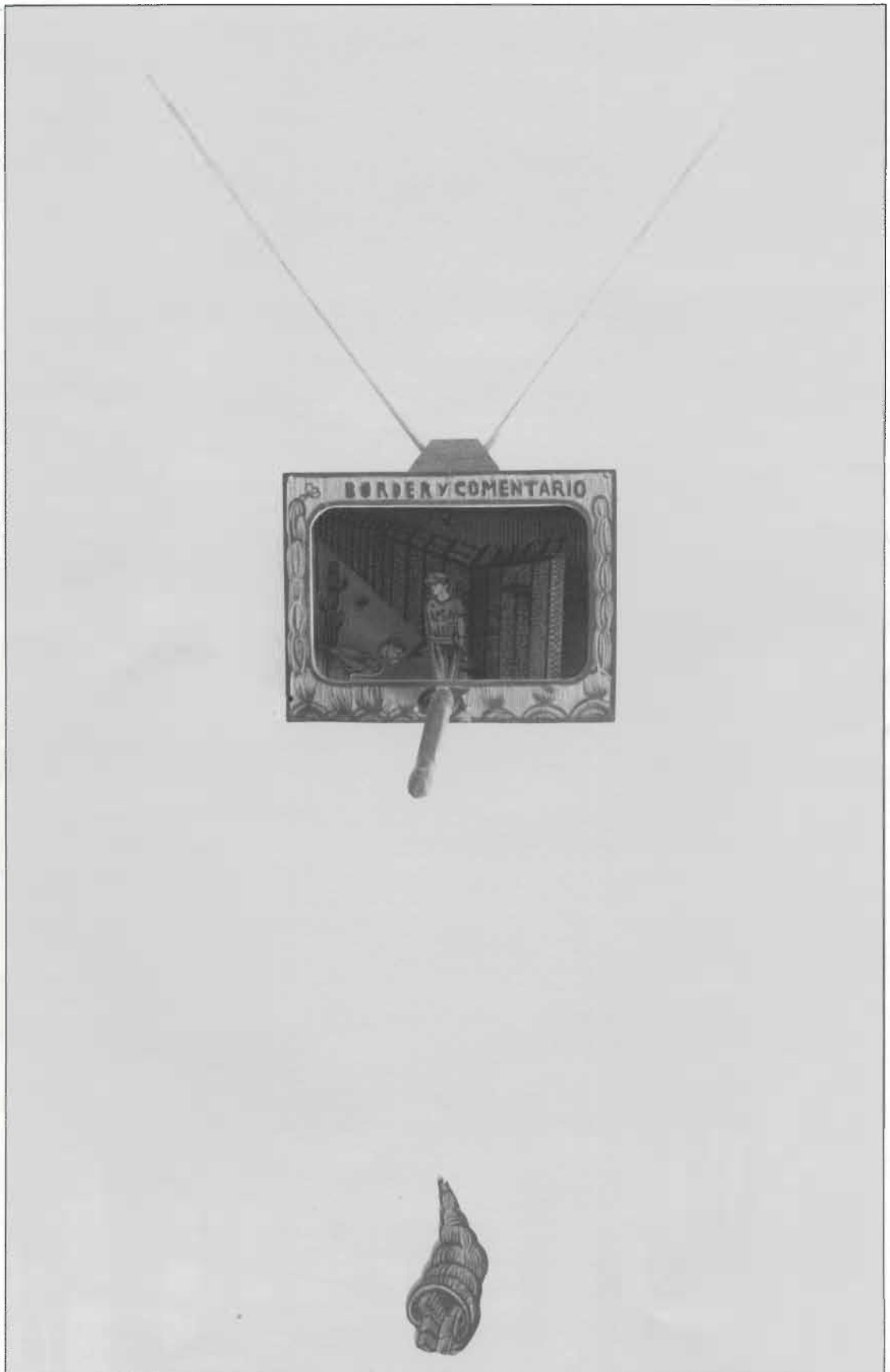
Barroso's approach is one of gentle, though incisive critique shrouded in the camouflage required by Cuba's current political restraints on freedom of expression. His are veiled indictments of a once Communist country that stalwartly shunned all foreign influence for over 30 years. Left behind both technologically and economically after the former Soviet Union abandoned it, Cuba is now openly receptive to foreign investment and tourism. Because of this, the country has been forced to weather the vicissitudes of aggressive first world capitalism and the desire for goods that has inevitably informed it.

Barroso's deceptively child-like creations, which he writes "[are] a reflection on the manipulation of information," take careful aim at a variety of both domestic and foreign issues Cuba presently faces. In *Vivienda de Naufragios (Living with Shipwrecks)*, a man swinging a cross between a hammer and sickle and a pick ax builds a house on a small, palm tree-studded island with flotsam that washes up from the sea: stray bricks, metal and wood, a half-submerged car, a Soviet star that pokes heavenward, a television emblazoned with the word "news." On one side of the TV, an industrial cityscape, armed with weapons, defends a Sony advertisement. In *Noticia (News)*, a perky female newscaster grins broadly at her audience as the carved legend, "How to Domesticate An Indian" scrolls on the bottom of the "screen." On the outside panels of the TV appears the effigy of an Indian and a doghouse with an empty plate at its door. A grim reminder of American blindness to the plight of those who try to leave Cuba, *Border y Comentario (Border and Commentary)* features a club-wielding U.S. border guard against the backdrop of a barbed wire-festooned wall; as the TV's crank turns, the guard strikes a kneeling man, whose head moves downward. A sardonic tribute to the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba, *Bienvenidos, Companero Papa (Welcome, Comrade Pope)* contains a waving pontiff on a moving bicycle that is being pulled along by a beleaguered pedaler with pumping legs.

In a companion piece to Barroso's televisions, *Nobody Can Assemble This*, the artist adroitly directs his attention to Cuba's desperate need for outside investment. At the same time he pokes fun at the country's burgeoning consumerism in the face of economic hard times, which has, in turn, bred increased crime, especially prostitution, perpetrated for the sake of those tantalizing electronic gizmos that, like a siren's song, now seductively beckon cash-strapped Cubanos.

Nobody Can Assemble This is a participatory floor installation in which the artist has taken a large woodcut plate and transformed it into jigsaw puzzle pieces. On the wall above the installation, a print made from the puzzle plate appears. Gallery visitors are invited to assemble the puzzle, which ultimately depicts a buxom bathing beauty (most probably a *jinetera*, or prostitute) on a towel with a palm tree motif, piggy bank in hand. She lies seductively on a conference table around which globe-headed businessmen vie for her favors with a variety of enticements, including a cell phone, a light bulb, credit cards, cars, stacks of money, miniature hotels and video and still cameras. According to the artist, the viewing public can become a part of the deal-making process represented by trying to put the puzzle pieces in place.

Abel Barroso is acutely aware of the cultural, social and political differences he must broach in presenting his work to foreign audiences. "With a spectator in any other country," the artist has told one interviewer, "one has to economize the language – that is, to make it a more direct, a faster, simpler language, so that the spectator is able to read it quickly and is able to interpret it." Through conscious simplicity, Barroso's work succeeds in giving even the most casual viewer easy access to his meaning.



Abel Barroso, *Border y Comentario (Border and Commentary)*, 1999, wood with moving parts

THE PERFECTLY PARADOXICAL NEW WORK BY FRANCES WHITEHEAD

When sculptor Frances Whitehead's beloved dog Rhino died several years ago, his cremated remains were unceremoniously handed to her in a cardboard box. Inspired by photographs of Egyptian cat mummy bundles placed on her studio wall, the artist immediately thought about making her deceased canine companion a proper funeral urn in the form of an ancient Egyptian canopic jar, fashioned from faience and topped with an effigy of Rhino's "huge and weird head." Within 15 minutes, Whitehead began furiously thinking about making other jars with less prosaic effigies that would represent the death or extinction of the jars' presumable contents. By her own admission, this was the unlikely prelude to the artist's current obsession with the classification of the unclassifiable.

Continuing to explore the essentially unchartable nether world suspended between polar opposites, together with the ordering and classification of objects and life forms, Whitehead's latest sculptural project, entitled "Arguably Alive (*the virus taxonomy*)," is the sculptor's most recent foray into the swirling metaphysical headwaters she has artfully navigated over the years. Her latest project is also a perfect example of Whitehead's longstanding preoccupation with the paradoxical.

For the last two years, the indefatigable sculptor has been working on a series of what will ultimately be 81 large, chartreuse-colored canopic jars she casts from molds using Egyptian paste or, as it is more commonly called, faience. Traditionally, ancient Egyptian canopic jars holding the mummified lungs, liver, stomach and intestines of a deceased person were placed in a tomb next to the embalmed and wrapped body from which the organs were removed. Each vital organ was assigned to a specific jar and invoked the protection of a separate deity, identified by its stopper, as well as by inscription.

Unlike authentic canopic jars, which ordinarily sported the heads of protective deities, each of Whitehead's vessels is topped by a to-scale, excruciatingly accurate, often strikingly beautiful representation of an existing virus family, ranging in size from one-half inch in diameter to three feet in length. Many of the viruses immortalized are those which can cause death in humans or animals. Ebola, HIV, measles, rabies and parvo are among those Whitehead has chosen to grace her jars.

In addition, each of her yellowish-green funerary urns is displayed on its own stainless steel stand ("the color is historically inauthentic," notes the artist, "a curious color because in the animal kingdom, it's death like, but in the plant kingdom, it's vital"). According to Whitehead, the stands are "designed to look like found objects, to look medical." Juxtaposing larger-than-life, three-dimensional figures of microscopic viruses, scientifically categorized as non-living, with an ancient Egyptian grave vessel customarily used for rituals related to a belief in an afterlife, Whitehead gives manifest form to questions about the very nature of existence itself. The artist addresses these queries not only from a purely scientific and physical standpoint, but also with an eye towards their inherent spiritual, philosophical and psychological implications.

"Everything about this project occupies that curious place between neither here nor there – whatever category you're talking about, whatever issue you're talking about, is between two typical polarities," Whitehead offers by way of explanation. "The virus is neither living nor dead. It kills us, but it is not living. We think of it as predatory, but it is absolutely non-volitional; we still fear these things, even though they're not really predators. There is no iconographic tradition of viruses, though they are the most ancient things; they are probably the mechanism of evolution."

Even Whitehead's choice of material for her jars involves that ineffable space between being and non-being: "Faience is neither here nor there; it is neither clay nor glaze. The pots continue to leach salts and get white crystals. You think you have this inert, dead thing, but it's not...the inside becomes the outside and turns itself inside out, just like the viruses are sort of the definition of life turned inside out."

First perfected 5,500 years ago, a millennium before glass was invented, faience (pronounced "fie-ahns" or "fay-ahns") is an elusive – and basically unworkable material – that lays claim to being the world's oldest artificial substance. It contains virtually no clay, making it difficult, at times almost impossible, to form, and is self-glazing. Called *tjehnet* by the Egyptians, which means "that which is brilliant," this mysterious, almost animated substance, was used for small hand-modeled or mold-made shabtis (funerary figurines), stelae (funerary markers), amulets, beads, palace decorations, mummy ornaments and other grave goods. The material itself was thought to offer the brilliance of celestial light and eternity to all who used it or the objects from which it was made; in fact, it was thought to facilitate a dead person's rebirth. To the Egyptians, faience was metaphorically the embodiment of life, rebirth and immortality.

"It's really important that people understand what a strange material this is," says Whitehead, a professor of sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago, "and what a technical impossibility it is that I am making [jars of this size]. I forget that because now, a couple of years later, I've solved the technical problems and I'm making it. But nobody makes anything out of this stuff."

NOTE: Front cover image: Frances Whitehead, *A Selection from Arguably Alive (the virus taxonomy)*, 1999. The photographs and essays from this publication may not be reproduced without the permission of Lisa Sette Gallery.

Themes of death and desire, of the very destructiveness of beauty, of absence and presence, of contained space and that which is contained – recurring leitmotifs that have appeared in Whitehead's past work such as "The Dream" and, more recently, "Antechamber" – thread their way through the artist's "arguably alive," virus-crowned urns (the title of her current sculptural installation was taken from the characterization of viruses as arguably alive by Lynn Margulis in *Five Kingdoms: An Illustrated Guide to the Phyla of Life on Earth*.) Though less obvious, other philosophical and formal concerns are examined through the work. "[These pieces] also involve questions about the status of objects and how they relate to the sculpture, and the notion of what constitutes a decorative art object, the way that's related to the utilitarian and the way that is and is not considered sculptural in late modernism," Frances Whitehead ruminates.

"For example, these canopic jars – what are they? Are they decorative art because they're ceramics? Are they sculptural installations? Are they conceptual art? Are they utilitarian? Are they just a bunch of urns? Because I suspect somebody will end up with one of these and will put their ashes in it. You know you buy what is going to kill you."

Kathleen Vanesian



Jamex and Einar de la Torre, *Marte y Venus*, 1999, glass & mixed media, 62" x 25" x 12"



Chema Madoz, *S/T (Untitled)*, 1996, toned gelatin silver print, 20" x 20"



GALLERY STAFF: Duane Smith, Associate Director, Lisa Sette, Director, Jennifer Friedman Kirshner, Director of Photography, Angie Buckley, Gallery Assistant, and Christian Widmer, Preparator

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

OCTOBER 7 - NOVEMBER 13, 1999
opening October 7 / 7-9 pm

FRANCES WHITEHEAD

NOVEMBER 18 - DECEMBER 31, 1999
opening November 18 / 7-9 pm

LUIS GONZALEZ PALMA

THROUGH THE ARCH
EINAR & JAMEX DE LA TORRE

JANUARY 6 - 29, 2000
opening January 6 / 7-9 pm

ABEL BARROSO

THROUGH THE ARCH
FRED STONEHOUSE

FEBRUARY 3 - 26, 2000
opening February 3 / 7-9 pm

MAURIZIO PELLEGRIN

THROUGH THE ARCH
CHEMA MADOZ

MARCH 2 - APRIL 1, 2000
opening March 2 / 7-9 pm

KAHN/SELESNICK

THROUGH THE ARCH
DARREN WATERSTON

APRIL 6 - 29, 2000
opening April 6 / 7-9 pm

KEVIN BERRY

THROUGH THE ARCH
TIMOTHY MCDOWELL

MAY 4 - JUNE 24, 2000
opening May 4 / 7-9 pm

MAYME KRATZ

THROUGH THE ARCH
FREDERIC WEBER

GALLERY EXPOSITIONS

January 20 - 23

Photo LA 2000

Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, Santa Monica, CA

February 11 - 13

The Photography Show 2000

Association of International Photography Art Dealers
New York Hilton