

LUIS
JORGE
DE LA
RAKA
CALIFORNIA

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Introduction

Anticipating that Hans Ulrich-Obrist is going to interview me, I decided to do a Self-Interview before I forget all about my biography altogether. For this I have created the character named Luis de la California with whom I will discuss about my artistic practice, about social problems, gossip and personal trivialities.

The book is like a kind of self-confession, somewhere between fiction and reality, allowing me to articulate my history, my epistemic fractures and political position, from my immediate experience.

JR: When I arrived at the place, the first thing that struck me was an immense flag; I think it measured about 40 meters. It was the first image that impressed me. I asked myself why a big flag at the North Pole?. Within days of being installed I started walking and getting lost in the city. Fairbanks is also called Last Frontier; it is the last most populated city in the extreme northwest of the American continent.

Then I thought about doing something with the flag. At first I had doubts about working with this image, you know the flag of the United States and the media and to work with something like that is very complicated. That action, although it seems simple, was the most complicated and most risky of all my actions. First because I was at risk of hurting myself when falling, second because of the risk of being arrested and deported. The first attempt at the action was a failure, I couldn't record or complete the action, because a man, who was passing by with his truck, came down and pointed his rifle at me and said: «Hey, son of a bitch», what do you do hanging on my flag, get off or I'll shoot you» A lot of people came over, the two guys, who were helping me with the recording tried to explain, that it was an artistic project. Because of that problem nothing was recorded, not even the moment when they threatened me with the rifle.

-So this is a Pot--au-Feu?

-Yes, it seems like a dish from the XVI or XVII century. I don't think it's a cannon dish. I got to know this dish from a friend's grandmother.

LDLC : How heavy is this story is and after that how did you solve the project?

-With a Spanish accent both say: Bon Appétit.

-I'll take a picture of this banquet. * Click, Click.

JR: The next day, together with the two assistants, I returned to the place, it was a Sunday and the street was silent, so I was

able to record the action. When I have an obsession to do something I want to finish it, the inconvenience of the man with the rifle didn't prevent me from returning. I convinced the two guys to help me again. Once I heard a lecture by the Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, she said that an artist has to reach the ultimate consequences of his work, not to flirt or play when questioning the power structures. I always stayed with what she said.

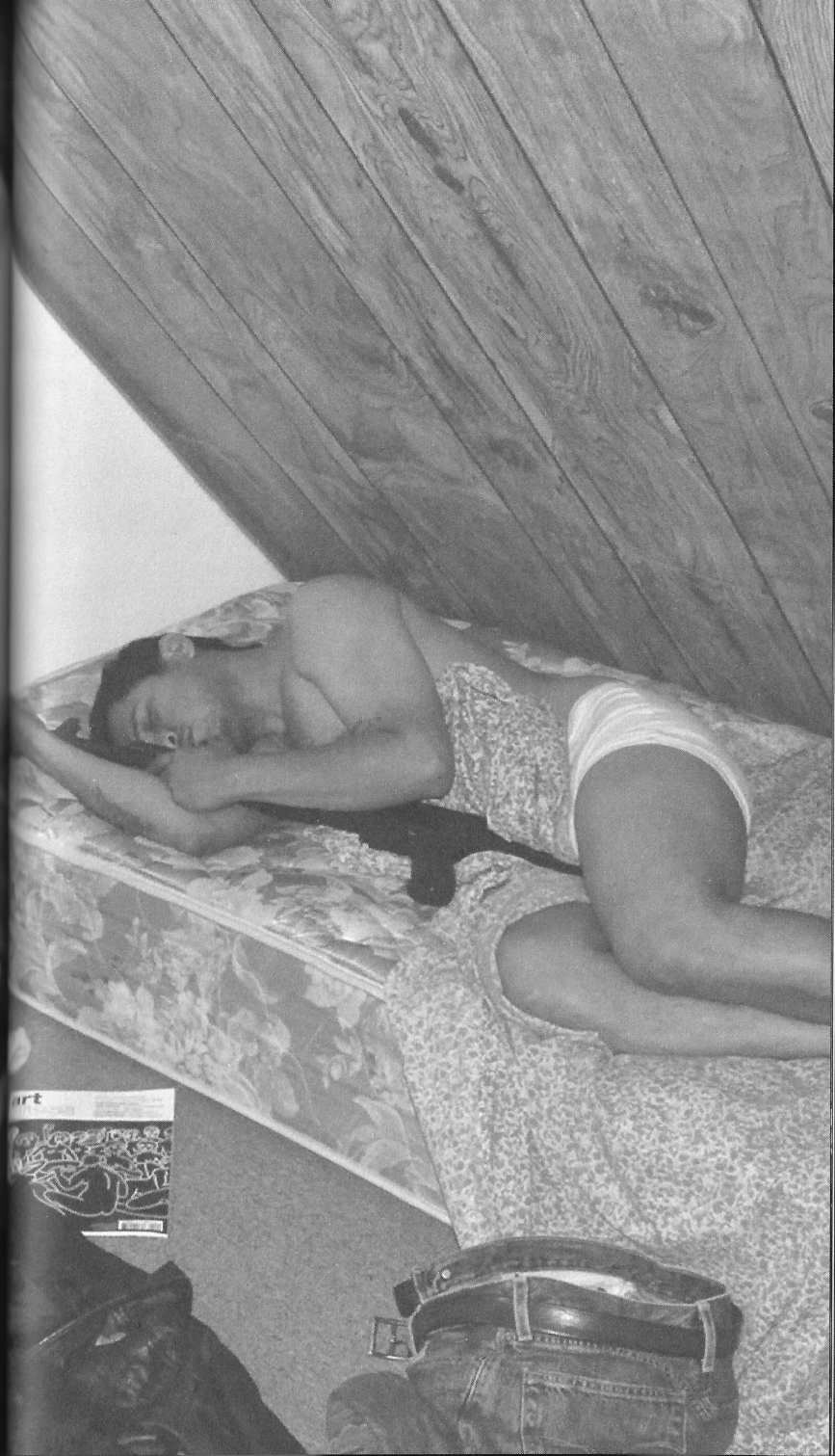
LDLC : What I understand is that with this action you were not representing the political, but creating a political moment. In this context I think about what is prohibited and what isn't.

***Raka rolls his eyes**



Fall from the flag, 2014, video 1,12 min. Fairbanks, Alaska (USA)

JR: I'm not sure, if I was creating something in that moment or not. Daniel Buren says, to work in the context and to see what is allowed and what isn't. The image of the USA flag is a very strong image and the more so for me as a Peruvian who since childhood has been educated to think that the United States is the bad friend, it is the enemy. From inside my artistic ingenuity I also saw that I was doing an inter-text with the paintings of Jasper Jones, the serigraphs of Andy Warhol and many other contemporary artists who have worked with this image of the USA empire. I wanted to appropriate that image to reinterpret it my way, but my history was influencing and changing the process. The idea of the action was to cling onto the flag until I had no more strength and fell, for me it was as if the United States expelled me from their country and I metaphorically fell into the garden of my house and there was also the juncture with the problem of the thousands of invisible citizens, mostly Latinos, waiting for an identity card from the USA government. That was the first action I did during my residency, then I made another one called *Sockeye drying in Alaska* (2014), where I built big scaffolds to dry salmon, I replaced the salmon with socks, I made an advertisement asking people to donate the socks, which were no longer in use. The most expensive and most valued salmon that Alaska exports is called Sockeye; I wanted to play with the name of the fish to give it another reading, dry socks outdoors. That installation I put in several places in the city; it was very funny, because people started associating the gesture with their history, since it is forbidden to dry salmon outdoors, because that causes a very strong smell. But the amount of socks that I was drying was directly related to the fish and at the same time the socks in the open air smell bad and if there are many, the smell is even stronger (LAUGHTER). This appropriation of drying salmon can sound very exotic or immediate from my foreign vision.

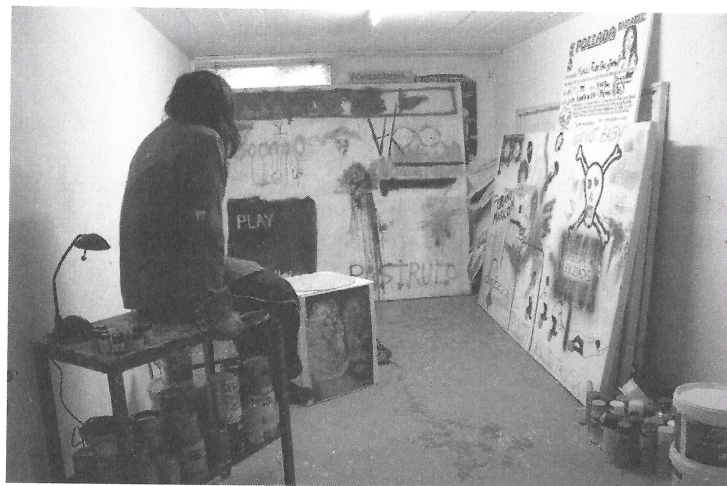


A black and white photograph of a building entrance. A white banner with bold, black, sans-serif text is stretched across the top of the entrance. The text reads 'NO SE NECESITAN ARTISTAS/ON N'A PAS BESOIN D'ARTISTES'. Below the banner, the entrance is framed by dark wooden or metal structures. The interior of the building is visible through the glass doors, showing a dark space with some furniture and a ladder. A bicycle is parked on the right side of the entrance.

NO SE NECESITAN ARTISTAS/ON N'A PAS BESOIN D'ARTISTES

No, se necesitan artistas
Acrilic on fabric 70 x4 400 cm
Colombia 2011, Switzerland 2016

JR: Thank you for inviting me, for your patience, generosity and for listening to me. You are always welcome. It was very stimulating that you interviewed me. You will forgive me if I overlooked something.



Jorge Raka in his studio, Sion, Switzerland 2017

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Translation by Astrid Welburn

Acknowledgements

édhea - École de design et haute école d'art du Valais
Eric Maeder, Jérôme Leuba, Leah Anderson, Alexine,
Astrid Welburn, Laura Ige.

Published by MACACO Press, 2019
macacopress.ch

LUIS DE LA CALIFORNIA was born in Los Angeles (1983). He live between Tijuana and New York. He is a researcher, writer and independent curator. He studied Sociology of the image in the Universidad Autónoma de México and Master in Art History in the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA). De la California has contributed his texts on art and culture in numerous catalogs and national and international publications. He has been curator of the IX Biennial of Arte do Amazonas (Manaus 2016). In New York he is co-founder and co-director of the Naked Gallery and in Lima he is curator of the research program for the arts of South America at the Maple Gas Corporation of Peru foundation. Their most important curatorships are: *Coitos interruptus* (Bogotá 2008), *Todo está de moda* (Lima 2009), *Esto no es un trabajo académico* (Buenos Aires 2011), *Gótico Tropical* (Salvador de Bahía 2011), *Algo esta pasando tras bambalinas* (Lima 2013), *Paisaje Sonoro* (Santiago de Chile 2013) *Algo espantoso va a suceder* (Ámsterdam 2014), *Art pour toute la famille* (Marcella 2014), *Esto no es una entrevista sino un conversatorio performance* (Tijuana 2015) *Phantasy* (New York 2015) *The Part Maldita* (Hong Kong 2015) *Mamarrachismo Crítico* (Barcelona 2016) *L'âge d'or* (Grenoble 2016) *Tomorrow ? Because tomorrow can be* (Liverpool 2016) *Todos somos drogadictos* (Lima 2017) *Hagas lo que hagas la cagas* (Berlín 2017). *Post-Bauhaus* (Hamburgo 2017). Currently working on a publication titled *Lumpen Jet-set, cartographies of Latin American artists abroad*.