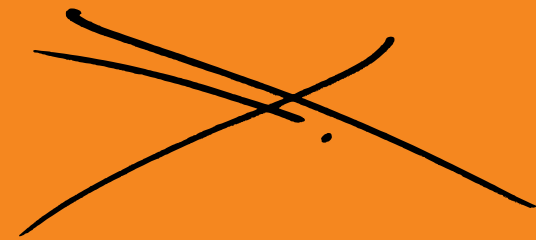




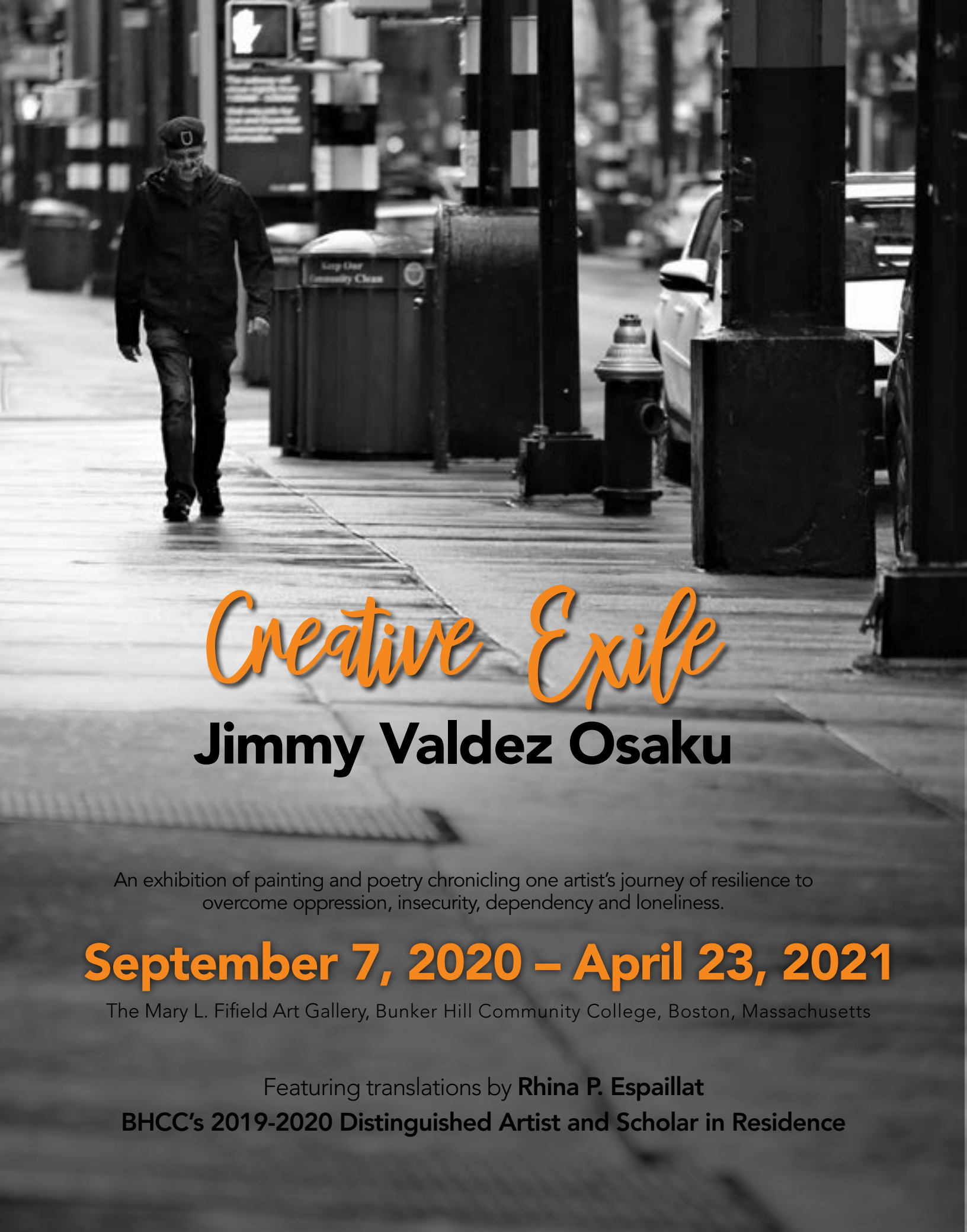
Creative Exile

Jimmy Valdez Osaku

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The Mary L. Fifield Art Gallery
Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, Massachusetts



Creative Exile **Jimmy Valdez Osaku**

An exhibition of painting and poetry chronicling one artist's journey of resilience to overcome oppression, insecurity, dependency and loneliness.

September 7, 2020 – April 23, 2021

The Mary L. Fifield Art Gallery, Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, Massachusetts

Featuring translations by **Rhina P. Espailat**

BHCC's 2019-2020 Distinguished Artist and Scholar in Residence

Contents

ABOUT THE ARTIST	7
AMONG SHADOWS: The Creative Exile Of Jimmy Valdez Osaku	9
ART LEADS THE WAY: The Journey of Jimmy Valdez Osaku	11
A CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTIST by Lee Santos Silva	13
JIMMY VALDEZ OSAKU, OR THE SEARCH FOR ONESELF by Carlos Sánchez	18
ON ART by Jimmy Valdez Osaku	20
PAINTING WITH WORDS	21
TRANSLATING JIMMY VALDEZ OSAKU: A Visit, or Breaking and Entering? by Rhina P. Espailat	23
PANDEMIC	31
WE ARE ALL EXILES NOW: Living Under Covid-19--Poems and Paintings	33
IN THE GALLERY	55-79
IN THE CLASSROOM	81
THE INTERSECTION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND ART: Interpreting and Reflecting Upon Psychological Theories Through Creative Exile by Amy L. Clinard	82
"EXILES FOR YEARS TO COME": A Reflection on Jimmy Valdez Osaku Poetry and Art by Alicia Gallego Zarzosa, PhD and Dr. Miguel A. Zepeda Torres	84
THE INTERSECTION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND ART: Reflecting Upon Resilience during COVID-19 Through Creative Exile by Amy L. Clinard	86



ABOUT THE ARTIST



AMONG SHADOWS:

The Creative Exile of Jimmy Valdez Osaku

An exile can be thought of as two people: always a stranger and always at home – since there may be no home to return to. Poet, painter, and cultural activist Jimmy Valdez Osaku works out of New York City; his art lives in another landscape, one of shadow, light, color, and struggle.

This exhibition at the Mary L. Fifield Art Gallery takes us into Jimmy's landscape through paintings, multimedia and poetry. This is a show of interior landscapes; the artist is both the creator of the art and its subject, his wanderings and his reflections presented in fragments and in his arresting use of color. Black lines create their own maze as they thread through canvases. References appear – a car, a steeple, a beach – yet the emotional thrust of Jimmy's work lies in the shadows, things half seen.

A few pieces are more overtly political; a knife juxtaposed with a bullet jutting from a rock – stands out. In some works, Jimmy has written the names of people who have hurt him and blotted them out with swaths of paint, as if to bury them with brightness.

Much of the work here speaks to the art of the street, referencing those spray-painted tags and hieroglyphics of an urban culture. For this show Jimmy has painted on the walls of the gallery, further breaking down the barriers between fine art and street art. There are messages here, secrets to be revealed by studying what lies inside the frame or on the wall.

Poetry for this exhibit has been translated by bilingual poet Rhina P. Espaillat, BHCC's 2019-2020 Distinguished Artist and Scholar in Residence, who describes the poems as "locked with disjointed syntax and bolted with grammatical structures as welcoming as barbed wire." Yet her effort to turn them into English has been

exhilarating: "I'm learning a different kind of reading, an approach to a mind that not only differs from mine in how it works, but also relies largely on the toolboxes of every visual artist—painter, photographer, cartoonist, sculptor, cinematographer, but not the writer—to create his inner world."

As this show was being organized the entire world entered a form of exile due to the coronavirus pandemic. Valdez – self-isolating in the epicenter of New York City – continued to paint and to write,

incorporating COVID-19 themes into his work, which were added to this show. These new paintings remind us that art can be used to reflect upon and synthesize the human experience, from the terrifying to the sublime.

Jimmy's work raises questions of identity for

Espaillat. "The image of the exile as a plural being, which occurs in the poetry of exiles and immigrants alike, raises an interesting question. How does he become plural? Is he divided into fragments that represent his conflicting loyalties in turmoil, or multiplied by the presence of loyalties not in conflict but in harmony, and perhaps by additional, layered identities acquired from his surroundings and the people in it?" she says. "I've encountered both kinds. It occurs to me that Jimmy's work reflects the divided self straining to create its own autobiography, speaking to what it contains and is constantly aware of, but cannot unify."

Even before the pandemic swept away social norms -- Jimmy felt most comfortable at home in his basement or "his cave." "I like landscapes, I love emotion; I have to deal with a lot of emotions," he says. Through both image and words, he expresses his feelings of loss and belonging, depicting journeys that never end and destinations that remain tantalizingly in the distance.

"Jimmy's work reflects the divided self straining to create its own autobiography, speaking to what it contains and is constantly aware of, but cannot unify."

*Rhina P. Espaillat,
Poet, Translator and Educator*



ART LEADS THE WAY:

The Journey of Jimmy Valdez Osaku

Jimmy Valdez Osaku (1975) is an artist living and working in New York City. He was raised in the Dominican Republic in a family who was passionate about art; both his grandfather and mother were painters. As a child, he started painting and writing poetry. In his early teens, he began to sell small paintings and stage exhibits with his mother.

Slightly colorblind, he found his family often looked askance at his color choices; he learned to read the descriptions on his tubes of paint but now says he can smell the differences in the pigment. His mother recalls her son's passion for art. After he participated in a collective exhibit with Puerto Rican and Dominican artists, she knew he was destined to follow his dreams to become an artist. "Painting is something we as a family love, we love tracing, the colors; we love to display what we do – that is art," she says.

He left home at age 16 and spent time in Spain, Switzerland, and France, mostly as a freelance art handler. He worked at the Louvre, where he was once asked to hold the *Mona Lisa*. Working at the Prado, he handled Picassos so many times, "it was like eating breakfast," he says. Holding the old masters was a profound – if somewhat nerve-wracking – experience; he could sense the centuries in the wood and canvas even as he knew he was holding up millions of dollars of property. Many artists inspired him: Cy Twombly, Clyfford Still. "De Kooning is a god to me," he says.

At age 26, he moved to New York City with \$50 to his name. At first unable to get a job as an art handler due in part to his then-limited English, he worked wherever he could – as a butcher, for example, and he still bears scars of those sharp knives. He worked as a cook in an Italian restaurant, which he liked so much he later spent some

time cooking in Italy. He still loves to cook. He found work at MOMA as a cook for six months. He was hired by famed auction house Sotheby's where he, again, handled million-dollar artwork, including one memorable Gustav Klimt painting that had been stolen by the Nazis.

He found the United States profoundly different politically from Europe and Latin American. "I believe in humanity," he explains. "Everyone deserves self-respect." At a rally to support immigration he was standing near the Rev. Al

Sharpton when Sharpton was arrested and so was Jimmy; a photograph of the pair even ended up being published.

He always kept painting, even though it was at first hard to get recognition for his work in the United States. "People don't believe in your skills until they see you working," he says. And he wrote: "I now have a dozen publications, including theater, short

stories and poetry. I try to write something every day, although there are some days I can't bring myself to write and there are other days when I can't make myself stop. When I write, I put in a lot of stuff – I don't like to be easy," he says. He wants his readers to ponder his words, "Why does he think that?"

He continues to work as an art handler for private clients. Since 2004, he has been organizing and curating art exhibits in various cultural centers in New York City and Union City, New Jersey, including "Poetas que pintan" 2004, "Undertow" 2012, "6to Piso" 2013, "Te Deum" 2014, "Beautiful Memory of Horror" 2015, "Wabi Sabi" 2016, "Resilencia" 2017, "Colateral" 2017, "Fulguration", "Rock-paper-scissors" and most recently "El Ojo Salvaje." He was a finalist in the Premio Diario Libre de Arte Contemporáneo (2015). His paintings and art installations have been exhibited in New York, San Juan, Havana, Santo Domingo, Tokyo, Madrid and Toronto. In 2018, he was granted the honor of dedicating the international book fair in New Jersey.

"Jimmy is the expression of a search for oneself, with a volcanic philosophical connotation that creates an exquisite visual and experimental world, which is affected by the turmoil of his existential ideas and his social and political commitment, that he assumes in a transitional society that refuses to perish."

*Carlos Sánchez,
Commissioner of Dominican Culture for the
United States*



A CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTIST

by Lee Santos Silva

The Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth of Bunker Hill Community College taps into the cultural wealth of the larger BHCC community to develop equity-minded practices among faculty and staff and to share those practices with the college as a whole. The concept of cultural wealth reflects the array of skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups, including their aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic and the familial capital. An equity framework allows the College to address racism, sexism, and biases within current policies, procedures, and decision-making processes, to eliminate organizational structures and practices that perpetuate academic performance gaps, and to create a campus community where resource distribution and opportunities are fair and accessible.

Through both his art and his writing, artist Jimmy Valdez Osaku explores the multicultural and multilayered facets of the American immigrant experience as well as a historical and global perspective on the role of the artist in the world.

Lee Santos Silva, Director of the Center for Equity and Cultural Wealth, recently interviewed Jimmy on a range of topics from his geographic and artistic influences, to his advice for young artists.

LSS: At BHCC we pride ourselves on valuing the cultural wealth of all members of our community—those who work here and study here. In what ways does your work as an artist, poet, and curator express these values?

JVO: I firmly believe that the most important thing about sharing my art and poetry with the college is that I do [so] with my utmost respect for the loving environment you have here. The institution and myself, as a public artist, are both equally enriched by sharing together our common experiences, our differing views, and our essential equality as members of the same human race. I am hoping my art can connect us more deeply together.

LSS: What does equity mean to you and how does your work across genres speak to equity?

JVO: My works have much to do with both a spirit and a hunger for justice. I carry this in my mind and in my heart at all times. I believe in the value that equity, justice, and love brings to all human beings—each strong on their own; but more powerful if sharing and respecting together. In my opinion, this is the only way to live among others, and be fully alive.

LSS: In what ways do you think your culture, as a Dominican, informed your art or made you a better artist?

JVO: We are made up of everything that surrounds us. Our lived experience, both in part and in total, leads us toward self-discovery. The Dominican Republic, as my birth country, forged in me a resilience I will never outgrow. The land offered me everything that was possible in its space, time, and living conditions. It was my road map of living, of being. My humble roots, a certain constitution and way of looking at things, a passion for all forms and life and a human warmth, a compassion, that I always try to share with others, most undoubtedly with others, comes from being Antillean.

LSS: Which poets have most influenced your work as a visual artist and which visual artists have most influenced your work as a poet?

JVO: When I was just entering adolescence, I met the renowned Puerto Rican writer and painter Sixto Febus Rivera, who took me in as if I were a son, a grandson, a fresh piece of clay to be molded into something for the future.



Sixto told me so many things about the Louvre, the Prado, the great museums of the world, that, even though I was only ten years old at the time, I was caught by all his words, his infusive love for the arts, and his bold desire to explore the world.

Sixto read me his own poetry, as well as the poetry of great Latin American writers. He introduced me to Abelardo Diaz Alfaro and Alejandro Carpentier, and then he started teaching me all that he had learned from his friend Marcel Duchamp (a bit of chess and how to look at things from a thousand different angles). I learned about “poetry” from the paintings of Willem de Kooning, but also a lot about “painting” by reading Charles Bukowski.

LSS: In what ways do you think navigating between different art forms—poetry and visual art—strengthens both your poems and your paintings?

JVO: I do not conceive of my life, or existence itself, as lacking either, because in both things--poetry and painting—when they are put to good use, they allow me to be free as an artist, to feel full of both beyond measure, rather than hungry for one.

LSS: In what ways are framing and hanging art for public viewing similar to how you’d frame and prepare a poem for publication or public reading?

JVO: Before birth I was ready. The way I plan and execute things could seem chaotic to anyone who doesn’t know me well. In each endeavor—painting or writing—I try to offer a full spectrum of my feelings at any given moment. I think we are all born with a talent to develop. When creating, I do not stop to think about what others may think of the finished product. In this, I am very selfish. If it is my work, I can change things, as I like, and please myself first. But when I am the curator, I must consider what others will think since they are the intended spectator of the work. In my own process of writing or painting, I usually do not prepare in advance; I just let things flow. However, because with both things I can sometimes struggle in the creation, I know very well a certain kind of pain—an intimate, unique frustration that all artists feel. And then, there is the excitement of overcoming these feelings, and finishing the work.



LSS: Do you have a unifying vision or theme that unites all of your work across different artistic forms of expression?

JVO: Passion. It is at the heart of what I do, and it is fundamentally who I am as an artist and a person. Whether it is an abundant color on my canvases, or the ambitious words and observations in the texts I write, passion is always present, in pure and resilient ways. It’s the experience of being alive – both in sorrow and in joy, in love as in regret.

LSS: Who in your personal life has – positively or negatively – most impacted your career as an artist, and how?

JVO: Until the time of his death, my father-in-law, Michel Ritter--a great artist, director and curator—worked at the Swiss Cultural Center, Paris, France. He did so during the occupation of Iraq, and when



"To find your authentic voice, all possibilities must be explored to know that your truth and power live in many places at the same time."

Jimmy Valdez Osaku

infamous photos of the Abu Ghraib prison emerged in the media, he proposed, curated and then staged an exhibition called "Sweet Democracy," putting his position in great danger, because the work denounced the abuses perpetrated in that country by the occupying troops. His courage and his daring in favor of art and justice inspired me to reflect on the curator's role to impart real change in the world. His artistic commitment and denunciation of injustice created a huge stir and allowed people to be more concerned about what was happening in the world around them. I do my best to continue with work that aims at challenging, awakening and changing those who encounter it. He will forever be my hero!

LSS: In any of your poems or in your poetry, have you ever tried to convey a concept from Spanish into English that you found impossible to translate completely and effectively? What expression was it and how did you resolve this?

JVO: I am very silly with languages. I have traveled the world and I can barely remember how to order chicken with rice in some places. I can only write in Spanish. I defend myself in French and English. I say some things in Japanese or Russian. But when I am writing in other languages, I allow myself to make mistakes, to find new ways of expressing feelings and idea. Isn't this the equal parts joy and purpose of poetry?

LSS: What advice do you have for young artists struggling to find their voice?

JVO: It is difficult to prescribe formulas or paths to follow to find your unique and individual voice. I think the key is and always will be constancy and remaining faithful to what you believe to be the "truth." I think that first of all, art has to be created with zeal, with great love, with hunger and, of course, with an understanding of what you, the artist, want to communicate.

JIMMY VALDEZ OSAKU, O LA BÚSQUEDA DE SÍ MISMO

Por Carlos Sánchez, Comisionado Dominicano de Cultura para Estados Unidos

"Está muy extendida entre los pintores la creencia de que lo importante no es lo que se pinta, sino pintarlo bien. Eso es puro academicismo.

No hay buena pintura sobre nada".
Mark Rothko

Aunque en sus inicios "la primera generación de la escuela de Nueva York", o expresionistas abstractos, era un grupo disperso, poco a poco fueron coincidiendo por razones de los momentos históricos, como fue el impacto de los reflejos de la Gran Depresión y la posguerra.

Robert Coates decía que otros calificaban de "escuela pictórica de las manchas y los borrones", y que él amablemente, la había llamado con el nombre de "expresionismo abstracto", aunque ya en el 1919, según Bárbara Hess, Alfred Barr habló por primera vez de ese estilo al que muchos críticos por mucho tiempo se negaron a considerarlo como tal.

Jimmy Valdez es un fiel heredero de ese movimiento artístico americano. Él expresa en sus obras el más exacto camino estilístico, el rompimiento que dialoga con una búsqueda interior en lo formal y estético de sus obras. Así encontramos en ellas grandes formatos donde su contenido es sin final, como decían los críticos de las obras de Jackson Pollock.

Jimmy es la expresión de una búsqueda de sí mismo con una connotación filosófica volcánica que se vuelca en sus obras y va creando un mundo visual experimental y exquisito, afectado por el tumulto de sus ideas existenciales y los compromisos sociales y políticos que él asume en una sociedad en tránsito que se niega a perecer.

Sus obras expresan la influencia de ese mundo febril de las artes visuales que rugen en territorio norteamericano y específicamente en la ciudad de Nueva York, donde él permanentemente ejerce como museógrafo en galerías de arte importantes y como curador de muchas exposiciones de pintores jóvenes, además del contacto y relación directa con las obras y artistas de la talla de Yoon A Kim, Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami, entre otros.

Cada época se expresa en las artes con sellos característicos, tanto en la técnica como en el estilo y en la búsqueda de valores estéticos que nacen de forma inconsciente en el artista. Esa búsqueda puede llegar, como ocurrió a algunos expresionistas abstractos durante la Guerra Fría, a establecer compromisos sociales y políticos en esa etapa histórica.

Jimmy Valdez se mueve, como artista visual, en lo que podría denominarse el neoexpresionismo abstracto expresando una búsqueda febril con una estética comprometida y contestataria de una sociedad social y políticamente en decadencia.



El grito. Sothebys. Subasta.

JIMMY VALDEZ OSAKU, OR THE SEARCH FOR ONESELF

by Carlos Sánchez, Commissioner of Dominican Culture for the United States

"It is a widely accepted notion among painters that it does not matter what one paints as long as it is well painted. This is the essence of academicism. There is no such thing as good painting about nothing." Mark Rothko

Even though the First Generation of the New York School of Design, or abstract expressionists, was a scattered group, they progressively agreed with one another due to historical moments, such as the impact of the Great Depression and the Post War era.

Robert Coates said that while others referred to it as "the School of blots and stains," he kindly coined the name of "abstract expressionism"; although, according to Barbara Hess, Alfred Barr had already referred for the first time in 1919 to the style that many critics around the world refused to consider as such.

Jimmy Valdez Osaku is a true follower of this American artistic movement. He expresses in his works the most precise stylistic path, the dialogue with an internal search both formal and aesthetic. Thus, we find in his production, large-format works in which content is endless, as critics used to refer to Jackson Pollock's works.

Jimmy is the expression of a search for oneself, with a volcanic philosophical connotation that creates an exquisite visual and experimental world, which is affected by the turmoil of his existential ideas and his social and political commitment, that he assumes in a transitional society that refuses to perish.

His works express the influence of a febrile visual arts world that roars in North American territories, more precisely in New York City, where he permanently serves as a curator in many important art galleries and young artists' exhibitions. Besides, he is in contact and has direct relationship with the works of outstanding artists, such as Yoon A Kim, Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami, among others.

Each era finds its expression in the Arts through characteristic hallmarks, such as techniques, style, and in the search for aesthetic values that unconsciously surge from the artist. This search may result in the establishment of social and political compromise in a given historical period, as it happened to some abstract expressionists during the Cold War.

Jimmy Valdez Osaku moves, as a visual artist, in what could be called abstract neo-expressionism, expressing a febrile search with a compromised and anti-establishment aesthetic against a politically decadent society.

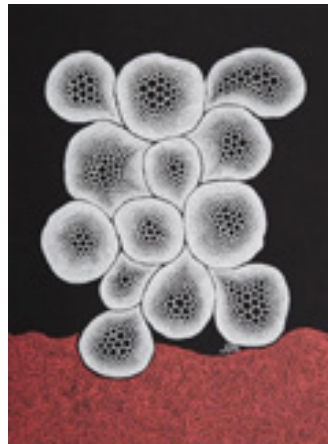
English translation by Alicia Gallego Zarzosa, PhD,
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Assistant Professor and Chairperson, Global Languages Department, Bunker Hill Community College



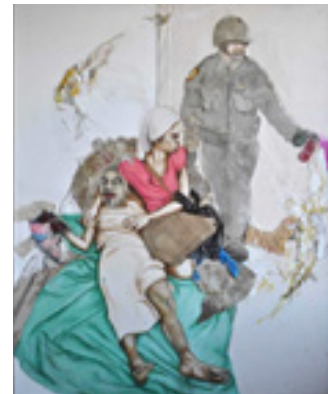
Installation for Art Basel, Miami, Florida.

ON ART

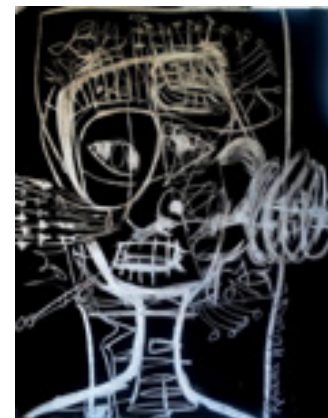
by Jimmy Valdez Osaku



Marissa Levien



Maurice Thomassen



Rosalba Hernandez

Yesterday, while I was painting, I realized that my left hand always moved counterclockwise. Seeing this, I tried to oppose the natural movement of the palette knife with which I instinctively trace what comes to mind.

As a result, I experienced an intense discomfort in the mobility of my work, which resulted in that experiment being something extremely ugly, much uglier than the works that generally come from my hands.

I appreciate the art of men and women who, with passion, love and talent, are committed to artistic production from a genuine, crafted concept. The ones who take care of their art with warm kindness, with authentic devotion, as an intimate portrait of the ideological, social and humane conscience of the author: a human being who produces Art from the very insides of his heart, from his cosmic anatomy, the underlying layer . . .

I am myself a laborer for the art market (I have worked for the most important institutions handling works of art and antiques). I state without any fear of being mistaken, that the majority of the works of art are being commercialized at ridiculously high prices, and lack any soul, reason, truth from the artists who have created them.

The contemporary art market is flooded with swindlers whose only guarantee of success is having a good marketing strategy and a couple of gallerists ready to sell rubbish in the name of conceptual art.

I know many "renowned" artists who only walk in their studios to sign the canvases, sculptures and all the other things produced as art; the sole production coming from young students and trainees hungry for employment.

It is true that many people have protested against contemporary art for these reasons and others that can be sensed inside the system. But we cannot deny the significance of the works created by artists such as Willem de Kooning, Clyfford Still, Alexander Calder,

Basquiat, Pollock, Kline, Gorky and Joan Michel, to mention some of my favorites...

Every time I have to install one of their works, or other works by Matta, Lam, Picasso, Tamayo, Frida, Siqueiros or Guayasamin, I feel a kind of enormous respect and honor that nurture what I am and what I want to become in my profession.

It my understanding, as a connoisseur who believes in constant, revolutionary, talented work, that those men and women who offered the best from themselves in each canvas, figure, and product, do so as a good birthed from inside their souls, and not just as a mere artificial product so they could fill up their pockets while living by their wits.

In any case, there is much talent, skill, and constancy in a great number of artists that I proudly know, or whose works I handle every day in the activities in which I participate as a technician and installer for different galleries and museums all over the world.

They include the Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto (1923-2005), David Lyle, Yoshitomo Nara, Yayoi Kusama, Juan Gómez Quiroz and Oviedo. These are the friends that produce/develop the kind of works I believe in, the ones I enjoy and would consume if I had the resources and spaces necessary to fulfill that dream.

Milcah Bassel, Peter Gynd, Tamara Shelest, Anna Molska, Maurice Thomassen, Ko Seng Man, Yoon A Kim, Izumi Kato, Rosalba Hernandez, Raquel Paiewonsky, Marissa Levien, Michelle Doll, Eliana Maria Pérez Núñez, Mayuko Fumino form part of the group of artists I especially admire, love and respect so much for what they express in each of their works, their spaces, with transcendent vitality (as should be): the Art.

English translation by
Alicia Gallego Zarzosa, PhD
and Dr. Miguel A. Zepeda Torres



PAINTING WITH WORDS



TRANSLATING JIMMY VALDEZ OSAKU— A VISIT, OR BREAKING AND ENTERING?

by Rhina P. Espailat

Every text waiting to be translated introduces some specific challenge for the translator, whether it's a setting so unfamiliar that every detail must be checked for accuracy, or dialogue so essential to the senses that it must feel and sound authentic without drawing attention to itself, or any of several other potential stumbling-blocks. But those are all part of my need as a translator to get myself invited, with at least a measure of civility, if not outright welcome, into a text—a mind—not opposed to attention from strangers.

But what if the door the translator knocks on seems locked with disjointed syntax and bolted with grammatical structures as welcoming as barbed wire? And what if, to deepen the density and ambiguity of the resident text, that text rushes to close every shutter and dims the lights, but leaves the back door ajar and insinuates an invitation with what looks like body language?

Those are the contradictory responses that I've been teased and baffled by, working on this arresting manuscript by Jimmy Valdez Osaku, painter, cultural activist, immigrant worker at a dozen trades, passionate political thinker, and—oh yes—highly regarded poet in our shared native language. This has been my first attempt at the translation of hermetic poetry, work that seems to invite my attention, but doesn't want me to know that it wants my attention at all. It's the most difficult translation I've ever done, and has left me wondering if I've been obliquely invited in by a complicated, seductive text, or on the contrary guilty of housebreaking and entering.

But the outcome of this scary first attempt has been invaluable, and more exhilarating than I expected. After thinking, all these years, that I already knew how to read, I'm learning a different kind of reading, an approach to a mind that not only differs from mine in how it works, but also relies largely on the toolboxes of every visual artist—painter, photographer, cartoonist, sculptor, cinematographer, but not the writer—to create his inner world.



Photo of Rhina P. Espailat, translator of *Creative Exile*, Poems by Jimmy Valdez Osaku (2020).

Having composed poems, from the age of four, using the tools of the speaker, singer, dancer, drummer wielding the percussion of meter and substitution, sound repetition of all kinds, theme and variations, and all of what the body does with language, I'm learning a different syntax, a grammar that has to be not so much heard and decoded as smelled and tasted, to process experience via sensation and memory, with only minimal mediation from common speech.

I don't quite have the hang of it yet, much less the ability to describe it, but the few examples that follow below may help to illustrate some of its appeal as well as its difficulty, so as to give the Anglophone reader/listener an idea of the startling effect of the Spanish original it has been my pleasure, challenge and privilege to translate.

OTRA VEZ LA LLUVIA

Otra vez la lluvia y las bolsas de basura en la calle. Yo arrastro una caja de herramientas pesada y torpe.

Sirenas policiales, gente que corre, los curiosos que salen al balcón de las casas. Cómo estipular el olor mediatibundo colándose en el aire?

Se apuestan las señoras, suben a los árboles los niños, la multitud abre paso y entonces cruzó ante la mirada atónita de todos.

-Es el tipo de la mala sombra!- Susurran entre ellos.

Cierro el ojo izquierdo, guiño un bostezo, tanteo viejas cicatrices invocando la leve sonrisa de una infancia remota y triste, pero sin la empuñadura adusta, fría, engarzada en el pecho por la que ahora soy atracción de circo.

Todos vinieron a ver al tipo arrastrando su caja menesterosa, me digo (aunque en el fondo sabemos la verdad, en el fondo conocemos el motivo, en el fondo quieren preguntar qué se siente ser la misma exuberancia de lo absurdo respirando la incalculable sepultura de sus pasos).

Arrastro un corazón de papel quemado, una caja de herramientas, la mordedura de un pez, el sumo atropellamiento de las dudas.

-Es el tipo de la mala sombra!- pregonan las chicas asustadas con el crujir inenarrable del sobre todo... Yo ato el último botón pegado al cuello. Pasó la soga por el hombro, empujo el cuerpo, prosigo la marcha (arrastrando, siempre arrastrando, una caja de herramientas, un cuerpo envejecido, las tinieblas mismas de las lápidas al anochecer los vocablos que le han dado nombre a su nombre, verdad a la verdad, dolor a mi dolor, máscara de cuco al sangrado del alma).

JVO Original

ONCE AGAIN THE RAIN

Once again the rain and the bags of garbage in the street. I drag a heavy, unwieldy box of tools.

Police sirens, people running, the curious ones who go out to their balconies.

How to describe the meditative odor drifting in the air.

The ladies place bets, the children climb trees, the crowd parts, and then it crossed before the astonished eyes of them all.

"It's the guy with the bad shadow!" they whisper among themselves.

I close my left eye, wink with a yawn, finger old scars invoking the faint smile of a remote, sad infancy, but without the grim, cold hilt firmly planted in my breast that today renders me a circus attraction.

Everyone has come to see the guy dragging his miserable box, I tell myself (although at heart we know the truth, at heart we understand their motive, at heart they want to know what does it feel like to be the same exuberance of the absurd, breathing the incalculable grave of its steps).

I drag a charred paper heart, a box of tools, the bite of a fish, the overwhelming abuse of doubts.

"This is the guy with the bad shadow!" shout the frightened girls, frightened by the unmistakable squeaking of his coat...I tie the top button onto the collar. I loop the rope over my shoulder, push the body onward, keep going (dragging, always dragging, a box of tools, an aging body, the mists around headstones at nightfall, the words that have given a name to the name, truth to the truth, the bogeyman's mask to the bleeding of the soul).

RPE English Translation

UNA GOTA DE LLUVIA

Oscura retina, oscura alcoba. Nido ambulante de hambrientas voces agoreras. Me desnudo del frío esqueleto de mi sombra (paso a la intemperie, al tracto transparente de una gota de lluvia) dejando cual bagazo la alelada esperma de unos ojos.

Soy y me deslizo en forma casi etérea por el cristal que mira sin vestigios el semblante anohecido de lo denso. Caigo sobre un muro y luego sobre un coche que viaja con la prisa de las alarmas policiales. El viento me vuela, me despedaza en el aire, agrega cicatrices ajenas a lo que supongo existe.

La noche se reúne a mí alrededor. Husmea como a cadáver al que encuentran los perros (la noche posa sus miedos, amaga con tomarme por asalto, con hincar sus dientes en el revés natural de las vísceras).

Pero la noche prefiere huir, le cuesta huir, huye; el estruendo de un relámpago azuza la ventisca con la que salgo disparado a las profundidades mismas de la ciudad, para entonces seguir cayendo, para entonces seguir transformándome en alguna cosa rancia, costrosa, de aspecto indefinible que al fin se diluye, que luego regresa a la oscura mansedumbre de mi sombra, al frío esqueleto de una alcoba, a la única voz que puedo reconocer entre las tantas...

JVO Original

A RAINDROP

Dark retina, dark bedchamber. Mobile nest of hungry prophetic voices. I strip away the cold skeleton of my shadow (stepping into harsh weather, the clear path of one drop of rain) leaving behind like crushed discarded fruit the stupefied sperm of a pair of eyes.

I am and unfold in almost ethereal form along the sighted crystal that notes, without a trace, the night-darkened features of the dense world. I stumble on a wall, and then a coach traveling at the velocity of police sirens. The wind flies me, tears me apart in the air, adds unfamiliar scars to those I assume exist.

The night gathers itself anew around me. It sniffs, as at a corpse discovered by dogs (the night poses its terrors, threatens to assault me by surprise, to sink its teeth into the native core of my bowels).

But the night prefers to run away, must run away, runs away; the clamor of lightning provokes the winddrift that bears me on to the very depths of the city, then to continue falling, then to become endlessly some rancid thing, some crust-covered indefinable thing that finally vanishes, that later returns to the dark mildness of my shadow, to the cold skeleton of a bedchamber, to the only voice I recognize among so many...

RPE English Translation





BELFOS Y SANGRE

Belfos y sangre y esqueleto (flaco el toro). La arena es un círculo remoto con gradas de concreto, vociferantes, necias.

Clavado en el morrillo, diez veces más profundo el arpón; brama, bufe, resopla borbotones rojizos, lepra asfixiante, trazo fosforescente del filo predador que busca cortarle la oreja como trofeo.

Flaco el toro (de ruido pastoso, pajoso, enfermo) exhibe la costrosa mancha de sus penas en el cofre abierto y desgarrado de la carne.

-Para que muera el toro existe un capote, una espada, el matador de pomposa armadura, cinco mil diablos y un demonio empuñando el estoque, la muleta, el mango corto de las misericordias.-

Flaco el toro, enfermo el toro, lisiado el toro, gime.

JVO Original

THICK LIPS AND BLOOD

Thick lips and blood (skinny, the bull). The arena is a remote circle with concrete steps, loud, annoying.

Fixed firm in his nape, ten times deeper than the harpoon; he roars, snorts, blows out red gushes, an asphyxiating leprosy, phosphorescent trail of the predatory edge that means to cut off an ear as a trophy.

Skinny, the bull (with a sound of pasture land, of straw, sick) he exhibits the scabby stain of his suffering in the open, torn coffer of his flesh.

In order for the bull to die there is a cape, a sword, the matador in his pompous outfit, five thousand devils and one, satanic, clutching the sword, the stick, the short-handled instrument of mercy.

Skinny, the bull; sick, the bull; wounded, the bull moans...

RPE English Translation



PANDEMIC



WE ARE ALL EXILES NOW:

LIVING UNDER COVID-19

Throughout history, artists have responded with creative fervor to outbreaks of deadly infection; think of the Black Plague-inspired bags of bones in medieval art – the skulls referencing memento mori and the whirling skeletons locked in a Danse Macabre. Edgar Allan Poe turned infection into a literal party-crasher in his 1845 short story, “The Masque of the Red Death.” In the 1980s, the luminous figures in Keith Haring’s AIDS paintings with their Silence=Death tag gave voice to a disease initially ignored by the government.

Art gives us a space to experience the anxiety of widespread sickness without succumbing to despair; art becomes an act of resistance as well as a way to interpret tragedy. The cycle begins anew with the COVID-19 pandemic, as artists create images of social distancing and soap; others stage drive-by art shows that heed calls for social distancing. Among the artists responding to the pandemic is Jimmy Valdez Osaku who has produced a body of work reflecting his reaction to the coronavirus and its impact on humanity. Examples are included in this publication.

“Now I’m one more frightened man, one more unlucky bastard, one more victim,” writes Jimmy Valdez Osaku in an introduction “Éste es otro mundo/This is Another World.” The pieces featured here were produced just after the world went into lockdown.

They are raw and immediate and yet they resonate with the previously established theme for Jimmy’s BHCC show, *Creative Exile*, which was organized in January of 2020. The pandemic has made exiles of all of us; we have been swept away from “normal life” and we don’t know what “normal life” will be in the future.

We can only move from one day to the next. As Jimmy writes in his prose poem, “Soledad la mañana/A Sunny Morning”: “Still at home, my mother’s place, like an uncomfortable guest who mustn’t be disturbed because he bites...”

The pandemic has produced its own indelible images ripe for artistic interpretation – the ubiquitous masks, the empty city streets, the blur of frantic activity in hospital acute care units by doctors and nurses suited up as if to walk in the empty void of space.



Memento Mori, French-Pendant with a Monk and Death
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.



Mathematical Absurdities In The Time Of the Virus, 24" x 18", Oil on canvas



Under The Radioactive Rain, 18" x 24", Oil on canvas.

The bleakness of the COVID-19 urban landscape is explored in "Shut Down, Man. The City Dies," Jimmy's foreboding oil-on-canvas painting that sets small swaths of lemony yellow amid a skyline of grey, charcoal and tan; a square beacon of tangerine, like bloodshot eyes, that overlook the city. In "Under The Radioactive Rain," hot flames of red, fuchsia, and mustard – similar to the bright colors often used in the now-indelible illustrations of the coronavirus – surrounds a strange figure, barely shielded by a thin layer of white and ivory. Is this the world that we now live in? With the inscrutable, indiscriminating virus swirling in the air around us?

"Mathematical Absurdities In The Time Of The Virus" seems calculating with its contrast of sandy browns and cool blue; the blue seems to reference an open-mouth monster, perhaps like the coronavirus itself – which is neither alive nor dead – and needs a human as host to reproduce. We hear William Yeats reciting "What rough beast, its hour come round at last" from his 1919 poem, "The Second Coming," which also contains a line ripped from today's headlines: "Things fall apart."

In his writings, Jimmy explores COVID-19 from an oblique angle, from the death of a friend and mentor to portraits of his partner. He pushes back against the angst that threatens to engulf us. In "Escribe Poesia/ Write Poetry," he throws down the challenge: "Write poetry. Be harsh with it. Use the knife blade on it, rough shards, the crushed mortar from bricks. Throw stones at it, pounce, at all costs.... Write as if your concubines were the Black Death and the plagues of Egypt."

As this catalog is being compiled, we – the collective humanity – don't yet know how the pandemic will end. We may continue to be exiles for years to come.



Shut Down, Man. The City Dies, 18" x 24", Oil on canvas.



QUEDA LO QUE QUEDA

Queda lo que queda del vil arrepentimiento: la ceniza, el registro, la imprecación (los vaivenes nupciales en la claraboya). Todo en su lugar prohibido, todo adrede. La ciudad resistiendo los jadeos del paisaje (sarna crepuscular, fosforescencia) y como hombre roto, el pesimismo.

Queda lo que queda como unción, como metáfora inasequible, como explanada (ovillo de escarnios en quietud y en el lado tres monedas que alguien arroja con usura). Queda una luz en el derruido pasillo de hospital. Una luz que ilumina tanto al piso como a la soledad. Una luz de silencios recostada sobre cristales rotos y papel arrugado. Una luz de bolsas plásticas agujereadas por los espectros de la tortura. Luz de bombilla apestosa, sonriente como un escarabajo martillo, casi mutante.

Luz de humedades y manchas verdes. Luz intestinal en boca oscura (luz en la palabra que descorcha lo infesto). Luz de entramados artificios, cóncava, de mordida al cuello. Luz en mi dedo (percutor amniótico). Luz mientras camino con la rota entereza de lo roto. Luz de oficio, máscara de plata sobre un rostro comido por la lepra. Nada como este reino de muros escaldados. Nada como este dejo rumiante, este balido de luz, esta sombra agazapada en el necio espejismo de la vida.

JVO Original

WHAT REMAINS AT LAST

What remains at last is the last of that vile repentance: the ashes, the search, the imprecations (the marital come-and-go in the skylight). Everything in its forbidden place, everything on purpose. The city resisting the panting of the landscape (the mange at sundown, the phosphorescence, and, as a broken man, the pessimism).

What remains as an anointing, an ungraspable metaphor, as a level field (tangle of injurious insults in the stillness, beside three coins tossed by someone usuriously). A light remains in the ruined hallway of the hospital. A light that illuminates the floor as well as the solitude. A light of silences leaning on broken panes of glass and crumpled paper. A light of plastic bags punctured by the specter of torture. Light of a stinking bulb, smiling like a beetle [*martillo*], almost a mutant.

Light of dampness and green stains. Intestinal light in a dark mouth (light in the word that uncorks the infested thing). Light of a network of artifices, concave, a bite on the neck. Light in my finger (amniotic drummer). Light while I walk with the broken wholeness of the broken. Light of work, silver mask over a face eaten by leprosy. There's nothing like this kingdom of scalded walls. Nothing like this aftertaste of ruminant, this shadow squatting in the annoying mirage of life.

RPE English Translation

ÉSTE ES OTRO MUNDO/ THIS IS ANOTHER WORLD

Now I'm one more frightened man, one more unlucky bastard, one more victim of the "universally known paralyzing spectral momentum," since I'm at the gates, in the very instant when the mechanisms of the system are coming to explain to us the urgency of those measures (not to be delayed and always painful in the words of the state) that limit, and will limit, according to the degree of harm undergone, the social, civil, economic, and human rights won by means of blood and fire during the previous scheme of things, now lamentably lost to the democratic nations of the world.

The known world, until now, has gone downhill. It's hard announcing it, but it is the most reasonable assertion, a matter of common sense, without prerogatives for anyone as long as the tragedy is being televised and there is no room for doubt, suspicion, rebellions that may oppose the necessary restrictions recommended by experts!

As a thinking person (an expert mourner) I feel obligated to drag the coffins of a new order: not without first uttering the cry, offering the sorrowful expressions, pronouncing a panegyric of useless replacements (as when a leg is amputated but leaves behind the sensation of a leg still in its original place, right beside the other extremity).

I take out the trash, return to my confinement. Neither Chinese nor Mexicans arrive to dig for plastics or glass. Parks and avenues are deserted (the jukebox shut down its sacred hallelujahs a week ago, the Spanish owner of the bar having died in a hospital in Queens).

My landlord comes down and we embark on somber conversations. Before, we used to sit at the table, now we measure the distance between us (he's come with a complaint: the Russian fellow he housed free of charge for almost a year is still bringing friends to the back yard, and sometimes they even sleep inside, if I'm not here and he feels at home).

I don't know what to do anymore. I explain. Until now I've lacked the guts to throw him out on the street (an inheritance from an ex who begged my compassion for a friend: "Could you give him shelter? He's an exile, a childhood brother with no money, no papers in hand, and he can barely stand." And, of course, I accepted the obligation. Since then it's been like having a 33-year-old son who always leaves dirty dishes in the sink and resents it if I enter the living room in the morning looking for something). A month ago I told him to leave, I reply to the landlord, but now he complains that he can't find a place to stay because of the coronavirus business.

My landlord looks at me as one looks at an idiot. "Well, tell him not to bring any more people to the house. We have little children, we're secluded, and we fear for our health!" I feel ashamed. I lower my eyes. I offer to pay the rent a week before the end of the month. The

landlord goes upstairs. I head for the living room. That's where the Russian sleeps. I see him stretched out on the floor with a blanket, wearing audiophones.

"What are you planning to do?" The Russian is barely awake. He regards me with a look halfway between amazement and displeasure over being disturbed.

"Hi, Jimmy! What do you want or need?"

"When are you leaving?"

And the Russian springs up as if a firing pin had propelled him from the floor.

"Bro! I'm looking, but not finding."

"And what about your friend, my ex? Can't she help you?"

"She's gone to L.A. with her boyfriend! I'm alone! I have \$100 I can give you!"

"I don't want your \$100. You've been here almost a year. Wait, who opened the bottle of vodka? Why do you just assume the right to open other people's bottles?"

No vodka, no tequila, no whiskey in the house, because instead of opening wine, you load up on the hard stuff."

"I promise to buy the vodka! I'm sorry."

"Don't buy anything. Round up your cash and find a place!"

Then I go out. Then I walk the street. I get into the car. The devil is inside me. I call an ex. No answer. I call my mother. "I told you so!" is all she says.

I stop at the supermarket. I buy lemons, garlic, peppers. I'm in a line behind three others. The money runs out, there are few options. I head out for Long Island (that's where I have my other hideout). Most definitely this world is another world, whether I object or not!

RPE English Translation

SOLEADA LA MAÑANA/ A SUNNY MORNING

A sunny morning, feverish haste, almost mechanical. We woke up holding hands on the rails of time (as earlyish summer roams the streets hanging on one shoulder, wrapped around the barbed wire of the body like a leap year).

The absolute spectacle of so much misery fumbles in the depths of the plastic bags heaped on the sidewalk (some horrible thing seems to have amputated something more than its legs, something more, some other indescribable essential) and I hate myself with a hopeless rancor of cloudy emblems in the reflection.

How is it possible to say pain so that it hurts to hear it. How do you describe the body tied to its anguish, with its word-filled mouth, like one who has died in all ways, in the same ways as your fellow man, with that same heartache, the kind that goes with major sorrows?

The air is a long figure, yellowish, in whose eyes, trembling, there are structured visceral enterprises (I am something with a homicidal smile, something walking around biting its tongue). I take place like the rust you can spot in the horrors of Guernica. The soul sleeps taking disastrous steps (everything is damaged organized from within. All the surroundings predict a sharp blow to the shin).

I switch from a bleak mask to an apron and experience a knife thrust at my throat; the blood spurts and has, for a snout, the dactylic mortar from a brick (how annoying stature is as one rehearses the broken moons of life).

"On what rock does the sea rest?" asks the gunfire from the porch aimed at the buttonhole of the shirt.

II

I walk, carrying inside so many shades of blue, with so many hematomas (suspicious of plots, radioactive) breaking into the instant of the purposeful. They call me crazy (errant, sleepless skylight) crazy rock of algae ruffled by the wind. The truth is that I don't know how to comply with the insipid custom of bowing (I suffer from incorruptible things).

The day is a tranquility bound to nostalgia (the walls stumble at the outskirts, nevertheless they link sound to the ever-attentive bread loaf of silence). I turn to look at my mother (she breathes her armchair of novels). She is lying there, asleep, waiting, I can see what she's dreaming: the black and white of the same film repeated one hundred times, and silent.

III

My sister does not come down from her orgasms, for days she's been in the doghouse (her sailor visits her; it happens every time, each winter since her sixteenth year, the same wretch). I have no word from my brother, he is asexual and cross-eyed (the only thing that moves him is the music of Los Panchos, or staring for a long time at the only photo of my father). I should acknowledge that they love me not only as the prodigal son, the one with the fucked-up soul, the poet. They love me because among all of them, I'm the one who most resembles our father (skinny, big-nosed, communist).

IV

I'm still at home...

Still at home, my mother's place, like an uncomfortable guest who mustn't be disturbed because he bites (and because if he were to be thrown out, the remorse would eat up a mother so used to the ill-natured sarcasm of her offspring).

V

I hate it when people talk as if we were all interested in the Kiss of Judas, that vulgar reposition of contempt with nitwitted protagonists who know only how to weep during the stellar event that is dinner. I'm equally nauseated by the hair-tinted ignorance of my sister, always unsatisfied with the pawing provided by the boyfriend: claiming, always claiming, a damned presence that evidence suggests will not withstand the sexual dust-storm at its noisy peak (I suspect that our youngest has read the thousand-and-something nights of the *Kama Sutra* fifteen times as a bedtime book).

I'm fed up with the very stink, with her certainties and her sterile breasts like lugubrious blue bowls; I don't remember if I have, in each hand, five fingers or six or only one. I ask my mother to stop making noise, but my mother isn't there, she's gone to church, to the corner, seeking to denounce me to some killer of lunatics. I finish the nudes in too predictable a fashion; I am the same blasphemous, dirty person who, without his mother, would be birthing a thunderous future: SEVEN KNIVES IN THE BREAST.

VI

White or black...

White or black, this damp morning, a quiet knife-thrust of alloys, a whole exhausted root waits, in hiding, in the wrinkles of the pillow. I smile because it's January and I am unavoidable, like a winter larva in the hiding place of each thing. I've chosen the beatings, each profitable bruise, as if the next sabotage to wait for depended on hungry wolves.

It's becoming too late for the date of return, all that's left of me is the splinter, the dryness of my side, the ribbed disjointedness that spreads out like a big stain of nauseating dark eye rings in the breath. What's left is left without more profit than this gentleness without resentments; although I think I've dreamt something, but I don't remember. And my sister appears, almost naked, bringing her sailor along. From what fisherman's basket did she get him? And then they go upstairs to the sequestered space of their nest. What a merciless and incomprehensible city! But anyway, it's morning, precisely six. "The cock crows," I write; my mother is headed for the kitchen.

RPE English Translation



ESCRIBE POESÍA/ WRITE POETRY

Write poetry. Be harsh with it. Use the knife blade on it, rough shards, the crushed mortar from bricks. Throw stones at it, pounce, at all costs. Be threatening with your body. Let the suicidal cry of the Viking penetrate skin even beyond walls.

Harbor no aspirations, aim for nothing spectacular, never initiate the smug, cold plot of self-deception (accept no praise, no slaps on the back) just kill, just look for the heart of the enemy in every leg-snapping bite you aim at the world.

Get used to death, to bare your guts (if you wish, take the trouble to strap on a suicide belt). Few care, nobody cares, it is meaningless, that mountain of words drowning inside of you.

For your evening meal, cook up the weedy growth that crowns your old wounds (think, think very carefully, about objects that may be thrown, so as to avoid risking their malfunction and turning on you, boomerang style). Write poetry without thinking of anyone else. Write as if your concubines were the Black Death and the plagues of Egypt (Note: these are merely notions that occur to the undersigned, ancestral rot, nominal leper colonies, tricks wrought by fanaticism).

Become poetry. Masturbate with it. Love it and also destroy it (never sleep with other poets, as that produces an infestation of tender feelings).

There you have the truth about all the well-known lies: write with all the conviction of hot soups in winter (those fed to us with little airplanes to the mouth to cure colds and every crisis of hypothermia).

RPE English Translation

YO QUE NO SOY NADA/ I WHO AM NOTHING

Last night I sat down in front of the TV. I had slept for an hour and made a soup that afternoon. Tired, drunk, wrinkled like a wet bandage over a wound that never heals.

I looked up the Korean series I'd been watching for days. I tuned into the episode (with a butt whipping to my innards, and storm warnings, and the choppy sea of tears).

"I want a watercress salad!" she said. I nodded, with the I'll-do-as-I-please smile that says "maybe...".

Gin and tonic, four times. The second hour of the anaconda-like Korean series. She's lying across my lap. I'm resisting the investment of thought. The pain of love, the sadness of those days, grief over the death of my friend—in short, the hundred demons that embody the inability to offer the same fixation, the same pattern of endearments, the coffer containing everything including the keys to my heart.

Loving is a mess from which I always emerge sheared. I have no soul for it (I am an open wound inflicted by the Nipponese knife-edge of a katana). I so regret the inabilities imposed by that. The body is another thing: you sleep, you kiss, you cook, pay attention, talk (you do all that in a robotic sense, barely engaging your feelings, nakedness, a few cents).

"What about her?" you ask yourself, as you watch the saddest, most painful episode on TV. That's when the dam of my self-containment ruptures. Tears, gasps, biting of the tongue, and of course, a stupid cry of hemorrhagic despair, one of those that stops your breathing so that you think you're dying.

She jumps up, hugs me, fetches a glass of water and asks if I'm weeping over René or the miniseries, or my daughters? And I don't have the courage to tell her. There is nothing so low as it would be to tell her what is the everything and then some that is destroying my heart!

Then I calm down. Then I stay in front of the TV. I say something, some meaningless comment or other. "I like the actress. She's very beautiful (I say this while I stroke her forehead with my fingers and pass my hand over her long hair)." Now she's angry. "I thought you were referring to me. I thought you were saying that you like my forehead, my hair, my nose!"

And that's how the spectacle of The Last Judgment begins! I tried to sleep on the couch. She came and went, throwing things at me. She pulled the blanket off me. She sent me to hell. She beat me over the head. I decided to find refuge elsewhere. I went into the bedroom to pack as I always do – (throwing everything into plastic bags and calling a taxi). She persists. Fighting. Looking for a way to deal me the one serious blow that will go with me to the grave. "Damn you, you no-good...!" that was her battle-cry. "Be quiet! The neighbors are going to think I'm the one who is beating you!" And she's breaking the door. Crying. All snotty.

I took what I could and called a taxi. She went to the kitchen. She even put the packages of spaghetti in plastic bags and threw them outside at me. I waited—with my canvases, spatulas, fresh paint—for the arrival of the taxi. Then she came out. She began to collect my things and take them inside. I told her to leave me alone. That I was leaving. That I was just waiting for the taxi, and so it was. The taxi arrived at one o'clock in the morning, with a driver named Jenny.

After about two blocks I got a call. "If you don't come back I'll kill myself!" And I know too well what she's capable of.

I paid and tipped as we turned around to head back. "If you like, I'll wait a few minutes longer!" I thanked her, adding that everything would be all right, that I knew the routine.

I got out of the car. Took my things. Went in and got into bed while she cried in the bathroom. I don't know at what time I got to sleep.

Today I wrote to my brother: "Come and get me! I don't know which of us is crazier!"

At this hour he still hasn't answered.

RPE English Translation



PRIMERO DE ABRIL. ES DE MAÑANA./APRIL FIRST. MORNING.

April first. Morning. I don't know if I slept or if during the night someone gifted me a shirt made of sticks.

It's still cold and the switch on the heater breaks into a series of bites to undo the silence that is the trapped day.

Coffee, milk, the nakedness of my body. All at once I'm older than the sandals I inherited from my grandfather. René used to make fun of my taste for second-hand stuff (other people's treasures, jewels for the crown).

"Hey Poet, that thing is really, really ugly!"

"René, leave me alone! I'm happy with my junk!"

"I want that painting! That very one. The one you just hung up. I want it for a book cover. I want it for myself!"

And the sticks and chunks of concrete and maybe or who knows how, cracks and *escupalarios* (all breaking away from some strange rusted architecture) was crushing me, drowning me in a cry, in a damned ambush finally coming through: "René is dead!" said the message from Ruben Sanchez Feliz.

The rest was like a leap through the air. The implosion. The vertigo, and of course, the tears. The rest was helplessness, the sense of futility, the twisting in the foundations of the soul. The rest has been the chair and the kitchen and the infamous reality of a world trapped by fear!

René Rodriguez Soriano, my brother the editor, my brother the poet, my brother who counseled me and laughed at my amorous entanglements, has gone on one of those journeys, a far distant one, without even saying goodbye, with barely what he brought with him, barely what he took away: the joy of knowing himself eternal in the memory of those who are left behind (maybe he is smiling, on the chance that what many say is true, and he may on some stretch of road, run into Eduardo Lantigua, José de la Rosa, and Cortazar, whom he loved).

Peace, my brother! I am a crazy top just now! Forgive me for all the times I called just to bug you! You know how this fucking poetry is!

RPE English Translation

MIS LÁGRIMAS INUNDAN LA TARDE/ MY TEARS INUNDATE THE AFTERNOON

My tears inundate the afternoon. I'm in front of the TV screen with a glass of whiskey in my hand. I went to the supermarket, shopped for liquor (vodka, rum, tequila) cleaned out the fridge too (so many things past their use-by date that we save for later)...

My throat is drowning in the Korean soap opera. She puts new episode on Pause. She lifts her head to offer me the same old kiss again; then she asks the questions, I reply with a lying half-smile, armor to cover me.

Then she stands up. She goes to the kitchen, wants to prepare dinner. "I don't want you to drink any more!" she says, with the affection of women touched by some of the cracked mortar of contrasts.

Before. As soon as she came home, she would want to go to bed. Wanted us to relax from the day's hustling. Wanted me to take off my clothes. I would give in, while reading some newly-published article. Something I'd written about René. A tribute to collect the knockout blow of his departure.

"What are you reading?" she asked. I read her what I wrote the day before yesterday on the routine nature and desperation of these days. That's when she initiated that mathematical mode of investigation. I shrugged. I kept on reading to myself. Continued asking myself questions related to the numismatic nature of the heartbeat, the way lying works, the cubic mirage of doubts.

She said. I said. I don't remember what, how much, the matter, abortive sallies toward the possible beginning of hysteria, accusations, stampedes of words...that's when I remembered the growing sums of the lottery prizes; I put on my pants, took the keys and took off with the anxious speed of mongrel dogs when they see somebody stoop at the street corner and pick up two rocks from the ground...

We had dinner when I returned. Her face was sliced by a pandemonium of blades (she tends to adopt defensive postures while she prepares her fulminating assault of demands).

An hour later I cried again and she went on to kiss me as usual... The Korean soap opera reached its end and I prayed that was so (I can't take much of the confrontations and dangers that lie in wait for the protagonists). "Leave that shit alone!" I shouted while the principal characters shared a great kiss.

11 p.m. and a whole day has passed without any major ups and downs. We went to bed. She on the left—her side—and I in the fetal position in which I always sleep (usually if I'm drunk I have no difficulty sleeping).

I closed my eyes. Woke up two hours later: a nightmare. Again my stepfather. The old fear. His abuse. From one side to the other. From one corner to the other. Getting up to take herbal sleeping pills. Getting up to find aromatic oils to help me sleep.

Finally at 3:30 a.m. she went to look for her camel-killer pills. I took two. Woke up at 11:52 a.m. Now I hear her speaking in her own language on the phone. I've stretched out on the floor to await oblivion, like all of these days, hours, the downtime of the liquor store; unhappily symptomatic, like just another piece of furniture, a stool, a tree fallen across the road...

RPE English Translation



CUERVO EN LA CAMA/ CROW IN BED

She put a revolver under the pillow. An enormous revolver with six full chambers and a reinforced barrel.

"We must sleep with protection!" she argued while I watched, my eyes rounder than an owl's at midnight. "You know the front door is broken, and until you fix it tomorrow—and you do have to fix it—we have to sleep uncomfortably tonight!"

Hours earlier, about a little after nine, I was leaving her watching TV and opting for sleep instead. "Look how you treat me! You leave me by myself, without saying a word, no conversation at all, without giving me a kiss!"

I recalled the way the day had gone: breakfast, late lunch in the afternoon, the other thing I cooked for dinner. Her coming and going from her office. Her series of common phrases, puerile, insignificant, her blind insistence as to the color of the new painting, her reasons, her explanations conveyed as demands.

"What's the matter with you? Tell me the truth! When you paint with that kind of absolute darkness your soul is sick. Could it be you're still thinking of her? Of your past? You're not happy here with me!" and her eyes, the ten times she went off in tears during the day.

"Leave me alone! Stop hounding me!" I said six or seven times over several hour intervals.

"You'd rather go to your cave! To leave me by myself for weeks to come, stuck at home! To disappear! To find refuge from things, like a coward! To be your own selfish worldly uncouth unhappy wretch; like that, without commas!"

I who never complain. Who never interfere in other people's business. Who barely exercise the sad function of some old piece of furniture, broken, shy, concentrating on my navel, on the holes so plainly visible, the suffering that follows me everywhere! Full of absurdities! Aggrieved by barbs aimed at me, by yesterday's toxic hemlock for three years now, I barely respond with a foolhardy attempt to get my things, get the hell out, close all my doors to her, and melt away into lethargy!

She cries. She screams. She goes after me with nails and teeth. Then she calms down. She comes and snuggles up to me like a cat. She wants a hug, kisses, the heart beating.

I offer her the body. The twenty-four hours of a piece of furniture—a monstrosity. The simplicity of the mirror, a dishonest business.

She brought her revolver to bed. She put it down next to the head (mine). She heard me breathe deep. She stroked my belly and then kissed me with the sweetness of some Lernaean Hydra. I hardly slept with any depth. It was with some reason that I thought I heard someone in the yard stealing the bicycle...

RPE English Translation



ALA DE UNA MARIPOSA/ A BUTTERFLY'S WING

I'm on the highway. Steering with my left hand, with the palm, to be precise (fingers spread, the soul galloping, that odd palpitation of being, going, the mercury of a thousand mirrors).

Home again. The city is a place of silhouettes framed by dull business enterprises. I return to what I consider mine, part of me, with my odor.

Foolish thought! Nothing is forever! You barely reach the entrance and out of nothing and the surroundings thereof they spring, the absurdities, the whole of it, those fictitious gargoyles with which you used to decorate the enchanted forest of forebodings.

Maybe the doorknob, maybe the door, but beyond the threshold, the frozen scene of amnesias, of non-being, of non-existence, the bed embraced by dust, fossilized, wearing the grimace of death, a tangle of sheets, on the point of collapse.

Then those steps toward the living room (the normal thing would be to begin there for the first look around, the aforementioned encounter). My chair, my desk, the paintings on the wall, and a photograph of her wearing a kimono (purchased at a newsstand with paper lanterns, at exactly 4 p.m., near the Imperial Palace, right next to the city walls).

I smile. Everything in its place. I return to the kitchen, look for some sticks of incense (Japanese rose, patchouli, sandalwood, etcetera). I light a match, move the flame toward the points. The smoke turns the gaze of every object into fragrance.

I forgot to say that it's morning (barely remember why the hell I came, my intention to leave again, the lugubrious silence that surrounds me these days) and that's when I take a hand towel from a drawer, stand in front of the photo, wipe its frame, the glass, whatever dulls its surface.

Once again I smile. Once again I fly. "Time is a butterfly's wing..."

RPE English Translation



IN THE GALLERY



Toda la Historia del oeste/All The History Of The West, 25" X 19.5" X 8.5", Wood, Glass, Bullet Case, Aerolith, Native American Knife



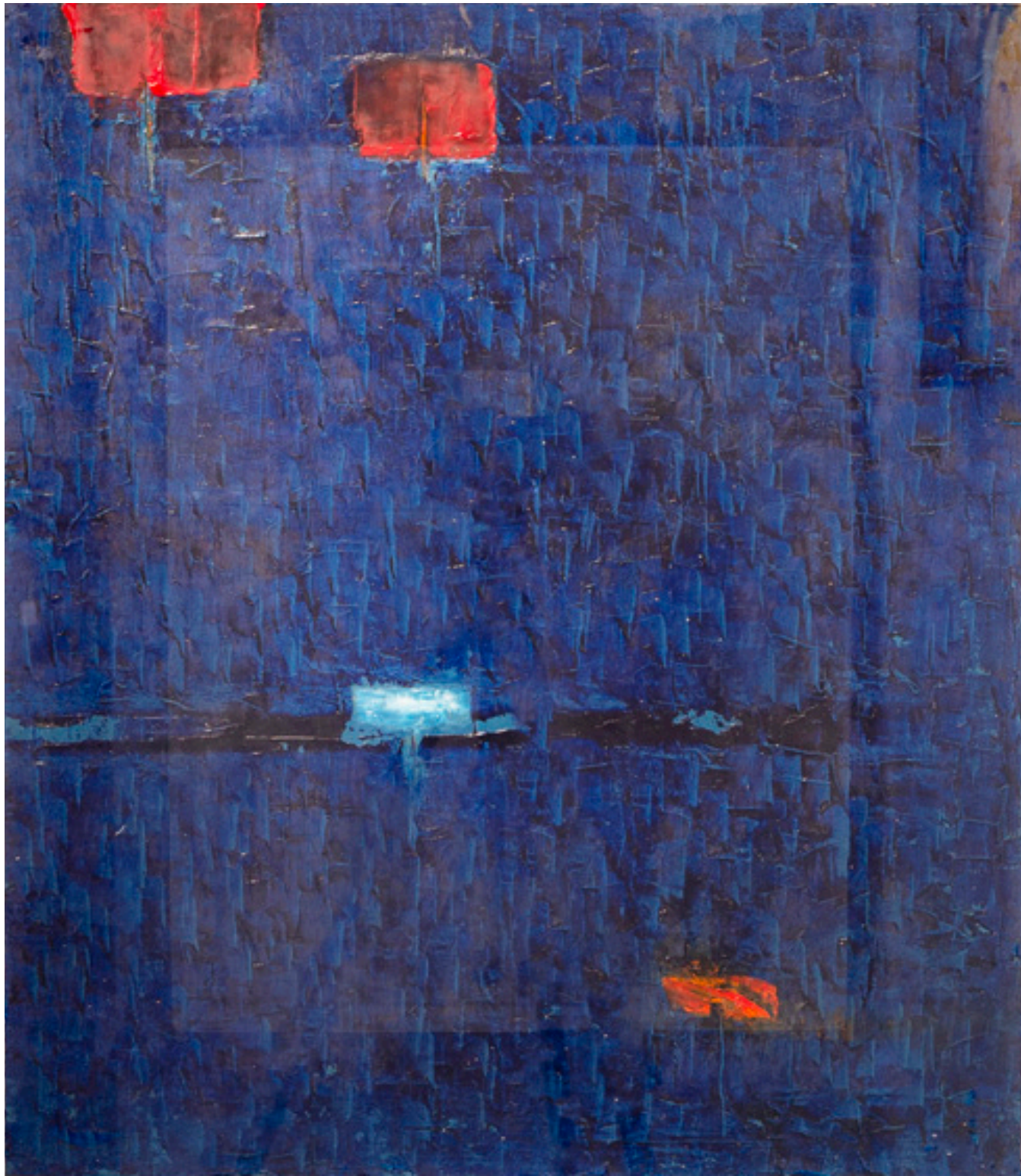
Graffiti BHCC 2020, 42" X 29", Acrylic and marker on plaster



Itika, 27.2" X 21.2", Oil on Canvas.



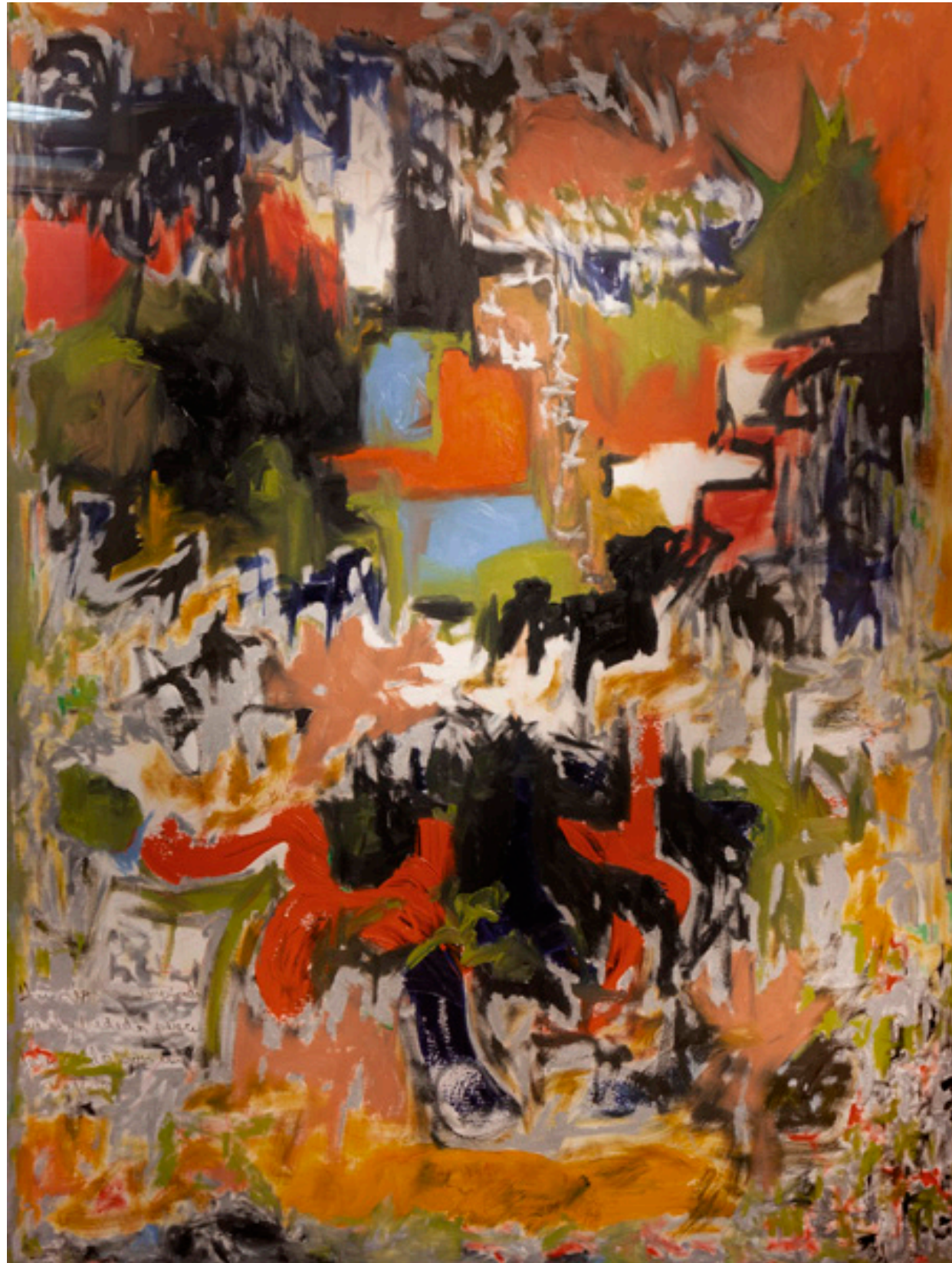
Memoria del horror hermoso/Beautiful Memories Of The Horror, 29" X 23", Oil on Canvas.



Cuando se sueña el mar/When We Dream About The Sea, 27.2" X 21.2", Oil on Canvas.



El grande ditator/The Great Dictator, 40.5" X 48.5", Oil on Canvas



Bukowski, 55" X 72", Oil on Canvas Under Plexiglas.



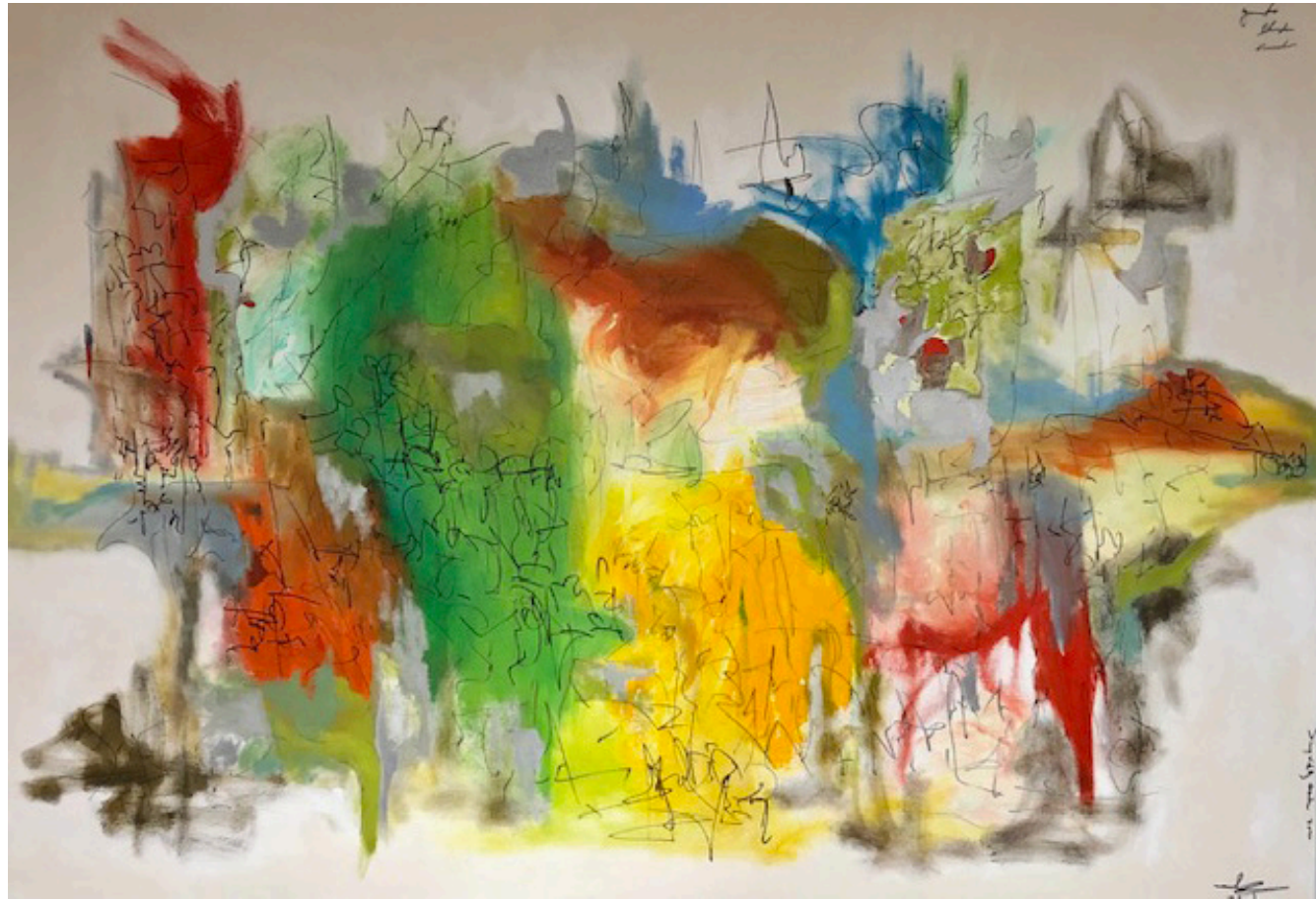
Graffiti (Narugui), 50" X 50", Acrylic on Canvas.



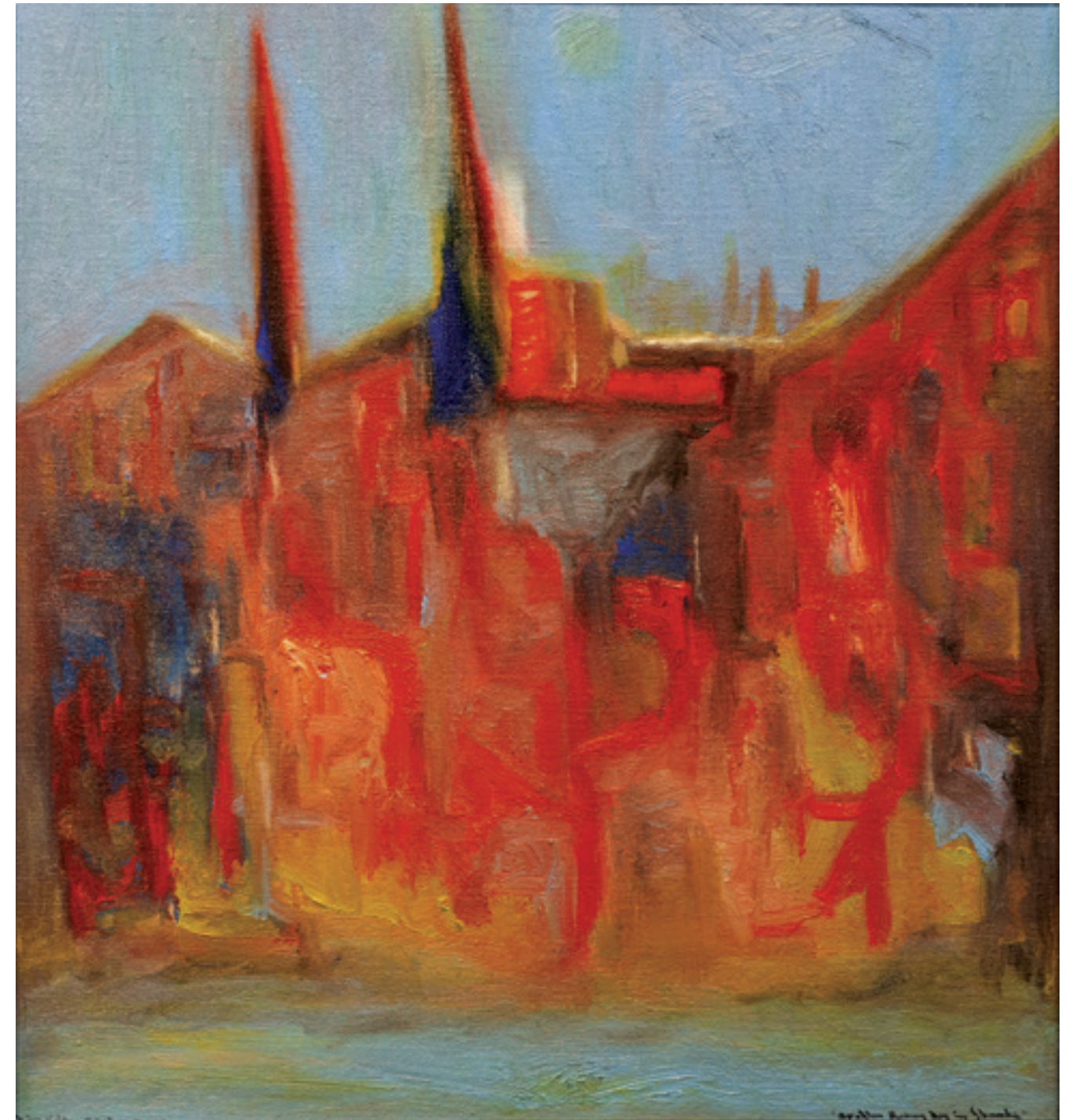
Orus, 39" X 17.5", Oil on canvas.



Datsun, 16" X 32", Oil on Canvas.



Ibakari, 47.5" X 25.5", Oil on Canvas.



Otro de lluvia/Another Rainy Day, 19" X 23", Oil on canvas.



Fin de la historia I/End Of The History Series I, 11" X 11", Oil on canvas.



Fin de la historia II/End Of The History Series II, 11" X 11", Oil on canvas.



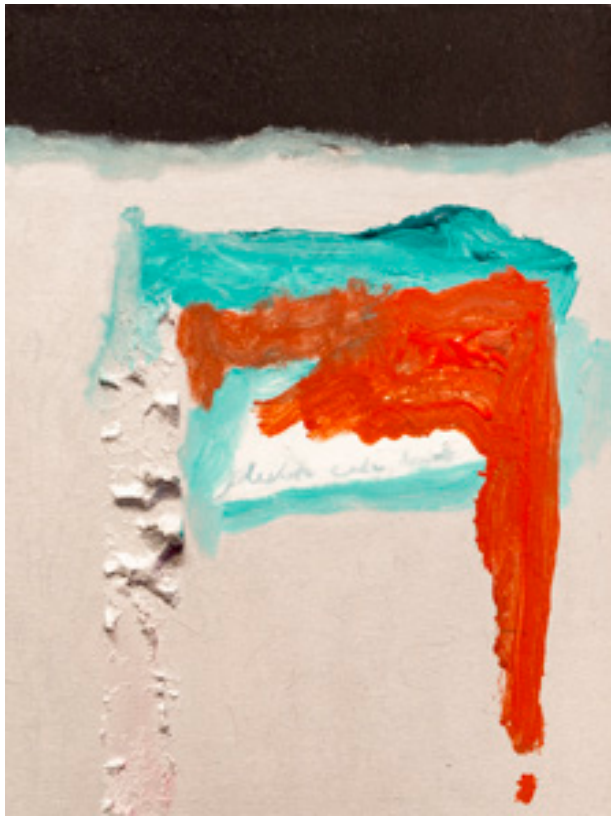
Fin de la historia III/End Of The History Series III, 11" X 11", Oil on canvas.



Fin de la historia IV/End Of The History Series IV, 11" X 11", Oil on canvas.



Gosh, 40" X 40", Oil on canvas.



*Piedra roseta I/Rosetta Stone Series I, 11" X 11",
Oil on canvas.*



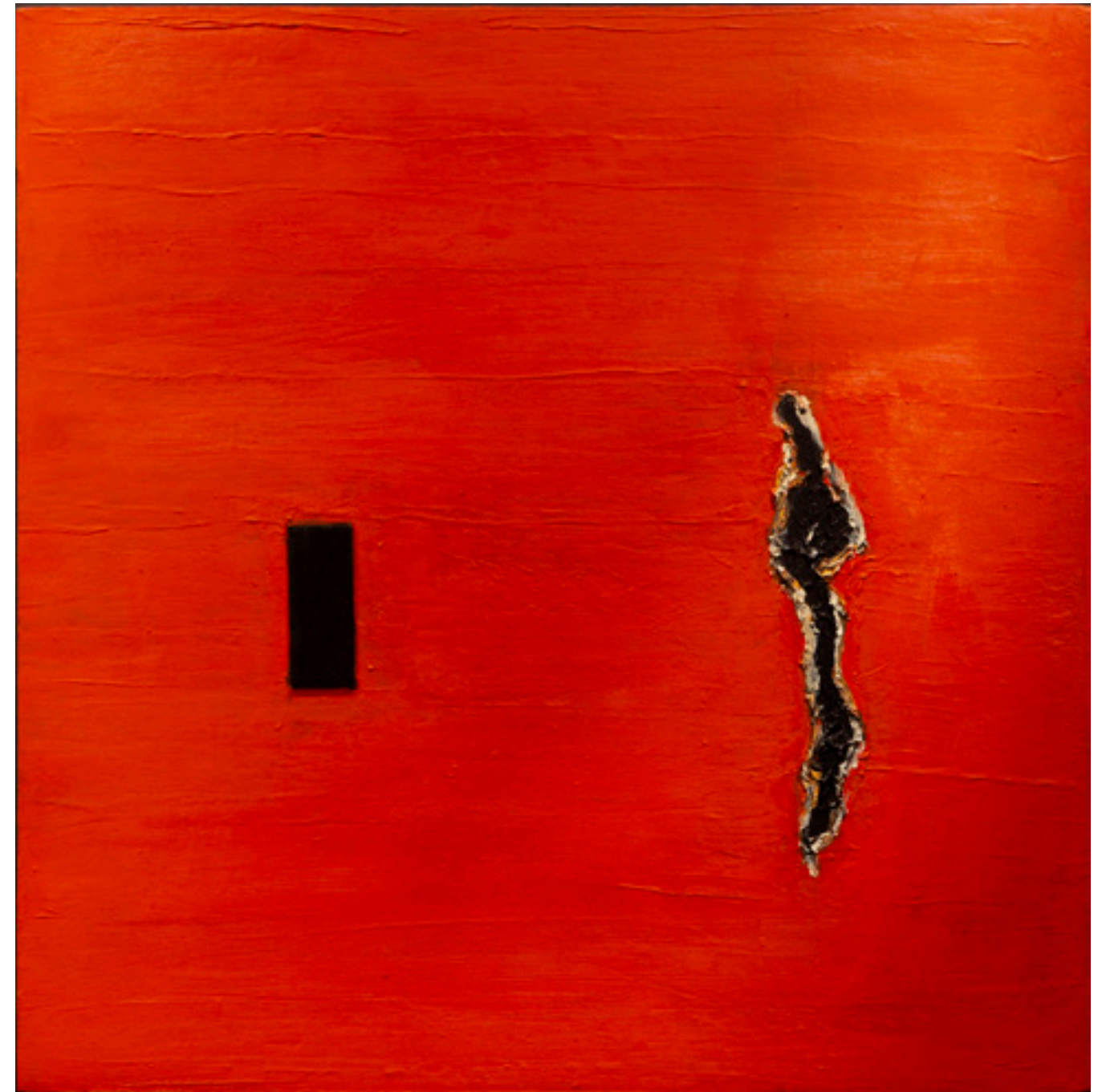
*Piedra roseta II/Stone Series II, 11" X 11",
Oil on canvas.*



*Piedra roseta III/Stone Series III, 11" X 11",
Oil on canvas.*



*Piedra roseta IV/Stone Series IV, 11" X 11",
Oil on canvas.*



En el otro lado/On The Other Side, 30" X 30", Oil on canvas.



*Piedra roseta V/Rosetta Stone Series V, 11" X 11",
Oil on canvas.*



*Piedra roseta VI/Stone Series VI, 11" X 11",
Oil on canvas.*



En elseis pies de distancia/Six Feet Apart, 18" X 24", Oil on canvas.



Subthat 1745/Outlander 1745, 18" X 24", Oil on canvas.



Subthat/Outlander, 18" X 24", Oil on canvas.



Amanecemos, sin embargo/And we wake up, however, 18" x 24", Oil on canvas.



Solsticio/Solstice, 18" x 24", Oil on canvas.



Y amanece, sin embargo/And It's Morning, Without Embargo, 24" X 18", Oil on canvas



Vestigios desde la nocturnidad, y amanece sin embargo/Vestiges from the night, and it dawns nevertheless, 24" X 18", Oil on canvas



IN THE CLASSROOM

THE INTERSECTION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND ART

Interpreting and Reflecting Upon Psychological Theories Through Creative Exile

by Amy L. Clinard

PSY101 - Principles of Psychology

In this activity, you will be given the opportunity to interpret the ways in which major psychological concepts can be applied to and understood through artwork. You will also reflect upon the ways in which artwork and other forms of cultural wealth and expression can be engaged within your own life as a means for psychological growth.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. In what ways has artwork impacted you in the past?
2. What was your first reaction to this artwork?
3. How can artwork be used to foster psychological growth?
4. Why has there always been an unmistakable intersection between psychology and art historically?

SENSATION & PERCEPTION

Interpret

- Cognitive psychologists suggest that our ability to understand the physical world is a product of both bottom-up and top-down processes. How are bottom-up factors identified in how we appreciate this piece? Top-down factors?
- Entertain the possibility that there may be “signals” within this piece that the artist wishes for us to “detect.” Based on Signal Detection Theory, what are some examples of non-sensory factors such as our past experiences, expectations, types of motivation and levels of alertness that might impact our ability to successfully do so?

Reflect

- What are some ways in which your lived experiences, or your personal experiences and the knowledge you’ve gained from them, may contribute to the way in which top-down processing is allowing you to make sense of this piece?
- Are any non-sensory factors impacting your interpretation of this piece at this moment?

MEMORY

Interpret

- It has been said that artwork and other forms of cultural expression may invoke the collective unconscious of a species. What collective memories are being portrayed do you think?

Reflect

- What memories are retrieved for you when engaging with this work? Why and how is the piece functioning as a retrieval tool?

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Interpret

- Interview four individuals who may each fall into one of Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development (1936). Ask them to consider the “guiding questions” as they view this piece. How do their answers change as a function of the stage of cognition they are currently in?

- Gardner (1983) suggests that human intelligence takes many forms. Using his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, what types are being demonstrated by the artist? What does this say about the value of art education in schools, specifically in early childhood?
- When asked what advice he has for young adults struggling to find their path, Valdez Osaku responded, “to find your authentic voice, all possibilities must be explored to know that your truth and power live in many places at the same time.” According to Marcia’s Theory of Identity Development (1960), what identity status(es) lead to finding one’s true voice?
- It has been argued that a central psychosocial task of middle adulthood is to achieve the virtue of “care” through a successful resolution of Erikson’s (1950) Generativity vs. Stagnation stage by making one’s mark on the world.

How is the artist exhibiting generativity through his work?

What are other artistic forms of expression that are suggestive of generativity?

Reflect

- What other types of identities do you have that would benefit from this same exploratory process as described by the artist above?
- What are some ways in which you see yourself being generative? Create a work of generativity that you believe would leave your current mark on the world.

PERSONALITY

Interpret

- Consider Costa & McCrae’s (2003) Big Five Theory of Personality. How might individuals’ rankings on these five traits impact the way in which they interpret this piece?
- The artistic growth process is closely related to the quest for self-actualization as theorized by Maslow (1943). How is the artist’s quest for self-actualization exhibited? Are there different stages of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs where the creation of art is more likely? Why or why not?
- Valdez Osaku chronicles his journey of developing resilience in overcoming oppression, loneliness and insecurity. In what ways does artwork provide a means for the development of resilience?

Reflect

- How does your own personality influence the way you are understanding this piece?
- How could artwork be a source of resilience for you?

MENTAL HEALTH

Interpret

- Art therapy can be a powerful tool for exploring one’s own emotions, memories, coping with a mental health disorder and relieving stress. How might engaging with this piece function in these important ways?
- Valdez Osaku refined his work in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In what ways does artwork “give us a space to experience the anxiety” associated with this crisis, as stated by the artist? Are there other mental health disorders where exposure to art may be therapeutic?
- What are some other forms of artistic expression that can be used in a similar way in the therapeutic process?

Reflect

- Are there additional forms of cultural wealth that have helped you in the past in a therapeutic way, or that you think may assist you in the future?

Amy L. Clinard

Assistant Professor, Behavioral Sciences Department, Bunker Hill Community College

"EXILES FOR YEARS TO COME" A Reflection on Jimmy Valdez Osaku Poetry and Art

by Alicia Gallego Zarzosa, PhD and Dr. Miguel A. Zepeda Torres

SPN 280 - Spanish for Heritage Speakers

The global COVID-19 pandemic that swept through the world in 2020 has forced us to re-think and re-feel our societies and how we shift our ways of being a part of them. To the experience of the exile or the immigration experience, many of us have now to add the exile from our loved ones and lived places that COVID-19 self-isolation measures have forced. In this activity we will reflect about the experience of the exile and its variations through the art of Dominican artist Jimmy Valdez Osaku.

The activity will be divided in three steps.

1. Individual work: you will choose to reflect on the poem "*Este es otro mundo/This is Another World*" OR on the artwork "*Shut Down, Man. The City Dies*" (both in page 35 of the catalog). Then, you will write down your reflections on the chosen work with the help of the guiding questions designed for each one.
2. Small group work: you will now share your conclusions and experience with the group of students that chose to reflect on the same work as you.
3. Bigger group work: with the help of your Professor, your group will share your conclusions with the group that chose the other work of art, and discuss whether you arrived at similar interpretations. Professor will guide closing remarks.

Literary Activity

Read the poem "*Este es otro mundo/This is Another World*" (pg. 38 of the catalog).

Guiding questions:

1. Identify the expressions the poet uses to express his feelings.
2. Underline the ideas or feelings that maybe you have once experienced too or those with which you identify.
3. Which are referred to exile / immigration and which to pandemia-related anguish?
4. In the poem, several nationalities are mentioned. What does it mean? How do they contribute to the diversity the poet wants to describe? Are the mentions positive or negative? Why?
5. Think about the verses dealing with different nationalities, feelings (the ex), ages (the mother), social class (the landlord). How do these expressions contribute to dehumanization and impossibility of human connection in the poem? How can you relate to some of these experiences?
6. Politics and the exile: how are they reflected in the poem? Do you agree with the poet's opinion? What would you add, according to your experience?
7. "*Now, I am one more frightened man.*" "*The devil is inside me*" "*This world is another world, whether I object or not*".
 - How do you interpret these verses? How do they speak to you? In your opinion, do they contribute to define the experience of the exile / immigration?

Visual Activity

Students who choose to work on the painting will begin by doing individually. First, they will carefully read the title: *Shut Down, Man. The City Dies*. To help them acquire ideas one will highlight two key words *Man* and *City*.

Guiding questions:

1. What do you see in the painting? Did it evoke any feelings or ideas?
2. If you had to choose between happiness and sadness to describe it, which one would you choose?
3. Isolation does not necessarily mean being physically apart from others. Have you felt isolated during the pandemic or ever before?
4. If so, how would you describe that feeling?

Group work:

Students would work in a group to discuss their answers to the guiding questions. Additionally, they will include any other relevant information or reflections from their observations. Likely, some students will share having been isolated both during the pandemic and at some other point in their lives.

Possible painting interpretation:

The dual interpretation of the painting, a human face and a city building, portraits death. When the city is shut down (cross representing an entrance closure) it no longer holds life and starts to disintegrate – represented by the lower right side of the building; similarly, when a person is unable to speak by being shut (cross representing something preventing one's mouth from speaking) death is to come.

This interpretation is to be combined with students' interpretation to have a group conclusion about the painting.

Alicia Gallego Zarzosa, PhD,

Associate Professor, Global Languages Department, Bunker Hill Community College

and

Dr. Miguel A. Zepeda Torres,

Assistant Professor and Chairperson, Global Languages Department, Bunker Hill Community College

THE INTERSECTION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND ART Reflecting Upon Resilience during COVID-19 Through *Creative Exile*

by Amy L. Clinard

PSY213 - Human Growth & Development

In this activity, you will be given the opportunity to interpret the ways in which resilience can be both created and understood through artwork. You will also reflect upon the ways in which artwork and other forms of cultural wealth and expression can be engaged with during and following the COVID-19 pandemic as a result.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What was your first reaction to this artwork?
2. What does the artwork represent?
3. Why do you think the artist created these pieces during COVID-19?
4. How do you think this artwork may impact viewers who engage with it?

REMEMBER

In your own words, **define** resilience as conceptualized in psychology.

UNDERSTAND

Describe three life experiences that may require us as humans to be resilient.

APPLY

Interpret the ways in which artwork may be a means for humans to develop resilience in order for us to overcome challenge.

ANALYZE

Using the COVID-19-inspired *Creative Exile*, **compare and contrast** the ways other viewers find resilience through the artwork by engaging in meaningful conversation.

EVALUATE

Critique whether or not the COVID-19-inspired *Creative Exile* will be a source of resilience for yourself and other viewers and why.

CREATE

Design or describe a form of cultural wealth of your choosing that may be a source of resilience for you and/or others during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Assistant Professor
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Jeremy Washington: (Color portraits) 10, 12, 32, 36.

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Photo supplied by Translator and Author: (Used by permission) Page 23.

Memento Mori, French-Pendant with a Monk and Death, the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

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The Mary L. Fifield Art Gallery
www.bhcc.edu/artgallery



The Creative Exile of Jimmy Valdez Osaku—A Film by Oldren Romero and Luz Valdez.

Voice recordings of poetry included in this exhibition by students, faculty and staff of Bunker Hill Community College may be found at bhcc.edu/artgallery.

A copy of the complete collection of *Creative Exile, Poems* by Jimmy Valdez Osaku, translated by Rhina P. Espallat, may be obtained by calling the Gallery Office at (617) 228-2328.



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