

Autoescuela

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It's been almost thirty years since the inception of the collective deschooling arts learning experiment, which with time came to be known as the Taller de los viernes (or Friday Workshop). This affords us a more than ample distance from which to claim that what was cooked up there—in a most intuitive and spontaneous way—was one of the most significant and interesting solutions that have taken place in Mexico to the eternal problem of a “National plastic arts,” to use that old term so beloved by our institutions. One of the solutions found by a group of individuals headed by Gabriel Orozco—who was already then an artist poised to operate as the crucial dislocator of notions he would later become—was rejecting the existing educational system to generate, rather than a new model, an appropriate space so that each moment could become a moment for learning, sharing, and being interested, as Iván Illich would have it.

Of course, such an unprecedented formative process can only happen in a random and unpredictable way. Just as with the most relevant historical episodes, one thing led to another and suddenly there they all were: Abraham Cruzvillegas, Damián Ortega, Gabriel Kuri, and Jerónimo López, better known as Dr. Lakra—all of them participating in the exercise moderately guided by Gabriel Orozco's intuition to “promote mutual growth,” as Cruzvillegas would write later on. Of course the accounts vary slightly between all the involved parties (remember, it's been three decades already!), but there is general consensus about the fact that Damián Ortega was the first one to seek out Orozco to ask him if he could visit once a week “to work with him.” Ortega was finishing High School and in his words he was “frankly tired of what he had to do in school. It was clear I wanted to become an artist and that I wanted to start working as soon as possible. So one day I went to the ENAP [Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas or National Plastic Arts School] to find out what they were teaching there. It was so depressing! Painting workshops were very decadent and with a outdated academic discourse. Then I went to another school and it was pretty much the same. So then I realized I needed to choose a different means of exploration.” He decided to approach an artist so that he could have a workshop and learn from his experience. And it was Damián's brother who suggested he seek out the artist who had been his visual arts teacher at the Centro Activo Freire, since he had just come back to Mexico after studying abroad for a year and had come back with some interesting ideas. He meant Gabriel Orozco, who had indeed come back to Mexico recently, after spending some time in Madrid studying at the Círculo de Bellas Artes, at a time when Spain, finally liberated from Franquism, was open to *movidas* and avant-gardes of all kinds—in contrast with Mexico whose tenacious protectionism held anything foreign at bay. It was there that Orozco learned about Marcel Duchamp, John Cage, Joseph Beuys. And when he came back he brought books and anecdotes with him, and these fed the discussion during the Friday sessions (hence the name of the workshop). (They read about all kinds of things, but most of it had to do directly with art: *Between Object and Image: Contemporary British Sculpture; Art and its Double; Francis Picabia: 1879-1953* or *Naked Appearance* where some of the titles consulted back then).

Ortega thus sought out Orozco who agreed to see him on Fridays at his home on Triunfo de la Libertad #18 in the Tlalpan neighborhood. According to Ortega, “We started painting the following week. I was making oil paintings back then! But truly, I felt a little lonely there, so I invited my friend Abraham Cruzvillegas, whom I had met at Rafael Barajas’ (aka el Fisgon) cartoon workshop to come.” Orozco then invited the Kuri brothers, though only Gabriel “a youngster with shorts who played the drums” would become an artist (the other brother would co-found alongside Monica Manzutto, kurimanzutto gallery in the late nineties). Weeks later, “a little kid who smoked like a chimney” knocked on the door. He was the now-famous Dr. Lakra who would later become not only a great draftsman but a renowned tattoo artist as well. “With this team we created a sort of *autoescuela*, [a pun on both self-teaching and driving school].”

The *autoescuela* functioned more or less continuously from 1987 to 1992, the year in which the group decided to end the Friday meetings so as “to access a new level of dialogue and collaboration,” as Abraham Cruzvillegas has said. Afterwards, they each went their own way albeit always closely following each other’s processes. Many of them started to travel and show their work outside of Mexico, “to keep studying, learning or unlearning elsewhere.” One of them even took the path of formal education, perhaps as a counterpoint. In any case, the exercise undoubtedly proved to be key for all of them in what would come later. It is true there is no artist who is not self-taught in some way—in fact it is almost a *sine qua non* condition of art. Even having gone through school, the act of differentiation which presupposes art-making according to each one’s ideas and temperament is necessarily an act of self-teaching, so that instead of borrowing, one begins to propose the terms in which the work of art must operate. The thing is that the Friday Workshop transformed that obligatorily oppositional gesture—vs. the art that existed then—into an approach of joined learning with the objective of creating art that *could* exist, according to individual interests. And for this to happen, new “educational” tools had to be generated, which were diametrically opposed from the ones offered by institutional art schools. In consequence, one cannot say that Orozco functioned as a teacher in the traditional sense. He was certainly a few years older than the rest; he had traveled and had a few shows and experiences under his belt that put him forth as the natural guide—really more of a counselor or guide than tutor, one might say. He had studied at the ENAP and therefore knew full well the entrails of institutional arts education, with its twenty or thirty year-old methods. He knew that schools were outlined in such a way as to train students to perform as art technicians, or craftsmen capable of making works with skill but without too much space to develop a language of their own, since emphasis was placed (and often times still is) on developing manual abilities, leaving aside intellectual capacity—a schooled imagination, as Illich called it. So then they had to proceed in the opposite sense and deschool it: beginning with the acknowledgement that there are things, art in particular, that one can learn without any teaching.

According to what some of the participants have written, we know that the sessions began on Friday morning and would sometimes go into the night. It’s clear that there were no proper lessons or classes. They would get together, as Cruzvillegas has said, “to discuss individual projects, works, read books and share information.” And at times they didn’t do anything aside from being together. The only example of the kind of exercises that they carried out was revealed by Gabriel Kuri, in a text dedicated to Orozco where he writes that back around 1989 they all decided to imagine what each one’s ideal work would be without

the artist in turn being able to say anything about it. At that time, he says, “Gabriel made paintings and abstract assemblages which simplified gradually and into which he increasingly started to incorporate found and ready-made objects. They undoubtedly had a more austere and cerebral aspect than our work (which was more colorful and gestural). Everyone else in the workshop agreed that Gabriel’s ideal work, the one he seemed to be searching for, would be entirely conceptual, almost devoid of form and where he almost wouldn’t intervene in its making at all.” Curiously, “instead of feeling flattered by the obvious compliment to his intelligence,” Orozco hurriedly pointed out that, “he felt it was the moment to make work that was more about exploiting intuition and less about formulaic intellect.” The years would prove that, in fact, his work would blend these two key ideas: his pieces would perhaps not be conceptual but certainly subtle and random, he intervened very little in their making; at the same time, of course, the work would have to be totally intuitive. In fact, it’s important to point out that in the others, intuition would be decisive as well.

Aside from this anecdote, little is known about the Friday Workshop’s fortuitous wanderings. Something that, if you’ll allow me the comparison, brings to mind the mystery that surrounded the most intense years of the invention of cubism, about which Braque confessed that he and Picasso “said things to one another that no one would ever say again—things that would be incomprehensible and which gave us much pleasure. We were like a pair of mountain climbers tied to one another.” In any case, it’s evident that Gabriel Orozco taught the others by *doing*, like an artisan would his apprentices; the difference here being that the master didn’t know his trade and he himself was discovering the kind of art-making that was possible to do. And so, as Cruzvillegas writes, the others witnessed “his own formative process, since he was configuring the conceptual corpus through which his works would flow from then on, thereby establishing a cycle ruled by the signaling of instants, making us participants and not just witnesses.” Without a doubt, Orozco managed to impart something, although it might not be easy to pinpoint what exactly. Perhaps a way of working based on searching and on the statement of hypotheses. Hypotheses, which he has said “spring from very specific problems raised by the objects themselves. And, as in any experiment, each hypothesis, is proved or discarded.” As opposed to what he had learned in school, which implied a certain kind of artist who knew how to get things done—who had knowledge—the idea here was the opposite: to work, one had to place oneself at the beginning of things, as a beginner or as the origin of something—“I believe that in the end, this is originality,” he said. That’s what it was about, to place oneself “at the beginning of something, with unpredictable consequences. To do so you have to break with things, with yourself, to discard a lot.”

Art as inquiry; as a way of building bridges towards nothingness. As opposed to Picasso, who used to say, not without arrogance, that he didn’t seek, he found, the issue here was to remain, precisely in the search. This is something that Gabriel Orozco found out quite soon, and not in school but outside it: on the streets—art as perpetual learning. This means not learning in order to never have to learn again (like the craftsman who has acquired a technique and no longer needs to study), but rather to never stop doing it, “to enter a somewhat labyrinth-like or unpredictable cognitive process.” That is, to learn what one wants to learn, not as in official schools where one learns what one doesn’t want or need to know, while believing that with this one can become an artist who is capable of being unique, and to allow to flourish what Zola called “a powerful and particular spirit, a nature that loosely takes Nature in its hand and places it in front of us, just as he sees it.” Of course, the Frenchman is

still talking about figurative painters. However, let's leave the example as it is, for we shall further see that nature (or reality, or whatever we wish to call the things that inhabit the world) was to play a key role in the work of the artists in the Friday Workshop.

Needless to say, Orozco was not the only one in the Workshop who was doing things so that the others would see them, for this would have meant an extension, more relaxed if you will, of the old teacher-student relationship. In fact, even though they spent time on shared reflection, they spent even more hours delving into their individual research. As Cruzvillegas explains: after spending some time talking about matters of common interest, “each one concentrated on his work, be it reading, drawing, painting or observing one another.” They were not looking to generate a shared style; not even a family resemblance. It was more like they were trying to “provoke each one’s personality.” And so if they arrived in the morning with works they thought were finished, at night they would go back home with a “mass of doubts and issues” that would have to be problematized independently. Aside from the few occasions in which they decided to work collectively (as when, for example, they did an intervention in an abandoned auto shop not far from the house where they got together, whose result, devoid of documentation, doesn’t seem to have been too promising, unlike “the event and the intention,” as Ortega claims), most of the work was done individually.

The activities that took place in Orozco’s house resembled very little a workshop at the ENAP, but they were also not close to those that take place in an artist’s studio. It wasn’t clear to anyone except the participants that what happened there in fact had anything to do with art. Ortega recalls that their families and other artist friends would ask, almost annoyed: “What are you doing?” Followed by something like ‘Get to work already! That’s nothing but gringo bullshit.’ Someone even said: ‘What you do is un-in-tel-li-gi-ble!’ And of course, we would laugh.” In fact, they laughed a lot. A great deal of the work took place amidst laughter. And it’s that the work itself, as Ortega notes, “surprised us at every turn and this was very new to us. We learned a lot while laughing—jokes were necessary to break through certain limits of what an artist was supposed to do.” Nothing further from the solemnity of the academy or the workshops in *Nude drawing* or worse, *Antique drawing*, where pupils were supposed to sit in silence for hours drawing sad plaster copies of Greek and Roman statues.

And although their works ended up being very different, something that precisely seems to unite them, is that they are non-Academic. That’s visible at first sight. The artistic dexterity some of them had in abundance—some are marvelous draftsmen—wasn’t of much use when making the kind of work they began to be interested in exploring. With the exception of Dr. Lakra, who moved towards tattooing and explored drawing as his main medium, the others moved towards sculptural reflections, although they still use drawing once in a while.

Just as Ortega, Cruzvillegas stayed on the doorstep of art school. According to him, “when the moment came to decide what to study, I realized that enrolling at the ENAP or Esmeralda would imply having to face a technical process—painting, etching in wood or stone—that I wasn’t interested in, not because it’s wrong to learn it but because it wasn’t what I wanted. So I decided not to go to art school and instead I went to study pedagogy.”

Dr. Lakra came to Gabriel Orozco's workshop after dropping out of Junior High. He was 15 years old. When the workshop finished, he traveled to Berlin, and lived there for a couple of years, dedicating himself entirely to the practice and study of tattoo. "I went to the library constantly," he explains, "and I started to find out about a whole world I knew nothing about... this changed my perspective. I read a lot about anthropology, and that's where I got addicted to tattoo."

In that sense, Gabriel Kuri would be the odd man out, since he is the only one, aside from Orozco, who studied to get his degree in Visual Arts at the ENAP, and when he finished, he went for a Masters at Goldsmiths College in London. A quick conjecture could lead us to think that perhaps this is the reason he is the most conceptual of all of them; one could almost venture to say he is an intellectual artist who is as interested in producing form as he is in producing meaning. But even in his case, or perhaps especially in his case, to have a space where he would turn traditional teaching on its head must have been very rewarding.

In addition to all of this, we are discussing a particular moment—the end of the 80s—in a particular place—Mexico City. Although it could be said that the artists in the Friday Workshop, as opposed to those of the Ruptura generation, did not have to fight or react against anything or anyone specifically, it is also true that local art-making was mired in the inexplicable digression, which had, since a few years prior, implied the return to more traditional modes of representation that threatened to reinstate figurative painting as the privileged carrier of meaning. A return to old-school easel painting and the codes of visual recognition with openly revisionist tinges¹ through which the dangerously dematerializing efforts of conceptual art from the 70s were to be rendered less visible. Therefore, it could be said that one of the central aspirations of the Workshop was to reconnect with practices that preceded this resurrection of painting, or rather, the argument of painting's preeminence. But, of course, no one was interested in reproducing the strategies of the 60s or 70s, nor in appropriating a discourse whose spirit was no longer quite current. What they tried then was to make a structural revision: much less focused in how art looked or what it meant, rather than in how it acted and the effects it had—on concepts, conventions, perceptions, in short on the understanding of art itself in general. In a way this inspired them to look not for a specific type of art, but for ways of working, processes and activities that could work as catalysts or produced forms in themselves—that is: art seen as a consequence of learning and searching.

Let us remember that since the 40s, Mexico had closed its borders to foreign commerce. This translated not only into countless pirated goods markets, some of which still exist, but also into an implacable control of the flow of information, and therefore knowledge about what went on in other countries in terms of art. The Grupos generation surpassed that limit through the bonds of intellectual and artistic fraternity which naturally formed with other Latin American artists (something which was accentuated with the arrival of the exiles from the South American dictatorships). At that time, there was a belief that a Latin American visual autonomy could be reached (based on the marking of differences between Latin American non-object-based experiences and Euro-North American conceptualisms) and so, the local artists more or less found a way to be in contact (through gatherings and colloquia, some of

¹ Expressionisms, symbolisms, costumbrismos and all kinds of pastiche reappeared in the work of numerous painters who worked at that time, which why this "eclectic" period is referred to as postmodernism.

which took place in Europe). But these solidarities had all but vanished with the reorganization of the art market structures following the blazing return of painting. In those years, people started talking again about “the risk of falling into cultural contamination.” The word “information” had negative connotations and was regarded as suspect. “In my workshop,” Orozco explains, “we tried to do things differently, we knew it was important to be aware of what had already been done. It still is, but now information has acquired a different status. Each time I used to go on a trip, I would come back, bags full of books, and then the next day my house was full of people eager to learn things.” And so there was no shortage of photocopying going on either.

One of the first group shows in which Orozco participated took place at the Polyforum Siqueiros, and was curated by Guillermo Santamarina (who was, according to Orozco, “the most progressive of curators”), in which they showed “paintings that were fighting with the very fact of painting.” At that moment, Orozco still painted, but, he acknowledges, one could already tell “that he was furious with painting.” The show passed inadvertently but not so the disquiet it generated, which amounted to a new project that would have important repercussions. Orozco and Santamarina, better known as “el Tinlarín,” decided to find out which other artists were working with installation instead of painting. They then managed to borrow the Desierto de los Leones ex-convent, in addition to securing a sponsorship from the German Embassy, since the show was stated as an homage to Joseph Beuys, who had recently died. In that search they found Silvia Gruner, Melanie Smith, Manuel Rocha and a couple more artists who were game, as Orozco says, “for an experimental moment.” In fact, there were few people doing this kind of work. This is why it’s considered the first show focusing on sight-specific installation, without any compromise with painting whatsoever. Orozco remembers that, “many people came to the opening, including Raquel Tibol, who had to explain to everyone what installations were. She quoted from a book: ‘a form of object-based work that integrates into space’ or god knows what. It was an artistic proposal outside the circuit.”

That show, titled *A propósito*, took place in the very midst of the developing Friday Workshop, in 1989. And so, the other artists closely experienced the process and some even collaborated, helping Orozco prepare his piece (which consisted of an elephant head hanging from the wall and a few tree trunks laid on the floor). From there, for example, Abraham Cruzvillegas’s interest in Joseph Beuys’s work grew. This led him to do research on his “political, educational, social and artistic project” which he used as a thesis to obtain his degree in Pedagogy in 1994.

It is very possible that each one would have arrived at similar conclusions by himself. Though it is hard to imagine that they would have so readily joined the exodus from painting if they had not all been in such close proximity to one another. As Kuri has explained: they began to be more interested “in ideas, issues and content” than “in learning how to paint well.” And in that process, the members of the Workshop became ever more conscious, as Ortega explains, that “techniques or the use of materials had content or a historical meaning, and so step by step we understood the political weight of the elements that make up a work, and so gradually we all abandoned pictorial representation to materialize it as cultural, sculptural objects that questioned traditional readings and meanings.” In this sense, perhaps the most extreme case was Dr. Lakra’s, who started his immersion in tattoo by tattooing himself, as a

way of experimenting on his own flesh after working in other media such as drawing on paper and collage on canvases that his father, Toledo, the painter, would give him.

Cruzvillegas started by translating the cartoons he had been making until then into three-dimensional *sculptpaintings* as Siqueiros used to call them. At the same time, Ortega exchanged his cartoons and comics for the representation of mechanical parts, of blenders or irons, for example, much in the style of popular street sign painters. Kuri began to explore the possibility of not having to use his hands, and rather finding meaning on the simple fact of designating, mentioning or even purchasing things. He thus took a radical step by suspending his love for painting dreamlike and symbolic landscapes and dedicated himself exclusively for a time to collecting postcards.

As it always happens, individual processes tend to blend inevitably with the goings-on of the world and in this case it's a possibility things wouldn't have happened as they did had various factors not contributed to making fertile ground from which emanated part of the musings and spirit of the Friday Workshop.

When I asked Orozco a while ago why he dedicated his most personal book² "to the teachers and parents of the Active Schools, because I owe them all I know," Orozco delved in the matter: "it's an exaggeration, of course, but it was a way of saying that a group of people with an innovative, free, playful mentality taught me to act in a concrete way in this world. I had the good fortune of growing up in an intense, creative environment that was very different from most of Mexico back in the day. It was also a way of thanking that particular approach to things where what you know and how much you know doesn't matter, but rather you have the tools to potentially solve anything. That's what they gave me: potentiality." This paragraph seems to explain everything. The artists in the Workshop lived through a very peculiar time in Mexico, in which information was despised and political repression was an everyday occurrence, but there were also cells and communities of people trying to do things otherwise.

Running the risk of oversimplifying things, one could say they grew up in a country, specifically a city, ruled by the norms of a bourgeois middle class for whom it was better to silence, as Álvaro Enrigue writes, "the very banal differences of one's place of birth." Not to mention what they thought of "non-conventional sexualities, different political experiences, of the Indians who were acceptable only as servants, and of the damn gringos who were to blame for everything." At the same time, chance would have it that most of the artists from the Workshop were the sons of the intellectual and artistic class, and so they were more safe than most from falling into those prejudices.

We've mentioned Toledo already, but Mario Orozco Rivera was a second-generation muralist, and Rogelio Cruzvillegas was not only a university teacher and artisan, he also collaborated on community radio for indigenous communities in Michoacán, and Héctor Ortega was an experimental theater actor. The Kuris were the only ones whose parents were not cultural workers, since they are both dentists.

² The exhibition catalogue for the show Orozco had at the Tamayo Museum in 2000.

But as life tends to be an amalgam of things, aside from Active Schools, college theatre, handcrafts and muralism— a movement with which the members of the workshop particularly identified—, this group brought together a mix of things which are still ever-present underlying the surface of their work as subtle correspondences, which sometimes come to light: things like political cartoons, the Communist Party and, yes, Lenin pins bought at PSUM festivals; the Cold War, the Dirty War, the Guerrilla War, trips to Cuba and the Soviet Union, hippies, feminism, overalls, the pill, literacy campaigns, anti-yankee imperialism, not speaking English, boiling water, driving VW bugs, the 1985 earthquake, “rock en tu idioma”, cassette tapes, photo rolls which had to be developed, Maradona, Cri-Crí, “Robes, pijamas and slippers,” the PRI, the corrupted press, Octavio Paz, Televisa, the folkloristas, Silvio Rodríguez, “alternative” media, *Deschooling Society*, Solentiname, life in the south of the city—sort of in the countryside still, empty lots, Latin American dictatorships, the Sandinista Revolution (“Free homeland or death”), the foreign debt, the nationalization of the Banking system, dollar at 12.50 pesos, the Pascual Boing strike, migration from country to city, misery, self-construction, anthropophagy, multiple militancy, counter-culture, film cycles, conceptual art, site-specific art, Jorge Luis Borges, Jimmie Durham, work made by the Grupos, collective creation, Alvarez Bravo’s and Graciela Iturbide’s photos, the Ruptura which never really ended up rupturing anything, Neo-Mexicanism, the INBA’s *Salón de Espacios Alternativos* and everything which fed the members of the workshop while they came of age in Mexico in the 1970s.

From that hotbed, came the message that came from the margins of the 90s when each one’s efforts became better known. “We did not identify collectively nor did we like the same kind of art, and we worked independently on very different things,” Cruzvillegas later writes. From diversity, they developed, following Orozco who had followed that route early on, an essentially abstract language (with the exception of Dr. Lakra, of course who continued working figuratively because it is tattoo’s natural vocabulary). Nevertheless, this path towards a “more austere, less explicit form of discourse,” as Gabriel Kuri defines it, made all their work and Orozco’s to be treated “with a certain indifference in Mexico, where spectators were traditionally used to having explicit, unambiguous and decisive links between visual art and narrative or politics.” At the same time, this “abstract, concrete and realist language” was precisely what “caused people to pay close attention” outside of Mexico.

“An abstract and phenomenological language” that greatly overflowed the two-dimensional territory of painting. And this is where nature, of which we spoke of before, comes in. Orozco rid himself entirely of painting the day he decided to go out with his camera onto the streets in the days after the September 19, 1985 earthquake, while he was volunteering at one of the several shelters which were set up for the victims, and began photographing the debris. As he has mentioned before, he was not interested in “portraying people suffering,” but rather in focusing “on buildings and ruins and the streets deformed by the movements of the earth.” But he would not become an urban photographer either. When he left for Madrid the year after, he not only expanded his horizons on postwar art and the possibilities of work beyond classical sculpture or painting, he also began making the first *in situ* assemblages, which he “immediately abandoned as soon as they were built.” Not having money to purchase materials made him work with what he found on the streets: bits of wood, branches, bricks. It was there he adopted the precariousness and ephemerality of the sculptural gesture, as well as its delicateness. Nothing to do with the marble or plaster

sculptures that filled art school warehouses. It was simply about signaling a particular organization of matter in space, on which he could intervene, or not. Afterwards came the photographs of those random configurations. And with that, he came back to Mexico, bringing with him also the certainty of having found a path that, unlike that of painting, forced the artist to engage in an entirely different negotiation with the outside: it wasn't just that the world (reality, nature) would directly give the raw materials, but it also offered itself as an alternative to the pedestal, the stretcher, the workshop and everything upon which sculptors traditionally depended: on the streets it was possible to put a—certainly transitory—sculptural idea in practice constantly.

And this is precisely what Orozco did during the Workshop years: point out, give an account, recognize—verbs that suggest a much briefer, tenuous—and perhaps much more emphatic—act than fabricate, mould, build: certain formations or configurations of things that in their simple *being there* extended the flow of meaning and disrupted their context. And the others would also move into that territory where works are not made but rather *result*. Each one in his own way, including Dr. Lakra, who doesn't like it when people tell him what to tattoo on them, since his drawing is better when it is spontaneous and improvised. “When we started reading and hearing about the term ‘installation’,” Ortega explains, “and the particularities of site-specific work, the world opened up: art no longer depended on meeting certain ideals and duties; there were no good or bad materials, but rather voices and ideas ciphered in each of the tools and materials we used.”

As everyone knows, Mexico is not a country renowned for its contributions to modernist sculpture. And so the path that most of the Friday Workshop artists took, which was markedly three-dimensional, can be seen as an unprecedented contribution to the local panorama. Of course the painter asks himself questions when facing the canvas, since he knows not clearly where he must go. But the sculptor who works with objects in the world and piles them, as Cruzvillegas does, or deconstructs them, as Ortega does, or juxtaposes them as Kuri does, or arranges them subtly, as Orozco does (all expressed here most coarsely, for what they all do by far exceeds the description of these poor verbs)—this artist asks himself many more questions than the painter does because he knows not even what material he will use; he cannot go buy it at the Art Supply store. And many times he does not know what he is looking for until he sees it. Of course personal processes vary and involve various degrees of premeditation and manual labor (this not only changes from one artist to another but even from one work to another, since none of them has a proper system that they stick to rigorously). Nevertheless they do share a sort of general approach to the work, which was doubtlessly developed during the constant feedback at the Friday Workshop and which has to do with a free way of dealing with materials and problems. And it is due to this that some insist on calling them conceptual although they are not. They're not really formalists either. They are, in any case, seekers, inquirers—*Accidentivores*, a term coined by Gabriel Kuri.

As Cruzvillegas writes, “many times the dialogue happened while we walked to the *tortillería* belonging to a Salvadorean in exile and also when, on the way back, we would go to Ceci's store to buy junk food or beers; we also discussed the whys and hows and whats. We even talked about Neo-Mexicanism.” Here is the perfect description of the spirit that guided those Friday encounters where it wasn't all about impudence, though there was plenty of it. Rather, the secret lies in the combination of moments of study and silence, with those of

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distraction and talk (where they worked as intensely as during the others). As Damián Ortega sums up, “we had invented the school we needed!” Which led them to invent the kind of art each one of them needed too, for one cannot be against traditional school and still make traditional art. During the past thirty years we have seen how the artists from the Friday Workshop have tried to take that maxim as far as it can go. It is clear then that what took place in Gabriel Orozco’s house was as crucial and relevant for all and that its echo would be heard long after the meetings had ceased taking place. The Workshop would have lasting and important consequences not just in the lives and careers of each one of its members, but also, notably, in the arts scene and the way people understand art in Mexico. Countless relations, consonances, exchanges and initiatives, which would involve sometimes all of them, sometimes only a few would be unleashed through time. Projects such as a magazine of mutant names, *Casper* (*Crepas, Pescar, Sercap, Es Crap...*); Damián Ortega’s publishing project *Alias*; of course kurimanzutto gallery, with its unparalleled proposal of having no fixed space and rather having site-specific shows in strange places like the Medellín Market; the *Galería de Comercio*, founded by Abraham Cruzvillegas or *Dermafília*, the tattoo studio that Dr. Lakra opened with some friends in Coyoacán. In short a thousand and one matters which share the spirit that permeated the Workshop—an vigour that makes an exhibition like this one possible today.