

Chronicle

By Gerardo Lammers

A postcard from Orozco

Its Sunday November 23. The afternoon arrives at the street crossing of Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez and Jimenez, where Francisco Ugarte is together with his wife, awaiting for the public's arrival (the is an announcement for the arrival of the Governor.) Guadalajara's sky is radiant; it could be said that it is ideal to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Jose Clemente Orozco's birthday.

The piece that Ugarte presents this time is a part of a series of ephemeral urban interventions made by several artists on points close to the as a homage to the great muralist. The works are located at points close to the Via Recreativa, which has as purpose that the visitors can ride bicycles on Sundays on car-free streets.

Ugarte, a Minimalist artist, painted white the four corners of the centric crossing, located beyond or before (according to the point of view.) From this crossing, it is possible to see the Copula of the Cabañas Cultural Institute, where Orozco painted his Fire Man (El Hombre de Fuego.)

The house's façades are painted white, but also the sidewalks, and the lampposts. If it could be possible, Ugarte would have painted the pavement as well, just as he confessed to the Governor, who has just arrived, dressed in sporting pants and surrounded by bodyguards. Some journalists with photographic and video cameras also arrived to record the event.

The politician comments to the thirty-something year old artist that he finds interesting that the author chose an "ugly" area for his Intervention. Then he asks if the artist took himself the brush to paint those walls.

Ugarte's works call our attention concerning the way in which we perceive the space. In this particular case, he focuses on these decadent, neglected streets, which at the same time are very representative of Guadalajara.

Those uniform, freshly painted façades invite us to look at them with renovated eyes. They remit me to the lime-painted walls of our towns. The idea of a painting on Orozco's easel jumps into my head (I believe that the name of the painting is Mexican Town (Pueblo Mexicano.) Luis Barragan hanged a reproduction of this painting in his home-studio located in Tacubaya, Mexico City. With the passage of time, this painting has mysteriously resulted to be of Barragan's style too.

The Governor is about to leave, but before, the figure of the neighborhood's car caretaker emerges among the few bicycle riders and bystanders. Perhaps the white of the shiny walls was not enough to blind him but the presence of the celebrity, a Governor has dazzled him. The car caretaker has arrived to ask the Governor to sign the dirty and ragged t-shirt he is wearing.

The politician asks for a marker and gets ready to autograph the garment.

Then, when the governor gets in touch with the car caretaker's body, he stops and watches for an instant; "You are way slender" he says.

The car caretaker only smiles back, unable to say a word. The uncomfortable silence breaks when the Governor raises the ballpoint pen and exclaims while looking at the crowd:

"On Orozco's day."

Then he signs on the ribs of the emaciated citizen.

Afterwards, Gonzalez Marquez and his entourage start moving, followed by the journalists. Some typical lunch from Jalisco awaits at the Patio de los Naranjos. In just a few seconds, the road crossing comes back to its apparent normality, although in a certain way it is no longer the same, since the artist's hand (and ideas) of the artist transformed it. I find it worrisome to think that the car caretaker may be confused, believing the same about his t-shirt.