

## circles

curated by Carlos Garaicoa

november 2011- january 2012

opening: saturday, 19th november, 2011

Ezequiel Suárez, *No usados sobre la marcha*, 2011

Everyone, like it or not, is from somewhere. But in the case of an artist, the geographical component of that 'somewhere' is only one of many such identifying factors: visual artists, in their work, inhabit not so much a place as a contextual network of references, influences and models that in their inter-dependence combine to define more fully than a place-name where any given artist can be said to be 'from'. This, in other words, is an artist's true 'circle,' something which has traditionally involved values of enclosure (i.e. demarcation, definition via exclusion) and alliance (i.e. us vs. them), but in today's art globalized art world extends as never before to span generations, languages and national borders.

This concept is the starting point for the group exhibition *Circles*, guest-curated by the Cuban-born artist Carlos Garaicoa for the Elba Benítez Gallery. In his role as curator, Garaicoa has selected five contemporary Cuban artists -- **Yoan Capote, Yaima Carrazana, Reynier Leyva Novo, Ezequiel Suárez and J.A. Toirac** – whose individual work spans various movements and various generations while serving when taken together to outline an overview Cuban art of recent decades. However, in addition to inviting these artists to participate in the exhibition with their own work, Garaicoa also asked each to select another artist whose work has been in some way important to her or his own, an importance that might be direct or indirect and that might consist of influence, education, affinity or attraction. This second level – or 'circle' – of the exhibition is made up of a far-flung group of internationally prominent artists: **Louise Bourgeois, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Martin Kippenberger, Teresa Margolles** and **Krzysztof Wodiczko**.

Thus *Circles* presents a group show that is at once diverse yet cohesive, small in scale yet vast in outlook, personal yet plural, subjective yet unconstrained. On the one hand, *Circles* highlights contemporary Cuban art with an insider's view, while on the other it traces farther-reaching relationships running through the wider art world. And throughout the exhibition Garaicoa -- who, in addition to his own established position on the international art circuit, is an accomplished curator of fellow-artists' work -- deftly incorporates and activates contemporary art world concepts of community, collectivity and connectivity.

As Garaicoa has written about the exhibition: *Circles is an exhibition of five Cuban artists of different generations sharing space with artists from different latitudes whose works have been important referents to their education/career. Together with the invitation, the curator sent the following questions to the five Cuban artists: What artist influenced you the most in your education? With which artist have you identified the most, or which one has defined your work methodology at some point? Which artist, although in an indirect way, is an essential referent to understand your work today? Which artist would you invite to show with you? Their answer –as well as the curator's own answer - have completed the list of artists in this show, thus closing a circle of interests.*

Carlos Garaicoa (La Habana, 1967) creates work that is characterized by an informed engagement with contemporary architecture and cities, and in particular with his native Havana. Incorporating architectural models, photos, drawings, video and language, Garaicoa's work is at all times imbued with an exquisite execution and a carefully-controlled aesthetics that manage to invoke poetry as well as politics and to suggest intimacy as well as provocation. Garaicoa has had solos shows at the ICA in Philadelphia, MOCA in Los Angeles, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and other museums internationally, and he has participated in Documenta 11, the Sao Paulo Biennial, the Venice Biennial, Dublin Contemporary 2011 and he will participate on the 18th Biennial of Sydney (2012).

George Stolz

February 2012: CARLOS BUNGA