

Galería Elba Benítez



VIK MUNIZ

Photocubism

September 12 – November 09, 2024

As seen through the rearward-oriented telescope of Art History, the pictorial movement of Cubism constituted a paradigm shift in the long arc of representational mark-making. And it was no coincidence that such a shift would take place just as representational media such as painting and drawing were suffering a metamorphic mix of death-throes and birth-pains, brought on in great measure by the arrival and ascendance of a different form of representational mark-making: photography. The king is dead, long live the king, as they say — but today, in our post-analogue world, the king isn't feeling quite so well or so kingly again. Photography, a technology-based medium, now finds its ascendancy undermined by as-yet-unfinished changes in the very technology from which it sprang, thus placing it in a position analogous to that in which painting once found itself. Photography, once taken to reign with certainty, now itself stands on uncertain ground. All that is certain is that, as they also say, what goes round, comes round.

This art historical cum technological interregnum offers ideal circumstances for Vik Muniz to bring, jester-like (in the sense of Duchampian jesterism), his particular artistic practice to bear, as can be seen in the works on view in *Photocubism*, Muniz's current show at the Galería Elba Benítez. Muniz's work has long been engaged in a dialogue with the intersecting histories of painting and of photography, a dialogue that in fact is more fundamentally driven by Muniz's overarching philosophical investigation into the structural nature of representation and of what might be considered the "linguistics" of image-making.

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In keeping with these concerns, *Photocubism* consists of a series of photographically printed images, all of which take as their starting points iconic paintings by Cubist pioneers such as Picasso and Gris. In fashioning these works, Muniz subjects images of the paintings to a sequence of photographic and physical manipulations, printing the image and then cutting it into pieces, freely reattaching those cut pieces and then rephotographing the reassembled object, printing that new photograph and cutting it into pieces, freely reattaching those pieces and etc, etc....

Ultimately, a final stage is achieved, a photographic image that is composed of photographic images but that, in itself, is quite unlike a photographic image. More importantly, these images not only refer to their Cubist forbears in terms of identifiable imagery, but also assimilate the underlying ethos, the ethos that provoked that art historical paradigm shift. Like the Cubist works they cite, Muniz's images in *Photocubism* are essentially analytic, in the sense of analysis as a process of breaking down and building up, of removing wholeness in order to restore a different kind of wholeness. And like them, these works also seek to capture both time and texture — or rather, to capture time through texture, the layered and layering traces of time- and movement-based sequence. Thus these images are both generative and generational, both cause and effect, both a cycle and the culmination of a cycle. In the works on view in *Photocubism*, what goes round, comes round. As they say.

George Stolz

Vik Muniz (1961, São Paulo; lives and works in New York and Rio de Janeiro) creates meticulously crafted visual puns and games, delighting viewers while at the same time raising more thoughtful questions about the nature and mechanics of illusion and representation. Beyond its technical virtuosity and irreverent humor, Muniz's distinctive practice explores and revels in the instability that exists between craft and mechanical reproduction, between high art and popular culture, between the ephemeral and the perdurable, between the coded and the recognizable.

Muniz has had solo exhibitions at MUN Museo Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, 2023; 2020); the Brigham Young University Museum of Art (Provo, 2021); the Sarasota Art Museum Ringling College of Art and Design (2019); the MAM Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia (Salvador, 2019); the Chrysler Museum of Art (Norfolk, 2018); the Belvedere Museum (Vienna, 2018); MARCO Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (2017); Maurithuis (The Hague, 2016); the High Museum of Art (Atlanta, 2016); the Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris (2016); the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2014); the CAC Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga (2012); the MoMA PS1 (New York, 2007); the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead, 2007); the Miami Art Museum (2006); the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (2004); MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma (2004); the Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin, 2004); the Menil Collection (Houston, 2002); the Whitney Museum (New York, 2001); the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 1998); the International Center for Photography (New York, 1998) and elsewhere. He represented Brazil at the 49th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia in 2001.

Photocubism is Muniz's sixth solo show at the Galería Elba Benítez.

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