

DESPIEL, ALFREDO ROMERO

To conceive the existence as an act of memory; to experiment the identity as a perpetual detachment from the skins, the surfaces, and the clothes. With this collection, Alfredo Romero Campos distances himself from the usual perception of Art by tracing part of the lost history and culture of the streets of Mexico.

In recent years, the visual artist has been developing the *stratum*, through which he has proposed a new relationship between art, ephemeral architecture and popular memory. Having as a central argument the recovery of *Vestiges* of popular labeling on facades and walls of the neighborhoods of Mexico, throughout his work Romero offers an opportunity to thematize the contemporary world, establishing a counterpoint between the ephemeral and the perennial, the vertiginous mobility and calm, oblivion and memory. A powerful reflection on the passing of time, and the traces it leaves on the communal memory finds a main driving force in his work.

With the strappo technique, Romero extracts layers of facades of buildings encapsulating the timelines of these local communities from the last half century that otherwise would disappear. Messages, advertising, and propaganda were painted directly on the layered walls in Mexico. Back in his studio, the artist intervenes onto the artworks creating a bond between the past and the present. These artworks become visual testimonies that relate the true history leaving a permanent imprint as references for the future generations.

In addition, for this exhibition Alfredo Romero created a series of works “topográfica” (topography) where he explores the aerial representation of urban landscape. With pieces of vestiges and the mosaic technique, he created three-dimensional wall installations. Relief, form and density are interpreted by the viewer. Here the artist offers a possible demonstration of encrypted compositions from historical vestiges and the visual result of globalization.

By extracting old facades, Romero is challenging the limits of delicate physical work, archive and art. He takes a damaged vestige from the streets – mostly from popular and poor neighborhoods - that local people find undesirable and turns it into a work of art that becomes part of museums and art collections. These works create a bridge between local communities, art institutions and art connoisseurs, allowing an open conversation about a common reference, putting them at the same table, exchanging on social, geographical, historical and cultural references, leading them to relate to one another.

The exhibition DESPIEL by Alfredo Romero Campos was presented at the Museo de la Ciudad de Mérida from December 2021 through June 2022.



FIRST STATION - Strata from strips and remains of vestiges

What would a map look like in which each and every movement made throughout a lifetime would be recorded? If that was possible, I mean to retrace the marks that our steps left behind, perhaps we would be surprised to realize how much was left behind: how many songs, how many names, how many disguises, how much innocence. Would we resist the temptation of picking up these pieces; to go collecting those remains of ourselves that were falling without even realizing it? Sometimes, the detachment is what allows the journey to begin.

What if we moved things from their place and let chance organize them as it pleases? Split, skin, gather, congregate. Here is a different possibility to imagine the stories. Fragments accommodated with freshness and self-confidence. And while some aim for everything to remain in its place, immovable and stoic, art encourages us to subvert the seriousness of taxonomies.

Another way is always possible.

SECOND STATION - Layers of skin that become volumes

How do you prefer to undress, smile, caress? In black and white, color or sepia? Perhaps a similar difference occurs when you go from understanding the world from two to three, four or five levels - after increasing the volume, adding music, movement, nostalgia or a desire to perceive. Only now have I discovered that the facade of a house can rotate like it is suspended until one gets dizzy and their voice trembles. What covers is temporary.

A stratum of invisible wings is building its nest in the wind, which gives it volume. Thickness, density and perspective are involved. Inflating memory to the point of explosion. Where in the house would you hang your most intense emotions? In which part of your body are you holding the wires that hold your desires?

To see life turn for someone could release a deep revelation. From that moment until now, I observe and ask myself, how many more layers of skin could there be.

THIRD STATION - Canvases, skins, shreds, floating and suspended tapestries

Time inhabits the things of the world. By detaching it from its clothes it becomes an affirmation of life. The one that can grab a sight from silence has a treasure for himself. Whoever draws a sigh from silence keeps a treasure for himself. In the same way, a vestige floating in the air announces an omen. The memories of the body and the wrinkles of time perhaps constitute an accurate allegory to life.

Associated to what is genuine and what pertains to identity, emotions and feelings, the skin constitutes our inside and our outside, our container and our content. Leather, sheepskin, membrane, epidermis or film are some of its synonyms. Shedding one's skin can be a metaphor to life's course, like a flowing river.

With the skin hanging in the air, what do we have left?

