

**CARLOS GARAICOA**

›Lo viejo y lo nuevo/the old and the new‹

Exhibition September 10 - October 23, 2010

Carlos Garaicoa is one of the most influential, politically committed artists of his generation in Cuba. We are very pleased to present his first solo show in Germany, at OPEN ART.

Garaicoa grew up in socialist Cuba at a time when the euphoria over the revolutionary years was giving way to the disillusion of socio-political relations. Faced with the impending collapse of the Soviet Union and the American embargo, the disintegration of Havana's architecture became a metaphor for ideological failure. Two extremes define the cityscape: decaying neo-baroque facades, the relicts of colonial opulence, collide with the ruins of unfinished communist-era building projects.

By exploring the urban spaces of his hometown, Garaicoa develops his ideas and concepts. The founding of the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana in 1976, where he was student for five years, and the establishment of the Havana Biennial in 1984, cleared the way for contemporary art discourses in Cuba. Garaicoa works in a variety of media and categories, using photography, drawing, architecture, sculpture, and video.

We present black-and-white photographs of destroyed, eroding fragments of architecture in the process of vanishing. Here is where Garaicoa intervenes. He reconstructs the city's architectural legacy by running taut threads through his photographs, creating something new out of the ruins. He likewise proceeds with the photogravures in the series *Frases, 2010*: Garaicoa takes incomplete and partly fallen off signs and labellings of old warehouses, and adds his own commentary and thoughts about Cuban realities. The political dimension, as well as the poetry of his work, becomes clear. The faded glamour and luxury of the consumer-oriented past is confronted with revolutionary slogans, the political entanglements become visible.

Two series have been especially created for the Munich exhibition, containing references to European cultural history. Nineteenth-century French etchings of garden architecture and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century engravings of buildings in Munich have been transformed into three-dimensional architectural models. Garaicoa takes the buildings out of their two-dimensional originals, tilts the facades upwards, and creates spaces out of black cardboard: abstract forms meet classical conceptions. Garaicoa uses aesthetic infringements or disruptions to question the established political and social orders. In *Upside Down Fundamentalisms (I Hate Them)*, 2010, the Star of David, the Swastika, the Turkish crescent, and Christian symbolism appear in the shadows of a Munich churchfront. Garaicoa's own interpretations arise.

Carlos Garaicoa, born in 1967 in Havana, Cuba, lives and works in Madrid and Havana. His work has been exhibited at the 53rd Venice Biennial, 2009; the 51st Venice Biennial, 2005; Documenta XI in Kassel, Germany, 2002; VI Biennial, Havana, Cuba, 2001; VI Biennial, Havana, Cuba, 1997; Africus '95, 1st International Biennial, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1995; Solo shows: IMMA, Museum of Modern Art Ireland, Dublin, 2010; Tampa Museum, Florida, USA, 2010; La Caixa Cultural, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2008; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada, 2006; La Fundación Caixa, Barcelona, Spain, 2003. Garaicoa's works are in collections at the Tate Gallery, Liverpool, MoMA, New York City, and the Centre Pompidou, Paris.