

B A R B A R A G R O S S G A L E R I E

CARLOS GARAICOA

If you have a glass house...

Exhibition: November 9, 2013—January 11, 2014

Carlos Garaicoa is one of the most influential, politically engaged artists of his generation. For the exhibition *If you have a glass house...* at the Barbara Gross Galerie he casts a critical eye upon the connections among architecture, ideology, and power structures.

Garaicoa's multimedia work revolves around urban spaces, which the artist regards as a mirror of social realities, as well as a stamp that leaves its mark on them. In the 1990s, his hometown of Havana served as the starting point for his aesthetic forensics, but ever since his work was seen at the Documenta 11 Garaicoa has been developing it in an increasingly international context, relating it to the social and historical circumstances of each exhibition site. To the tendency of each system to capture dominant power structures in enduring stone and concrete, the artist replies with fragile, temporary architecture: contours of buildings made out of thin threads, architectural models out of rice paper and glass, or slowly dissolving miniature cities made of sugar or wax are humane alternative designs to the immortal ambitions of political dogma.

The question of the guilt and innocence of architectural forms serves as a parentheses for the works that Garaicoa has created for the exhibition in Munich. At the center of the show are two iconic buildings, whose symbolic language is exposed by the artist's deliberate shifts in size and material: the German Federal Bank headquarters in Frankfurt and the Haus der Kunst in Munich.

The gold miniature *Bundesbank* is kept like a gem in a massive steel vault; in this setting, it is like an ironic commentary on the way that the financial sector is fetishized. Garaicoa confronts the site of economic power in the thin, reflective gold leaves of his *Portfolio* with the rage coming from the streets over the excesses of the economic crisis. They are inscribed with words such as *Chorizos* (thieves), *Puppets*, or *Basta*—fragments of text from protest posters from Spain, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Greece—which, taken out of the critical context and enhanced with a shiny surface, are themselves caught up in contradictions.

With the glass model of *Haus der Kunst* Garaicoa is also recalling a theme that has not lost any of its currency: the abuse of art as an instrument of power. The fragile plates of glass that Garaicoa has used to build the model of the monumental, neoclassical building not only counteract the hollow emotionalism of the overwhelming National Socialist architecture, but they also bring to mind images of the shop windows broken during the night of the Third Reich pogrom in 1938, which signaled the start of the public and systematic persecution of the Jews in Germany. This complex of works is rounded off by *The serial killer book shelf*: a collection of political writings by Mao, Stalin, and Hitler, books that have been found in the collections of serial killers; cast bronze statuettes of athletes modeled after those in Leni Riefenstahl's Olympia films of 1938 serve as bookends.

Carlos Garaicoa, born 1967 in Havana, lives and works in Madrid and Havana. Participation in the Sydney biennial 2012, Havana biennial 2012, 2000, 1997 and 1994, the São Paulo biennial 2004 and 2011, the Venice biennial 2009 and 2005 and Documenta11 in 2002. Solo shows among others: The Institute of Contemporary Art, Sofia / Kunsthaus Baselland, Basel / Kunstverein Braunschweig, 2012; Irish Museum of Modern Art - IMMA, Dublin, 2010; Museo de Arte Moderno Medellín, 2010; Contemporary Art Museum, IRA, Tampa, Florida, 2010; La Caixa Cultural, Rio de Janeiro, 2008; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 2006; La Fundación Caixa, Barcelona, 2003. Works are among others in the collections of Tate Modern, London, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, the Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, and the Centre Pompidou, Paris.