



LOLO Y LAUTI

Localidades Agotadas

Bomarzo

In 1984, when I was 19, I made a trip to Buenos Aires to visit the Teatro Colón for the first time. After twelve years, the opera *Bomarzo* (by Alberto Ginastera) was reopening with a script by Mujica Lainez himself. It was a very cold night in May, and of course I was running late. I ran when I heard the bell for the start of the opera and found my place in paradise shrouded in the darkness. It was a warm darkness that I entered, a wet mouth whose breath had the aroma of *Eau Sauvage* by Christian Dior. In the first act, long before young Pier Francesco is bewitched by the dance of a great skeleton and before he takes the potion that will allow him to live forever with his hunch and desire for men, the respectable gentleman that was sitting right by my side took my hand and placed it on his bulge. He had arrived in a hot paradise with no immortality. From this side of the stage, time passed with every creak of the wooden seats—which sang the movements of that motionless dance like a choir—and with my saliva, my hand over there, my own pants and the vision of Pier Francesco’s fate, which was starting to show its face.

In this exhibition, Lolo y Lauti talk about how the theater functioned as some sort of proto-Grindr. Perhaps it is true. What is certain is that since that visit to paradise, I experienced a lot of situations that at that time happened only in the shadows, out of the spotlight of the era. Inside me they make up—as Mujica Lainez has said of the garden and statues the Duke of Bomarzo had requested in order to express his torments—”an autobiography written in a dream.”

In *Localidades agotadas*, Lolo y Lauti find their own paradise, that most privileged of places: the backstage. Another form of darkness. And from there they recount anecdotes and situations that not only made the chance of new sexual encounters possible, but also built a new language, a language that could only be born in Buenos Aires, which constitutes the roots and cornerstone of cultural life in this city: theater.

Lolo y Lauti introduce an exhibition that whispers one of the inscriptions from that whimsical rainforest built by the Duke of Bomarzo: “You, travelling the world in search of great wonders, come here, where you will find horrible faces, elephants, bears and tigers.”

This is the scene, therefore, of the ultimate spell, in which every visitor finds the most extraordinary and bulging treasure they have ever seen: the slut they have inside.

By RAÚL FLORES

for *Lolo y Lauti*

Buenos Aires, March 7,

2021

Carmen

How can intense and enlightening collaborations between diverse artists and the communities of Panama City be established? This question is the driving force behind the international urban art project that Humberto Vélez and I have called Ciudad Múltiple 500.

Lolo y Lauti, the first guests, set out to make a filmed adaptation of their favorite opera, Carmen, with people from the drag and trans community from Panama, and for this purpose they stayed in the city for more than a month (Rodri stayed for a little less). They met the team from Ciudad Múltiple 500 and plenty of other people. They explored the “landscape”, they moved to Casco Viejo, the historic quarter of the city, and lived in the great attic of the building that housed the first music academy of the country. In this symbolic, beautiful and somewhat ramshackle place they held auditions for the artists that make up the cast of Carmen. And right there they rehearsed, filmed and edited their first “contemporary opera.”

Miss Veneno Fraimark, Conchota Grande Iriarte Fraimark, Lolita Starfish Fraimark Von Dee, Bubblegum Fraimark, Alexa Fraimark, Lorena Iriarte Fraimark, Libia Fraimark, Cordelia Fraimark, Jamie Rivers Fraimark, Rosario Arias Castaño, Ja’la De La Fressange, Galilea De La Fressange, Dragnessa Williams, Charlie Chiskei, Laidy Boo, Angela Victoria Jhanono, Lana Michelle Visser Carangi, Lanesys Nicole Harts, Yineth Layevska and Brittany Yokasta Smith King are all Carmen: the legendary gypsy rebel that is stabbed to death by her lover and whose name means “charisma.”

—

“The drag scene in Panama is vibrant and sophisticated.” (Lauti)

“The Fraimarks are, for us, perhaps the best young art collective in Latin America right now.” (Lolo)

—

The first thing I learned about Lolo y Lauti is their eagerness to invite us to play in an alternative

present. They draw upon the resources at hand and appropriate highly heterogeneous codes to ask mind-boggling questions of our sensibilities.

The second thing I learned about them is that their sense of humor is an unapologetic, celebratory, loving and disruptive exercise. I would say it is an ethical humor, even. *Queer*.

And the third thing (I wonder if that is the order) is their fascination with the body as a political space and with the infinitely transformative and elusive power of theatricality. This is their defining characteristic.

—

The splendid prelude to Bizet’s opera is also the prelude to Lolo y Lauti’s Carmen. But their version does not follow the plot of the original. In fact, it does not follow any narrative or formal storyline. Their logic is different. The film focuses on the very process of carrying it out: the auditions, the interviews, the rehearsals... And at the same time it focuses on the elaborate, ritualistic and performative art of drag queens. An art that delights in creating illusions and breaking them apart, in putting on and removing the mask.

The screen in this film by Lolo y Lauti (and Rodri) is like a metaphor in a continuous metamorphosis. It unveils and conceals. It is protean, provocative, outlandish and incredibly fun. It relentlessly moves, fractures, darkens, blinks, expands, compresses and multiplies. The takes, the sequences and the special effects, just like the artists on stage, subvert all unambiguous identities. They captivate and at once pull back the curtain for all to see.

And so, from the start, the intention of this Carmen is clear: to pay homage, from Panama, to the great art of drag and to the community that was born from its counterculture. Because—as Esther Newton says and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reinforces—“drag is less a single kind of act than a heterogeneous system, an ecological field,” whose relations are defined both within that field and outwards, challenging the dominant culture.

+

+

This *Carmen* seems to celebrate Yvonne Rainer's No Manifesto, but the other way around:

Yes to spectacle.
Yes to virtuosity.
Yes to transformations and magic and make-believe.
Yes to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.
Yes to the heroic.
Yes to the anti-heroic.
Yes to trash imagery.
Yes to involvement of performer or spectator.
Yes to style.
Yes to camp.
Yes to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.
Yes to eccentricity.
Yes to moving or being moved.

The same night that *Carmen* was opening in the Museum of Contemporary Art, the president of China happened to visit the president of Panama. For his security, he ordered (yes, Xi Jinping also rules in our country) the closure of streets across large parts of the city, including the street leading to the museum.

What to do? Fear and tremble, as that great Dane once said.
When the supreme leader finally boarded his flight, it was so late and the traffic jam was so terrible that a fifteen-minute journey took us two hours. Drag queens could be seen, monumental and stunning, getting out of cars and buses to arrive faster on foot. Slowly, the MAC Panama was filling. The museum director gave her speech to the public, the Deputy Mayoress promised to fight harder for the LGBT community, Lolo y Lauti spoke, Jamie Fraimark too, Rodri said hello... Lights went out. And so, projected onto the biggest wall of the biggest room of the museum with the help of a powerful (borrowed) piece of equipment originally used to display astrophysical phenomena, more than 200 people sitting on the floor, between shrieks, laughter and tears, bore witness to something that was truly larger than life.

Je t'aime, Carmen!

By ADRIENNE SAMOS
for Raúl Flores
Panamá, April 9, 2021

—
Translation by
Fabrizio Arias Lippo
June–July 2021
www.barro.cc