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## elephant juice (sexo entre amigos)

curated by damián ortega

gabriel orozco, daniel guzmán, monika sosnowska, luisa lambri, lawrence weiner, dr. lakra, eduardo abaroa, abraham cruzvillegas, sofía táboas, anselm reyle, javier rodríguez, mauricio rocha, enrique metinides, gabriel kuri, luis felipe ortega, rinkrit tiravanija, jonathan hernández, marine hugonnier  
los manantiales restaurant, xochimilco, mexico city  
december 14 2003

*Elephant Juice (Sexo entre amigos)* was conceived by Damián Ortega as a one-day group exhibition to be held at Los Manantiales, a restaurant in Mexico City's Xochimilco. Throughout the day, a variety of works (drawings, photographs, sculptures, installations, and performance) by eighteen artists was shown and performed at this unusual venue. Los Manantiales is a restaurant housed inside a thin-shell circular concrete structure built in 1958, boasting a futuristic design based on intersecting hyperbolic shapes by architect Félix Candela.

Beyond a conventional curatorial exercise, Ortega proposed a stage ready to be intervened: a circular labyrinth designed and constructed in collaboration with architect Mauricio Rocha, using rented scaffolding. Covered with different materials ranging from canvas, plastic, and mesh, the structure served to hang the artwork but also to create a series of smaller sections where sculpture and video were on display.

Walking through this labyrinth presented a particular set of viewing conditions for the spectator whom, affected by the impossibility of seeing more than a few meters ahead, experienced a partial and fragmented perception of space. More than a path to be followed blindly, the labyrinth format offered a series of surprises; it established a playful relationship between one work and another while giving the viewer the chance to get lost inside the exhibition. Thus, pieces acquired more than one meaning, depending on the direction from which they

were encountered. The experience of one object became entangled with another: one artwork lending the next a particular reference that permeated its interpretation. The quest to reach the center of the maze then became the search for hidden and unsuspected affinities between the pieces.

Each artist was presented with a diagram of the maze as well as a sketch of its main component: a rectangular piece of the wall oriented vertically and subdivided into eight rectangles. The plan included a larger space at the center of the labyrinth where visitors could stay longer. Based on this design, artists envisioned their participation in different ways: Gabriel Kuri covered one of the labyrinth's dead ends with bright pink tarp – effectively creating a room of his own, reminiscent of a typical street market stall – in which a single light bulb shone above a small landscape made from patches of fresh moss separated by newspaper. This work introduced a shift in light and temperature, and smell in relation to the rest of the path. Referencing the news' "freshness" and "temperature" while inviting a heightened awareness of the senses.

According to Ortega, "*Elephant Juice* aimed to provoke a tangible, physical attraction between inanimate objects, situations, and spaces by setting up a tension-marked environment and alternating viewing conditions, while combining living elements with inorganic artifacts." One of the pieces that transmitted this unmediated physical tension was a performance by Javier Rodríguez who walked around the labyrinth for hours, balancing a glass of water on his head, only to drink it at the end of the night. Viewers who witnessed this precarious balancing act became accomplices to the action; subject to the same pull exerted between the artworks.

Lawrence Weiner participated with one of his trademark stenciled-phrases: *Varying Degrees of Damage Done to the Same Thing*. Weiner's statement, printed on white potato sacks, provided the backdrop for the center stage of the maze: a sculpture by Rirkrit Tiravanija inspired by Enzo Mari's hexagonal designs and crowned with a steel pole. Tiravanija invited a professional female pole dancer to perform and activate this piece while the public visited the exhibition. She was covered in Dr Lakra's drawings, creating the illusion that one of the pin-up girls in his posters had come to live.

The first part of the show's title, *Elephant Juice*, comes from a phrase you mouth without uttering a sound in order to deceive someone into thinking you are saying "I love you." It's also the original title to a film Ortega saw in Brazil; only it had been translated as *Sexo entre amigos* to make it shocking and commercially appealing. The dislocation between translations fascinated Ortega, who found it a deliberate exercise in misunderstanding. The dissolution of meaning describes the space left open for each viewer's interpretation of the show, the same space activated by each and everyone's participation.

Food was served during the afternoon and a live band played until it was time to close down. Each individual was made responsible of curating his own experience, free to traverse the space and create a different exhibition. This relationship was described by Ortega in an interview: "paths are created inside the labyrinth, they close off; different levels at different heights demand our attention but they are constantly negotiated and transformed... they are spaces in continuous fluctuation."