gabriel orozco

april 29 – june 13 2009

kurimanzutto presents Gabriel Orozco's most recent work produced after a series of trips the artist made in early 2009 to the natural reserves and biospheres of Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Querétaro, and Oaxaca in Mexico.

For this exhibition, Orozco has intervened the remnants of desert plants using golden leaf, plaster, graphite, wooden structures, and volcanic rocks. These elements gathered in the gallery produce a re-constructed and re-composed landscape. In this temporary inhabitable landscape, nature and human order reveal at once; with the natural becoming enhanced instead modified.

All the vernacular species presented were found dry and collected from different locations throughout Mexico. Among the vegetal species exhibited are: *Beaucarnea gracilis,* a tree colloquially known in Mexico as *pata de elefante* (elephant leg), capable of living over a thousand years and whose thick trunk accumulates large amounts of water to face drought and, once it dries, acquires the aspect and composition of a sponge; *nopaleras,* tumbleweed from the deserts in Matehuala, San Luis Potosí, and Querétaro; *quiotes*, maguey's flower stalk from the south coast in Oaxaca. Once *patas de elefantes* die, they are cut and burnt through an ancient Mesoamerican technique named *roza-tumba-quema* in which the carbonized remains of plants are spread as natural soil fertilizer.

The region of Tehuacán valley, also known as Sierra Mixteca, is where the largest Mexican mountain ranges –Sierra Madre Oriental, Transvolcanic Belt, and Sierra Madre del Sur– join and "knot". About 200 million years ago, this area was covered by the sea, as were two thirds of the current Mexican territory. The similarities between the structure of the cactaceae (cacti) and coral reefs are remarkable.

From his earliest pieces, Orozco's interest in organic forms and materials found in nature, has been a constant presence in his work: in his 1989 exhibition *A propósito* (On Purpose), held at an old convent in Mexico City, Orozco showed a group of tree trunks arranged on the floor of one of the chapels along with an elephant's head hung from the wall; more recently in *Espumas* (foams), a sculpture from 2003, in which the artist studies the behavior of polyurethane, a highly industrialized material that acts as a living creature, transforming itself from a semi-liquid lava-like state into a solid that resembles a kind of marine creature.

During the development of the project *Matrix Móvil* (2006), the most difficult task was to find each part needed to complete the whale's skeleton and later reconstruct it and install it at the José Vasconcelos library in Mexico City; in this exhibition at kurimanzutto the assembling of the elements is deliberately exposed. The simultaneous superimpose of a distribution principle over natural structures is also characteristic of Orozco's work

Orozco is equally amazed by branches woven by the wind into spherical shapes or the absence of water transformed into fibrous tissue: "Most of my work takes place on the border where order (structure, language, urban faith) and disorder (organic life, natural phenomena, wilderness) are confronted (...) It is in the tension space created between countryside and city, organic and inorganic, 'artificial' and 'natural' that most of my work is generated, where I wander and discover." [1]

Gabriel Orozco would like to thank: Dr. Alfonso Valiente, Víctor Serrano, Secretaría de Ecología de Tlalpan, Cimarrones, Taller Flora, Christián Maciá, Adriana Riquer, Arturo Hernández, Nayeli Lavanderos, Karla Castillo, Carme García, Rita Ponce de León, Restauro, Marco Barrera Bassols, Museográfica, Fletes y Mudanzas Filiberto Mendoza, Tania Bohórquez, Instituto de Artes Gráficas de Oaxaca, Casa San Agustin Etla, and Francisco Toledo for their support and collaboration in this exhibition.

[1] Excerpt from a lecture given at Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City, January 30, 2001.