



JAIMÉ CARREJO

This is an exhibition about identity. A complex visual story told by an artist who is constantly challenged by what it means to be a border-crosser, both physically (movement from one place to another) and psychologically (decision-making processes). Scholar Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, defines Chicano art as art that “ seeks to link lived reality to the imagination . . . It intends that viewers respond both to the aesthetic object and to the social reality reflected in it.”² Carrejo’s installation, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, invites us to participate in a nuanced interplay of old and new metaphors for identity and uses whimsical iconography to question the circulation of multi-lingual signifiers. The images— *el burro* (the donkey), *la grúa* (the crane), and *la flor* (the flower)—are adapted from a children’s game involving chance and visual recognition called *Lotería* (lottery).

“ I’m looking to where my family came from as a generator of metaphorical symbols that cross cultural boundaries,” says Carrejo, who was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. Situated on the U.S.-Mexico border, El Paso constitutes an important point of entry for Mexican immigrants traveling *la Carretera Panamericana* (the Pan-American Highway) to a better life in *el norte* (the north). The city functions as both a static and a transitional place, where those on the go pass through quickly; and those that stay are suspended in-between two cultures and they become: Mexican-American, Chicano, Hispanic, or Latino. It is this in-between state that captures Carrejo’s imagination and motivates him to investigate the sources and meanings of a more fluid “ multi-hybrid” sense of self.³

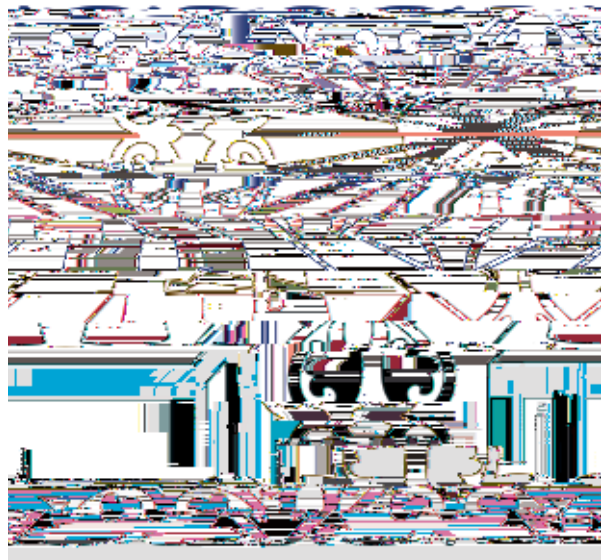
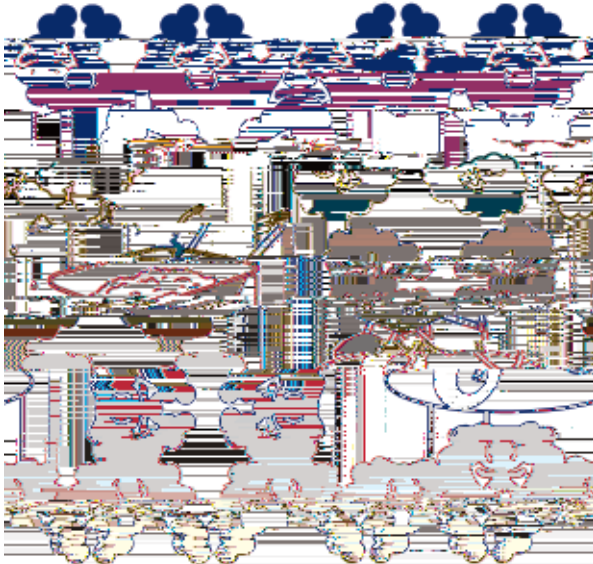
However, this is not an exhibition about Mexican art or history. Although Carrejo uses a traditional folk-art aesthetic—piñatas and *papel picado* (cut paper)—he is not Mexican. He is American and the symbols, language, and culture that he understands as Mexican are Americanized versions of *Mexicanísimo*. Positioned between the past and the present, the Mexican-American artist assimilates a cultural identity through second-hand stories and *dichos* (sayings) told by those to whom the identity of Mexican truly belongs—his ancestors.

Although the following provides a guide for interpreting the individual components of this installation, it is not Carrejo’s desire for the objects to be read as isolated parts. At its core, Carrejo’s work is about a negotiation of individual identity based on a maneuvering of collective identity.

El burro

The donkey is a beast of burden both physically and metaphorically. Initially domesticated as a pack mule, the donkey





Our Own Worst Enemy, 2009

Vinyl decals starting at top left, clockwise:

- Border Crosser**
- Reconstruction Time Again**
- Preserver**
- Lemmings**

About the Artist

Jaime Carrejo lives and works in Denver, CO.

Jaime Carrejo was born in El Paso, Texas. He received a BA from the University of Texas El Paso in 2002; did a post-baccalaureate year at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, in 2004; and received an MFA from the University of South Florida, Tampa, in 2007.

Currently an adjunct professor of art at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design in Denver, Carrejo was a visiting assistant professor at The College of Wooster in 2008.

In addition to his solo exhibition at The College of Wooster Art Museum in 2009, Carrejo is part of a collaborative artist group whose video project, titled *Neighborhood Watch*, first took place in Tampa in 2006. *Take 2* and *Take 2 1/2* of the same project took place in 2008 in El Paso, with *Take 3* occurring in 2009 in Paris, France, and El Paso. The upcoming *Take 3 1/2* in 2010 will take place in Chicago and Denver.

Other collaborative projects include *National PARK(ing) Day* in 2009, and the *New Millennial Hanky Code Project* in 2007 at the William and Nancy Oliver Gallery, Tampa.

Group exhibitions include those at Covivant Gallery, Tampa, and the Shaw Center, Baton Rouge, LA, both in 2006.

About the Author

Monica Huerta is a PhD candidate in the History of Art department at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She received a BA from the University of Texas at El Paso and an MA from the University of Michigan. As a Ford Foundation fellow, she is completing her dissertation on contemporary figurative sculpture. Huerta was raised in El Paso, Texas, and identifies as Hispanic.

Works in Exhibition

All dimensions are h x w x d inches

Our Own Worst Enemy, 2009

Wood, acrylic paint, metal, paper, and rubber vinyl decals, dimensions variable
cart, 44 x 43 x 84 1/2
crane, 74 x 67 x 12 3/8
donkey, 104 x 60 x 30

Acknowledgments

Fluidity of thought and the ability to synthesize disparate strata of our world—from complex theory to observed nuance—are often common denominators among artists.

Jaime Carrejo's installation, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, demonstrates these traits with humor and eloquence in this disquisition about borders, identity, and personal responsibility.

In addition to thanking Jaime for his generosity and clarity as an artist (and great laugh), I thank Monica Huerta for her elegant essay that contextualizes Carrejo's appropriated imagery.

I also thank The Burton D. Morgan Foundation for their support of this exhibition, as well as their continued support of the exhibition program at The College of Wooster Art Museum.

Kitty McManus Zurko
Director and Curator
The College of Wooster
Art Museum



Our Own Worst Enemy, 2009
Donkey (detail)

JAIME CARREJO

October 27–December 6, 2009

The College of Wooster Art Museum

Burton D. Morgan Gallery

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