

STUDIO VISIT 4

THE PHYSICS
OF
JUGGLING

GUTO LACAZ

BY
RAPHAEL MICHILIS



Below:
Psych-Out
"Tribute" movie poster
Giclee Print
2008



IT IS HARD TO FIND a word to define all that Guto Lacaz does. One of Brazil's best known graphic designers, he is also an illustrator, a fine artist, a writer, a set designer and a teacher. But even with a frantic routine in Sao Paulo, Lacaz still finds some spare hours to exchange emails with Raphael Michilis and tell him how he uses humour and science to make art. His experience stretches back to a period when (in the eighties) a government-imposed ban on foreign technologies and imports prevented him and other graphic designers in Brazil from keeping their work up to date with the rest of the world.

First of all, how should one define you professionally since you work in so many fields. I am an architect that became a fine artist later on, but before that I studied industrial electronics. I planned to be

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an electronic engineer, but failed. Graphic design was only one of the courses that architecture school gave me. The most important one was the concept of multimedia projects.

You failed? When I enrolled in electronics I thought it was to build machinery, the part I love. But truly it is pure Mathematics and I don't have a Maths' head.

Does science have any importance for your art today? To me art and science are the same thing. It is impossible to have one without the other. It is important to divide work of art and art. Work of art is everything man builds, in different scales of qualities. Art is energy, a personal definition after my quantum mechanics classes.

And you teach? I have been teaching some courses in Arts, Graphic Design, Experimental Graphic Design, Project

and Illustration, Video, Sculpture on Paper, Magic Theatre (with black light), Mechanics to artists (kinetic sculpture), Pop Up (Architectonic Origami), and graffiti.

Wow, that's quite a lot. How do you find time to do anything else? I do not teach these courses all at the same time! I have developed these courses over more than 30 years. Some were regular classes in colleges. Some were just workshops.

In one of those courses you said you wanted your students to be aware of the possibilities of a 'dynamic art' based on the principles of three of the main machines from the mechanics studies. Why are they important? I taught the three simple machines, lever, inclined plane and pulley and their uses in fine arts. They are important because with them you can build any other machine.

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I try to show to the students how beautiful machines are, and how they can be used to produce art. In general, artists hate Physics and Maths, but they don't know how physics opens a great space to ideas in arts. I try to show this point of view and the students enrol because they want to learn it.

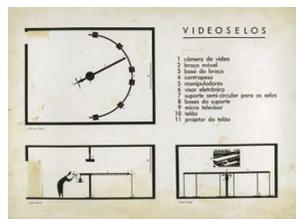
I found a video of you on TV, is it common for a graphic designer be on TV in Brazil?
 In the eighties, a friend of mine, Sergio Groisman, was invited to present an experimental TV show (TV MIX IV) on Gazeta Channel 11, Brazil's poorest channel at that time. He asked me to be part of his show, which should last 15 minutes once a week. I loved his invitation and started thinking of what I could do. After four trials, 'The Meeting between Art and Science' was born. The dream was over after three years though, when the program was discontinued. Nowadays it is easy to see designers or any kind of professionals on TV. But our meeting was very different. It was a non-sense and transgressive moment.

Why transgressive? It was a live show with one or two cameras only. And most of my work was transgression with ordinary objects. For instance, we showed how to open an umbrella using a typewriter machine. I have a picture of it on my website. The eighties were wonderful in Brazil. We felt free after fourteen years of dictatorship, from 64 to 78.

Is there a political twist in your work? To live is as an artistic political posture. Politics is a world view. I am a humourist: humour is my politics.

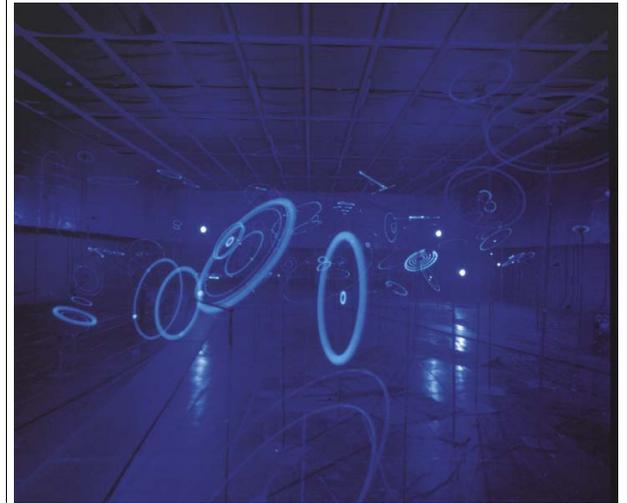
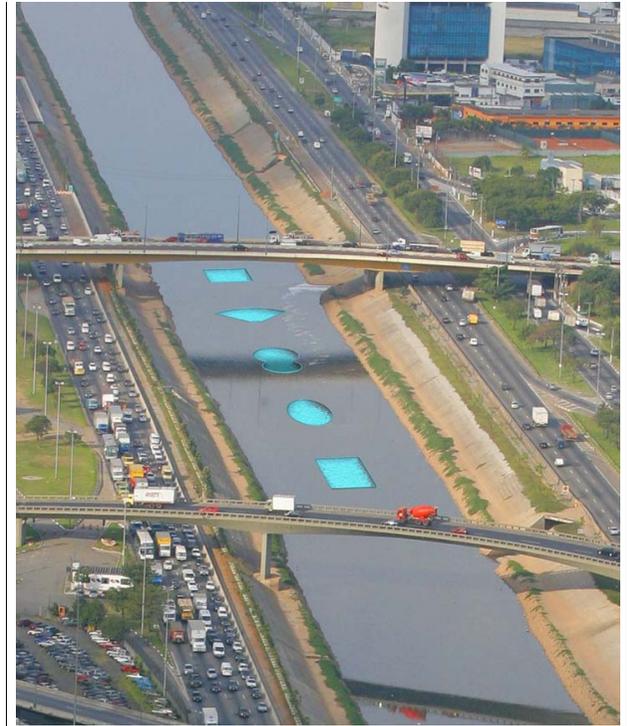
Is humour an important ingredient in your art? Humour is my base. The way I see the world passes through humour. As a child, I used to love copying cartoons from magazines. Then I brought it to graphic design and fine arts.

What is the message in the installation Auditorium for Delicate Matters, in which you placed some chairs floating on water? There's no message, or no one's message. All the viewers' interpretations are welcome. It was commissioned by the São Paulo City Hall to project an



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urban intervention, homage to human rights. The installation was placed close to where I live, on one of the Ibirapuera Park's lakes. I don't know where this idea comes from, but it was the most difficult work that I have done up to now. And I don't know how it worked perfectly, because during three months I had such a hard time with it!

You published on your website an article saying how your installation, Auditorium for Delicate Matters, sank into the lake. Were you embarrassed by the trouble you had making those chairs float? But of course I was! This article was published in an important newspaper the day after the opening. I was embarrassed, publicly embarrassed. But after two months working on the lake everyday I solved all

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the technical problems and the composition was then perfect. The same newspaper published an new item later, stating: 'Now, chairs are floating again.'

Sorry for insisting on the purpose of that installation. But you added to it a text saying we lack saints nowadays. Did you want someone to drown in that lake? As I said: all views are welcome. All views are valid. We call it 'open work'. This beautiful text was written by the analyst Oscar Cesarotto. It was a great surprise to me because at that time nobody had written a word about it. You talked about dictatorship. And we know it was a difficult time in Brazil, especially for artists, who many times were expelled from the country, some finding exile here in London. What was your experience? I was in the architecture college

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in the seventies, and we felt the fear of the time. But as we didn't get involved in guerrillas, like some groups did, we lived almost in peace.

Do you collaborate with other artists? At the beginning of my career I used to share lots works with three contemporary graphic designers, Rafic Farah, Mario Cafiero and Ricardo Van Steen. We did magazines, logos and illustrations. In some occasions we created together. I've learned a lot with them. They are my masters. The experience with them was like an intuitive and experimental school of graphic design. Now, each one has his own studio.

Your portfolio contains a large variety of work. What do you enjoy most? Actually, I love to have ideas and each idea asks a

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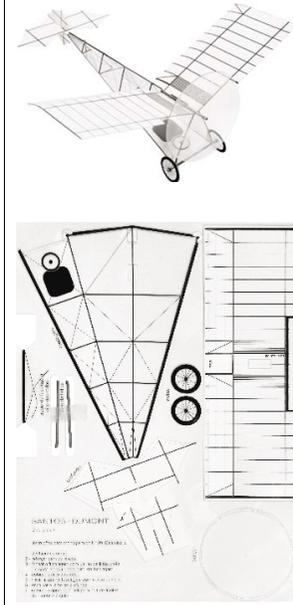


different media. There is a special pleasure in doing performances, because we can instantly feel the impact of each sketch on the audience. People laugh a lot. It is a very good energy!

Where can one see your work outside Brazil? There's no place outside São Paulo. And in São Paulo? The great majority of my work is part of my private collection. And your next project? I have already put down lots of ideas and many works ready are to show. But I need to wait for an opportunity to show. I have one hydrokinetic sculpture to be shown by the end of this year and two 'wind' sculptures that may be left for 2011. I am already doing the first tests.

You criticized the systematic use of the same kind of fonts by newspapers,

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magazines and other media. Then you created some new fonts. Where were they used? I have never created a complete font – just a group of letters for logos. I mean, typography is the most difficult chapter in graphic design. Newspapers and magazines are constantly changing their fonts. It is a market question. I love to get into the font sites and see what is going on. But I can do my work with less than ten fonts, Futura, Din, Garamond, Impact, Bodoni, Helvetica, Gioto...

In your website you complain that about ten years ago you had to surrender to the computer to draw. How was this transition? The transition was very difficult. I bought my first computer in 1989, and it was forbidden to buy an imported computer, because at that time there was a

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law that obliged Brazilians to buy only Brazilian computers. We wanted to buy Macs, but couldn't. Then we used to buy them in cash in the black market, without any guarantee or technical support. It was difficult to learn the new language and vector drawing, but today everything is easier and the computer is my partner.

What is your main work as a designer today? Doing logos, illustrations, a large show about nuclear energy, graphic poems, editorials (Wish magazine), editing, etc. Some types of work in graphic design, like logos, for example, are very well paid and some others, like book illustrations, are not. So I need (and I love) to do all kinds of work to keep my mind alive... And to make money. Actually we live in imbalance ●