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## ARTIST'S PROJECT

### Adriana Lara

#### *The Invisible Hand*

Adriana Lara is a subscriber. Adriana Lara is a publisher. Adriana Lara is a browser. And Adriana Lara is also an artist. For *X-TRA*, Lara has produced *The Invisible Hand*, an insert whose title invokes Adam Smith's economic theory originally espoused in his 1776 book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. According to Smith, it was the nature of humans to operate out of self-interest, but an "invisible hand" insured that the wheels of the economy would keep turning: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest."<sup>1</sup>

The metonymy that Lara has set into play on the following pages shows a "hand" shuffling the typical categories that order the unwieldy number of magazines in print today-- apparently upwards of 10,000 distinct magazines in the United States alone. These lists are an overlay of the artist's myriad interests and operations, and they also serve as a meta-project about the magazine format itself. Presented against the backdrop of Yves Klein's International Klein Blue (IKB)--or four permutations of IKB based on screen grabs and scans--a play is produced between the bluntness of each term ("art," "politics," "sports") and the boundlessness of IKB, which Pierre Restany described as "disengaged from all functional justification."<sup>2</sup>

In the words of curator Sofia Hernandez Chong Cuy, Lara has shown "a preoccupation with systems."<sup>3</sup> Her *Nuevo archivo de arte publico* (New archive of public art) was an online project that concocted historical meanings and monumental ascriptions for objects in the landscape not originally intended as public art. Lara's contributions to the 2003 exhibition (*GNS*) *Global Navigation System* took the form of a survey and topological study investigating the phenomenon of artist's concepts that turned out to be duplicated or in process by another artist. More recently, for her residency at Artpace, Lara immersed herself in a large, unruly portrait of the San Antonio art scene, producing a "compilation" tape documenting an array of personalities and practices.

In *The Invisible Hand*, Lara's invocation of categorical labels that at first seem benign gives us a sense of a historical past--perhaps not too long ago-- that accords meaning by conveying the general and the generic. For we of the age of instantaneous editorializing (Twitter, blogs, Huffington Post) and innovative forms of self-publishing (E-zines), will the same lists be sufficient to corral our increasingly short attention spans in the Googlesphere? As Douglas Coupland recently commented in the *New York Times Magazine* about the absence of any "cultural megatrends," "Now everyone basically is their own microculture, their own nanoculture, their own generation."<sup>4</sup> That said, there is something almost quaint and placid about Lara's lists that begs for preservation. You could almost imagine one of these dainty groupings being swallowed by a larger, roaming "tag cloud."

Lara's *Invisible Hand* also shares in the skeptical inquiries of Dan Graham who, in *My Works for Magazine Pages: A History of Conceptual Art* (1985), wrote:

From one perspective, the art object can be analyzed as inseparably connected to the institution of the gallery or museum; but from another perspective it can be seen as having a certain independence, as it belongs also to the general cultural framework which the magazine is a part of. Magazines specialize in a way which replicates other social and economic divisions. Any magazine, no matter how generalized, caters to a certain market or a specific audience in a particular field.<sup>5</sup>

Graham writes of the complicity of the artwork trafficking in a

system of mutually agreed upon but unannounced leveraging, with galleries paying for ads in specialist magazines that promote or validate directly their programmatic agendas. Covering a broader territory, Lara is interested in the way print categories are fundamentally investments with an anticipated outcome. Lara's first impulse after being invited to participate in X-TRA's artist pages was to systematically locate the magazine's position within that "general cultural framework" that Graham defines.

As publisher, Lara has worked collaboratively with the curatorial collective Perros Negros on *Pazmaker*. *Pazmaker* takes the format of a fold-out bulletin with an omnivore's boundless appetite for content. As such it could be listed as an "art" publication, but it aspires to something more reckless, less authoritative. The invitation to do something for X-TRA inspired Lara to make something quite different from the loose-knit construct that is *Pazmaker*. In these pages, Lara relishes the chance to wield the authoritative "invisible hand" that seemingly defines our experience as readers and consumers of printed matter.

**Rita Gonzalez** is Associate Curator in the Contemporary Art Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

**Adriana Lara** lives and works in Mexico City. She is a member of Perros Negros, an "art production office" that proposes new platforms for making, exhibiting, and discussing art; is chief editor of *Pazmaker*, a free distribution, zine-like publication; and she is part of Lasser Moderna, an experimental band that combines Latin cumbia with electronic music. Lara has had solo exhibitions at Artpace, San Antonio, Texas (2009); Gaga Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City (2008); Galeria Comercial, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2007); and Air de Paris, Paris, France (2007). Her work has been presented in group exhibitions including *The Generational: Younger than Jesus*, New Museum, New York (2009); *San Juan Poly/Graphic Triennial*, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriquena, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2009); Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin, Germany (2009); and *LA MAMAIN ET LA PUTAIN*, Air de Paris, Paris, France (2006).

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Edwin Cannan, ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), 5th ed. Available online at <http://www.econlib.org/LIBRARY/Smith/smWN1.html> (accessed February 9, 2010).
2. Pierre Restany, "Yves Klein's Proposte monochrome, epoca blu" (1957), quoted in Sidra Stich, *Yves Klein* (Ostfildern: Cantz, 1994), 81.
3. Sofia Hernandez Chong Cuy, "Adriana Lara," *Modern Painters* (Winter 2007/08), 72-73.
4. Deborah Solomon, "Dreaming of a White Christmas: Questions for Douglas Coupland," *New York Times Magazine*, February 4, 2010. Available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/07/magazine/07fob-q4-t.html> (accessed February 9, 2010).
5. Dan Graham, *Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art*, Alexander Alberro, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 13.

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#### open call for artist's projects

X-TRA invites artists to submit project proposals for publication in the magazine. Proposals should be specifically designed for the context and format of X-TRA.

Selected projects will be allocated up to four full-color pages in an upcoming edition of X-TRA. Proposals that incorporate a web-based element for publication at [www.x-traonline.org](http://www.x-traonline.org) are encouraged.

Submissions must include a complete description of the proposed project, an artist's statement, representations of previous work, and the artist's contact information (name, address, phone number and email).