

Akiko Ichikawa, 2003.

In this particular collection of writing that traces the technological trend in some recent contemporary art, the media that pave the ostensible road towards art's future, it is of value to examine the semantics of the work of the artist of focus. Twenty-eight year old Andrés Ramírez Gaviria, was born in Bogotá, Columbia, and lives and works in Vienna. He has shown in Boston, Santo Domingo, Barcelona, Madrid, and Berlin. Gaviria's geographic mobility follows in the recent customs of many Latin American artists who work internationally; the circulation of his work and his artistic practice extend miles beyond the borders of the South American continent. Spanish writer Manuel García (himself calling Berlin; Valencia, Spain; and Santo Domingo home) boasts, "Now at the beginning of the third millennium, to talk of Latin American art is to talk of artists that live, work and create in any part of the world." From Los Carpentieros, the Cuban conceptualist collective, and Ernesto Neto and Rivane Neuenschwander both of Rio de Janeiro, artists whose work have garnered international attention but stay in the South, to Meyer Vaisman, Vik Muniz, Fabian Marcaccio, and Valeska Soares, artistic figures whose identities as New Yorkers are so strong as to make one forget they are from elsewhere, it is clear that there are multiple ways to be international. Then there are those who juggle locations. Tunga, the monumental metal artist, born in a town near the eastern coast of Brazil (Palmares, Pernambuco) manages to divide his time between Rio and Paris while maintaining strong New York gallery representation.

Gaviria presented two ambitious bodies of work at the 2001 Biennale, "The Darkest Distance" a mixed media work consisting a numerous mini-installations and "ar_td_ep" an interactive laser light installation. The individual tableaus that formed "The Darkest Distance" consisted of mobiles and combines: a mirror framed against a white sheet, a small biomorphic mobile, a bulb against a light source, a monumental relief of blackened book forms, coiled wire shaped on a lit support. In this theater of universal symbolism, the main figures are books and light, the figures for knowledge. The single light bulb is of course one of Samuel Beckett's favorite symbols, and much like the work of the celebrated writer of the bare bones, there is in "Darkest Distance," an evocation of reality in extremis. However, unlike Beckett, Gaviria's stripping down is not meant to reveal the essential anguish of the human condition but is the occasion of metaphysical transformation, when

the ecstatic emerges from the static, the moment of conversion. Though bare, these installations are steeped in tropes for ceremony and ritual. The dramatic chiaroscuros are analogous to those that form the stage for the viewing of bodiless presence(s) through the objects.

Gaviria's emphasis on the heightened moment ("a sole instance") further reveals his work's conceptual organization along the lines of modern painting. The "sole instance" is analogous to modern painting's "instant laden with significance" that Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote of in his 1766 theory of painting, *Laocoon*. Others sense this too. "Sometimes postmodern artists with other languages, other resources, other ideas, are recalling the best achievements of the European painting," writes García in a somewhat prejudicial way. Gaviria's staged set-ups maintain the hierarchy of genres, with opticality, or painting, at the top and physicality, sculpture, as its support.

In his second work for the Biennale, "ar_td_ep," the movements and sounds of the viewers are mimicked by a laser-line drawing on all four walls of a dimly lit exhibition space. The projected images are in continuous movement with its scale changing in direct relationship to viewer interaction. Here the dualism between physicality and visuality of "Darkest Distance" is gone, and the subject of the narrative has become the subject, or the viewer. There occurs then in this piece a kind of enactment of Althusser's theory of subject formation just as "Darkest Distance" lays bare symbolism's origin as the use of traditional signs for representation. Gaviria may bounce comfortably between Vienna and the Caribbean, but his narratives are transcultural, transmedial, and transhistorical.