

BEYOND THE BORDER

Mexico City's
kurimanzutto
joins forces with
Jessica Silverman Gallery
on a joint exhibition in
San Francisco.

BY LEIGH MARKOPOULOS



A new joint exhibition at Jessica Silverman Gallery features work by 16 artists from Mexico City's kurimanzutto gallery, such as Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla's *Contract (SWMU 6-2)*, 2015 (here).

“We wanted to build more complex relationships between Mexican and international artists.”

—Mónica Manzutto

Despite operating without a permanent space for the first nine years of its existence, Mexico City’s kurimanzutto gallery is today firmly grounded in the contemporary Mexican art scene. Founded by José Kuri and Mónica Manzutto in 1999, the gallery experienced an initial itinerant period that was essential to its development: “Not having a fixed space or geography allowed us to be very experimental,” Kuri says. “We viewed the city as our gallery and for every project we looked for an ideal space—be it a carpet shop, cinema or the airport gallery for a show about tourism.”

For their current remote endeavor, held in collaboration with San Francisco’s Jessica Silverman Gallery, 16 of kurimanzutto’s artists are presented in a tightly curated group show, “from here to there.” The exhibition is the latest satellite venture in the United States, following Regen Projects in Los Angeles in 2012 and Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York City in 2001.

Silverman describes the experience as enlightening. “José and Mónica are so generous and thoughtful. Their show is super considered: They’ve taken into account their artists, the works they make and the context of San Francisco,” she says. “They have curated something that reflects

not only their program’s distinctive character, but also the complexity of the contemporary art scene in Mexico City.” According to Kuri, it was Silverman’s advice that inspired the direction of the show: “She told us to develop it here as if no one knows anything about us.”

And indeed, whatever you do or don’t know about kurimanzutto, upon entering the show, you are instantly transported elsewhere. There is a large wall-mounted installation by Abraham Cruzvillegas made from acrylic-painted ephemera and memorabilia belonging to the artist. Assembled over distinct periods in his life, they provide a kind of portrait, tracing his activities and affiliations. On another wall, Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla’s leafy green palms hint at tropical geographies, while underfoot are a selection of Danh Vo’s crimson carpets, which were woven and dyed in Oaxaca using natural pigments provided by cochineal insects, highlighting the work of skilled Mexican craftspeople.

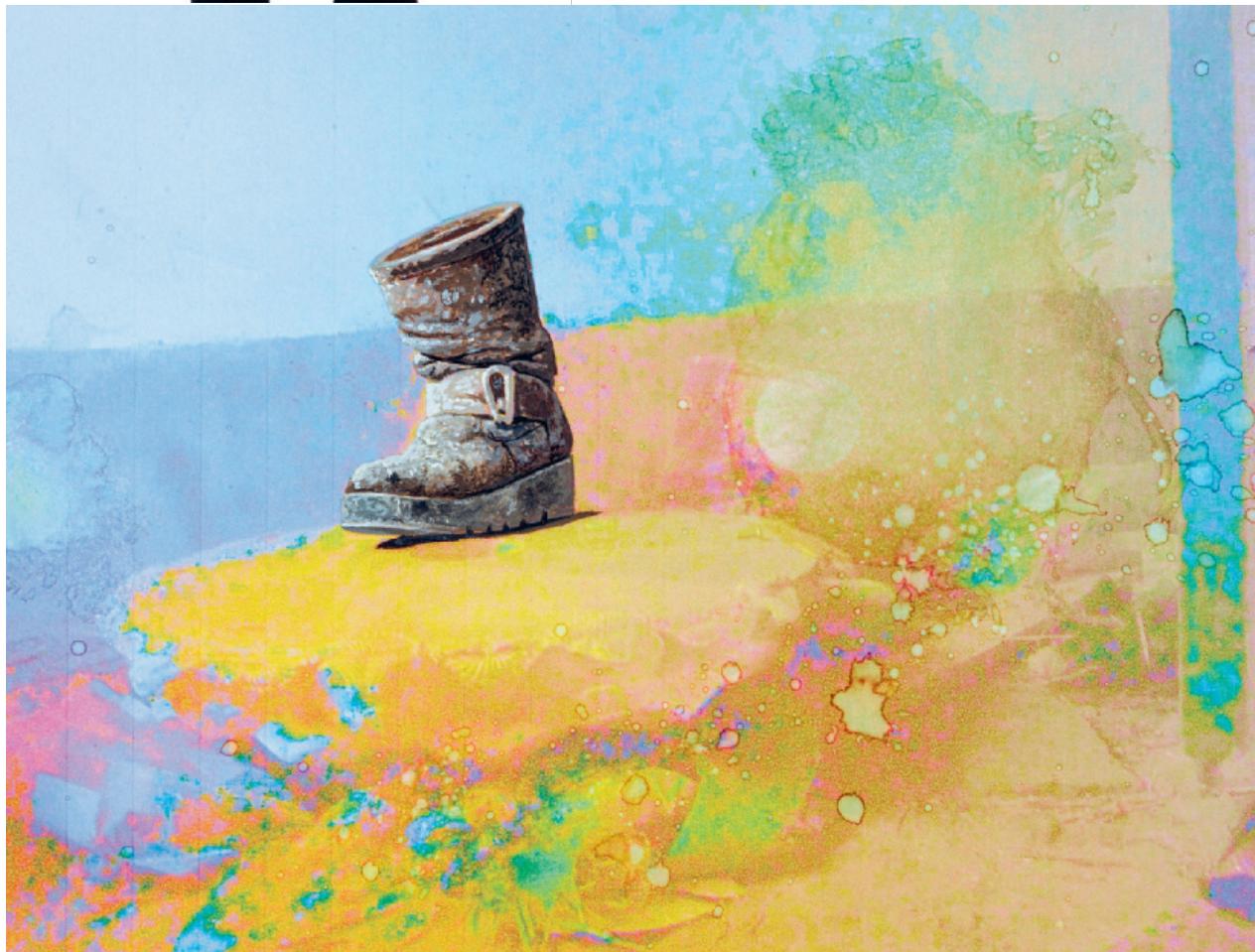
The cross-section of artists on display is also reflective of the gallery’s evolution. “When we opened we focused on Mexican artists, with the exception of Rirkrit Tiravanija—who was close to Gabriel Orozco [also a gallery co-founder],” explains Manzutto. “But we wanted to build more complex relationships

between Mexican and international artists and to show their work in Mexico.” Monika Sosnowska was the next global artist shown by the gallery; she came via one of their other artists, Damián Ortega. “Most of the time, our artists recommend other artists whose work they admire and think relevant for the gallery program—that is how we grow.” (And that is how we are able to see the work of Jimmie Durham, by extension, despite the artist’s self-imposed exile to Europe since 1994.)

Still, engagement with the fertile context of Mexico is a foundation of the gallery’s intentions. kurimanzutto often funds residencies and travel to the country. “If artists are going to make work about Mexico, they should do so on site,” says Kuri. This has of course impacted the Mexican scene by opening it to outside influences. “In the time since we opened the gallery, Mexico City has become a more open space—a bigger playground,” says Manzutto. “Artists are able to develop their ideas more fully in a more receptive context. There are many ways to engage with local culture and politics, and many levels on which to engage with the art world, which has become more complex, layered and inclusive.”



PHOTOS BY DIEGO PÉREZ, BERYL BEVILACQUE; COURTESY OF KURIMANZUTO GALLERY



Jessica Silverman (above left) joined forces with Mónica Manzutto and José Kuri for a joint exhibition featuring works by influential Mexican artists, such as Adrián Villar Rojas' series *The Most Beautiful of All Mothers* (left).