

Season of Light, Color, and Memories

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Spring. I write the word wistfully as I listen Piazzolla's [Primavera Porteña](#) because from where I sit in Los Angeles it feels a long way away. But in Buenos Aires spring has arrived, and not because some prognosticating woodland creature has deemed it so. No, spring arrives in BsAs with the fabulousness that is Semana del Arte (Art Week). On September 19, exhibitions, concerts, gallery crawls, conferences, and a kids' festivals will spring up across the city as more than 100 galleries, museums, and cultural centers [throw open their doors](#) to welcome visitors inside or, in some cases, to move the party outside.

In Retiro, the gallery [Raíces Americanas](#) gets things off to an early start tomorrow night with the opening of its new exhibition *Configuraciones de la memoria II* (Configurations of Memory II). This is part two of the exhibition—the first part was on view at last year's Semana del Arte—and features the work of Roberto Duarte, Rubén Borré, and Emilio Sampietro.

All three men hail from Buenos Aires but have also studied, exhibited, and garnered awards internationally. Deep in their hearts though, they are Porteños, and so their works speak not only to the artistic movements in which they honed their craft, but also to their national identity as artists and social commentators of their times.

According to the gallery's director Maite Paladini, the works in last year's exhibition contained threads of a universal history that served to awaken sensitive memories. This second exhibition was put together with the same spirit of appealing to collective memory with the hope that making sense of the past will create a better future.

Roberto Duarte

Emilio Sampietro

Rubén Borré



1 Roberto Duarte (1935-2004). "La manifestación. Óleo sobre tela, 120 x 180 cm, 2002. Photo: Courtesy of Pablo Duarte

2 Emilio Sampietro. "El machete" Homenaje a Ruanda. Técnica mixta y collage sobre papel y cartones montados sobre carton, 27.7 x 41cm, 2010. Photo: Courtesy of Raíces Americanas Galería de Arte

3 Rubén Borré (1950-). "Amor portuario". Pintura acrílica sobre tela, 150 x 100 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Raíces Americanas Galleria de Arte

Roberto Duarte

One of the first things I noticed about Roberto Duarte's paintings was his use of color and light, combined with the riveting expressionistic figures that inhabit his canvases. It quite simply stopped me in my tracks. While there is a distinct European influence to his work, (I was intrigued to learn that he had studied for a time in Europe under Victor Vassarely), the stories are uniquely Argentine with imagery that chronicles not only the country's rich cultural history but also some of its darkest days under military rule. Taking them in and absorbing the stories as they unfold before you, evokes the full range of the human experience: joy, sadness, love, loss, and desire.

Through his studies and travels, Duarte came to believe that art, like religions, is universal. It was a thought that struck him the first time he visited Notre Dame in Paris. "I instinctively thought how would [Troilo's](#) bandoneón sound here! At that moment I realized that national art exists beyond (the Buenos Aires streets of) Corrientes and Esmeralda." It left him with a feeling of pride in the beauty produced by his country but also with a feeling of universality, that you are not only a brother to your countrymen, but to the entire world.

Rubén Borré

Rubén Borré describes his work as a retracing of the 'mysterious labyrinth' of the past which serves as a compass for the future. The port of La Boca is a recurring theme in Borré's work, which he attributes to a search for something from his childhood and his immigrant grandparents. Rather than trying to create a literal narrative, he uses color and shape to make sense of our world—our desires, joys, affections, and fears. He believes that by capturing the essence of the human aesthetic on canvas the story is told forever and is there for us to learn from, if we choose to do so.

While he has extensive international experience, particularly in Spain, he believes that it is important for an artist to contribute to the development and construction of art with a national identity. It is a belief to which he has dedicated himself in practice throughout his career. While there can be much to learn and share across international borders, a country and its people need to nurture the development of a regional artistic sensibility for the benefit of generations to come.

Emilio Sampietro

There is something about collages that just capture me. It's a combination of the randomness of the materials, their individual histories, the distortion, the texture, the depth...and when it's done well, these disparate pieces come together as though they were always meant to be sharing a space together. For artist Emilio Sampietro, the art form fulfills his need to go against the rules with a real desire to recover, every day, a sense of wonder.

"Usually, I prefer to approach my work without preconceived ideas, although lately, without losing that approach, I have been incorporating a well-defined subject matter," explains Sampietro. Such as the work pictured here which is a tribute to Rwanda. In creating these objects, he draws on hundreds of magazine and newspaper clippings and fragments from previous works he has abandoned, objects that are waiting to be rediscovered.

The exhibition *Configuraciones de la memoria II* (Configurations of Memory II) is on view through October 6, 2010.

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