

Eduardo Villacis

Artist Statement

My life would probably be very different today if my father did not have a vast library. I grew up fascinated by the images in his books, particularly the albums of great past and contemporary artists. Perhaps the impulse to draw came after seeing those pictures. Many years would pass before being able to travel outside Ecuador and seeing an original Ernst, a Rembrandt or a Miro, but the printed pictures of their work haunted me even before being able to read the text of the books they were in. I realized in my adolescence that seeing artwork in a book or screen could affect many more people than if those paintings were confined in a gallery. That thought attracted me to illustration, which to me is not about any specific genre, style or market, but about visual ideas that are created with the ultimate purpose of reaching people far away through reproduced copies.

Because of this interest most of my activity so far has been in the field of media arts. The works have been primarily short 3D animated films, multimedia shows, comics for magazines, puppets for political satire and designs for musicians and theater groups

Despite the variety of media, one of the constants of my pursuit has been the use of humor. Once again, much of the discovery of comedy as a tool is a heritage from my father. As a poet, he has a great sense of metaphor and irony that he applies daily in a seemingly effortless manner. He taught me how to use witticisms as means to find comfort from the paradoxes of life. The first practical application of this defense system was against bullies at school. It was great to see that by finding the right nickname or making a nasty but exact caricature you could transform a helpless situation into an advantageous position. Ralph Steadman, the outrageous British cartoonist, said that grotesque imitation is the next best thing to shooting somebody. Probably that is how most satirists start, as a defense and protest against an absurd and hostile environment. Parody transforms pomposity into ridicule and affects even the most powerful figures.

The vehicle for such humor usually is story. Most of my tales happen in fictitious and improbable places or situations. For instance: an Andean town whose inhabitants are rusty machines about to be seduced by the false promises of a video prophet, or an inverse history of the world where the Aztecs conquer Europe and reduce the light skinned natives to slavery. The evident unreality of the scenarios is intentional. For one thing, I prefer to make worlds that justify the effort invested in creating them. Today, real life chronicles are usually better told with cameras than with pencils. To me the strength of drawing and animation lies in their capacity to generate impossible situations. More important, there is power in the creation of worlds that seem very different but are actually metaphors for our own. That is a lesson from the masters of fantastic literature like Kafka and Jorge Luis Borges, or sociological science fiction writers like George Orwell or Stanislaw Lem. Despite how absurd my fables might seem, beneath the surface these fictions deal with some aspect of our conflictive reality. Maybe these narratives are channels to transform inner struggle into something positive.

Each story has a certain medium through which it is told at its best. Usually, when working on the concept for a fiction, there is a progressive revelation if the narrative will work better as animation or as a graphic novel. While crafting the plot there is simultaneous work on the visual development of characters and environments. A big influence in the way I think about

the visual design of a project is Dave McKean, a British comic book artist who explores many styles and media. He does not hesitate to combine painting, photography, computer graphics, typography, assemblages and puppets in his comics to convey a specific message. He is equally resolute in simplifying the visuals to a minimum if he thinks it best suits the overall concept. To achieve this level of versatility is a personal goal.

A great part of the process is devoted to developing the characters. I do studies of every detail: how they look, their body language, their costumes, the spaces they inhabit. At the same time there is an intense production of sketches of different story sequences destined to bring the narration to a visual existence. Once a certain level of assurance in the decision process has been achieved, I start drawing the actual pages of the comic or begin to model the final objects for the animation.

Comics and animations consist of hundreds of images. That means the projects are long and demand enormous patience. In a comic, unlike a painting, each image is not necessarily significant in itself; it may be seen only for an instant, enough time to make the story advance. Therefore each individual picture is not considered a precious object.

Most of my previous comics were drawings that were scanned for later digital assembly and processing. Others were a combination of drawing and different computer techniques like 3D graphics and photomontage. Gradually, I felt a need to produce the artwork as manually as possible. Many years of creating artwork behind the computer screen have increased the urge to use the sense of touch. I also desire the beautiful imperfection of the human mark.

These past two years have been devoted to the foundations of traditional drawing and painting. A current enterprise is the previously mentioned graphic novel that tells the discovery and conquest of Europe by the Aztec civilization. This epic farce allows me to further my interest in pre-Columbian art. Those ancient symbols are part of my culture and are incorporated into the artistic style of the novel. The artwork in the book will be a hybrid between drawing and painting. I am using color pencils, ink, pastel, acrylics and oils to create the images on wood panels and illustration boards. The clash of cultures is made visual by the contrast between a Mesoamerican aesthetic and European Medieval iconography. That mixture is an example of my fascination with the phenomenon of syncretism and its visual manifestations. Whenever I draw, paint or design anything there is an attempt to integrate dissimilar qualities and somehow turn that mix into a working alchemy. My nature tends to caricature and exaggeration in the vein of artists like Hieronymus Bosch and Gerald Scarfe or filmmakers like Terry Gilliam. That excess is balanced with a certain refined stylization inspired by artists like Gustav Klimt or Egon Schiele. For the Aztec project I am also working with the contrast of vivid colors versus muted tones. The intent is to represent the hegemony of the Aztec invaders with vibrant colors that overpower the paler tones of a collapsing European culture.

The main motivation for the Aztec story is to reflect on the topics of racism and the manipulation of religious beliefs as ideologies of conquest and as tools of deceit. I guess you could call them Weapons of Mass Distraction.

Eduardo Villacís

Resume

Solo Exhibitions

2011

Bert Green Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA

2010

Solo exhibition as part of the "Comics sin Fronteras" (Comics Without Frontiers) International Comics Convention. Museo de Arte de Pereira, Colombia.

La Casa Zulay Art Center, Tumbaco, Ecuador.

2007

"El Espejo Humeante /Smoking Mirror," Bert Green Fine Art, Los Angeles, CA

2003

"El Espejo Humeante /Smoking Mirror," Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana, CA

Group Exhibitions

2011

Centro Cultural de la Alianza Francesa. Quito-Ecuador.

Organizer of "San Violentín 2011", Galería La Naranja Mecánica, Quito-Ecuador.

Centro Cultural Casa del Portal, Ambato-Ecuador.

Multimedia Show "Sistemas Metabólicos Audiovisuales", Ambato-Ecuador.

2010

"Trimarchi 2010" Biennial, Mar del Plata, Argentina.

"Quito en Zaragoza", Zaragoza-España

Organizer of "San Violentín 2010", Galería La Naranja Mecánica, Quito-Ecuador.

2009

Retrospective Exhibition as Winner of the Vanguard Award of the Animec International Festival. Plaza de las Americas, Quito, Ecuador.

Collective Exhibition, Galería Ileana Viteri, Quito, Ecuador

Organizer of "San Violentín 2009", Galería La Naranja Mecánica, Quito, Ecuador.

2008

"The Nude Figure in Ecuadorian Art", Anthology of drawings and paintings of the human figure encompassing the XIX, XX and early XXI centuries. Centro Cultural de la PUCE, Quito - Ecuador

"El Comic en el Ecuador". National exhibition on the History of Sequential Art in Ecuador since the early 1900's. Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Quito, Ecuador.

Leader of the project "Preteritos Futuros V 3.0". Casa del Portal, Ambato, Ecuador.

2007

"Preteritos Futuros V. 2.0", parallel project to the IX Cuenca International Art Biennale, Quinta Bolívar, Cuenca, Ecuador.

2006

Ajuar de Cal, painting solo exhibition, Centro Cultural Benjamin Carrion, Quito, Ecuador.

Preteritos Futuros, parallel project to the "Closing Time" project for the Contemporary Arts Paris Biennale, Alianza Francesa, Quito, Ecuador. ExpoArtes 2006, group exhibition. Quito, Ecuador.

2005

ExpoArtes 2005, group exhibition. Quito, Ecuador. Salon Nacional Del Comic. Guayaquil, Ecuador.

2004

ExpoArtes 2004 Bienal Nacional del Diseno, Quito, Ecuador.

2003

Group Painting Exhibit, Chapman University, Fullerton, CA

2002

3 Group exhibits, Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana, CA

2001

Group Exhibit Jewish Community Center, Brea, CA

Biography

Eduardo Villacis was born in Quito, Ecuador. His artwork falls within the fields of painting, comics, illustration and 3D animation. He has been a professor of the Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) since 1994 and obtained a scholarship granted by the Fulbright Commission for a Master's degree in visual arts at the California State University Fullerton. Working with his students he has received important international awards; among them are the first prize at Imagina –Mexico Digital Animation Festival, finalist at MTV's "Abuso del Poder" story contest and best script at Rosario Video & Film Festival.

Academic and Other Studies

2000-2003 California State University, Fullerton, USA Master of Fine Arts, Illustration, Summa Cum Laude

1996-2000 Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador BA. Multimedia Arts Summa Cum Laude, Best G.P.A. of the 2000 class

1988-1992 Escuela Politecnica Nacional, Quito, Ecuador Studies of Mathematics and Computer Science

1975-1987 Kindergarden to Highschool, Deutsche Schule, Quito-Ecuador

Seminars and Workshops

2011 "Visual Story", seminar with visual storyteller Bruce Block.

2009 "Artist as Brand" workshop with artist Greg Spalenka.

2008 Figurative Painting Workshop with Russian painter Vladimir Tassoff

2007 "Seeing is not Believing" Visual creation workshop with Barron Storey.

1995-96-97-99-2000-01-03 Attendance at Siggraph computer animation conferences

2001-02 American Animation Institute Life Drawing/Painting Classes

2001-02-03-04-06 Conferences at San Diego Comicon

1997 Seminars with British filmmakers, Quito, Ecuador

Professional Experience

2004-2011 Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador. Fine Arts Department Coordinator, Professor of Fine Arts and Illustration.

2002-2003 California State University, Fullerton, USA Professor of Illustration

1994-2000 Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador Multimedia and 3D Animation Professor

SURREAL Multimedia (1999-2000)

Art Director and 3D artist

CD ROM Game: "Treasure of the Yanganatis" (1997-98) Lead Visual Designer-Art Director

1989-1995 3D Animator for several production houses. TV Commercials.

Selected Animation and Multimedia Projects

3D Animated Short film: "Brote Subversivo" 2003 Visual Development and Art Direction.
3D Animated Short film: "Cincompasion"-1999 Director.
Story Concept and Visual development for MTV Latino international Contest with Project "Rust & Light"- 1997 ~finalist
2nd Poster Biennale Asociacion De Diseñadores Graficos. Multimedia Show for the Festivals Opening. 1996
Prisma Awards, National Advertising Awards, Diners Magazine., 1992. Multimedia Show for the Awards Ceremony.

Festivals

Animamundi Film Festival 2003 Sao Paulo - Brazil "Brote Subversivo" short-film
L.A. Shorts films Festival 2003, USA. "Brote Subversivo" short-film
Rat Powered Film Festival 2003. Long Beach, CA., USA "Brote Subversivo" short-film
Rat Powered Film Festival 2002. Santa Aria, CA., USA "Cincompasion" short-film
Imagina- 3d Film Festival-Mexico City, 2000. Winner Best Film" Cincompasion"
Rosario Short Animated Film Festival, Argentina -2000 Winner best Script.

Languages

Spanish as first language Fluent English both written and spoken German both written and spoken

Special Awards & Recognitions

Academic Excellence Award, Universidad San Francisco de Quito, 2006. Fulbright LASPAU scholar 2000-2004 Winner Best Film "Cincompasion" Imagina- 3d Film Festival-Mexico City, 2000. Winner best Script "Cincompasion". Rosario Short Animated Film Festival, Argentina - 2000 Created the first Ecuadorian CD ROM Game: "Treasure of the Yanganatis" (1997-98)
Finalist for MTV Latino international Contest development with Project "Rust & Light"- 1997
Biography book 'Eduardo Villacis, compulsive imaginator' is in process of publishing for "AMONG US" collection of 30+ outstanding people of the world. Author: Jorge Preloran, UCLA emeritus professor.