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WHAT SURVIVES?

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ALL ABOUT  
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INTERVIEW BY ROBERT STORR

**LATIN AMERICA'S NEXT BIG STARS**



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Seeing Stars

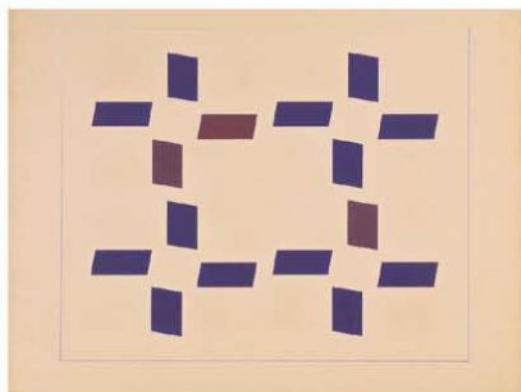
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# WHEN YOU HEAR THE TERM **LATIN AMERICAN ART**, WHAT **IMAGE** COMES TO MIND?

**TONEL** ("Meeting of Minds," p. 44) graduated with a degree in art history from the Universidad de la Habana, Cuba, in 1982. He has been a visiting artist and lecturer at the Center for Latin American Studies at Stanford University and an adjunct professor at the University of British Columbia, in Vancouver, Canada. His work is represented in many public and private collections. He received a 1997–98 Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship in the Humanities and a John S. Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship for painting and installation art in 1995.

Rather than any specific image, what comes to mind is an ingenuity that finds its course in all shapes, forms, colors, and sizes, a polymorphous creativity that is at its best when it engages the contradictions—the splendor, the joy, the misery, and the violence—that sprout from its immediate environment.

**FLAVIA DA RIN** ("All About Guillermo Kuitca," p. 64) is a photographer living and working in Buenos Aires. She graduated from the Instituto Universitario Nacional del Arte in 2003 and from 2003 through 2005 attended the Programa de Talleres para las Artes Visuales Rojas-Kuitca (also known as the Kuitca Fellowship) at the Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas. She has been included in group and solo shows at museums and galleries in Argentina and around the world and has represented her home country in biennials in Busan, Korea, and in Cuenca, Ecuador.

When I hear the words *Latin American art*, I don't think of a particular image, but I feel instead a sense of expectation—more of a "What will it be this time?" Latin American art is a vast and diverse area that I find hard to imagine fitting under a single tag or label.

**gabriel pérez-barreiro**

**tonel**

**flavia da rin**



**GABRIEL PÉREZ-BARREIRO** ("Seeing Stars," p. 40) is the director of the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, of New York and Caracas. From 2002 to 2007 he was a curator of Latin American art at the Blanton Museum of Art, at the University of Texas at Austin. Before that he was the director of visual arts at the Americas Society, in New York, and an exhibitions and projects coordinator at the Casa de América, in Madrid. In 2007 he was the chief curator of the sixth Mercosul Biennial, in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

When I hear *Latin American art*, I sigh a deep sigh, wondering when we can finally stop using that term.

**brett littman**

**BRETT LITTMAN** ("Snow-blind," p. 28) is currently the executive director of the Drawing Center, in New York, and from 2003 to 2007 was the deputy director of P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, MOMA, in New York. At the Drawing Center, Littman curated "Yüksel Arslan: Visual Interpretations," "Greta Magnusson Grossman: Furniture and Lighting," and "Leon Golub: Live & Die Like a Lion?" which opened in April 2010. He is also an active art and design critic.

I was fortunate enough to travel to Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro in 2008 to go on studio visits and give several lectures at museums, foundations, and art schools. The scenes in Argentina and Brazil were quite vibrant and very heterogeneous. I left with the feeling that the story of Latin American art is still being written today—it is too early to categorize and reify what the traditions are and where things are going.

**robert storr**

**ROBERT STORR** ("All About Guillermo Kuitca," p. 64) is an artist, critic, and curator who teaches at the Yale School of Art and currently serves as its dean. Formerly, he was the senior curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where he worked from 1990 to 2002. He was also the first Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, from 2002 through 2006. Storr was director of the 2007 Venice Biennale and has lectured, taught, made exhibitions, and written for catalogues and magazines across the United States and around the world.

In 1971 I worked as a studio assistant for the muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros. At that time Mexican art was all that most North Americans knew of art made south of our border. That changed for me in the late 1970s, and since the 1990s I have thought in terms not of American art but rather of art in the Americas—North, Central, and South and emphatically plural.



## Snow-blind

A SOUTH AMERICAN ARTIST ENVISIONS A LAND UP NORTH.

BRETT LITTMAN words





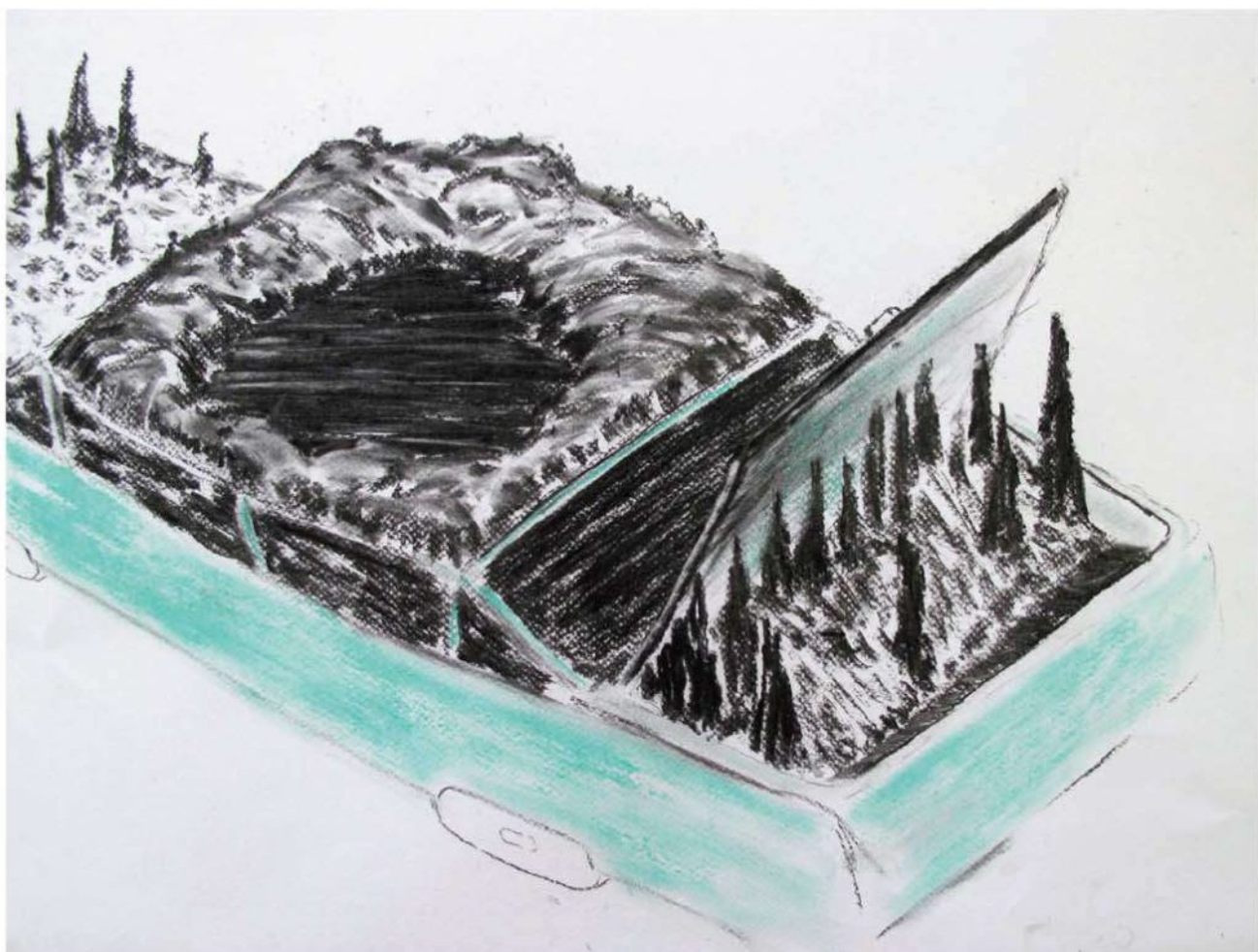


In early 2008 the artist Matías Duville had a dream about Alaska—a place he'd never been and one that could hardly be further from his hometown, Buenos Aires, in terms of landscape, ecology, temperature, and culture. For a year he drew hundreds of images of the 49th state in his studio. During this time he never looked at pictures of it in books or on the Internet, so as to not color his meditations on the alien territory.

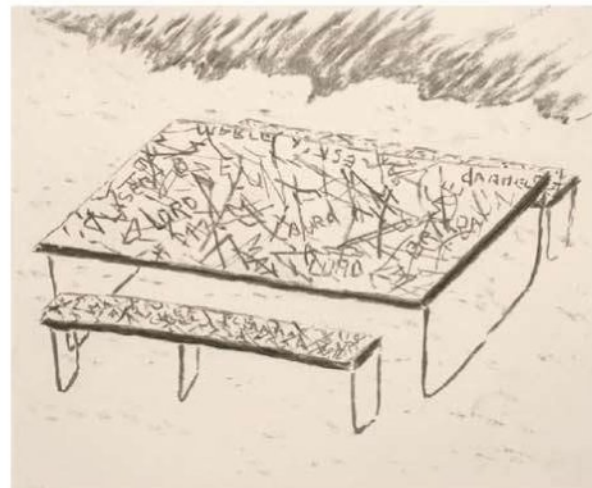
Duville, who is 36, likes to work on the edge of "blindness," where, he says, "I can explore what is beyond the visible and my direct base of knowledge." Throughout his career he has used imaginary geographies and juxtapositions of irreconcilable elements—a swimming pool in the ocean, an electric-organ keyboard at the top of a waterfall—as levers to pry open reality. His understanding of place and time is internal, personal, and variable—closer to a hypnotic state than to full-blown consciousness.

Born in Quilmes, a coastal town between Buenos Aires and La Plata, Duville left in 1995 to study advertising and art at the Martín Malharro Superior School of Visual Arts, in Mar del Plata. After graduating, in 1998, he was awarded several national scholarships to continue his studies and from 2001 to 2002 worked closely with the Argentine Conceptualist Jorge Macchi. The past few years have been busy for the soft-spoken artist. Since 2007 he has had solo shows at Galería Alberto Sendros, in Buenos Aires, and at Distrito 4 Gallery, in Madrid, and been included in group exhibitions at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, in Buenos Aires, and at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, in

FROM TOP: *Untitled*, 2009.  
PASTEL ON PAPER, 16½ X 21¼ IN.  
*Untitled*, 2009. CHARCOAL AND  
PASTEL ON PAPER, 16½ X 21¼ IN.  
OPPOSITE: Duville in his studio.







Santiago, Chile. In June, Galería Alberto Sendros will host another solo show of his work.

All this exposure has helped Duville establish a reputation among curators, critics, and collectors in South America, the United States, and Europe as one of the rising stars of the Argentine art scene. His diverse output ranges from quick crayon sketches to large faux-naïf landscape paintings on plywood, and from images burned into pile rugs to ink drawings on silk and site-specific murals. "I work with different materials and substrates," he says, "to merge the narrative and action with the surface to force experimentation with the image and a distortion of the original story."

In his Alaska drawings, says Duville, "I was trying to find the end of landscape as a genre of imagemaking by working with places not on the map that are ruled and governed by their own natural laws." Such a project has strong literary precedents, in which authors test the limits of what they know and what readers will accept. The most directly related book might be Raymond Roussel's 1910 novel *Impressions d'Afrique*. Although the title recalls 19th-century travel writing, Roussel rarely left his Paris hotel, let alone France, so his "impressions" are not based on his own exploits, nor indeed on reality. They are instead lifted from his imagination, resulting in an inventive, often absurd, and highly surreal portrait of the continent.

Under the title "Future Memories: Mental Trip," Duville assembled crayon drawings depicting cars trapped in a glacier; a train passing through a mountain; a house of ice, with one yellow window, precariously perched atop a mountain; a frozen waterfall hanging over a cliff; a campfire emitting an antelope-shaped cloud of smoke; and a fish, seamlessly incorporated into the landscape, sucking a river into its sharp-toothed mouth. Mostly black and white, with sparse bursts of color, they recall Seurat's wonderful Conté-crayon pictures from the late 1800s, in which the outlines of objects and figures snap in and out of focus, as if seen through a fog or mist. Like those, Duville's images convey contradictory emotions: a deep sense of wonder at the sights in this foreign place, as well as a palpable foreboding about the unresolved and unknown.

In 2009 the artist decided to take his project in a new direction. He wanted to see "what would happen to the drawings if my mind met the reality" of the actual Alaskan landscape, in all its grandeur and banality. So that summer he rented an RV and drove around the state for several weeks. He allowed himself to make his

drawings only from inside the vehicle, on the fold-out dining table, thus limiting his influences to things he could see through the window.

This collision with reality immediately deconstructed the world he had spent a year envisioning and created fresh tensions and contradictions, as new objects and events were layered into the imagined environment. The resulting drawings are less fantastic and extemporaneous than the first set but no less interesting, their visual lexicon expanding to include native animals and trees, weather conditions, and ships, along with A-frame houses, geodesic domes, igloos, and roadside buildings whose façades are emblazoned with large images of thunderbirds, eagles, and fish—all things Duville saw.

The project's third phase is currently occurring back in Buenos Aires. Duville continues to draw Alaska, which for him is now part dreamscape and part reality, in compositions that continue to be rich and multilayered. It is unclear whether he will ever reach an end. We will just have to wait and see if this explorer finds his way out of the maze he has created for himself. **MP**

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**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**  
*Untitled*, 2009. CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 11¼ x 15¾ IN. *Untitled*, 2009. CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 11¼ x 15¾ IN. *Untitled*, 2009. CHARCOAL AND PASTEL ON PAPER, 13¾ x 17 IN.

