

The background of the entire page is an abstract artwork. It features a series of vertical stripes in white and a light peach or salmon color. Overlaid on these stripes are several large, black, irregular shapes that resemble stylized birds or abstract forms. The shapes are scattered across the page, with some appearing as solid black and others as white cutouts against the stripes.

RAÚL DÍAZ REYES

I'M THE PROBLEM

RESIDÊNCIA PAULO REIS
SALA PROJETO FIDALGA
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I'm the problem, 2016, vista da exposição, primeira sala, foto: Ding Musa | *I'm the problem*, 2016, exhibition view, first room, photo: Ding Musa



I'm the problem, 2016, vista da exposição, primeira sala, foto: Ding Musa | *I'm the problem*, 2016, exhibition view, first room, photo: Ding Musa



PLEX N16 e PLEX N14, impressão a jato de tinta sobre tela, adesivo, vinil e acrílico, 93 x 63 cm (cada), foto: Ding Musa
PLEX N16 and PLEX N14, archival inkjet print on canvas, adhesive, vinyl and plexiglas, 93 x 63 cm (each), photo: Ding Musa



PLEX N18, impressão a jato de tinta sobre tela. adesivo,
vinil e acrílico, 93 x 63 cm, foto: Ding Musa
PLEX N18, archival inkjet print on canvas, adhesive,
vinyl and plexiglas, 93 x 63 cm, photo: Ding Musa



PLEX N15, impressão a jato de tinta sobre tela e
acrílico, 93 x 63 cm, foto: Ding Musa
PLEX N15, archival inkjet print on canvas and
plexiglas, 93 x 63 cm, photo: Ding Musa



PLEX N17, impressão a jato de tinta e pintura sobre tela, adesivo vinílico, acrílico e rodas, 93 x 63 cm, foto: Ding Musa
PLEX N17, archival inkjet print and paint on canvas, adhesive vinyl, plexiglas and wheels, 93 x 63 cm, Photo: Ding Musa



I'm the problem, 2016, vista da exposição, segunda sala, foto: Ding Musa | *I'm the problem*, 2016, exhibition view, second room, photo: Ding Musa

work in progress



I'M THE PROBLEM

RAÚL DÍAZ REYES

A conversation between

Nico Linares and Raúl Díaz Reyes

A week ago, late at night—due to the different time zones we were at the time—I got a message from Raúl asking me if I would write something for his upcoming exhibition in São Paulo. It was late, so I thought about sending him my go-to fuck you meme, but then I thought briefly about our last encounter filled with beers, music and honest laughs and went back to sleep with a smile. After a lengthy discussion on whatsapp about the different possibilities the text could offer (and its limitations) we decided to do causal Q&A via mobile phone. A talk in which subjects could pop-up freely and were not necessarily related to art or his work. A format that fit Raúl's work for two reasons: it was flexible and stubborn enough to get along at the same time. And also, it shined a light in some of the themes and images behind his work without being extremely referential.

Memory and heat shouldn't be mixed lightly. The tropical setting where I type these words has nothing to do with one of my earliest memories of my friendship with Raúl. We were roaming around Madrid, in a modestly enough windy day. Out of

the blue he ask me: Are you a Piña Colada lover? I knew the question was a decisive one. One of those moments where incipient friendships come out reinforced or is broken altogether. I wouldn't call myself a Piña Colada lover, but I am definitely a good friend, a caring friend, I said. He smiled and told me had never actually loved the cocktail, but lately he had been having these crazy dreams about it. We ended up having 4 each that day. One of the best days of my life.

NL: Woody, Larry or George?

Raúl Díaz Reyes: That's a good first one. Three heroes. I love Woody and I love Larry, but I would choose Mr. Constanza.

NL: If you had to give your worst enemy a superpower, what would it be?

RDR: Oh let me think, I have a big list after enjoying One-punch Man this year. I think you were expecting other kind of answer.

NL: I wasn't expecting anything. I once sat next to a guy in a plane in a flight from Mexico

to Colombia who after drinking a bottle of scotch thought that the best thing to do next was to steal the purse of a woman who was sleeping, lock himself in the bathroom and steal out all of her money. He threw up when we were landing, and then the police came into the plane and arrested him. Any good airplane stories you might like to share?

RDR: Just a short romance with a blonde flight attendant, it was a Brussels - Atlanta 1998. All started when I threw the coffee tray she was holding.

NL: Oh, that is so much better than my story! Moving on. You seem to place a good deal of attention on the silence of the image, I mean, what is hidden or cut or erased holds the same importance than the actual objects/traces being shown. Is that a fair assessment to make?

RDR: You're totally right. All is about layers and about what I decide to show and what not. At the end, these works that I'm showing here are just the result of adding and removing layers, digitally and analogically. Artists now have the possibility of using a bunch of new media. I try

to take advantage of that in order to talk about things that interest me.

NLL: You've been in São Paulo 5 times or something like that before, right? What is for you the appeal of the city?

RDR: Yes this is my fifth trip in Sao Paulo; is always intense for me here. This city helps me know more about myself, At least it works this way for me. It is a special city, maybe in the next trip I'll stay.

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NL: You and me are both big fans of Michael Jackson, you much more than me I would say. Have you realize that almost nobody knows any albums by him, aside from Dangerous and Thriller, me included. I mean he is all about the singles. Do you happen to know the name of all of his albums?

RDR: Of course, man. You just have to add Off the Wall, Bad, History, Invincible and maybe that Blood on the Dancefloor, there are previous and posthumous albums that I wouldn't include in this list. Talking about Michael, the story about the flight attendant? Well, during that trip I ended up spending a day in Neverland, Yes, Michael's house. A mutual friend invited me. I know that you're very interested in food, so let me share so information: I ate a nice BBQ chicken there.

NL: Are you a cyber-security freak? I mean, do you erase your history and cache's and use VPN

software? There's not a day that goes by that I don't think something about data, identity and corporate-state power. I've been also watching Mr. Robot, so that doesn't help. Are you parte of that club?

RDR: Oh yes I do, you have to be a freak about it! But, hey, Mr. Robot? I hate that show!

NL: In the last 3 years you've changed your art practice in a significant way (I wouldn't call it radical because the ethos of your work is still mostly intact, in my opinion). What was the thing, if there is one, or the moment, that made you switch from drawing to sculpture?

RDR: Well, I lived half year in NY in 2013, and there I felt that I was really tired about my last works, I was not enjoying it. And in the other hand, I was visiting all those amazing shows. I used to have long talks with Max Stolkin, this genuine artist who was my partner at the LMCC residency. Later I started to have long skype chats with my friend Andrea Hill, and we talked a lot about art, about shows. She also helped me too to reboot myself and to take "the job" more professionally. And more specifically, these Plexiglas pieces are drawings too. Now I feel that I can make anything.

NL: Would you rather:

- 1) Be in the same room with a cat for a whole day
- 2) Be in the same room with a dog for a whole day
- 3) Be in the same room with a hippo for a whole day

RDR: Depend of the cat, if it is a excited one I will chose the hippo.

NL: You always reflect a sense of calm in any given situation. However, is a certain calm I a associate with obsessive heroes like Woody Allen or Larry David, who eventually explode and blow steam all over the place. Do you also have this little (or big) episodes of fury? And if you do, what bring the pot to a boil?

RDR: I have my temper, and it does pop-ups sometimes, but I'm not like our heroes, my friend.

NL: What song, or type of music, plays on your head when you fall in love?

RDR: During this residency I have listened a lot to Frank Ocean, also Drake (I am still asking myself if I actually like his music) Panda Bear. You know? It's curious because in Madrid I'm always listening Brazilian music. But you asked when I fall in love, right?

NL: Yeah. What about when you are in love? Don't give me such a Trump answer!

RDR: I was trying to be enigmatic; maybe she's reading this conversation now. By the way, does a Temer answer exist?

NL: Primeiramente... they come from the same bag of shit. Anyway, are you mainly, and almost always, the problem? I mean, are you prone to blame yourself for everything, even when you can't control the circumstances?

RDR: Oh yes, that's me. It's always my fault but hey, I'm also the solution! I'M THE PROBLEM is also the tittle of the show. For a month I shared the studio in Fidalga with Takashi Kuribayashi. We were setting up our RAID 8 at Raquel Arnaud exhibition show and it was being intense and hectic at the beginning. I remember chatting with him on an uber and telling him: I'm the problem, Takashi. Is always me, next show will have this tittle. We chose our own limits and the things we are confronted against with. And let me talk to you about this show, it has been conceived in some way like a experimental exhibition, because I feel that experimental has to be a closely associated to residency.

NL: Tell me more about the show.

RDR: Well the exhibition ends my residency in São Paulo and I'm showing new works; archival inkjet prints on canvas with adhesive vinyl, and Plexiglas.

NL: Do you dream about specific images? Or sounds?

RDR: I used to dream with falling elevators during my childhood, and sometimes I dream with new songs, and with new noises. In my head they are like undiscovered hits.

NL: You should try to do something with that! Maybe whistle the melodies and record them on your phone.

RDR: Maybe. That could be something. Hey, this press release reminds me the episode when Jerry

and George pitch their show to CBS; the infamous show about nothing.

NL: Seinfeld should be on the air forever. Every two hours or something like that.

NICO LINARES.

Colombian writer living in São Paulo.