

## Without Restraint. Works by Mexican Women Artists from the Daros Latinamerica Collection

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### Portraits of the Artists

**Ximena Cuevas** was born in 1963 in Mexico City, where she lives and works. This video-performance artist deals in her work especially with gender specific questions, such as for instance the social role of sexual minorities in Mexico. In the exhibition in Bern she is represented by a single video *El diablo en la piel* (The Devil in the Flesh, 1998) in which she broaches her fascination for the artificial in life. As she states: "In *El diablo en la piel* the camera films the trick, but even then, the action appears dramatic. This video is once again about my fascination for artifice, for fabricated emotions. It is about the Catholic search for pain in order to live passionately. And it is also about the family melodrama's discomfort." (Ximena Cuevas)

**Claudia Fernández** was born in 1965 in Mexico City, where she lives and works. After a first artistic phase during which she created mostly sculptures and installations, she later started working with photography and video. Her work questions the ordinary value of objects and actions from everyday life by taking them out of context and investing them with unexpected meanings. In the two videos presented in Bern – *Susituto* (Substitute, 2002) and *Limpia* (Cleaning, 2003) – Fernández investigates the traditional spatial and behavioral structures of femininity in Mexican society and offers a critical and ironic interpretation of the nature of such representations.

**Teresa Margolles** was born in 1963 in Culiacán, in the Mexican State of Sinaloa. She lives and works in Mexico City. The artist, is well known for engaging in her artistic practice with topics such as death and violence. Materials like the blood of corpses, the threads used in autopsies and water used in the morgue for cleaning the bodies are frequently used in her work. In Bern, an audiotape will be included in the exhibition: the minimalist audio work *Trepanaciones (Sonidos de la morgue)* (Trepanations [Sounds of the Morgue], 2003): audible only through headphones is the sound of a saw opening a skull at the morgue, what is called "trepanation" in forensic language.

**Betsabé Romero** was born in Mexico City in 1963. The artist studied in Mexico and Paris, and today lives and works in Mexico City. The car and its components, especially the tires, are Romero's absolute trademark. Since 1997, cars have been accompanying the artist on her quest for identity and cultural roots. Through reflection on the power of traditional symbols and artifacts and on the transformation processes they are undergoing in the era of globalization, Romero's work speaks of migration, religious and cultural rituals, consumerism, and the environment. The exhibition presents eleven of her works.

**Maruch Sántiz Gómez** was born in 1975 in Cruztón, an indigenous village in the highlands of Chiapas, a region in southern Mexico where ethnic groups directly descended from the Mayas live. At the beginning of the 1990s Sántiz Gómez was introduced to photography and started working on her long-term project *Creencias* (Beliefs, 1994–1996). For it she researched, studied, and collected dozens of traditional beliefs from her community and the neighboring villages, which she subsequently wrote down in her language Tzotzil, translated into Spanish, and combined with one black-and-white or color photo each. Twelve of her works are presented in the exhibition.

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In the pictures, she portrays domestic objects and utensils from her everyday life, like a broom, a pot, or a mirror, and animals. The texts are folk sayings charged with the spirituality of an indigenous, pre-Hispanic wisdom that has been passed on orally for generations and that now risks being lost forever if not recorded for posterity.

**Teresa Serrano** was born in Mexico City in 1936 and has the longest and most varied career among the seven artists shown in the exhibition. She lives and works in Mexico City. In Bern, Serrano is represented by six works, executed in a variety of media. They all have their leitmotif in the artist's typical reflection on the power of visual and metaphorical language. Among the dominant topics in Serrano's work are critical considerations of the gender-specific role of the woman in a male-dominated environment and her resistance against limitations to her liberty, as well as criticism of the senseless antagonism between religions.

**Melanie Smith** was born in Poole (England) in 1965. She settled in Mexico City in 1989 and has been working there ever since. This new environment has exerted a visible influence on her work, so that nowadays she is considered a Mexican artist. In her work she confronts the concepts of modernity and post-modernity and their impact on Latin America. In her three black and white photographs *Photo for the Spiral City (I), (II) and (III)* (all 2002) presented in Bern she portrays the megalopolis Mexico City as seen from a helicopter flying over the city. Smith is here looking for an abstract structure: the city is freed from any decoration and human presence and transformed in a non-lieu, offering itself as subject for a systematic scrutiny. The centre of attention is the development of the megacity that, layer after layer, grows like a crystal and is at the same time subjected to erosion.