

DAGOBERTO RODRÍGUEZ - Broadcasting the Unknown

by Emanuela Mazzonis

The multidisciplinary and internationally acclaimed Cuban artist, Dagoberto Rodríguez, is being presented for the first time in Luxembourg with a solo show displayed in two different locations: the Annexes at the Château de Bourglinster and the former church Al Kierch in Roodt/Syre. The exhibition titled Broadcasting the Unknown presents a selection of sculptures, paintings, watercolors and video focused around the idea of the satellite as both technological object and cultural metaphor and the value of culture in an era dominated by virtual attractions.

“Talent alone is not enough. Education is important.” This statement by Tracey Emin resonates particularly strongly with Dagoberto Rodríguez’s installation **El gimnasio del pensamiento (The Gymnasium of Thought)**. The Cuban artist has recreated the architectural form of a church, transforming it into a fully functioning gymnasium: benches, weights, metal bars and ropes occupy and redefine the sacred space of this contemporary church. The environment created by the artist has lost its original spiritual and religious function and has instead become a temple of twenty-first-century society. Human beings today seem to devote increasing attention to the care of the body, while paying less attention to the training and cultivation of the mind and spirit. Mass culture is increasingly focused on physical appearance and wellbeing; the exterior seems to take precedence over the interior, while contemporary society risks losing sight of the broader value of culture as a form of education, inner development and intellectual growth.

Rodríguez’s temple of thought invites us to slow down the frenetic consumption of information we receive every day and reclaim the time needed to think, reflect and cultivate the mind. Each element of his gym becomes a tool for measuring and calibrating the weight of culture. Every piece of equipment, as well as the eighteen watercolors that surround the gymnasium in the manner of a contemporary Stations of the Cross, assumes a new identity through its association with some of the great thinkers, writers, philosophers and musicians of the last century: Marguerite Yourcenar, Jorge Luis Borges, Oscar Wilde, Bob Dylan, Franz Kafka, Allen Ginsberg, James Joyce and Hermann Hesse, Umberto Eco, to name but a few.

Beneath the apse, around twenty towels are displayed, each hand-inscribed by the artist with phrases drawn from reggaeton songs, as well as original texts conceived and selected specifically for this exhibition and dedicated to love, alongside quotations inspired by the mosaics of Pompeii. The Reggaeton sentences as well as the graffiti of Pompeii establish a direct dialogue with the present, revealing the same value of language, the same ability to condense ideas, emotions, and experiences into short, direct statements. A wide variety of words that reminds us that popular poetry and the need to communicate concisely, spontaneously, and directly have always existed. Once again, the artist foregrounds the role of culture and the intellectual effort required to truly observe what lies before us. The towels become statements in their own right: through an ordinary, everyday object, the artist conveys universal messages—about love, life, way of being—before which we are all equal.

Within the eighteenth-century setting of Al Kierch in Roodt/Syre, the artist introduces the idea of a contemporary church, itself transformed through the objects and codes of contemporary culture, directing our attention to the importance of education today. He evokes a certain nostalgia for an analogue world that is gradually disappearing, and which we might need to reclaim: a world in which knowledge was not consumed instantaneously, but encountered through time, attention and reflection.

Composed of architectural elements, watercolors and everyday objects associated with knowledge and learning, the installation becomes a metaphor for a mental landscape in which memory, education and imagination intersect.

Together, the works presented across the two exhibition venues—the church of Al Kierch in Roodt/Syre and the Annexes of Château de Bourglinster—explore the idea of landscape in both its physical and intellectual dimensions. At the Annexes, the geographical landscape is mediated and transformed by technological progress, embodied in the presence of Rodríguez’s terracotta satellites.

At Al Kierch, the landscape turns inward, becoming an intellectual and mental space shaped by education, literature, memory and the transmission of knowledge. Rodríguez thus moves between two forms of landscape: from the territories observed, mapped and connected by technology to the inner territories constructed through culture and thought. If the satellite offers humanity a distant eye through which to observe the world, *The Gymnasium of Thought* asks us to turn that gaze inward—to slow down, to observe rather than simply look, and to reconsider the role of culture and education in shaping the landscape of our minds.

About the Artist

Dagoberto Rodríguez Sánchez (Cuba, 1969) is a Cuban-Spanish artist whose multidisciplinary practice explores the intersections of art, architecture, technology, politics, and everyday life. He first gained international recognition as a founding member of **Los Carpinteros**, the Havana-based collective established in 1992, whose work challenged the boundaries between art, design, and architecture through irony, humour, and social critique. With Los Carpinteros, Rodríguez participated at the **Venice Biennale in 2005** and exhibited internationally in major museums and institutions.

Since 2018, Rodríguez has pursued an independent practice encompassing sculpture, painting, installation, video, architecture, and design. Drawing on his experience of growing up in Cuba, he examines how systems of technology, communication, and infrastructure shape our perception of the world. Familiar objects and structures are transformed into poetic and often ambiguous forms that question ideas of progress, power, collective memory, and globalization.

His works have been exhibited in Museums and cultural institutions around the world such as **MoMA, Whitney Museum of American Art or Guggenheim in New York, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Tate Modern in London or the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid**, among others.

Dagoberto Rodríguez is currently based working in Madrid, Spain.

DAGOBERTO RODRÍGUEZ. Broadcasting the Unknown | October 24-November 29 | Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays 11.00-19.00h | Al Kierch. Roodt/Syre, Betzdorf & Annexes Château de Bourglinster, Junglinster | Free entrance

This exhibition is presented by the Commune of Junglinster and the Commune of Betzdorf, for the first time together in a joined artistic project. Curated by Emanuela Mazzonis and produced by VF Art Projects, the show counts also with the support of the Spanish Embassy in Luxembourg.

