

MINCARS

Leandro Erlich. *The Tower*

26th November – 23rd February 2009

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Leandro Erlich (Buenos Aires, 1973) achieved important critical recognition after an intensive series of exhibitions initiated in the early 1990s. His projects question our view of reality by means of simulation strategies and scenographic effects, which alter our perception and create optical illusions. Through his impressive installations, the visitor comes face to face, in a playful manner, with a perception of himself as an individual and as part of society.

Those everyday and apparently unimportant zones we occupy (corridors, lifts, staircases...) –seemingly insignificant spaces repeated almost identically in cities the world over– are nevertheless replete with information about how we interact –including emotional information related to memory and experience– and are therefore chosen by Erlich to stage his scenarios. Using mirrors, glass, water and other easily recognizable means, the artist manipulates the view of what is real and places the astonished, disconcerted visitor in a situation in which things we would consider “normal” stand out. Questioning our existence and empirical truth or revealing, in short, the different levels of veracity in everyday reality is the basis of Leandro Erlich’s work.

La Pileta, (1999) consists of a huge container sunk into the ground which simulates a swimming pool full of water. However, it is actually an empty space roofed by an acrylic glass sheet covered with a film of water, which gives the sensation that visitors entering from one side underneath are at the bottom of the pool. It also underlines one of the principles governing Erlich’s work: simplicity. The fact that something extraordinary could happen in so simple a way –both technically and conceptually– and that the visitor can see through the “trick” and apply this reflection to everything surrounding him, is, without a doubt, one of the artist’s purposes. Erlich has also tackled psychological issues, exploring psychoanalysis and the basic concepts of the nature of the ego in *Le Cabinet du Psychoanalyste* (2005). This work consists of a space divided in two by a glass wall. The visitor, who sits on one side and observes what is happening on the other (where a psychoanalyst’s room has been recreated), is surprised to discover that, through the reflection of his own image in the glass, he is able to see himself as either the psychoanalyst or the client on the couch; a re-posing of the question of who we are –real subjects or a reflection of ourselves as defined by the perception of others.

In one of his recent works, *Carrousel* (2008), Erlich transforms a roundabout into an apartment with its various rooms: lounge, kitchen, dining-room, bathroom and bedroom. Its constant rotation steeps us in the monotony of modern-day life and in all those habits that are endlessly repeated. In spite of the pessimistic nature that might be attributed to this work, it is in fact positive as it reveals our capacity to register surprise and understand and analyze our experiences.

Trompe l’oeul became popular in the Baroque. In a way it meant a step towards modernity as the observer had an active and absolutely necessary role to play in its meaning. It implies a physical and above all intellectual involvement, since, without the observer, the trick or illusion is non-existent. Indeed there is no explanation for Erlich’s installations without the observer’s participation and the understanding of how the work affects him.

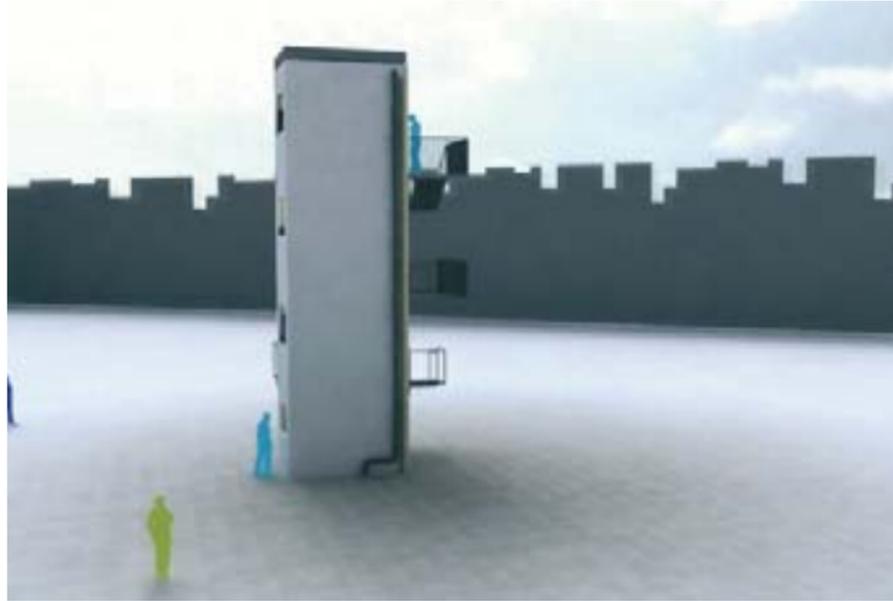
The Tower (2008), produced specifically for the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and installed in the courtyard of the new wing, is a building with several floors that works like a giant periscope. A mirror device allows the visitor standing at the bottom to observe what is happening above, and vice-versa. To the eyes of the visitors looking through the windows from outside, those on the inside (which simulates an apartment building corridor) seem to be floating in space. A complex play of perspectives is created which make us lose our sense of direction and feel the experience of challenging the law of gravity. It is a space in which distinct relationships are established between the observer and the person observed in that the visitor becomes a participant who sees and is seen at the same time. As Erlich says: “Like other projects, *The Tower* seeks to construct a narrative and fantasy based on our everyday experience in shared spaces.”

Leandro Erlich is one of the most highly-acclaimed Latin American artists on today’s international scene. His work has been exhibited at the Istanbul Biennial (2001), the Venice Biennale (2001 and 2005), the Centro de Arte Santa Mónica, Barcelona (2003), the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (in *Nôtre Histoire*, 2006) and, recently, at the Liverpool Biennial and P.S.1, New York.

For more information on the artist: www.leandroerlich.com



Virtual image for *The Tower* project, 2008



Virtual image for ***The Tower*** project, 2008

**Museo Nacional
Centro de Arte Reina Sofía**

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Opening Times

Mondays to Saturdays: 10.00 - 21.00
Sundays: 10.00 - 14.30
Closed Tuesdays
The exhibition rooms will
be vacated 15 minutes before
the museum closes

Illustrations

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