

Daniel Guzmán

Chromosome Damage

13 December 2014 – 21 February 2015

Daniel Guzmán is among the generation of artists in Mexico City whose radical and conceptual approach to art first attracted the attention of the international art scene in the 1990s. Guzmán is mainly recognised for his stylised cartoon-like imagery and texts made in ink on paper and walls. These works contain multi layered references to lyrics and song titles from rock bands like Kiss, AC/DC, the writings of William Burroughs and Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño, to satirical illustrations of Mexican politicians of the 1970s. The title for his exhibition is taken from 'Chromosome Damage', a song by Chrome, an experimental rock band founded in San Francisco.

Guzmán's sculptures and drawings are steeped in the context of Mexican and pre-Hispanic imagery. Since 2000 he has researched and visited archaeological sites as a means of confronting his personal and historical background as a Mexican from Oaxaca. This new series of works on paper, their first showing in the UK, is the result of his intensive research about the cultural history of Mexico, exploring the mythical and cultural expression of national identity and representation.

These works directly reference the paramount imagery and iconography of Aztec sculpture and archaeological findings, mainly the great deities of Coatlicue, Tlaltecuhli and the Cihuatéotl, powerful female goddesses and earth mothers that often embody dual symbols for fertility, life, death and sacrifice. For Guzmán, the fusing of cultural, mythical and historical sources through the reference to Aztec symbols of the female body, teeth, serpents and skulls, refers to man's destiny and place in the world.

In *Chromosome Damage* each of the thirty drawings represents a single, mainly female, figure –baring teeth and pop out eyes, which goes through mystic and troubling metamorphosis – feet become tree trunks and serpents coil round them, limbs are extended and breasts and other features multiply. These works are made in pastel, charcoal, ink and acrylic on a thin, brown paper that is generally used to serve street food. Guzman's palette is dictated by the distinct attributes and colour significance of each deity that he characterises as both human and spirit like. Earthy colours - browns, pinks and reds predominate – but brighter yellows and reds make appearances.

As the artist states, "*In these drawings I look for ways to represent the matter that gives form to the universe, something that is in constant ebullition and transformation, forms that transfer, merge, twist and turn*".

In *Chromosome Damage* Guzmán takes a tantalisingly rich subject matter that is distinctively Mexican and creates something personal and political, provocative and humorous that resonates within a wider cultural context

All works are: *Untitled, from the series 'Chromosome Damage, 2013-2014, pastel, charcoal and acrylic, 64 x 44 cm. Series of 30. Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, México*

Drawing Room is proud to present this series of works in the first exhibition by Daniel Guzmàn in a public gallery in London and the UK.

Daniel Guzmàn was born in Mexico City, 1964. He studied in Mexico City at Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) 1989-93 and International Studio & Curatorial Program ISCP Artist Residency, New York, USA 2000.

Guzmán has exhibited in prominent institutions worldwide including recent solo exhibitions at: Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Mexico; Museum of Contemporary Art, Oaxaca, Mexico; (2011); *Distant Star* - an exhibition around the writings of Roberto Bolaño, Regen Projects, Los Angeles and kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Mexico; *El Sol de Mexico*, Harris Lieberman, New York (2009); *Double Album: Daniel Guzmàn and Steven Shearer*, New Museum, New York (2008), MUCA, Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte, Mexico City (2009). Selected group exhibitions include: *México Inside Out: Themes in Art Since 1990* Museum of Modern Art, Fort Worth, Texas, USA; *Sakahán: International Indigenous Art*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (2013); *México: Política y poética*, San Francisco State University, San Francisco (2011); *Nothingness and Being*, Fundación/Colección Jumex, Ecatepec, (2009); *Life on Mars: 55th Carnegie International*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; 5th Berlin Biennial, Berlin (2008); *Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1976*, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal (2007-2009); Turin Triennial, Turin, (2005); *The Everyday Altered*, curated by Gabriel Orzoco, Venice Biennale (2003).

We thank Daniel for his enthusiasm to show this inspiring series of works at Drawing Room. Our thanks and appreciation goes to José Kuri, Mónica Manzutto and Ana Castella, at kurimanzutto, Mexico City, for their commitment and support of the exhibition. We are grateful for the support of the Embassy of Mexico, as part of 'Year of Mexico in the UK 2015' festival, for without which the exhibition would not have been possible.

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