

# ARTFORUM

ROCHESTER, MN

## Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle

ROCHESTER ART CENTER

November 2006

A recent exhibition of Inigo Manglano-Ovalle's work at the Rochester Art Center presented new sculptures and audio works alongside reconfigurations of existing projects. Among those not previously exhibited was *Portrait of a Young Reader*, 2006, from the artist's ongoing series "DNA Portraits." This example diverges in form and meaning from earlier entries, large, colorful C-prints based on the results of DNA testing that feature the blotchy bands familiar from crime documentaries. *Young Reader* presents us instead with a strip of small, colored disks derived from DNA microarray analysis. Rather than grouping a number of genetic "fingerprints" together to represent human diversity, Manglano-Ovalle here represents a single anonymous everyman who seems to stand for both an open-minded reader and a producer of fresh meaning.

Both *Young Reader* and *Red Fist*, 2006, a red, hardened-epoxy form that the artist made by squeezing a chunk of the raw material in his hand, acted as counterpoints to two large sculptures, *Cloud Prototype No. 1*, 2003, and *Recumbent Iceberg (r11i01)*, 2005-2006, which dominated the main gallery. Whereas the first two works speak of the specificity and singularity of the body, the latter are signifiers of the sublime. Hanging from the ceiling, *Cloud Prototype No. 1* is a billowy fiberglass shell in the shape of a thundercloud, surfaced with shiny titanium-alloy foil, a spectacular manifestation of the informel based on real weather data. *Recumbent Iceberg* takes its shape from radar and sonar scans of the topographical outline and core volume of an actual iceberg in the Labrador Sea. Made from thousands of pieces of aluminum tubing joined together into what looks like a geodesic dome gone haywire, the work juxtaposes Buckminster Fuller's utopian vision with the threat of global warming, signaled by the iceberg's tilted position. Objective representations of nature thus intersect with more ideologically loaded images. For Manglano-Ovalle, clouds--like icebergs--are first and foremost bodies in unimpeded motion, unaffected by national boundaries, and thus serve to illuminate the nature of migration, the political construction of the "illegal alien," and the trials faced by actual immigrants.

Previously, Manglano-Ovalle has demonstrated a knack for revealing the "productive" character of architecture by representing buildings as mediators of human relations. In this exhibition he worked with architecture by manipulating and monitoring the gallery environment. Referencing the term "climate" as a descriptor of both meteorological and sociopolitical-economic environments, *Random Sky*, 2006, features equipment that measures the gallery's temperature, barometric pressure, and air movement. Electronic sounds and abstract visual output mark subtle changes in these conditions as viewers circulate through the room. *Random Sky* thus not only employs climate as a metaphor for the social, but places man in the position of observed object.

In two smaller galleries Manglano-Ovalle created different environments by covering windows with tinted film. *Reddish light filled the gallery that housed 41[degrees] N x 74[degrees]W*, 2002, in which speakers broadcast the sound of wind recorded by the artist in April 2000 at the top of the World Trade Center. In the same gallery was *Plume*, 2003, a pair of photographs of a cloud that reads as both the mass of water vapor we know it to be and the plume of an atomic blast. Across the hall cool, blue light and the sound of rain filled an otherwise empty gallery. Yet the tranquil resonance of *Sonambulo II (blue)*, 1999, is not what it seems. The sound is the product of studio manipulation, its true source being the sound of a bullet fired from a gun. In this work, as in the exhibition as a whole, Manglano-Ovalle transforms the potentially destructive into the semblance of its opposite.

- Patricia Briggs



Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle,  
*Cloud Prototype No. 1*, 2003,  
fiberglass and titanium alloy foil, 11' x 14' x 8'

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