

Press
April 26, 2014, Basel

ALINKA ECHEVERRÍA

Icon as Image : Image as Icon

From The Road to Tepeyac series

April 29 – June 5 2014

Opening Reception: Tuesday, April 29 2014 6-8pm

Laleh June Galerie is pleased to present an exhibition of Alinka Echeverría. The exhibition entitled *Icon as Image : Image as Icon* takes a selection from her celebrated series *The Road to Tepeyac*. Since its recognition as winner of the HSBC Prix Pour La Photographie in France (2011), this series has been exhibited at The Wittliff Collections, Texas (2013), Museo de America, Madrid (2013), Centro Cultural Recoletas, Buenos Aires (2013), Moscow photobienal (2012), Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles (2012), Shizaru Gallery, London (2012), Berloni Gallery, London (2012), The French Institute of Latin America, Mexico City (2012), Lima Biennial of Photography, Peru (2012), Maison de la Photographie, Lille (2011), Galerie Baudoin Lebon, Paris (2011), L'Arsenale, Metz (2011), Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris (2011) and Galerie Réverbère, Lyon (2011). The series will be show in November in a solo exhibition at The California Museum of Photography.

This is Echeverría's first exhibition in Switzerland. The opening will take place in the presence of the artist on Tuesday, April 29 2014 from 6 to 8pm.

Alinka Echeverría was born in Mexico City in 1981. A 2008 graduate of The International Center of Photography in New York, she additionally earned a M.A. in Social Anthropology at The University of Edinburgh. Named 'International Photographer of the Year' of 2012 by the Lucie Awards, Echeverría previously won the HSBC Prize for Photography in 2011. Her work, usually presented as immersive photographic installations, focuses thematically on belief systems, specifically addressing representational constructs.

«In my artistic practice, I have always been interested in the relationship between what is external, on the outside, and what is concealed, invisible and on the inside. The politics of representation cannot be escaped. I am interested in how the practice of representation embodies the tension between visibility and invisibility. I very much concur with Foucault's understanding of visibility as being part of and conditioned by the system of representation. I am intrigued by the divergent modalities of visibility within representation. My practice is thus informed by a long-standing inquiry into the push-pull dynamic and constant negotiation between what is on the surface, what is known, seen and named and what is underneath and remains hidden.

The Road to Tepeyac was conceived of as immersive installation, observing the relationship between an invisible presence and its materialised expression. The iconographic depiction of Guadalupe, an amalgamation of the Catholic Virgin Mary and the Aztec Goddess Tonantzin, in all of its manifestations (each re-presentation is a sacred and valid as the next), offers a tangible connection to that which is unseen – the divine mother. She gives unconditional love, offers protection and grants the faithful miracles. By photographing isolated characters carrying their icon, I observe each pilgrim as an individual on a personal journey, as well as the psychological connection between faith and images. The decontextualisation is intended to focus our attention on the individual image, and allows the reintegration of the collective group, permitting the viewer to appreciate the plethora of re-presentations of the Virgin and give a glimpse of the journey of millions of pilgrims every year» says Alinka Echeverría.

The title of the exhibition *Icon as Image : Image as Icon* refers to Christian Caujolle's introduction to the HSBC Prize for Photography exhibition catalogue published by Actes Sud in 2011.

L A L E H J U N E G A L E R I E

«Once a year, from all around the country, pilgrims come to the sanctuary at the top of Tepeyac Hill to pay homage to the Virgin of Guadalupe, ask a favor of her, for healing, love, wealth, a more fortunate hereafter than the existence they often lead on earth. They flock in their millions; it is said that six million come each year. They come on foot, walking for days, some alone, others with their families, often accompanied by young children, who are sometimes in traditional dress and whom end up being carried on their parent's shoulders when they are too exhausted to keep moving forward. They walk and pray in the heat with a sole objective: this virgin, this sacred place, to get close one time at least, as with so many religions, to the origin, supposed or real, it doesn't matter. To be there. To be worthy. To such a degree that many end up barefoot, even walking on their knees, suffering. To be worthy. To merit benevolence, assistance in this world and pardon in the next, to merit that the Virgin gladly guard them with her protection. Because the Virgin provides salvation. Nothing hugely different then from many other pilgrimages and collective demonstrations, which are, first and foremost, a cluster of individual decisions drawn together by the same belief, nothing except the impressive number, which shows the extent of this faith in a "good mother," radiant and always represented in an oval of light emanating from her. The Virgin of Guadalupe is solar. Right at the beginning, photography was talked about as a heliographic drawing.

Because it is indeed a question of a burden for certain people for whom a banner or flag pinned to their backpack or wrapped around themselves does not suffice. Anything goes: huge statues, along with small, sometimes delicate ones swaddled in a blanket, paintings that are larger than the people carrying them, displaying every kind of esthetic, with huge frames, in carved wood, poker-work virgins, others roughly sketched, drawings, works in cross-stitch, paintings as delicate as popular ex-votos, others finely embroidered on plain or precious fabrics, on fur, mantels, still others, probably more precious than the rest, that have perhaps come from a chapel, in their glass and metal container. Thousands of virgins, thousands of images in movement, like an uncountable immensity that would speak of the intensity of belief.

They become image because they carry an interpretation of the image they are going to venerate, and because the only thing photography retains of them is this echo image of another image. And it is obviously because belief, for want of generating visions for each person, has materialized in an image to become "the Image", that this is possible.

Christian Caujolle, 2011

For press inquiries, visual material and any further information please contact Laleh at info@lalehjune.com or +41.61.228.77.78.

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Hours: Tuesday – Friday: 1 – 6PM

Saturday: 12 – 5PM and by appointment

Monday closed.

bus / tram stop: Kunstmuseum Basel

LALEH JUNE GALERIE



ALINKA ECHEVERRIA
From *The Road to Tepeyac* series
Untitled, 2010
Hahnemuhle inkjet fineart-coating
80 x 62 cm
ed. of 7