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# LUIS MIGUEL SURO

Inauguración Abril 27, 2021  
17 - 22 H

General Juan Cano 103, San Miguel Chapultepec, CDMX, 11850

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Gran parte de la obra de Luis Miguel Suro (1972 - 2004) mostró su interés por mezclar conceptos del arte contemporáneo con formas de hacer arte popular tomando como punto de partida la tradición ceramista familiar en que se formó como artista. Una síntesis de esta producción será exhibida en el espacio de GALERÍA ENRIQUE GUERRERO, donde hace quince años fue mostrada su obra por última vez.

Part of Luis Miguel Suro (1972 - 2004)'s work was characterized by mixing concepts of contemporary art with ways of making popular art, always taking as a starting point the family ceramic tradition in which he was trained as an artist. A synthesis of his production will be exhibited in GALERÍA ENRIQUE GUERRERO, where his work was shown for the last time fifteen years ago.

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**LUIS MIGUEL SURO**  
*De la Serie Flower Painting Project, 2004*

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**LUIS MIGUEL SURO**  
*De la Serie Pull the Botton, 2000*

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**LUIS MIGUEL SURO**

*De la Serie Assassination-Suicide Pistol, 1997*

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**LUIS MIGUEL SURO**  
*De la Serie Bancos, 1999*



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SOBRE SU OBRA | ABOUT HIS WORK

## **The Language of Flowers**

(on Luis Miguel Suro's Flower Paintings Project)

In his famous 1983 publication titled "The Invention of Tradition", English author Eric Hobsbawm refers to certain aspects of contemporary culture that have been taken for granted for years, but whose actual origins belong to some kind of deliberate one-man plan (and not -as we may have assumed- to an organic, ancestral or community-related process). Over recent years, issues like the Scottish Highlands Tartan tradition, the Otavaleño's handcrafted products from Ecuador or the Russian Matrioshkas, have become unveiled and revealed in their "post-historical" trickiness. Modern -and clever- manipulations of the past, these icons on which we were standing on are all of a sudden dissolved. It can be said that, as part of displacement and migration dynamics, loss of tradition as well as the continuous reinvention of it has been increasingly invading all contemporary debates, specifically the artistic.

An interesting candidate for Hobsbawm's thesis is a small town called Tlaquepaque, a satellite village which is today considered as part of Guadalajara (Mexico's second largest city). Center to one of Mexico's best worldwide known handcraft products, Tlaquepaque has been developing since the late 50's a sustained and evolving so-called "mexican style" -a mélange that basically goes back to Spanish colonial aesthetics and to native Mexican archeological sources, with subtle hints of French Art Nouveau and U.S. Ranch Style-. Based on some signature looks in metal handcraft, carpentry, textile weaving, embroidery, stone sculpture, but specially blown glass and ceramics, Tlaquepaque has become one of the world's most distinguished producer and exporter of decorative handcrafts.

Deeply immersed in this tradition, Luis Miguel Suro actually grew up amidst this phenomena (being the son of Noé Suro, one of the most remarkable industrial ceramic producers in Tlaquepaque). Although his artwork has been dealing in recent years with issues of power v/s fragility, local v/s global culture, violence v/s tenderness, and even if the media he has been working with goes from modest drawings on paper to video installations, there has always been a relevant part of his discourse devoted to his upbringing in this fully creative and productive handcraft environment.

The present series of oil paintings titled "Flower Paintings Project" renders a special tribute to the author's family business, and at the same time, offers an accurate statement of what artistic practice now means to Suro, both formally and emotionally.

It might surprise us to learn that the flowers in this project were not made directly by Luis Miguel Suro, but respond to a collaborative pact: they were actually hand painted by a worker of this factory called Rodolfo Rivera. For about forty years, Rivera has been the man specifically in charge of painting and/or supervising every flower that has come out of the Cerámica Suro factory in Tlaquepaque. It can

be said that his memory is the virtual bank where all flower patterns come from, whether it is an orthodox ancient pattern, a whimsical or fashion-driven one suggested by a costumer, or a subtle mutation of these two put together by his own imagination. That's perhaps the reason why we are able to find in this ongoing series diverse -sometimes even bizarre- visual solutions: Delft-style flowers in brown shades, flowers that are half-poppy and half-daisy, pink Talavera with orange roses, etc. It looks like the flora featured in these paintings (such as chrysanthemum, tulips, poppy flowers, roses, plum blossoms, orchids, daisies and lillies), either respects the formal doctrine it belongs to or becomes altered through free-style variations, highly determined by Rodolfo Rivera's taste, mood or artistic ambition.

At first sight, it seems like each one of this little oil paintings is perverting all that which a group of flowers is supposed to communicate: fleetingness, innocence, charm, perfume, peace, harmony, fertility, renovation, femininity, joy, freshness, purity, divinity... None of this comes easily to mind when observing these images; what we see is actually something more like a dense and slightly disturbing surface, where some kind of hidden agenda, restriction, opaque eroticism, both stiffness and viscosity can be felt. In a certain way, there's this special unnatural quality in these floral designs: on the one hand, something that might remind us vaguely of William Morris' oeuvre (almost entirely based on flowers and plants derived from medieval illuminations and illustrations), and on the other, a softened version of the modern jailhouse-culture practice of floral tattoo.

Of all of the better known sub-themes present in the history of the Fine Arts where flowers may have the leading role (like Still Life, the Virgin Mary, the Saints, the four seasons, the Sacred Wreath, Mythologie, the Vanitas, the five senses, etc), there seems to be none in which these paintings made by Suro would properly fit in. These images, although trying their best to belong to the almost five centuries old "oil on canvas" tradition, still remain as a consequence of some other iconographic - rather marginal- device. In fact, looking at these paintings, many pictorial academic conventions are put into question: its simmetric structure; the density and proximity of each flower-unit; the dissonant chromatic interaction (which is either flat gama-based or completely unadjusted in regards to the hues), the rather clumsy combination of washes and thick paint brushstrokes, among other elements, are apparently carrying these paintings away from what true botanical art is supposed to do: i.e., to accurately observe, explore and go beyond the surface of the vegetable kingdom in search of the unknown.

There is no intention here to introduce the reader into the presence of painted flowers in History, but in recent centuries western civilization has been insistingly referring to them: Van Aelst and Verbruggen in Holland, Monnoyer in France, Archimboldi's exuberant compositions, Monet's radical water lillies, Klimt's delirious allegories, and more recently Georgia O'Keefe, Donald Baechler,

Christopher Wool, Philip Taffe and his intricate, intriguing sensually-driven mixture of patterns; or more recently still, Paul Morrison's "representations within cartoon-like representations" of a disquietingly simple and blown-up-in-scale vegetal world... Once again, Luis Miguel Suro's "Flower Paintings Project" seems to be definitely not part of this lineage. At least, not in a straightforward, recognizable way.

Looking back in time, all around the world and throughout the last thousand years, floral patterns have shown a tendency to oscillate indistinctly from the very profound to the purely shallow effect, and back again. As we can see amongst Islamic flower patterns, for instance --where the mediation through geometry pushes its connotations more into the transcendental than into the banal, more towards a male than towards a female direction-- we can perceive a passionate effort to avoid figurative religious imagery, raising the demonstration of infinity and the never-changing laws of God. Intriguingly, we can trace this particular trajectory of flower representation from Islam to Toledo, Spain (XII century); from the Dominican cloisters (Talavera de la Reina) in Spain, to Puebla, Mexico (XVI century); from Puebla (where it -again- became influenced in the XVII and XVIII century by floral patterns coming from Portugal, Holland, Italy and Asian echoes of the late Ming dynasty, to Jalisco's highlands in Mexico (XVIII); then again from Jalisco to its state capital city Guadalajara, and in Guadalajara, a few kilometers southeast, to Tlaquepaque (XX century).

Luis Miguel Suro has delicately interrupted this multilayered, centuries-old and strictly decorative chain, to provide us with this suspicious evidence, this vigorous collection of pseudo-baroque pictures, this extract of world culture-clashes, this literal example of social accomodation and -only for those qualified to read the language of flowers- a poisonous list of such disparate concepts as "you're a wonderful friend", "cheerfulness and rest", "innocent heart", "secrecy and silence", "I still love you", "tranquilize my anxiety", "I'll always remember", "slighted love", "there's sunshine in your smile", "death is preferable to loss of virtue", "perfect lover", "reward of merit", "beautiful eyes", "declaration of love", "believe me", "love at first sight", "I'll never tell" or "perfect happiness".

Cristián Silva - Guadalajara - September 2004

## LUIS MIGUEL SURO

Nace en Junio de 1972 en Guadalajara, Jalisco, México.

Fallece en Diciembre de 2004 en Guadalajara, Jalisco, México.

### SELECCIÓN DE EXPOSICIONES INDIVIDUALES

- 2005 *Luis Miguel Suro*, Galería Enrique Guerrero, México, D.F., México
- 2003 *Gallos, ¼ de Proyecto*, MUCA Roma, México D.F., México
- 2002 *BUREAUCRACY*, Programa | Centro de Arte, México D.F., México
- 2000 *Pull The Button*, Venetia Kapernekas Fine Art Inc, Nueva York, N.Y. E.U.A  
*Plagios Cotidianos*, GARA Art Gallery, Buenos Aires, Argentina.  
*Fake ATM*, Zapopan Project, Guadalajara, Méx.

### SELECCIÓN DE EXPOSICIONES COLECTIVAS

- 2005 *Luis Miguel Suro*, Galería Enrique Guerrero, México, D.F., México
- 2004 *Oil*, Triangle Project Space, San Antonio, TX. E.U.A  
Colección permanente, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, N.Y., E.U.A  
*Dicen que Finjo o Miento. La Ficción Revisada*, Central de Arte (WTC), Guadalajara, Jal., México  
*So Far, So Close*, Americas Society, New York, N.Y. E.U.A  
Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn, N.Y. E.U.A  
*Significant Anomaly*, ScopeNY, N.Y. E.U.A
- 2003 *25hrs. Intl. Video Art Show*, The Video Art Foundation + UNXposed, Barcelona, España  
*Trans-Figuration*, Pallazzo Mediceo, Seravezza, Lucca, Italia  
*Piel Fria*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Carrillo Gil, México D.F., México
- 2002 Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Santa Mónica, Barcelona, España  
*Zebra Crossing*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin, Alemania  
*Sauvage*, La Panadería, México D.F., México

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- 2001 *Sala de Recuperación*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Carrillo Gil, México D.F.,  
México *Video Screenings*, 291 Gallery, Londres, Inglaterra
- 2000 *Blown Away*, Garth Clark Gallery, New York, N.Y., E.U.A
- 1998 *Double Trouble: La Colección Patchett* (Exposición Itinerante México-España).  
*HIPER*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Carrillo Gil, México D.F., México.

SELECCIÓN DE PREMIOS Y RESIDENCIAS

- 2003 ART - OMI International Arts Center, Omi, N.Y., E.U.A
- 2001 Ecole Cantonale D'Art Du Valais, Sierre, Suiza.  
Braziers Intl. Artists Workshop, Oxfordshire, Inglaterra
- 2000 Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (FONCA), México D.F., México.  
Gran Premio, Omnilife, Guadalajara, México.

SELECCIÓN BIBLIOGRÁFICA

- 2004 Cabinet Magazine, Issue 14, "Contract For A Never-To-Be-Seen-By-The-Patron  
Artwork", por Luis Miguel Suro y Mario Garcia Torres.
- 2003 La Jornada, México, Abril 25, "Suro Propone Una Metáfora Del Debate Que Vive  
La UNAM", por Merry Mac Maters.
- 2001 Postmodern Ceramics, por Mark Del Vecchio, editado por Thames & Hudson.  
Frieze, Nov-Dic, BACK, "Braziers Intl. Artists Workshop", por Sally O'Reilly.  
ARTnews, Abril, On The Edge: "Dynamic Ceramics" por Cynthia Nadelman.
- 1998 Flash Art, summer, At The Galleries: "Bucking The Chelsea Trend", por Franklyn  
Sirmans.

## LUIS MIGUEL SURO

Born in 1972 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico

Died in December 2004 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

### SELECTED SOLO SHOWS.

- 2003 *Gallos, ¼ de Proyecto*, MUCA Roma, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2002 BUREAUCRACY, Programa Art Center, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2000 Pull The Button, Venetia Kapernekas Fine Art Inc, Nueva York, N.Y. USA.  
Plagios Cotidianos, GARA Art Gallery, BuenosAires, Argentina.  
Fake ATM, Zapopan Project, Guadalajara, Jal, Mexico

### SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

- 2005 *Luis Miguel Suro*, Galería Enrique Guerrero, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2004 *Oil*, Triangle Project Space, San Antonio, TX., USA  
Permanent Collection, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn Harbor, N.Y. USA  
*Dicen que Finjo o Miento.La Ficción Revisada*, Central de Arte (WTC),  
Guadalajara, Jal. Mexico  
*So Far, So Close*, Americas Society, New York, N.Y., USA  
Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
*Significant Anomaly*, ScopeNY, N.Y., USA
- 2003 *25hrs. Intl. Video Art Show*, The Video Art Foundation + UNXposed, Barcelona,  
Spain  
*Trans-Figuration*, Pallazzo Mediceo, Seravezza, Lucca, Italy  
*Piel Fria*, Carrillo Gil Contemporary Art Museum, México City.
- 2002 Santa Mónica Contemporary Art Center, Barcelona, Spain  
*Zebra Crossing*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin, Germany  
*Sauvage*, La Panaderia, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2001 *Sala de Recuperación*, Carrillo Gil Contemporary Art Museum, Mexico City,  
Mexico

G A L E R Í A  
E N R I Q U E  
G U E R R E R O

- Video Screenings*, 291 Gallery, London, UK  
2000 *Blown Away*, Garth Clark Gallery, New York, N.Y., USA  
1998 *Double Trouble: La Colección Patchett* (travelling show México & Spain).  
*HIPER*, Carrillo Gil Contemporary Art Museum, Mexico City, Mexico

*RESIDENCIES, GRANTS & AWARDS (SELECTION)*

- 2003 ART - OMI International Arts Center, Omi, N.Y., USA  
2001 Ecole Cantonale D'Art Du Valais, Sierre, Suiza.  
Braziers Intl. Artists Workshop, Oxfordshire, U.K.  
2000 National Fund for Culture & Art (FONCA), México.  
Great Prize, Omnilife, Guadalajara, Jal., Méx.

*SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY*

- 2004 Cabinet Magazine, Issue 14, "Contract For A Never-To-Be-Seen-By-The-Patron Artwork", By Luis Miguel Suro & Mario Garcia Torres.  
2003 La Jornada, México, April 25, "Suro Propone Una Metáfora Del Debate Que Vive La UNAM", by Merry Mac Maters.  
2001 Postmodern Ceramics, by Mark Del Vecchio, edited by Thames & Hudson.  
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1998 Flash Art, summer, At The Galleries: "Bucking The Chelsea Trend", by Franklyn Sirmans.



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