

KATE MACGARRY

VANITY FAIR

2

Art

Slide Show: Dr. Lakra Applies an Ink Gun to Mexico's Cultural Heritage

by *Nils Bernstein*

April 12, 2010,



Dr. Lakra, *Sin titulo/Untitled (sillon rojo)*, 2004,
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

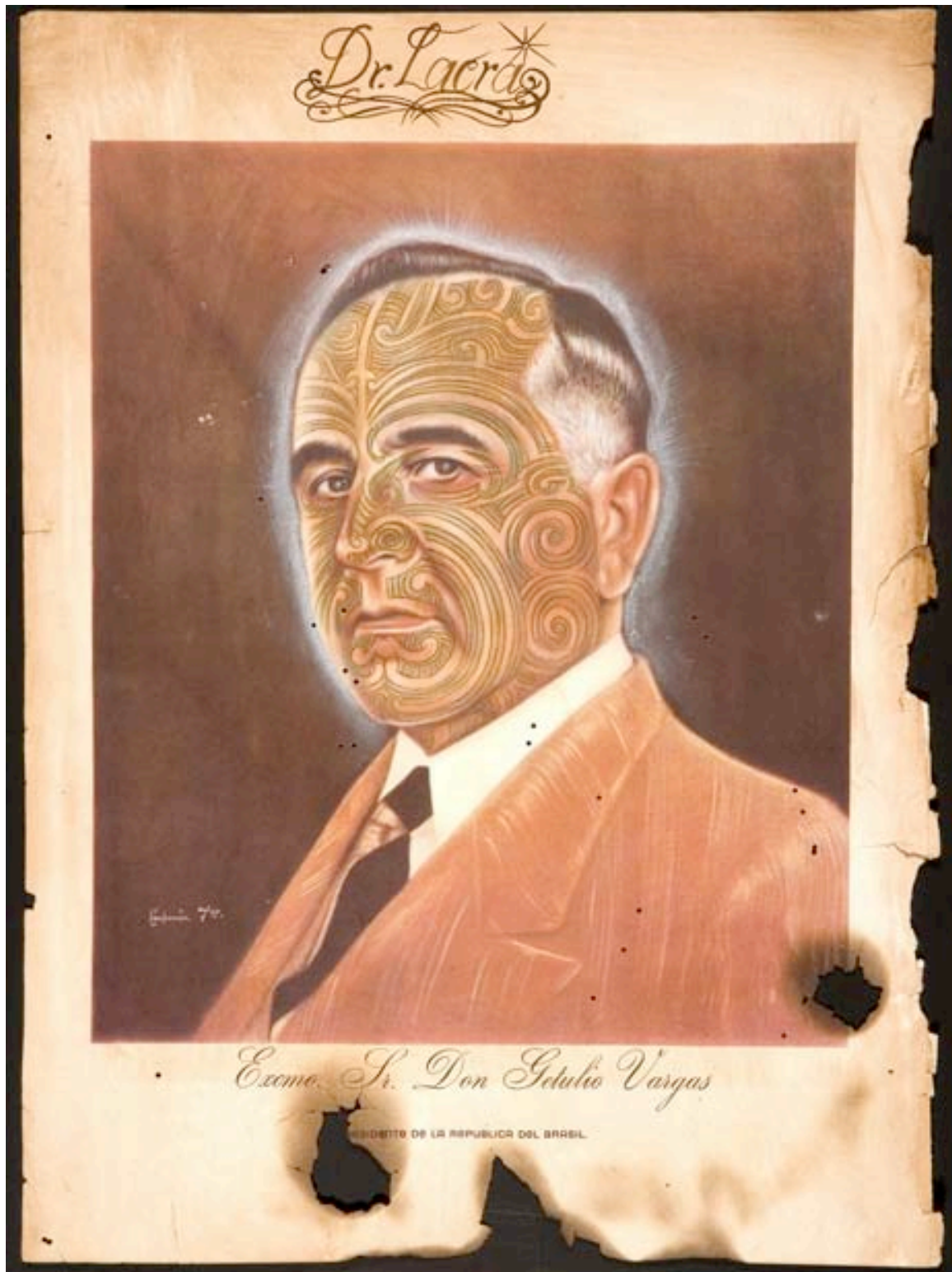
Having adopted Mexico City as a kind of second home, I see the perpetual tug-of-war between the idiosyncratic vision of Mexican artists and a cosmopolitan sensibility, with work that yo-yos between thrilling inspiration and earnest mimicry (don't get me started on the pop music). While contemporary Mexican art is still under-exhibited in the U.S., visitors to the exhaustive Gabriel Orozco show at MoMA this past winter saw the work of the most influential Mexican artist of the last 20 years. Still, despite art-world efforts to pigeonhole the current Mexican scene, not everyone there remains in thrall to Orozco's brand of pop conceptualism and his avoidance of stereotypically "Mexican" elements.

Opening Wednesday at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston is the first U.S. solo show from Dr. Lakra, whose easy-to-love schtick gains resonance through sheer skill and its religious, social, and political references. A hugely successful tattoo artist, Lakra is enjoying increased appreciation for his non-skin work, where he "tattoos" and otherwise transforms such iconographic images and objects as 50s pin-ups, medical illustrations, Japanese prints, wrestlers, superheroes, and children's dolls. While the subversion and wit are readily apparent (if rather one-note) to U.S. eyes, when seen from a Mexican perspective Lakra's seductive work implies such weightier concerns as desecration, criminality, and economic disparity.

Lakra's apparent influences include alternative comics of the 80s, Mexican folk art and muralism, graffiti, Asian and African traditions, Chicano gang symbols, Richard Prince, and the Zapotec mythology of his father, famed Oaxacan artist Francisco Toledo. At heart, however, Lakra is an expert draftsman, as can be seen in the massive mural that anchors the show; its dense riot of faces, bodies, and symbols takes comic art into the intricate, fleshy realm of Sue Williams or early Cecily Brown.



Sin titulo/Untitled (Simbolo de calidad), 2005, Ink on vintage magazine,
Courtesy kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City.



Sin titulo/Untitled (Don Getulio Vargas), 2006, Watercolor and pencil on vintage magazine, Collection of Geri and Arnie Obler, New York.



Sin título/Untitled (Japonés y cigarro), 2009, Ink and acrylic on Japanese print, Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City.



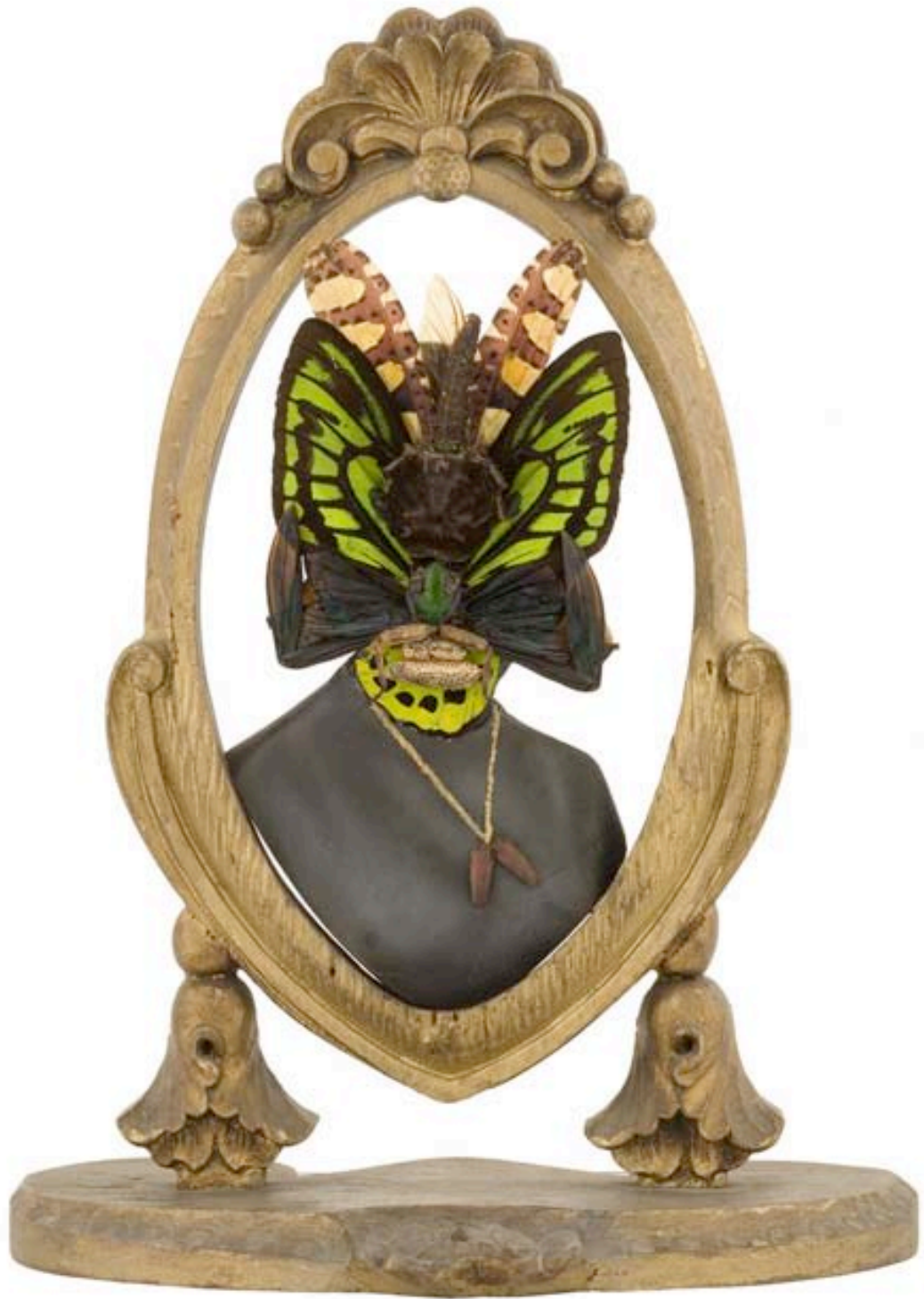
Sin titulo/Untitled (Olanes), 2004, Ink on vintage magazine, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Tab. 20.



Lith. Anst. F. Reichhold, München.

Sin titulo/Untitled (Shattered), 2009, Ink on vintage lithography, Mexico City.



Sin titulo/Untitled (Vestido negro y collar), 2007, Dried insects on photo-relief portrait on wood, Courtesy of the artist and the kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City.