

FRANCESCO X. SIQUEIROS

April 3 - May 8, 2004, at [L2kontemporary](#), Downtown

by Elenore Welles



"ViT," 2000, mixed media on canvas, 35 x 31".



"Las Tres Verdades," 1994, mixed media on wood, 50 x 40".



"5.1," 1999, mixed media on canvas, 24 x 24".



"Self Portrait," 1995, mixed media on wood, metal, 40 x 36".

Embedded within Francesco Siqueiros' *The Equivalents* is an underlying language that offers a range of possibilities. He uses cultural signifiers to challenge pre-formed associations with an emotive illusionism. The simultaneous interpretations of that which is real with that which is possible reflect on the essence of Modernism.

Siqueiros navigates those realms through color, shape, mathematics and letters. He equates colors and shapes with sound, a dynamic geared to elicit individual emotions and prompt subconscious feelings. Moreover, he challenges the impetus to read his works as purely aesthetic. Harking back not only to the color, shape and sound theories of Kandinsky, Siqueiros' premises are also close to those of the early 20th century Dutch De Stijl group. Artists such as Mondrian viewed the artist as avatar of the divine, drawing on mathematics and letters to evoke arcane mystical vibrations.

Like Mondrian, Siqueiros seeks to unify an equivalence of opposites. But early Modernist traditions are subverted by their exclusions of culture and heredity. Preserving the traditions of his predecessors that promulgated the spiritual manifestations of letters and numbers, the artist nevertheless extends his references to popular culture and multicultural ideologies. The simultaneity of color, sound, image, shape and mathematics continue as the unifying language. But they contribute to a more complex contextual aesthetic.

He uses an eclectic mix of styles and media, each geared toward expressing a particular idea. In *Cup*, cubist planes of blue and gold overlay objects and designs. Whereas in *ViT*, a mixed media still life, the geometric elements are invoked through a series of references outside the central composition. In the central square on a table sits an arrangement of vividly colored objects. It is surrounded by squares that include numbers, colors and images. The painterly interior can be experienced sensually, while the surrounding squares can be read analytically. The emotional component comes from the connections.

Color and charcoal portraits are surrounded by geometric shapes, designs and photographs, each section leading to references and associations that can evoke literal connections. In *RTi*, the patches of design and letters conceptually and contextually related to the portrait are embedded within the central composition.

Extra dimensions are also found in the charcoal renderings *Teatron Calderon* and *El Retiro*. Here Siqueiros inserts color swatches to reference specific areas of architectural tourist sites. Although the references in his varied works must be plowed through for layers of meaning, they are geared, also, toward evoking emotion. The duality stems from attempting to reconcile and synthesize the aesthetic disassociation that is a byproduct of post-modernism. Mathematics and geometry informs the outer reality, while universal symbols are a means of equivocating between multicultural beliefs and ideologies. The narratives represented by figures and abstractions depend on cultural traditions to analyze and decipher them. But there is also the belief that individual emotion is manifested through color and form and the vibrations that emanate from them.

Siqueiros' brooding 1995 *Self Portrait* best expresses that emotional, intellectual yin/yang. Contained within a grid of colored squares and designs, his haunting vision is held captive by geometry.

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