

Wilson, Michael, "Adriana Lara", *Artforum*, February, 2018

Adriana Lara

GREENSPON

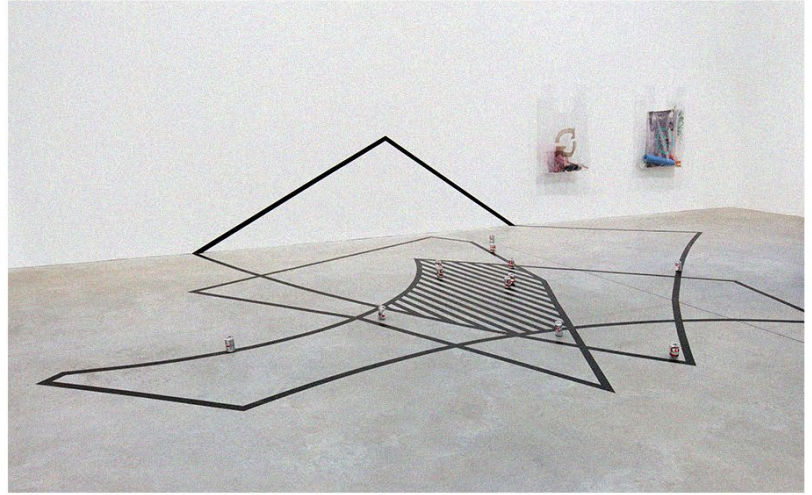
CARBON; FIRE; GAS; NOISE; SILENCE; PLASTIC; DIET COKE; DEBRIS; PRODUCT; ALLUMINUM [*sic*]; INFORMATION; COPY; MARKETING; TRASH; VOICES; BURPS; RECORDINGS; RADIO; CC; FORM-EXFORM; THEORIES; POST-PUNK-POST-PRODUCT; STRATEGIC UNPREDICTABILITY; BORDER-MEXICO-U.S. In the lead-up to her third solo exhibition at Greenspon, Mexico City-based Adriana Lara supplied this dizzying end-times vocab list to half a dozen writers as fuel for a series of original conspiracy theories, making the (suitably paranoid) results available in the gallery as simple printed handouts. As well as providing rich inspiration, the list also functions as a useful summation of the artist's current obsessions, which found heterogeneous form here in a suite of assemblages, paintings, and sculptures collectively—and ominously—titled "The Future."

Theories, conspiracy and otherwise, are a cornerstone of Lara's practice, but not in the sense of canonical or buzzed-about academic worldviews. Since 2010, the artist has been working with her own numbered sequence of "Interesting Theories," sets of interlocking geometric shapes, each of which provides the parameters for its own descendant. The supports for these patterns vary from site to site; in "The Future," the linear black vinyl graphic that is *Interesting Theory* #57 (all works 2017) sprawled across the gallery's polished concrete floor and edged up one wall, as if slightly too large for its designated space. Suggesting a field marked out for some obscure sport (and, really, what else is art?), it was also littered with empty Diet Coke cans—a component inspired, bizarrely, by the drink's ritual consumption during services at a Chiapas, Mexico, church.

Diet Coke cropped up again in *The Hip Recycler/The Poor Collector 1*, one of several assemblages that consisted of oversized transparent carrier bags filled with various objects. Imprinted with smiley faces and recycling symbols, these casual-looking containers suggest both a historian's drive to archive the everyday, and a sensitivity to the benefits and interest of selective salvage in the present. Decoding the connections between the items in each holder was no straightforward task—what *do* a yoga mat and a rubber telephone, or a portable radio and a copy of Robert Filliou's artist's book *A Selection from 1000 Basic Japanese Poems* (1971), or a deflated plastic globe and another can of the aforementioned soda have in common?—but the puzzle is surely more about effort than solution. Lara's bags, like Warhol's time capsules, prod gently but insistently at hierarchies of value and preservation.

Elsewhere, the visual mishmash of the bags gave way to an outwardly more austere aesthetic. A row of monumental silk-screened prints on and of carbon paper (their applied pattern reproduces that found on the original sheets) loomed over the gallery in a pointed fusion of reproduction technologies—recycling again. *The Future (Pre-Columbian, Post-Columbian)*, meanwhile, was a pair of black obsidian slabs with the pocket-sized dimensions, beveled edges, and flawlessly smooth surfaces of brand-new iPhones. Wall-mounted next to each other—one horizontally, one vertically—they felt immediately familiar, but they also, as the title suggests, evoked Mesoamerican stone mirrors. These historical precedents were, like the work's contemporary echoes, the subjects of considerable reverence, their psychic potential far stronger than initially apparent. Arthur C. Clarke's Third Law holds that any "sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," and the iPhone maintains, at least for now, a quasi-mystical hold. In projecting us back to a time when mirrors had a similar power, Lara achieved a feat of time travel as thrillingly vertiginous as the jump cut from spinning thighbone to orbiting spaceship in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

—Michael Wilson



View of "Adriana Lara," 2017. From left: *Interesting Theory* #57, 2017; *The Hip Recycler/The Poor Collector 2*, 2017; *The Hip Recycler/The Poor Collector 3*, 2017. Photo: Farzad Owrang.