



Photo: James McCaffry

Excerpt from *Philosophical Tantrum*, 2005

Guillermo Gómez Peña | La Pocha Nostra

Ladies & gentlemen,

What a strange time to be an artist...

In this time and place, what does it mean to be “transgressive?” What does “radical behavior” mean when the Tea Party lunatics are perceived as defenders of democracy and Glen Beck as a defender of free speech? When our most intelligent newscasters are comedians and Angelina Jolie is considered an activist? Remember the Bush era? What the hell is performance art, pregunto, when a theological cowboy runned the so-called “free world” as if he were directing a spaghetti western on the wrong set? And half a million civilians die during the shooting of the film? And we let him do it? What does radical performance art look like when the images from Abu Ghraib look like radical performance art? What is science fiction when creationism becomes official policy? When some US politicians are sincerely waiting for the rapture and believe that the UN is the anti-Christ? What the hell is performance when Conan the Barbarian became governor of California twice in a reality show called “California?”

Coño, I ask myself rhetorically, what else is there to “transgress?” Who can artists shock,

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challenge, enlighten? Who is listening? What else should I do or say tonight? Should I improvise more? Give birth to yet another performance persona on stage, “America’s most wanted inner demon?” Should I burn my bra or my green card at the steps of the Museum of Contemporary Art? Bear my soul at the altar of despair? Masturbate in the name of democracy and freedom? Curse Jehovah or Allah? Show up naked at the Alamo with my red stilettos and black cane? Auction my left testicle on eBay?

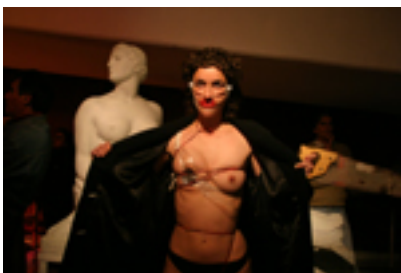
You tell me...kemosabe. Tonight I am your intellectual surrogate... Or rather, your house Mexican.

Can we start all over again? Can we? May I? Mearlos?



Detox Art Festival, Norway, 2005

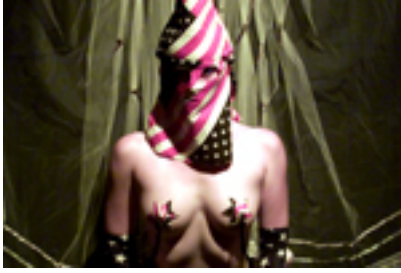
Courtesy: La Pocha Nostra Archives



Art Flasher (Johanna RivEro de Beer), Argentina, 2005

Photo: Ramon Teves

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Miss Amerikkka (Alexis McKee), San Francisco, 2002

Photo: James McCaffry

Guillermo Gómez-Peña is artistic director of La Pocha Nostra. Born and raised in Mexico City, he came to the US in 1978 to study Post-Studio art at Cal Arts. His pioneering work in performance, video, installation, poetry, journalism, photography, cultural theory, and radical pedagogy explores cross-cultural issues, immigration, the politics of language, the politics of the body, “extreme culture,” and new technologies. A MacArthur Fellow and American Book Award winner, he is a regular contributor to National Public Radio, and a writer for newspapers and magazines in the US, Mexico, and Europe.