

## CLEAN CINEMA

An approach to the work of Diego Lama

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During the late nineties in Latin America, the high costs of film productions contributed to more people shifting its work to digital video, taking alternative routes from traditional cinema. However, there are some artists that began using the language of cinema with video to perceive what reality offers in the form of a symbolic language that can be easily understood.

Since the beginning of his career, Diego Lama began experimenting with video as media. While revisiting his work, the spectrum of genealogical analysis is displaced by the chronological, as it's evident an evolution in his artistic growth through the years, where each piece embarks in bigger challenges, in a conceptual as well as a technical level.

Diego Lama is part of what we could call a "second generation" of young artists that have been developing an intense activity in the field of electronic art in Peru, since the restitution of the Festival Internacional de Video/Arte/Electronica in 1998. While it is explicable that this new generation handles different codes from their predecessors, in the case of Diego Lama, the most evident feature in his visual language relates to the imagery and thought-process of cinema, which has strongly influenced his artwork and career. This visual language is not only noticeable by the inclusion of scenes appropriated from films or in the eloquence of his video pieces, but most notably evidenced by the "cleanness", which is characteristic of commercial films, which has been absorbed by the visual arts in the past few years.

Lama's work is clearly determined by two lines of action which are not visually independent of one another: on the one hand, his interest in the globalization process within the field of mainstream art, and his confrontation with the realities of the countries and regions which are not well represented (Latin America, for instance); and on the other hand, his undeniable and persistent taste for the creation of ambiguous spaces through the representation of intimate tragedies, which are related to extreme situations that can seemingly reach absurdity (many times making use of black humor). In both cases, we find the use of a "clean" cinematic language accompanied by popular melodies (from Frank Sinatra to Carmen Miranda) or contemporary orchestrated compositions (such as Philip Glass).

The act of producing high budget productions (in comparison with the minimal or nonexistent budgets of most video art productions in Peru) not only it doesn't contradicts itself but it complements it, for, by doing it, Lama tries to give visibility to the technical level of the "cultural periphery's" productions, thus revealing an increased preoccupation by Latin American artists to develop a concept beyond the final result in aesthetic terms, which we consider important as it delineates its validation, but also establishes a tradition for originality.

His most prominent pieces (Family, The Death of Eros, Chimaera) pick up, in a direct manner (through professional film production and actors), situations that go beyond the limits in both conventional and abstract contexts, always with the intention to create a reflexive vision. What is intended is to create a sensation of complicity with the viewer, where these "clean" spaces do not specify a geographical or cultural context, transforming the character's situation into a universal one.

According to Lama this can help the viewer to reflect upon the most basic and instinctive human feelings to the point of detachment of individual consciousness, and in turn, transforms the viewer into an accomplice of story. However, not only this awakens an interest for originality, but a will to contribute with critical reflection in the field of contemporary art, and the desire to be incorporated into a universality. Diego Lama give us back the formal parameters of cinema combined with the freedom of video format, as well as an integration with other art forms, such as theater, to develop a complex and rich body of work in terms of “cinematic imagery”.

For the last few years, his efforts to make pieces with a production level rarely seen in Latin America has gained him recognition at home and abroad. His works have been awarded many national and international awards, which have kept him in Europe for long periods of time.