



as templates for memories or as references to these now ghostly people. It is as if these figures were a means of referring to an idea that needn't be fully embodied. This tendency indicates the artist's gradual shift toward abstraction, evidenced in his increasing use of geometrical and purely formal elements, which, in his hands, become symbolic. This move connects him to other maverick Spanish artists such as Dámaso Pérez, a painter whose use of imaginary figures and abstract fields is closely allied to that of Pérez Villalta.

El encuentro de Salomón y la reina de Saba (The Encounter of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba), 2007, shows the importance of

ideas in Pérez Villalta's work. Here we see two apparently contrasting figures: One (Solomon) is built from elements that, according to Pérez Villalta in the exhibition catalogue, evoke "reason, science, and language," and has depth, color, and sensuality; the other (the Queen) is linear, monochromatic, and flat. The extremely theatrical placement of the figures in the space demonstrates the influence of de Chirico, albeit by way of one of his followers, Yves Tanguy. The construction of the figures in these works also evokes Picasso's work from the mid-1920s.

Appropriating a wide range of influences has always been at the base of Pérez Villalta's work. "Imaginary Landscapes with Stories," 2005–, combines elements of Flemish Renaissance painting with others taken from nineteenth-century Romanticism. While it develops themes taken from classical and Christian mythology, "Imaginary Landscapes," is also inspired by Rococo chinoiserie, though Pérez Villalta prefers to mention the influence of Walt Disney. The beautiful smaller paintings in exquisite colors in this show are the closest the artist comes these days to sensuality.

—Pablo Llorca

Translated from Spanish by Jane Brodie.

BARCELONA

Jordi Bernadó

GALERIA SENDA

This small, impeccable show complemented and updated "World Wide Works 1993–2007," the comprehensive survey of Jordi Bernadó's work presented at the Centre d'Art la Panera in Lleida in 2007. At Galeria Senda's exhibition, Bernadó showed new photographs of Rome, Dubai, Barcelona, and other cities, as well as a small selection of earlier works. Almost all of the photographs shown came from different series, but there was an underlying thread that unifies the scenes: They all looked like stage sets. The ruined house in *Detroit #01*, 2006, the rocky structures of Roman fountains in the diptych *Fontana de Treva* (Roma #01 Roma #02), 2007, and the stones from León in northern Spain (*Vegacervera, León #01*, 2006) all look as if made of papier-mâché. Nonetheless, as in most of his work, the photographs are representations of real places, not of models, and they have not been manipulated so as to falsify the resulting image. Hence, Bernadó's photography continues to explore that innate and structural issue of the photographic medium: its place on the thin line between the true and the false.

For Bernadó, this ambivalence between truth and fiction is, however, more an outgrowth of the work than a point of entry. Indeed, for some time, he has been interested in the stories he comes across on his journeys—his photography is a product of his travels. Through a sort of productive curiosity, he reconstructs and reworks these stories until they become images. Behind his photographs lie true stories, situations, and bits of news that he then turns into portraits of these events and of their telling. Knowing this is key to understanding his work. Though his severe language is in keeping with the German school (objective photography, centered vision, landscapes without people), his work has an explicitly literary quality. These photographs retell

Jordi Bernadó,
Dubai #01, 2007,
color photograph,
49¼ x 60½".
From the series
"Dubai," 2007–.

small, unlikely episodes that are, nonetheless, anchored in reality. Like postcards, his photographs are of specific places, after which the works are titled literally or with playful allusions. Though they convey narratives of real events, the images here do not reproduce the predictable but rather the absurd, the eclectic, the ironic. The hotel architecture of *Dubai #08*, 2008, for example, could be captioned with some words on the contemporary delirium that motivates this new El Dorado; and alongside the ruins of old Detroit hotels might be scribbled memories of a glorious past. Like real postcards, Bernadó's images have a hidden side bearing bits of news, not from nowhere but rather from very specific places that seem to have gone mad.

—Martí Peran

Translated from Spanish by Jane Brodie.



NEW DELHI

Ram Rahman

LALIT KALA AKADEMI

A huge, buff bodybuilder flexes his muscles as three delighted, scantily clad female acrobats applaud. These painted figures hover on a billboard above a wall built of corrugated iron sheeting, across which are lettered the words GENTS URINAL. The scene is typical of Ram Rahman's mostly black-and-white photographs, in which concatenations of representational codes—hand-painted billboards and text, as in *Gents Urinal, Delhi*, 1991—mingle with banners, buildings, crowds, and resting figures so that perspective collapses. This maze of painted sign and intimate streetscape is not hard to find in New Delhi, but it is becoming atypical with the onslaught of development and the boom in construction. Rahman is the Atget of 1980s and '90s New Delhi, capturing a city in transformation.

In the early photographs, India's political hub seems to be submerged under hand-painted walls, billboards, placards, and political banners. This is the almost-Pop side of Rahman's aesthetic. The city's inhabitants are squeezed to the edge of the frame, or are hidden, or doubled, by film stars and politicians whose photographed faces and painted bodies appear on screens, posters, and shop signs, often scaled uncannily to the same size as the men and women who disappear behind them. But as this vast, self-curated retrospective shows, Rahman was also witness to historic events. *Safdar Hashmi Funeral*,