



# A Cosmic Viewpoint

Carlos Estévez

My work is, in essence, the representation of a vision that nurtures itself from a whole lively and reflexive process; assimilating the world in order to reintegrate it once more to itself by means of images that symbolize my marks in the universe.

I have conceived my work in the form of fragments. A kind of essays or phrases that come to me intermingled with the dynamic of the human thinking. As such, the pieces are not understood as an ending, stylish succession, nor formal harmony; but, they are by and large oriented towards the diversity with the connection of the unique source: "The Creator," towards a same goal: the cognoscente experience.

Each one of the pieces pretends to be a conclusion: either a query or an answer that depletes itself, attentive to the ideas' exigencies, developed from the communion between the symbolic-suggestive connotations of the image and the material that contains it.

My fundamental resources have been: the encyclopedias as metaphors of confinement within an object (book) that comes from the "human knowledge" the universal history from where I have acquired symbols and images to represent my ideas; and finally, the life as a cognoscente experience in which I pretend to re-elaborate, in a personal manner, the treatise of the human existence.

Carlos Estévez

*Fascinación sostenida*. 2008  
Oil and pencil on canvas. 78 x 60 inches

Throughout time, artists have explored the realm of the human being in its relation to notions of universal significance. These are the existential questions about the meaning of life that relate the idea that humans cannot be identified within the grand scheme of the universe as simple entities. The complexity of existence proposes that we are transcendent beings placed within a larger whole, the cosmos. The art of Carlos Estévez reveals a consistent interest in the potential for images to examine the infinity of human experience, with its frailties and contradictions. He explores notions of symbolism, time, anatomy, metaphysics and the cosmos in a quest for understanding that goes beyond the visual to enter the realm of the mind in complex works created out of a wide variety of media. All of his work is a serious commentary on the human condition and reflects the breadth of his intellectualism.

Carlos Estévez was born in 1969 in Havana, Cuba. He began his career as an artist as a child in a small school in Vedado and graduated from the Academy of San Alejandro, 1987, and ISA (Instituto Superior de Arte, 1992). He also studied conservation and restoration, photography and film; educational and theoretical experiences that contribute to the complex technical and creative nature of his multi-faceted work. Mr. Estévez has long had a fascination for the history of ideas present in the study of alchemy, science, ritual and magic, and has used these ideas to inform his cosmic and existential viewpoint. He sees the world as a great theater where we are watching the actors, while performing as actors ourselves. It comes as no surprise that marionettes feature prominently in his work, not only because he has had a long interest in them since his days as a student in Cuba, but because they can serve as an object of manipulation to serve as a metaphor for the many ways humans are manipulated in life. His marionettes can be dressed in a variety of clothes, from childlike dolls to Baroque theater performers. They have religious connotations, as well as the playful. They bring to mind words of wisdom, jokes, voices of pathos, and even songs. What does it mean to "pull my strings?" Who pulls our strings? His puppets are often situated in box-like environments surrounded by objects that may or may not give us clues about their identity, but certainly set the scene for a level of discourse provoked by their presence, and more questions. They also introduce us to another key component of his work: the collection.

There are collections of many diverse items in the work (and studio) of Carlos Estévez. There are insects and rocks, toys and bottles, accumulations of buttons and screws. His aesthetic recalls the exotic assortments so appealing to the aristocrats of the 19th century. The exploration of the "New World" resulted in a European passion for exotica, specimens, mythical creatures and other strange things that were displayed in rooms or cabinets, called *Wunderkammers* or *Kunstkammers*. The combination of hermetic or magical objects in a clutter of wall sections, drawers and shelves was as philosophical as it was aesthetic (and a precursor to museums). This same odd approach to collecting and accumulating is seen over and over in the works of Estévez. Every object performs a number of roles within his literary, scientific and aesthetic creative methodology. They have both an artistic and symbolic purpose. Presiding above his complex intellectual symbolic repertoire is his vision of the cosmos and human existence within its infinite space. Humans perform as mechanized puppets, animals and insects - or strange combinations that are weird fantasies of the mind.

Machinery is a representation of the internal functioning of the cosmos in which we all exist and the fusion of mechanical and biological structure in Estévez's work becomes analogous to our place within the universe. With a medieval obsessiveness, he draws the inner workings of the human being as a series of gears and connecting shafts interacting within an anatomical scheme and architectonic structure. The universe is re-evaluated and abstracted into essential lines, with geometry representing perfection. Circles, squares, diamonds, tetrahedrons, starbursts, solar and astronomical symbols, and numerical codes appear within the complex patterns that are within and surround the image. Human beings are in the middle of life's contradictions and the machine acts like the centralized axis that holds it all together.

Carlos Estévez explores the potential of creativity to reveal the infinity of human experience through the senses of the eyes and the mind. He uses a variety of media that range from complex drawings and paintings to objects, assemblages and installations, to describe a concept of universal spirituality that affects every person at one time or another, with or without a sense of awareness. Each of his works is a visual reflection on the phenomenon of existence with all its questions, conflicts, challenges and rewards. Based on ancient sources of knowledge, his art carries encoded messages, arcane symbolism, and an array of fantastic creatures - part human, part animal. Each image is constructed from a myriad of information, real and imaginary; scientific and mythical; ancient and modern. His art is a compendium of creative invention and its substance gleaned from personal references and encyclopedic notions. It is an art of cosmic vision well beyond its appearance.

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*Ciclos evolutivos personales.* 2007  
Oil and pencil on canvas. 56 x 38 inches





Above: *Lo que no he alcanzado es lo que me hace seguir adelante*. 2007. Oil and pencil on canvas. 48 x 54 inches  
Right: *Party's Extension Mysteries*. 2007 Oil and pencils on canvas. 56 x 38 inches

