



Yoga
Jam

Flesh Garden
Felipe Bracelis @ LPM

OTTAWA SPECIAL



TWO BOYS, ONE GARDEN

By Jordan Arseneault

Celebrating the gallerist's 50th birthday and a year-long collaboration on their touring exhibit, La Petite Mort's Guy Bérubé and Chilean curator Felipe Bracelis will host the summer's gayest art show opening, *Flesh Garden*, on Friday, July 6.

Santiago has been in the news lately for many of the same reasons Montréal has. Gigantic student and unionist demonstrations have repeatedly taken to the streets of the Chilean capital, with many of the same struggles for access to education at the centre of the social debate. From his apartment overlooking Santiago's Plaza de Armas (the equivalent of Place Émilie-Gamelin for protests), editor and curator Felipe Bracelis has been busy working on a different cause, that of queer representation and emerging talent in the visual arts in Latin America.

"My apartment is right on the main square of the capital, I have seen protests, riots, and the whole thing. The main issues that people are confronting is education and the price of tuition," Bracelis explains. Activists in Chile are painfully aware of how state and economic oppression intersect, having survived American meddling, dictatorship, and the impacts of globalization. "Since the Pinochet coup, the neoliberal system was tried here, and now 40 years after, today's generation is aware that the model has failed. The poor are getting poorer, the rich are getting richer. People are dumber, there is less education. I think it's more like a global awakening to the issue," the young bearded curator tells me. While there are a lot of queer artists doing performance

interventions during the protests in Santiago, the works he has included in the delicious *Flesh Garden* show coming to Ottawa are of a decidedly more aesthetic bent.

For Bracelis, the show is "a view on the history of art and how it has been represented. The curatorship is based more on the body through art, than on society," he proffers. Although the massive surge of social dissent in Chile won't be manifesting itself on the gallery's walls, the radical element will come in the mingling of queer artists from South and North whose work is underrepresented in galleries and museums.

BODY/CULTURE

Bracelis found himself on Bérubé's radar through the web avatar of the Chilean's *YESSR* magazine, which is dedicated to queer visual art in Latin America. "He reminds me of myself, he's like a little brother to me," Bérubé says of his 24 year-old co-curator. The two out gay provocateurs share a desire for fresh takes on painting and photography, and a love of images that toe the line between sexy and serious, grotesque and magical.



Though the styles and origins of the works in Flesh Garden may differ, they are linked by the cheerful themes of "disintegration, disfigurement, and dysmorphia." Bérubé's choices range from the quiet and painterly 'Profil de Marc' by Montréaler Martin Douvil to the visceral 'Too Many Late Night' by Peter Shmelzer, alongside almost twenty other pieces that explore corporeal extremes. Bracelis brought in artists from Brazil and Argentina to complete the bi-continental array of 18 striking works. Francisco Navarrete Sitja's 'Fisura' recreates the nostalgia of turn-of-the-century homoerotic photography, but is scarred to appear as if it had been saved from a fire or flood. The show lends itself to a game of compare and contrast, with Brazilian Celio Braga's use of collage next to that of Amsterdam-based artist Ashkan Honarvar's 'La Grande Bouffe' and Bracelis's own 'Frat Origami [pig]' taking up an old technique in new ways. Bérubé favourites James Huctwith and Scooter Laforge round out the show's eclectic mix of outsider art and more classic figurative work.

The other game you can play in the show, of course, is "North or South?" where you can try and guess where the artist is from, which will no doubt lead to a few surprises, as it did for me with 'Cristo-Crucificado' by Canadian painter Juan Carlos Noria. The cartoonish remake of "Jesus" on the cross has all the hallmarks of a queer culture-



Francisco Navarrete Sitja,
'Fisura', 2010, Digital Print, 30 X 20 cm