Artelogie

Recherche sur les arts, le patrimoine et la littérature de l'Amérique latine

5 | 2013

Femmes créatrices en Amérique latine : le défi de synthétiser sans singulariser

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/5833>

DOI: 10.4000/artelogie.5833

ISSN: 2115-6395

Publisher

Association ESCAL

Electronic reference

Jamie L. Ratliff, "A woman's place is in the "home": The spatial politics of Daniela Rossell's "Ricas y Famosas", *Artelogie* [Online], 5 | 2013, Online since 16 October 2013, connection on 20 December 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/5833> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/artelogie.5833>

This text was automatically generated on 20 December 2021.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

List of illustrations in *Artelogie Expo Revue*

- 1 In 1946, Mexican President Miguel Alemán publicly stated:

We pride ourselves that in Mexico women have been traditionally incomparable mothers, sacrificing and diligent wives, loyal sisters, and modest daughters... The laws of the revolution have pledged to preserve the legal and social conditions that form the basis of women's natural sensibility. These conditions reside in the home (Sanders, 2007, p. 187).
- 2 Such a statement marks the home as much more than a functional space in which to live; rather, it identifies an ideological emblem that symbolized the cornerstone of a stable nation and traditionally defined what it meant to be a woman. As a traditional space of femininity, where women are tasked with the maintenance of the household and the family, the home represents a space with not only personal but also national significance as the family serves as a model for the ideological structure of the patriarchal state. Thus, the home as a "representational space" suggests the ways in which the power and authority of the state invades the personal lives of its citizens, and allows for the reproduction of state power as traditional gender roles are perpetuated (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39).
- 3 Contemporary Mexican artist Daniela Rossell utilizes the space of the home as the conceptual and visual foundation of her work. Taken over a seven-year period, from 1994 to 2001, *Ricas y Famosas* [*Rich and Famous*] consists of nearly 100 photographs of mostly interior shots of elaborate and richly decorated houses and the women and men who own them, their friends, their children, and members of their domestic staff,

showcasing the opulent settings of some of the most lavishly decorated private homes in Mexico City, as well as the elite occupants who dwell therein, the vast majority of whom are women. These photographs offer a rare view into the homes and lives of Rossell's subjects, who pose in bold and often sexualized ways alongside arrays of luxury items that are no less provocative in their sheer materiality and often the servants who work to maintain these extravagant environments. On their surface, the photographs seem to resemble the glossy spreads found in international fashion magazines. These displays, however, are constructed in such a way that they work as deeper investigations into the nature of female representation, attempting an ironic commentary on the visual "eye candy" in which it revels. The image of the "home" presented by *Ricas y famosas* defies the stereotypical expectations of the private sphere, and its elite female inhabitants, as nurturing and maternal. In doing so, Rossell offers a version of the home that does not necessarily align with the prescribed domestic stereotypes and their national significance. This article offers a feminist analysis of the *Ricas y Famosas* series and the challenge that it poses to traditional understandings of traditional femininity and a domestic, "private" sphere, both concepts that have been central to the construction of the Mexican nation. In presenting such radically unfeminine representations of the home, Rossell deconstructs the symbolic exploitation of national womanhood and in doing so, exposes the fallacy of the home as a "private" space that is uncomplicated by the so-called "public" concerns of work, the economy, and mass media communication. Ultimately, the artist demonstrates the many ways in which the female body had been colonized by the state in order to define, and maintain, a coherent version of national identity that "naturally" begins at home.

- 4 *Ricas y Famosas* revolves around the space of the home, which, throughout the series, acts as a central subject. Despite the variety of people, poses, clothing, possessions, and architecture represented in the series, the common thread that binds the photographs together is the situation of their sitters either within or on the grounds of a private dwelling space. The images capture a feast of colors, textures, fabrics, and subjects who occupy fantastically ornate domestic spaces. The photographs clearly embrace visions of wealth and status, displaying an unabashed representation of opulent surroundings and sheer abundance of material wealth evident in nearly all of the images. In doing so, Rossell sets the stage for an investigation of the feminized domestic space by putting the home and its contents/occupants on display. The artist stated that the project's sole mission was to document "the objects that this particular group of people decide to bring into their homes, the personal environment they inhabit and the style they choose to identify with" (Rossell, 2002, p. n.p.). However, the series also constructs a visual identification, achieved through compositional arrangement, between the objects found in the homes, the style of the décor, and the specifically *female* inhabitants as they relate to their surroundings.
- 5 For instance, in Figure 1, Mexican actress Itatí Cantoral sits alone at a long empty dining room table. A replica of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* hangs on the wall behind her, while a candelabra with five long red tapers burns, and a solitary tear runs down her face, highlighted by the photographer's flash. As befits the melodramatic style of *telenovela* acting, both the photographer and the subject appear to knowingly parody her apparent sadness. Yet her exaggerated melodrama contrasts almost humorously with the large plastic sheeting that covers the floor of the room. The rippling of the plastic sheet created by the indentation of the legs of the table and chairs creates a wave-like effect that almost suggests a pool of water. One wonders if this plastic

permanently protects a valuable carpet or whether it was placed there by the artist. In either case, it adds to the kitschy melodrama performed by the subject who sits at an empty table, seemingly surrounded by a sea of her own tears.¹

Figure 1: Daniela Rossell, *Untitled (Ricas y Famosas ; Itatí Cantoral)*, 1999

C-print, 30"x 40"

Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

- 6 This photograph offers an interesting commentary on the ways in which women have traditionally been identified with the space of the home. The scene takes place within a dining room, a space that often involves eating as a communal, family activity. Historical understandings of women's domestic tasks would locate the preparation and serving of meals as a feminine duty to her husband and children, as she is tasked with their well-being in the home. Cantoral is dressed in a long, pure white gown that plays off of the Christian reference that hangs behind her. Seated meekly at a demonstrably empty table, she is the virginal (almost bridal), sacred, self-sacrificing mother gazing wistfully to the side, presumably lamenting a loss of her familial responsibilities. Her mourning, however, is interrupted by her obvious sensuality, the exaggerated melodrama of the lone tear, and the baroque artifice of the décor, not the mention the plastic sheet upon which the entire scene rests. This is a *tableaux* that parodies its own sense of drama, satirizing the authenticity of the feminine qualities suggested by the space.
- 7 This interaction between the performance of the sitters and their decorative settings is integral in revealing the home as a contrived feminized space. A number of images contain portraits of the subjects themselves, which forms a juxtaposition between the sitters and representations of those same sitters: sharing the same domestic space, the sitters are often posed in ways to recall their previous likeness. This picture-within-a-picture technique constitutes a loose form of what Jennifer González and Adrienne Posner refer to as "recursion," a type of visual repetition. According to the authors, a critically recursive image is one that employs "a simulation or parody of hegemonic

signs that produces new signs to stand in their place and usurp their positions of power" (González & Posner, 2006, p. 225). These mirrored images are representative of many in the series that likewise offer multiplied images of their sitters—representations within representations.

- 8 The lines between the recursive subjects are even furthered blurred in the many examples that use architectural or decorative features and, in some cases, literal mirrors, to frame the sitters. The technique of using recursive images allows the space of the home to subsume its female occupants. Recursion permits one sign to replace another, usurping its power. However, in Rossell's photographs there is little indication of which image is the usurpation, the primary subject. Instead, the two representations, the sitters and the portraits, compete with one another, demoting the actual beings to an objectified status within the home. Rossell draws a comparison between her own collaborative subjects and representational objects in their surroundings. She declares this outright: stating that her subjects are "part of the decoration, like the delicate ostrich eggs in a bowl or the rare African artifacts. Their clothes are an extension of the architectural décor; they just continue like wallpaper" (Schumacher & Winzen, 2003, p. 148). Again, in these instances, the so-called subjects, or sitters are assimilated into the space of the home, which becomes the actual subject of the series.
- 9 The artist objectifies the sitters, turning them into yet another decorative object that occupies these ornate spaces, an objectification that is further served by the performances of the subjects themselves. The contrast between the subjects and the objects that are placed around them and with which they interact is also emphasized by the exaggerated poses and parody-like arrangement of the interiors. In doing so, Rossell draws the viewer's attention to the act of representation, which highlights the performative aspects of her sitters' attitudes and appearances, and the constructed nature of the series itself. Given the elaborateness of the photos' careful staging, it is surprising that "even the most astute commentators appear to forget that what Rossell sets before us is not women but objects, images of women acting as images, as something else, in order to become (they imagine) more fully themselves" (Brooksbank Jones, 2004, p. 231).
- 10 It is the deliberate play between subject and object that, according to Anny Brooksbank Jones, allows the sitters to use the act of collaborating with Rossell as an opportunity to construct their own subjectivities. Analyzing the series with regard to what she refers to as the logic of "serial objectification," she states:

This logic presents women widely perceived as trophies, 'barraganas,' the wards or consorts of powerful men, as they manipulate and define themselves through other objects, and objectify other subjects, in an attempt to realize themselves fully as subjects (Brooksbank Jones, 2004, p. 231).
- 11 Thus, in *Ricas y Famosas*, as collaborators who played an active role in the construction of such elaborate visual fantasies, the sitters were offered an opportunity to reconstitute themselves as subjects through the ironic objectification of their bodies. However, the supposed subjectivity offered to them, or constructed by them, in the project only reinscribed the objectified status of the female sitters, a point which was often noted by critics of the series. The female sitters are denied subjectivity as they are (visually) made to be part of the house and its belongings. This, in many ways, demonstrates how the home functions more as a fixed symbol in ideological discourse that reinscribes gender ideals and less of a real space in which women (and men) act. By likening her female sitters to the decorative objects, Rossell visualizes how

hegemonic rhetoric similarly equates women as objects that signify the home, and not as subjects.

- 12 The objectification of Rossell's female subjects, and their apparent rightful situation within the house, is emphasized by a comparison to the six images in the series that prominently feature solitary male figures.² Treated as a sub-group of the series, each photograph of a male sitter contains visual exceptions that prohibit its masculine subject from being fully incorporated into the feminized space of the home. Two of these portraits depict Emiliano Salinas, son of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994), photographed once standing outside his familial home and once inside it (Figure 2). In the exterior image, he is positioned at the very center of the composition, surrounded by the twisted, knotted limbs of the tree on whose trunk he stands. A house is seen behind him through the branches. However, because the brown brick and stone of the house are similar in color to the natural surroundings in the foreground, the domestic space is diminished by the exterior landscape that dominates the composition, with Salinas at its center. While this is not the only image in the series that makes use of exterior space (others include balconies, rooftops, and driveways), it is the only photograph that hinges on a prominent natural (outside) feature to visually divorce the subject from the home. Perhaps it is not coincidental that the tree that separates Salinas from the home is one that can be interpreted as a symbol of a complex familial lineage.

Figure 2: Daniela Rossell, *Untitled (Ricas y Famosas ; Emiliano Salinas)*, 1999

C-print, 30"x 40"

Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

- 13 The interior shot that features Salinas also places him in a central position, head bowed slightly, hands clasped together around a rosary as if in prayer. He stands in front of a large bay window affixed with a stained glass Mexican flag. It is unclear from the photograph whether the flag is actually a physical part of the stained glass or whether it has been digitally inserted by the artist. Regardless, the impact of the photograph is clear as Salinas is posed with icons of *Mexicanidad*. Most striking about this image,

however, is the emptiness of the room in which Salinas stands, a characteristic that distinguishes it from the object-laden interiors that dominate the series. Just as the room appears emptied of its possessions, Salinas himself is not fully present either. By employing a double-exposure technique that overlays two different photos of Salinas, the artist has captured the subject as a transitory, ghost-like inhabitant, not fully materialized within the interior space of the house. Salinas' representation in this photograph distinguishes it from the others in the series and suggests a difference in the ways in which the home constructs masculinity. As the only element within this space, Salinas is not objectified like his female counterparts; instead, the multi-perspective and immaterial nature of his portrait dominates the scene, offering him a subjective complexity not presented by the female sitters. The photograph suggests that Salinas' subjectivity is not anchored in the space of the home, but that it is just one of the spaces through which he is constituted.

- 14 In identifying its female subjects with objects inhabiting interior space and distancing its male participants from that same space, *Ricas y Famosas* identifies the backdrop of the series as a domestic, feminine domain, a presentation that, at first, seems to uphold the traditionally gendered private-public dichotomy. Rather than extending women's roles outward from a domestic space, Rossell turns her photographic lens inward, examining the home as it serves as a microcosm for social gender relations as they have been produced by the Mexican state. According to Nira Yuval-Davis, there are three dimensions that constitute all nationalist projects and consequently construct women as national objects: 1) the genealogical dimension, wherein a mythologized mother-figure comes to emblemize the birth of the nation itself; 2) the cultural dimension, by which women are inscribed into a so-called private sphere of the home and the family; and 3) the civic dimension, which, according to Yuval-Davis, "focuses on citizenship as determining the boundaries of the nation, and thus relates it directly to notions of state sovereignty and specific territoriality" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 21). Women, in their capacity as both biological and cultural reproducers, come to be seen as the standard that determines one's relationship to the nation: women who embody the traditional and appropriate gender role signify the boundaries of the collective nation, a process that is symbolically situated within the home.
- 15 The cultural dimension of nationalist projects depends upon the ubiquitous creation of the private/public dichotomy, a gendered binary framework that exploits the supposedly "natural" character of social spaces and the social behaviors that occur therein. With such a pervasive distinction, where "space embodies social relationships," women, who are ideologically and physically charged with the private sector of the "home," serve as the conduit of biological and cultural reproduction (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 27). The home, which is a socially-constructed space, fosters "relations between adults and between adults and children in the family, ways of cooking and eating, domestic labor, play and bedtime stories, out of which a whole world view, ethical and aesthetic, can become naturalized and reproduced" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 43). Women are also tasked with the guardianship of culture and are thus responsible for its transmission from one generation to the next. In doing so, they become repositories of "national essence" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 116).
- 16 Mexican art and visual culture throughout the 19th and 20th centuries have employed a litany of archetypal images of nationally essential women. Iconic figures such as the Virgin of Guadalupe, the China Poblana, La Tehuana, the Soldadera, and La Malinche,

the historical mistress of Spanish Conqueror Hernán Cortés, have been used to construct, promote, and maintain national ideals of citizenship. Often used as a foil for the patriarchal masculinity that characterized the governing body of the nation, the image of woman is alternatively construed as passive, domesticated, a bastion of ideal maternity, racialized and indigenized, the ultimate Other. Conversely, negative representations of womanhood are employed as well: a woman who was modern and sexual, deviant and depraved, represented the less-than-ideal citizen, and at times, a threat to public order (Coffey, 2007, pp. 341-362).³ Deployed through state-sponsored public artworks, exhibitions, educational programs, and cultural festivals that were meant to promote national identity, these archetypes represent a form of state surveillance that cast women in an "ambivalent" role within the nation: exploited to symbolize the unification of the nation and yet, "excluded from the collective 'we' of the body politic" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 47). As such, they serve as national *objects* rather than national *subjects*.

- 17 It is this objectified status to which Rossell calls attention with *Ricas y Famosas*, by drawing upon the overly-simplistic dichotomous tropes mentioned above. The series features a number of subjects who embody a very bold and emblazoned sexuality, an attitude that, according to traditional constructions of gender, is upheld against "feminine" ideals. Rossell visualizes the space of the home as one that is more socially limited to the upper echelons of Mexican society, but no less essentializing in the way that it characterizes Mexican women. In her photographs, the home functions in a more literal sense as a richly elaborate backdrop for an array of material objects, its female inhabitants included. Here, in *Ricas y famosas*, the inherent "maternalism" and abnegation of her subjects normally invoked by a domestic space has been replaced by overt displays of sexuality, luxury, and defiance. These displays constitute an assault on the numerous feminine archetypes that inhabit the respectable space of the home: the housewife, the mother, and especially, the *mujer abnegada*. The *mujer abnegada* is a salient trope in Mexico that characterizes "good" women as self-sacrificing, self-denying martyrs for their families and husbands. According to Jocelyn Olcott, it was a trope that, like motherhood, "undeniably informed the ways that ordinary Mexican women constituted themselves as political subjects, simultaneously elevating and subjugating them" (Olcott, 2005, p. 16). Rossell parodies this model by her extravagant displays of riches, both material and bodily. She replaces the domestic female archetype with one more closely associated with a "public woman": one who is young, single, sexualized, and bold.⁴ By replacing one trope with another, she moves these female objects around the house as easily as she does the other decorative articles that surround them. In doing so, she exposes an artificiality that unsettles understandings of both women and the home.
- 18 One of the most well-known and commonly reproduced photograph from the series shows a young, blonde woman outfitted for tennis standing next to a black-and-gold lacquered credenza (Figure 3). Looking seductively towards the camera, she is standing in a room filled with oversized ornately-carved furniture, as she props one foot on the head of a stuffed lion. One shoulder is bared by a yellow shirt that reads "Peep Show \$1.00," and her pose offers a view up her tennis skirt to reveal the hidden shorts below. She is, in this case, surrounded by furniture and objects that would read as items of luxury: the furniture, the stuffed game animal, gold and crystal vases, a gold and silver rooster, and commissioned portraits of her mother, her sister, and herself. However, as with many of the other photographs, the cheekiness of the composition is

also apparent. Standing in front of her own fresh-faced portrait, she leans her head and looks upward in a similar fashion. However, the figure greatly exaggerates her pose as if to parody her own portrait. This sense of parody is also seen throughout the room as the golden accents of the furniture and accessories contrast with the golden hue of her t-shirt that touts its own cheapness. The peep-show itself is parodied in the way that both the subject, in her posing, and Rossell, in her choice of framing, suggest sexual exhibition. At first glance, the skimpy clothing and raised leg of Rossell's model do suggest her own overt sexuality. The angle at which she holds the tennis racquet handle is also suggestive, holding it net-down with her fingers wrapped around the handle shaft. The stuffed lion is positioned in such a way as to be afforded a view directly up her skirt. However, closer examination reveals more ambiguous signs of sexuality. The viewer can see that the subject is entirely outfitted for sport, including wrist sweatbands and an ace bandage wrapped around her right knee, and the lion's show, as well as the viewer's, is directly impeded by her tennis shorts. The subject is additionally shielded from the viewer by the tennis racquet itself, which creates a kind of screen. This contrasts with the fact that the lion is fully exposed to the viewer as he is positioned in a way that literally foregrounds his masculine assets. Coupled with the golden cock sitting on the table to the right of the composition, Rossell then presents to her viewers an arrangement of ambiguous sexual symbols and a subtle humor at play in this domestic environment. The sexually-charged atmosphere of the scene is unmistakable in the confident pose, defying gaze, and suggestive clothing of the subject as she stands in a room literally flanked by a cock and balls.

Figure 3: Daniela Rossell, *Untitled (Ricas y Famosas ; Paulina Díaz Ordaz)*, 1999

C-print, 30"x 40"

Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

- 19 Rossell not only offers a version of femininity that differs from popular national archetypes; she also examines the political ramifications of deviating from ideal femininity grounded conceptually in maternity and spatially in the home. She achieves

this by directly implicating the state mechanism through references to the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, that are found in the content of the homes and also through the identity of several of her models. Although Rossell did not label her portraits with the individual identities of her sitters, many of them were identified by the media and art critics. The sitters who received the most attention were the young women who have familial connections to the prominent political party.⁵ For instance, the young blonde woman featured in the above-described photograph (as well as three others in the series) was revealed to be Paulina Díaz Ordaz, whose ties to high-ranking PRI officials and their respective crimes against the nation were stressed in media descriptions of *Ricas y famosas*: Díaz Ordaz's grandfather, former President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), was responsible for the army's attack against the protesting students at Tlatelolco in 1968; and her stepfather, Raúl Salinas, (the brother of former President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, 1988-1994) was suspected of having participated in money laundering, drug trafficking, and conspiracy to assassinate political opponents during his brother's presidential term. Governmental ties are not explicit in each of the photographs; however, the images from the series that garner the most public attention are those in which the sitters have such connections. In my opinion, the politically-tinged images contain the most potential for reproducing social relations because they visualize the home as an inherently political space.

- 20 Figure 4 is another example that explicitly features political PRI-related iconography. It depicts a young woman in a cowboy hat looking at the camera and extending her right arm to tap the ashes of a lighted cigarette with her forefinger. She sits astride a leather saddle on a wooden stand placed on top of a desk, presumably in a home office space, with its double desks, fax machine, and row of books lined up in a niche above the desk. The scantily-clad woman, identified as Paulina Banuet Rovirosa posing in her father's office, is situated among the many objects gathered and carefully positioned on the desk: a stuffed alligator, a ballot flier that endorses the campaign of her father, the prominent PRI politician Don Beto Banuet, a second portrait of Beto Banuet placed in front of a screenprint of Revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata, and a framed photograph of an elephant's rear end. Rossell's photograph contains many of the series' most salient characteristics: a deliberate and self-conscious arrangement of the photographic field, an accumulation of objects that possess a conspicuous semiotic multivalency, and an element of performance by the subjects pictured within these arranged spaces. In this example, as in many others, these characteristics together form crafted photographs that establish a dialogue of critique.

Figure 4: Daniela Rossell, *Untitled (Ricas y Famosas; Paulina Banuet Rovirosa)*, 1999

C-print, 30"x 40"

Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

- 21 In particular, the objects in the Banuet photograph were deliberately arranged and juxtaposed to suggest a visual dialogue with one another. Despite the artist's claim that the series represents "actual settings," and while this photograph may indeed picture an actual office within the Banuet house, it appears that some items were rearranged by either Rossell, Banuet, or both. Perhaps most obviously, for instance, the saddle and stand are quite out of place on top of the desk, and the ballot flier is balanced atop a gold star that has been laid against the leg of the saddle stand. Both the framed photograph and the portraits of Banuet and Zapata (which looks curiously like a customized computer mouse pad) are turned around to face the camera, as opposed to whoever might sit at the desk. The Banuet/Zapata portraits are also propped up in front of an obscured object on top of which is perched a bowl of fruit. The legitimacy of the office space as an "actual setting" is further called into question when one considers these objects in relation to those placed in the background and the sitter herself. Behind Paulina Banuet, hanging on the wall, is a large, painted portrait of Zapata, whose image is repeated a third time in the bronze bust sitting on a pedestal in the left side of the composition. The many references to Zapata frame Paulina, whose demeanor could be described as "unapologetic" or even "irreverent," given the historical and mythological status of Zapata and La Revolución, as well as the PRI, the "revolutionary" party of which her father is a member.
- 22 Banuet is seated in front of the painted Zapata portrait, in such a way as to echo the portrait of her father on the desk below. But instead of representing heroicized masculinity, she presents herself as an object of overt feminine sexuality. Banuet is dressed in revealing clothing: a sparkly blue halter top held together by thin strings that leave her entire back bare; red faux snakeskin hot pants; red high-heeled sandals. Her face is heavily made up with electric blue eye shadow and bright red lipstick, and her naked limbs are highlighted by the strong spotlight trained on her body. Her

appearance suggests a cheapness that contradicts her known social status. The space in which the photograph is staged is significant because it represents a space of work in a domestic setting, implicating the ways in which the two supposedly separate spheres are inherently intertwined, particularly PRI rhetoric that makes use of familial metaphors.

- 23 In 1964, historian Frank Brandenburg coined the phrase "Revolutionary Family," which he used to refer to the system of power in modern Mexico, a small, elite, male fraternity, with the President posing as the father surrounded by his inner council of favorite sons, whose biological and political descendants influence the lives of the Mexican population (Brandenburg, 1964, p. 3). Since he termed the phrase, numerous scholars of Mexican history have found the term an apt metaphor to describe the oligarchic and corporatist structure that has ruled Mexican politics since the Revolution. The creation of a "single national front" constituted the institutionalization of revolutionary rhetoric and the installation of the president as the supreme national patriarch, "institutionalized" as the father of the country by the process of *dedazo*, or the privilege to personally name their successor, as if from father to son (Benjamin, 2000, p. 179; Knight, 1991, pp. 116-117; Zolov, 1999, p. 4). The president as symbolic father figure, however, hinges upon the successful image of a stable matriarch: "the vision of the mother figure as saint and sufferer, whose moral superiority and spiritual strength acted as glue for the ultimate stability of the family—and by extension the nation" (Zolov, 1999, p. 5). Historian Eric Zolov explains how the figure of the mother, or of a feminized figure more generally, was employed as a punitive measure: threats posed to the nationalistic culture were feminized with words such as *desmadre* (disorder; literally, a "de-mothering") and *malinchista* (betrayal) in order to mediate public behavior through shame and humiliation.⁶ Thus, while the symbolic patriarch and his "sons" constituted the public face of Mexico, women represented an implicit, potentially threatening, and private counterpart, whose behavior was more carefully monitored through social and rhetorical surveillance measures in order to ensure national stability.
- 24 Feminist historians have long recognized the family as the basic social unit of governmental order and control (Arrom, 1992; Vaughan, 1997). While binaristic gender roles were not created wholesale by Revolutionary rhetoric, they were nevertheless institutionalized through both symbolic and legal measures that reinforced a gendered private-public dichotomy. Just as the corporatist government structure created hierarchies of subordination that operated at political and economic levels, it infiltrated the real family, constructing the father as a minor proxy for the presidential patriarch, overseeing his household of compliant citizens. Thus, while the symbolic patriarch and his "sons" constituted the public face of Mexico, the Revolutionary woman, represented an implicit, supportive, but also potentially threatening, and private counterpart. By featuring Banuet as a sexual object in her father's home office, this photograph is interpreted as a direct challenge to the Revolutionary Family, a construct that traditionally paints her as a dutiful daughter. Instead, she mocks the political legacy to which she and her father belong, literally looking down on the historical and familial figures that surround her.
- 25 The photograph of Banuet, with its play on female sexuality and political references, makes clear that the home has been constructed as a so-called "private" space outside of a complementary "public" space of politics and the economy. However, as is revealed

through the *Ricas y famosas* series, the home is nothing more than a social space that masquerades as an arena of isolated female identification. This masquerade hides the multiple ways in which politics and the economy are also situated within the home, as Rossell visualized both the symbolic as well as actual roles played by the female inhabitants of these elite homes.

- 26 In a rare series of studies of upper class women in Mexico City, sociologists Larissa Lomnitz and Marisol Pérez-Lizaur address this often-ignored section of the public. They stated that "because the vast majority of Latin Americans live in poverty, upper-class women have not been the preferred subject of social scientists"; even among a more objective community of scholars, "frequently dismissed as superficial women who spend their day talking on the phone, playing cards, shopping, and generally wasting their time" (Lomnitz & Pérez-Lizaur, 1994, p. 177).⁷ However, Lomnitz and Pérez-Lizaur found that women often played an integral role in maintaining business contacts among elite circles often connected through networks of enterprise, blood relations, and marriage.⁸ In a corporatist arrangement, elite "centralizing women" are usually aware of business goings-on and background information on specific individuals and act as "brokers" in establishing contacts and speaking on an individual's behalf. Women are expected to uphold the familial connections; "the business of asserting and reasserting one's status and position in the family is almost a full-time occupation for a woman," much of which occurs at social functions held within their homes as opposed to board rooms. Even this estimation does not account for the variety of roles that women assume in contemporary elite society. In more recent years, the role of women in family business has expanded, giving women the opportunity to contribute capital of their own and to even acquire and maintain ownership of familial enterprises. At the same time, more traditional expectations persist in requiring women to assume the role of mother, housewife, and behind-the-scenes partner. Yet, the multifaceted aspects of women's lives are obscured by symbolic representations produced by the private/public dichotomy and its resultant binary gender constrictions (Lomnitz & Pérez-Lizaur, 1994, p. 180).
- 27 Nor have subjects of this social class generally been subject to the objectifying gaze of what Rossell herself calls Mexico's "rich tradition of ethnographic photography" (Rossell, 2002, p. n.p.). While female subjects are no strangers to the "scopophilic gaze" of photography and film, ethnographic photography has generally aimed its lens at those of the lower classes. This artistic tradition, which dates to the mid-nineteenth century has included such well-known national and international photographers such as Karl Lumholtz, C.B. Waite, Agustín Víctor Casasola, Tina Modotti, Paul Strand, Manuel and Lola Alvarez Bravo, Nacho López, and Graciela Iturbide, who have each come to be known for their respective documentary styles. However, as Marina Pérez de Mendiola points out, ethnographic photography carries with it an historic legacy of being used towards "repressive ends," for documenting and registering prostitutes, photographing inmates and criminals, poor people, servants, and members of the lower and working classes (Pérez de Mendiola, 2004, p. 129). Ethnographic photography has also been used in order to construct pseudo-scientific documentation and classification systems of the indigenous groups of Mexico and has also aesthetically contributed to the twentieth-century political and cultural campaigns to define an inherent national identity based on *indigenismo* and Mexicanidad (Debroise, 2001, pp. 114-161). As an artistic medium, it has been criticized as objectifying its subjects:

Instead of viewing indigenous people as a real presence, the clinical view encloses the image in another museum, that of indigenous pathology, thus reinforcing the idea that the indigenous are truly the cancer of the modern nation. The danger resides in the fact that viewers/readers of the photograph may fail to separate the image of the pathology from the pathology itself. In reality, the aestheticized, sad, miserable image of the indigenous is what provokes the clinical gaze, erasing, therefore, particularities so that only the common characteristics that determine the native community remain (Pérez de Mendiola, 2004, p. 134).

- 28 The ethnographic gaze thus constructs a sense of "identical filiation," whereby specific cultural distinctions and individual subjectivities are erased and subjects are simplified into objects (Pérez de Mendiola, 2004, p. 134). Capturing these subjects (objects) in their so-called "natural" habitats also allows the viewer to visibly situate and contain those who posed a threat to social order, much like the construct of the home has been used to restrict women's access to the public sphere. Rossell problematized this situating gaze by focusing on an elite segment of society, offering perhaps what was meant to be an ironic statement about her chosen medium and its oppressive history. Employing an ethnographic framework, Rossell calls into question the "naturalness" of her depicted settings and their inhabitants and critiques the notion of gender, racial, and spatial authenticity. However, popular reactions to the *Ricas y Famosas* series proved that the neither the artist, nor her subjects, were immune to the pathologizing gaze of the Mexican public.
- 29 In the years following their popular release, the photographs from the series achieved recognition based on the public response they received, a notoriety that has, at times, certainly matched, if not surpassed, recognition of their artistic merit. The opulent surroundings and sheer abundance of material wealth is evident in nearly all of the images, the representation of which sparked the general outcry that followed the photographs' initial book-length publication in 2002. The media reaction to the book publication was overwhelmingly negative and disproportionate, considering the fact that the photographs, according to Cuauhtémoc Medina, had been in gallery circulation for nearly a decade (Medina, 2006b, p. 312). Denounced as an arrogant display of the symptomatic decadence of contemporary elite society in Mexico at a time in which poverty had reached its most widespread and highest proportions, the subjects of the photos, and the artist herself, found themselves the targets of serious media backlash.
- 30 As it was the female subjects who were most commonly represented within the series, and also more visually signified by the domestic space, it was the women of Rossell's photographs, who bore the brunt of that criticism and quickly became scapegoats for national sociopolitical ills. Two months after the book was released, the first public response was issued in Mexico in *El país semanal*, by Juan Villoro, soon to become just one of many voices of outrage and disgust unleashed over next few months, the majority of which lambasted the images for what they reveal about Mexican society. Lorenzo Meyer, a political and economic analyst, published what is perhaps the most well-known and often quoted critique of the photographs. However, rather than address the photographic representations directly, he simply used the images as a stark contrast to new studies that declared an extreme situation of poverty plaguing over half of the citizens of Mexico. Meyer quotes a number of statistics to contradict the evidence of wealth presented by the photographs, focusing on studies that cite the national poverty number at over 53 million people (Meyer, 2006, p. 328).

- 31 Because of their engagement with the ethnographic legacy, the photographs were publicly misinterpreted as objective, and their subjects similarly pathologized. Meyer, like various critics, viewed the images in terms of what they expose about the nation; using strikingly similar pathological language, he stated: "Any analyst of Mexican society can only welcome Daniela Rossell's book, in the same way that an oncologist must recognize the usefulness of a good (albeit repugnant) image of a cancerous tumor" (Meyer, 2006, p. 329). The use of the photos as a form of cultural exposition was an act that, according to critic Medina, became "routine" (Medina, 2006b, p. 311).
- 32 On the one hand, the interpretation of the photographs as documentary in nature is valid, as Rossell both textually and visually cites ethnography as a relevant component of her work. However, the media reaction to the series failed to take into consideration that the artist might have been deconstructing certain modes of representation, both historical and contemporary. The images, as well as the resultant controversy, reveal the many ways that gender, race, and the visual arts have been historically intertwined with the construction of national identity in Mexico and how those connotations still hold significant cultural currency.⁹
- 33 A second concealment that is revealed by Rossell's photographs, one that branches outside of the upper-class strata of subjects portrayed, is suggested by the four images that contrast the "rich and famous" with members of their domestic staff. As seen in Figure 5, the contrast between the two women pictured is striking. One is exceptionally casual, splayed out on the couch in a gold lamé dress, light-skinned with blonde hair; the other, wearing a uniform, has dark skin that nearly matches the tone of the wooden column next to her, both in sharp contrast to the light uniform she wears. This photograph suggests an often unrecognized social reality for women in Mexico, as "Latin America 'leads' the Third World in both the size of the domestic service sector and the percentage of women in the occupation" (Rollins, 1985, p. 39). Yet, the photograph captures a similarity between the two women as they formally relate to their surroundings as objects. The woman on the couch assumes a languid pose, blending in with the couch on which she lays. The fabric of her dress is echoed by decorative pillows beside her, making her a decorative element as well. Similarly, the domestic worker to her right stands as tall and rigid as the faux Solomonic column next to her, her usefulness ironically compared to the useless architectural element that supports nothing. As different as the two women appear in terms of class and status, in this room, they are both presented as furniture, the objectification of women cutting across class lines. Such an image disrupts the ethnographic tradition that the photographic series references, one that helped to enact a type of "societal cleansing," which Pérez de Mendiola states
- was officially and regularly practiced through the photographic registration and cataloging of the somatic types identified as possible dangers, particularly those people who had daily contact with the aristocracy: drivers; domestic servants; small, informal merchants, such as baggage carriers, water sellers, and other street vendors (Pérez de Mendiola, 2004, p. 129).

Figure 5: Daniela Rossell, *Untitled (Ricas y Famosas)*, 1999

C-print, 30"x 40"

Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

- 34 Rather than presented as a danger to the elite woman on the couch, the domestic worker is presented alongside her, occupying a similarly-objectified (and objectifying) space. Nevertheless, the two subjects in figure live different realities, and thus Rossell demonstrates that there are at least two significant forces inhabiting this gilded world: those who live in these domestic spaces, and those who work in them. The photographs simultaneously display these two kinds of domestic inhabitants and point to notions that the home is a social space whose true nature is veiled behind pervasive gender stereotypes. The so-called domestic, feminine, private sphere that is constructed by Rossell's photographs is a parody of the way that sphere has been used as a national building-block. Thus, the series, especially in book form, can be read as a sardonic photo album that exposes the artificiality of the Revolutionary Family through "strategic gender interests," or an awareness of how gender inequality structures the everyday lives of women (Molyneux, 1985, pp. 232-234).
- 35 For Rossell, much of the pervasive gender inequality that affects the daily lives of women is borne out of the popular cultural portrayal of women in magazines, radio, television, and film. Through her medium, staging, and book format, the artist makes direct reference to the ways in which female stereotypes are widely disseminated through mass media outlets that have been central to the creation of national identity, and thus have served as tools of patriarchal power relations. For Rossell, the participation of Díaz Ordaz, Banuet, and her other models is central to the critical significance of the photograph in which she is pictured, as the artist invited her subjects to perform what they see around them. In a statement issued on August 28, 2002, Rossell identified the sitters' complicit participation as a key component of the project (Rossell, 2006, p. 331). The sitters' participation, or "performance" in the series, allows the artist to comment more widely on the representation of gender by examining the traditional ways in which woman (and to a lesser extent, men) are

portrayed by the mass media. Rossell has stated in interviews that her subjects often play into popular expectations: "The women figure out from magazines and television what they think a photographer should snap, and they start performing" (Sheets, 2001, p. 176). Many of the photographs take their style from glossy fashion magazines, as the subjects strike dramatic and unnatural poses that, like the photograph of Banuet, often trade on their sexuality. In an interview, Rossell described her artistic process as follows:

I like collaborations. First I get a tour of the house, and then I interview the women. They can suggest a dress or a favorite room. Each is acting out her personal fantasy... Many times they're kind of laughing with me. The women are playing a game too. They are doing things that are empowering to them... Many are very smart women who are cynical about the fact that they're so privileged, but they don't want to change anything...(Schumacher & Winzen, 2003, p. 149).

- 36 What the quote above illustrates are the ways in which, for her subjects, femininity, domesticity and status are intertwined. The subjects identify with their surroundings, and find within them a space to visualize desire. The homes afford a sense of both security and playfulness, which leads to certain amount of liberation for the women to act out identities otherwise not available to them in public, despite the pervasiveness of such models. As Rossell states, her subjects "really want to look American, like what they see on TV, and they go to a lot of work to accomplish that" (Sheets, 2001, p. 176). The appearance and poses of the subjects, then, reveal an acknowledgment of public gender archetypes. However, with this acknowledgement comes the realization that those expected representations are exaggerated and even parodied. Although Rossell states that many of the women recognize that the space of the (upper-class) home is a space of financial and social privilege, it is also a space that, because it is feminized, her subjects are unwilling to reject because of the freedoms it does provide.
- 37 Ironically, it is because the home is a feminine-identified space that the subjects are given the liberty to playfully perform stereotypes, or at least culturally dominant images, perpetuated by the popular media.¹⁰ Many of the images were influenced by the types of images found in Mexican soap-opera magazines, and the series title itself references *Ricas y Famosas*, a popular *telenovela* from South America (Sheets, 2001, p. 176). The reference to soap-opera aesthetics is further reinforced by the appearance of *telenovela* actress Itatí Cantoral in two of the photographs. In her analysis of Mexican *telenovelas*, Adriana Estill describes the genre as overwhelmingly characterized by excessive use of melodrama, distinguished not only by its emphasis on emotion, but also its focus on domesticity—the home and family life (Estill, 2000, p. 77). Most *novelas* portray what she calls a "tidy" world, a closed community, wherein traditionally "the entire *telenovela* [takes] place in the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, maybe in the car" (Quinones, 1998). As Marit Melhuus states, it is the woman's behavior that is monitored and judged, her femininity contingent upon her "daily conduct, in particular in what she refrains from doing—casual visiting, loitering and gossiping are all considered negative—and through what she is expected to do: preparing meals, doing housework, and taking care of the children" (Melhuus, 1996, p. 245). Thus it is in the space of the home that ideal femininity, or the quality of maternity, is determined. The home, however, implicated within this emphasis on femininity, is two-fold: *telenovelas* often portray a home that is then broadcast into actual homes across the nation. This double representation creates another type of recursive image, a

representation of the home within the home, whereby the authenticity of each space is called into question as to the "reality" of the space itself.

- 38 The ambiguity of the realness versus the constructedness of the space of the home is echoed by the format of the *Ricas y Famosas* series as it was published in book format in 2002. The images in the book are reproduced almost entirely without text, save short passages at the end of the book and a two-line introductory statement that reads: "The following images depict actual settings. The photographic subjects are representing themselves. Any resemblance with real events is not coincidental" (Rossell, 2002, p. n.p.). This statement has been taken as a declaration of the anthropological character of the series; however, it also reads as a version of the boilerplate disclaimer that often precedes fictionalized accounts of true events. It alerts the viewer to the idea that the photos may be "based on a true story," however, as is often the case, what follows is a sensationalized, Hollywood-version of those supposedly "true" events, carefully edited for public consumption.
- 39 The next page (Figure 6) features a brown-skinned woman wearing a freshly-starched pink maid's uniform. She stands beneath a monumental archway to a covered patio space. The patio is filled with upholstered furniture arranged to resemble an indoor living room. However, the subject stands at the threshold between interior and exterior, occupying a liminal space that serves as the gateway into the book, and into the home as well. A large curtain is gathered in folds at the top of the arch, almost as if the scene itself constitutes a stage whose velvet curtain has just been lifted to signal the start of a play. With her hip cocked and her head tilted back towards the house, she welcomes the viewer into the performance that unfolds within.

Figure 6: Daniela Rossell, *Untitled (Ricas y Famosas)*, 1999

C-print, 30"x 40"

Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

- 40 The photos are then presented in succession wholly without interrupting text. Many fill the entire two-page spread, bleeding to the borders of the pages. As the viewer moves through the book, the eighty-nine images form a sequence that steers its audience through the fantastically rendered scenes. The book even builds cinematically to a narrative climax as the last fourteen images showcase what is, by far, the most extravagant setting of the entire setting: a seaside house, the famed Villa Arabesque, which is integrated into the rocky cliff of Acapulco Beach. The Villa Arabesque, which was built as a winter home by the late Baron Enrico di Portanova, has its own cinematic history, famous for being featured in the James Bond movie *License to Kill* (1989). Featuring massive white ogival arches, multi-level pools, and expansive patios that contain the painted harem decorations, this home of truly palatial proportions fittingly brings the book to a close.
- 41 The final image of the series (Figure 7) is unique in its presentation: it shows the staff presumably employed to maintain this structure. A staff of thirty-six cooks, housekeepers, drivers, bodyguards, secretaries, repairmen, and landscapers are seated on a marble staircase, each holding a tool of their respective trades. A thirty-seventh figure, Rossell, is seated among them holding her camera. This final image continues the filmic presentation of the book. Here, the behind-the-scenes crewmembers are portrayed in successive rows as the figurative credits roll on *Ricas y Famosas*.

Figure 7: Daniela Rossell, *Untitled (Ricas y Famosas ; staff)*, 1999

C-print, 30"x 40"

Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

- 42 By appropriating the narrative format of a film or television program, the book-form series, splayed out across ninety pages, reads as an amalgam of popular culture forms. It is at once a gossip tabloid (exposing the "private" lives of political elites), glossy soap-opera digest, narrative comic book *historieta*, melodramatic telenovela, voyeuristic reality show (Robin Leach's *Lifestyles*, MTV *Cribs*, or "The Real Housewives of Mexico City"), and a panoramic cinematic achievement. Devoid of text, the series' (aural)

volume is muted, allowing the visual language to speak loud and clear. The space of the home serves throughout this series as an elaborate stage set, albeit one with very high production values. It is revealed, in the end, to be just as contrived as the performances of the actors themselves. By revealing the feminine space of the home as an artificially constructed atmosphere, *Ricas y Famosas* creates a discursive space in which to discuss how boundaries of male-female, public-private binary distinctions begin to break down.

- 43 Thus, Rossell presents the space of the Mexican home as a social construct that was strategically employed to bolster state solidarity by maintaining familial stability, a responsibility that largely fell upon the shoulders of the nation's women. *Ricas y Famosas* confronts such representations of women, which are pervasive in art history as well as the popular media, thus attacking not only the archetypal construction of women in "high art," but also condemning the image of woman as it is disseminated to a wider, national audience. In problematizing the public-private dichotomy, Rossell points to the ways this binaristic construction of traditional gender roles has been exploited as a metaphor for the "familial" nation itself.
- 44 Rossell's work depends upon deeply-ingrained representations of the home and the women who are supposedly tied to it. The image of the "home" presented in *Ricas y famosas* defies the stereotypical expectations of the private sphere, and its female inhabitants, as nurturing and maternal. Rossell "stages" a critique of traditional representations of women and their place in the home. By focusing her lens on a rarely-discussed and rarely-photographed group of subjects, she defies photographic expectations and the Mexican ethnographic tradition by creating highly composed, multivalent images that provide a visual feast of symbolic readings. The series ultimately points to the pervasiveness of the spatial construct as it inflects women's realities in Mexico and the multiple strategies used to challenge a space largely produced for, and not necessarily by, women.
- 45 Thus, the series calls into question the supposed integrity of traditionally gendered roles and spaces. As the nation-building projects of the twentieth century were built upon such gendered bedrock, the significance of *Ricas y Famosas* holds the possibility of national reverberations, reconfiguring the space of the home through its relationship with and representation through mass media formats. The artist acknowledges the media as an entity that in Mexico traditionally straddles the public/private dichotomy in its representation of women. By appropriating these media techniques, and producing the space of the home, Rossell not only presents alternatives to an archetypal image, but she also deconstructs the process through which the feminine character of the home is fabricated. Thus, she constructs the home from the ground up, rebuilding it as a space that reveals and blurs the limits of such spatial confinements and offers a feminist vision of subjectivity that extend well beyond the home.

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NOTES

1. This scene with Cantoral could almost be a play on the title of another popular telenovela, *Los Ricos También Lloran* (*The Rich Cry Too*). Although Cantoral did not star in this program, another well-known female telenovela star, Verónica Castoral who also lives in a Mexico City mansion

where 'her living is jammed with chests from India, ceramics from Czechoslovakia, an enormous stuffed tiger, a stuffed leopard, a bearskin rug, sofas with towering backrests shaped like seashells, and bronze statues of Neptune and Arabs with sabers and upturned shoes, like something out of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,' (Quinones, 2001, p. 65).

2. There is a seventh image that contains only a male figure, but it is an exterior view of a house and the subject is barely visible only through an upper-floor window.

3. For example, Anne Rubenstein describes several attacks on young women known as "las pelonas" in the early 1920s, women who embraced modernity by adopting flapper styles and short hair popular in Europe and the U.S. This unfeminine and foreign influence was viewed as a threat to the patriarchal social order in Modern Mexico. See Rubenstein, 'The War on *Las Pelonas*: Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924,' in *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, edited by Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughan, and Gabriela Cano (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 57-80.

4. Adriana Zavala, in her discussion of early modern female archetypes identifies one of the competing images of the domestic woman as the "woman liberated from the confines of domestic space," a "woman/mistress consumed by sexual passion and the desire to please men." Similarly, William French argues that such a boldly sexualized characterization of women has been used to reinforce the necessity for adherence to feminine ideals. He states that "Mexicans have always utilized gender and morality to delineate class boundaries and separate themselves from others," and the female prostitute was one of the strongest symbols of moral warning (French, 1992, p. 529; Zavala, 2010, p. 98).

5. In 2002, the connections of the subjects to the PRI, as well as the decidedly un-feminine representation of those female sitters led to a public controversy that overshadowed, and surpassed, the critical, artistic achievements of the series. For a description of the controversy see (Gallo, 2004, pp. 47-69; Medina, 2006a, pp. 332-333; Meyer, 2006, pp. 328-330; Villoro, 2002, pp. 42-50)

6. Both terms have gendered linguistic origins: *desmadre* signifies a literal lack of a mother that results in social chaos ; *malinchista* is a term that derives from the shameful way the historical figure Malinche, the indigenous interpreter and companion of conqueror Hernán Cortes, is regarded and additionally connotes an enjoyment of foreign things, particularly consumer goods or anti-Mexican taste. For a specific example of how these terms were employed to femininize counter-cultural movements, Zolov describes how Elvis Presley's masculinity was challenged after he publicly insulted Mexican women. Presley's "feminine gestures" were mocked and he was accused of homosexuality (42-3); hippies were mocked for their inability to adhere to strict gender codes (105). Later, Zolov also mentions how the countercultural movement was different for men and women based on prevailing gender stereotypes and constraints. But most effectively, his examples of the ways in which counter-national elements were labeled as "desmadre" or "malinchista" show how political disorder in a patriarchal nation was consistently characterized as female.

7. This statement is also supported by Roderic Ai Camp's study of the "power elite" in Mexico contains almost no references to women as being counted among the politically and economically authoritative. See (Camp, 2002)

8. In their research, Lomnitz and Pérez-Lizaur determined the "grand family," a network of familial relations that extends over three generations, to be intertwined with the success of family enterprise. Headed by "father-entrepreneur," aided by sons and trusted relatives, it is network of family solidarity, whereby the less-wealthy members are expected to pay allegiance to the wealthier, more in-control members in exchange for "economic support, participation in family rituals, and social recognition." While it is traditionally the men of these families who participate in the more business-oriented activities, the women also play an integral role in the association: "Information, the most elementary and basic type of exchange within the clan,

involves a wide spectrum of facts, ranging from family gossip to knowledge about relatives and ultimately to clan ideology. Women have always played a large role in the transmission of such information, which is on the main mechanisms of clan solidarity. Prominent female figures, who devoted their lives to creating and transmitting a clan ideology, established information networks over certain branches of the family kindred, often across generational and socioeconomic boundaries. The personal prestige of these centralizing women was based on their authoritative knowledge of the family history, including the personal backgrounds and relationships among individual members, within an ideological framework of family values and family solidarity." (Lomnitz & Pérez-Lizaur, 1994, pp. 178-180)

9. For analysis on how constructions of race and gender intersect with the formation of Mexican national identity, see both (Zavala, 2010) and (Widdifield, 1996).

10. Parody is achieved not only by the exaggerated performances of the participants, but is fed even more so by the curious public persona she cultivates for herself. By many accounts, she is part of the same circle as those she photographs, "having grown up on a very ornamented estate with fiberglass replicas of Olmec heads in the garden," (Gallery, 2004) She has, likewise, acknowledged "being driven by her own love-hate feelings about her upbringing. She recalled how her nanny lived with unfinished floors in a room that was half the size of her mother's closet," (Thompson, 2002, p. 4) Yet in one early interview, she stated that she "grew up in the servants' quarters of a mansion where her mother worked as a maid," (Sheets, 2001, p. 176) Throughout the controversy that followed the public release of her images, she actively maintained her rights as an artist to be outspoken and confrontational and yet at the press release of her book, refused to appear as herself when slated to speak. Having persuaded a friend to appear as her, Rossell herself sat in the audience in disguise, watching as journalists and photographers "swarmed" her body double (Gallo, 2004, p. 52). Rossell's masquerade has been interpreted as her own fear and apprehension about being confronted by a hostile press. However, as Cuauhtemoc Medina points out, her decision to be represented by another woman (who herself was a subject within the series), may simply be another manifestation of the project itself: a deliberate attempt at representation, at performance, at acting.

ABSTRACTS

The *Ricas y Famosas* series consists of nearly ninety photographs of mostly interior shots of elaborate and richly decorated houses inhabited by the women and men who own them, their friends, their children, and their domestic staff. The opulent surroundings and sheer abundance of material wealth sparked a general outcry that followed the photographs' initial book-length publication in 2002. The female subjects bore the brunt of that criticism. In presenting such radically un-feminine representations of the home, Rossell deconstructs the symbolic exploitation of national womanhood and in doing so, exposes the fallacy of the home as a "private" space that is uncomplicated by the so-called "public" concerns of work, the economy, and mass media communication.

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Keywords: Daniela Rossell, *Ricas y Famosas*, private sphere, gender, space, photography