

**Gabriel RICO**

*At home with artist Gabriel Rico*

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Gabriel Rico, *II Mural*, from the series, *Reducción objetiva orquestada* (2016 - 2021), 2020. Mixed media, brass, neon © Diego G. Argüelles / Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin

A deer head cradling various sports balls between its antlers, two real feathers hidden in plain sight among a wall of brass facsimiles, golden honey trickling from a suspended ceramic beehive onto a human skull: these are all motifs that Gabriel Rico has used to captivating effect. His combinations of found objects, taxidermy, branches and neon may at first appear bewildering, but on deeper inspection, can enlighten us to the evolving relationship between humans and the natural environment. We catch up from afar with the Mexican conceptual artist ahead of a solo show at Perrotin Paris this summer and a more imminent takeover of the gallery's Instagram.

### Wallpaper\*: Where are you as we speak?

**Gabriel Rico:** I am in a cabin in the middle of the Sierra del Tigre in Jalisco. I decided to come here to collect objects (branches and stones), take advantage of the quarantine, and be alone in the company of my wife. We are in a natural area similar to a coniferous forest. The temperature is perfect, not as strong as the heat in the city. At sunrise and sunset, the sound of birds is loud but pleasant, and golden light appears at around 7pm.



Gabriel Rico in front of his 2016 work *Venado*, comprising a brass rod, neon strip, knife, old coins and a deer hoof. *Photography: Guillaume Ziccarelli, courtesy of Perrotin*

**W\*:** How has your education as an architect has informed your work as an artist?

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**GR:** During my architecture studies I realised that the construction of a building requires the mixing of many materials to provide structural coherence and suggest a form to the construction. This is the same principle that guides the selection of materials I use to develop my works.

**W\*:** You are known for collecting and configuring found objects for your sculptures and murals. What draws you to these objects, and what is your process of putting them together into an artwork?

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**GR:** My relationship with the objects, and the meaning they acquire when I change their context and utilise them in a new situation, outside their logic of use. I am also inspired by scientific principles and some philosophical analogies and normally use this like a base to start new compositions or pieces.

**W\*:** What are some unusual items in your collection that you are hoping to include in future artworks?

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**GR:** The collection that I have is a mixture of natural objects (rocks, shells, branches, and animal remains such as horns or skins), and objects that are directly related to the Anthropocene, and the ideology of the period in which I live. These objects range from porcelain flowers and ceramic plates to CDs, old cell phones, glass bottles, plastic fruits, and balls from different sports. When I decide to keep one of these objects, it is not clear when I will use it and even less so, in what type of work. I have kept objects for several years until I finally find the perfect piece to use as a complement.



Inside the artist's studio in Guadalajara, Mexico. © Diego Argüelles

## W\*: What is the role of humour in your practice?

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**GR:** I do not think consciously that humour is part of my work. And it's necessary to define what kind of humour is seen in my work – some have told me that it is ironic, others sarcastic. I consider it as a part of my personality that is reflected in my work. The physicist Leon Lederman said that humour has a value on the social scale very similar to that of love or sadness. He believed that the character of humour (when it is genial) is universal since it does not depend on language to understand itself.

## W\*: What has been the highlight of your career so far?

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**GR:** The residencies I had in countries like Colombia, South Korea and Belgium opened my eyes to the artistic practices that were happening internationally at the beginning of the past decade, and I was able to see the real level of my art. Of course, having exhibited at the Venice Biennale and in museums such as the Aspen Art Museum in the US, in addition to exhibiting at Galerie Perrotin, brings me great satisfaction, because I realised what I was thinking and doing had value for various people involved in contemporary art – collectors, curators, gallery owners, etc.



Gabriel Rico, *To be Preserved without scandal and corruption*, 2020. Volcanic stone, rope, taxidermy axis deer, fibreglass column. © Diego G. Argüelles / Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin

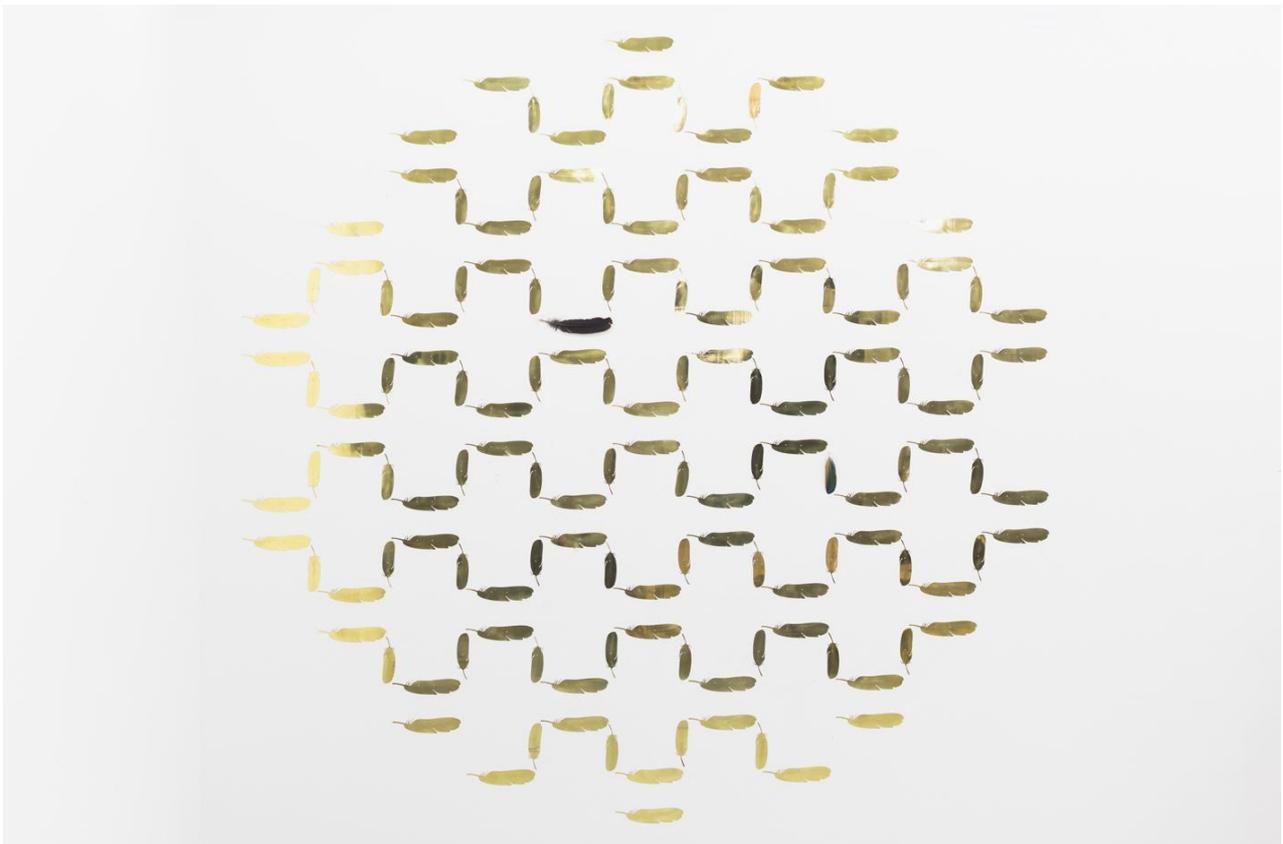
**W\*:** What's the most interesting thing you've read or listened to in the last few weeks?

**GR:** The discovery of a new class of subatomic particles called Pc (4312)<sup>+</sup>, proposed by Tomasz Skwarnicki, a professor of physics at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Syracuse University.

**W\*:** Your next solo show, at Galerie Perrotin Paris this summer, is titled 'Nature loves to hide'. What ideas are you looking to articulate through this show?

**GR:** 'Nature Loves to Hide' is a quote from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, which I chose as the title for its simplicity and elegance. It references a fact that continually stuns us when trying to find quantitative meaning in the natural world: nature exists for itself and not for our needs.

This new body of work suggests a journey to a certain time. I carefully select the natural elements in each piece — when making these decisions and selecting each element, I act as though I have deciphered the mysterious relationship between man-made and natural objects.



Gabriel Rico, *III*, from the series *Unity & Uniformity (La Mitla de hérétiques)*, 2020. Feathers, brass. © Diego G. Argüelles / Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin

**W\*:** Are there elements of the show that have taken on new meaning in light of recent global events?

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**GR:** We are seeing how nature is regaining ground within cities - wild felines walking on the streets of cities in Southeast Asia, bears walking in downtown Chicago, the crystal clear waters of Venice. I try to make my work reflect on the possibility of the extinction of the human race, the possible ruins of civilisation, and how nature would react to a situation like this. The interesting thing for me at this moment of crisis is to be able to have a glimpse into a small part of what could happen. In this sense, most of my work is related, in one way or another, with what is currently happening. §