

# Pan-Americas

Curated by Arlan Londoño

April 1 - April 17, 2010



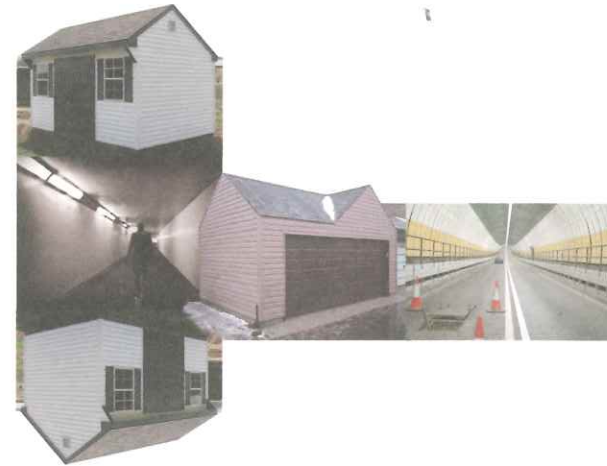
Pablo Helguera  
Eugenio Salas  
Beehive Collective

Opening: April 1, 2010  
6:00 – 9:00 PM

**UTac** UNIVERSITY  
OF TORONTO  
art  
centre



**Pablo Helguera**, *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, Asuncion, Paraguay, 2006. Courtesy of the Artist.



**Eugenio Salas**, *Tunnel*, 2010. Installation, plywood and siding, variable dimensions. Courtesy of the Artist.

## Pan-Americas

*Donde se narra cómo América Latina desapareció de los mapas, cómo sus dictadores y guerrilleros pasaron a mejor vida y se llevaron consigo el horror y la gloria, cómo el realismo mágico fue sepultado en la selva y cómo esta milagrosa y tórrida región se torna cada día más difusa, más aburrida, más normal.*

Jorge Volpi, "El insomnio de Bolívar"

*There is a narrative of how Latin America disappeared from the maps, how its dictatorships and guerrilla armies passed away to better life, and carried with them their horror and their glory, how the magic realism was buried in the jungle, and how this tropical and miraculous region is becoming more diffuse each day, more boring and more normal.*

Jorge Volpi, "Bolívar's insomnia"

The idea of this exhibition began during a talk about Latin American culture presented by the members of Beehive Collective, a group of graphic artists and activists. I was amazed at how many versions of Latin America we deal with outside Latin America. *Pan-Americas* is an exhibition of contemporary art projects that examines the political, economic, colonialist, and post-colonial ideas behind the dream of integration between North and South America, featuring art works by Pablo Helguera, Eugenio Salas and the Beehive Collective.

All three artists are trying to create a new form of connection and communication between people from North and South America. Pablo Helguera's *The School of Panamerican Unrest* is the result of a trip by car along the Panamerican highway. Traveling through the continent, Helguera asks the people he encounters how

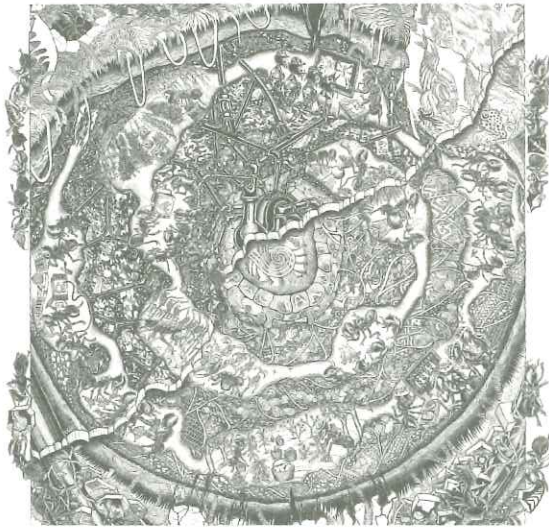
they feel about the Panamerican dream of connection and interaction amongst the Americas. Based in New York City, Pablo Helguera employs unusual formats ranging from experimental symposiums, phonograph recordings, exhibition audio-guides, publications and nomadic museums.

Toronto-based artist Eugenio Salas has been using Coyote tactics in his latest projects. Coyote is the name given to the human smuggler who works between Mexico and USA. Like a coyote, Salas works as a mediator between people by trying to establish connections or communications between them. His intervention for the exhibition *Pan-Americas* is titled *Tunnel*; it refers to smuggler tactics that cause encounters of cultural communities or socio-cultural subjects. Salas investigates how immigrants establish connections within their new context, and how they create the North American dream. His work seeks to connect the unconnected.

Beehive Collective's *Hemispheric Graphic Project* creates dialogue between people with a strong political orientation from Latin and North American cultures. A collective of artists based in Canada and the United States, Beehive tries to reconnect lost tracks of communication. A grassroots collective that creates links between the Americas, Beehive creates collaborative anti-copyright images that are used as educational and organizing tools.

All the artists employ processes and methods that are part of everyday life, but they do so with a new, creative and communicative purpose. In *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, Helguera brings together information about issues of local and social concern. He does this through debates, programs and roundtable discussions. His trip along the Panamerican Highway was a critical approach to these concerns. The Panamerican Highway was built as a form of socio-economical integration and cultural communication. This highway system extends from Alaska in North America to the lower reaches of South America. Helguera's trip proved to be an influential way of accessing the dream of communication and development of this area. The project allowed him to discuss how artistic practice in the Americas might acquire a more influential role in public life and in political, cultural and social discourse, thereby enriching the perspective of communities in a productive and positive





Beehive Collective, *Plan Colombia*, 2002. Poster, 19.5" x 72.5". Courtesy of the Artists.

manner. Set up in its own room, Helguera's exhibition consists of a selection of pictures from *The Panamerican Diary*, an edition of 120 photographic works that describe the 120 days of ground journey from Anchorage to Tierra del Fuego undertaken as part of *The School of Panamerican Unrest*. The second component is a selection of poster-size collages from *The Panamerican Suite*, which consists of approximately 120 collage pieces. The installation also includes two videos, presented on TV monitors. The project functions as an archive inspired by the travel itineraries of those who once crossed the continent, ranging from missionaries, explorers, scientists, revolutionaries, intellectuals, writers, and others. In the utopian spirit of those who once conceived of the Americas as a unified entity, *The School of Panamerican Unrest* crosses the continent – making literal the very idea of Panamericanism, where artists, writers, political activists, sociologists, economists and educators are invited into this nomadic think tank.

Eugenio Salas' *Tunnel* consists of an architectural passage that acts as a transit space between Pablo Helguera's exhibition and the Beehive Collective's installation. Salas' intervention emphasizes the idea of two joined ends while creating an illusion of magnetic attraction and, consequently, triggering a need to visit the opposite gallery. Audiences confronted with the tunnel will eventually have to decide whether to traverse it and continue with their trajectory to other, adjacent galleries beyond the *Pan-Americas* exhibition. Salas presents the tunnel as the smuggler's working place. It is a metaphor that refers to the physicality of several types of actions. In particular, the coyote works with migration, which is linked to walking journeys. Coyotes make use of their knowledge of space, its borders and custodians, to develop alternative paths and sneak their clients across the border. In most cases, they must walk into tunnels and small gaps, and they face uncertain conditions. Ultimately, the tunnel is an opportunity to confront audiences with the space and with themselves, prompting improvisation and random encounters, much like migration.

The *Free Trade Area of the Americas* (FTAA) and *Plan Colombia Graphic Projects* by the Beehive Collective started as critical approaches to the way globalized corporations establish themselves within Latin American countries.



THE SCHOOL OF PANAMERICAN UNREST  
DAY 62

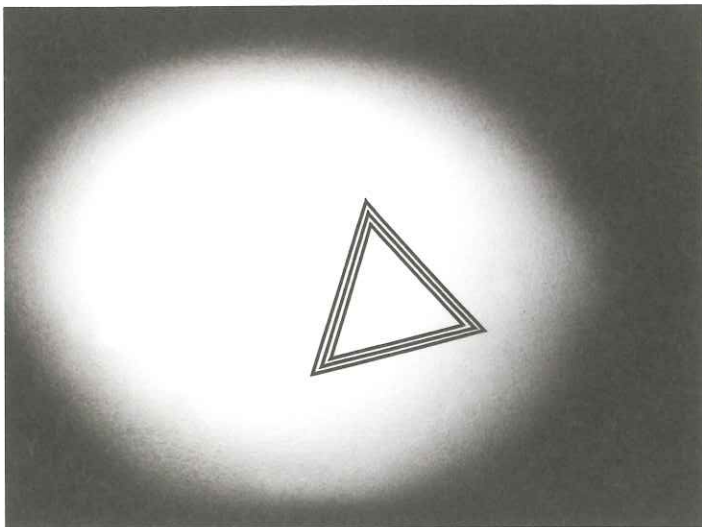
Pablo Helguera, *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, Day 62, 2006. Courtesy of the Artist.

FTAA and *Plan Colombia Graphic Projects* are located in the north gallery and consist of the documentation of different trips they have taken since 2000. The exhibition includes banners, graphic images and brochures created as a result of the collective's engagement with Latin America. I am interested in the communicational strategy of the Beehive Collective. They travel to countries where they perceive there could be problems and obtain information through interviews with different communities. Once their trip is complete, they create the graphic project and return to the regions involved, sharing it with the population and showing it in popular schools. Subsequently, they show the project in local schools in North America. Their exhibition presents an ongoing project and an archive that changes whenever they are in contact with people.

In the context of this exhibition, I see the Beehive collective project as working in three main ways. Firstly, the project analyzes Latin American's adverse relationship with the north. Secondly, the project creates its own method of establishing communication links while dealing with topics shared by voiceless people (e.g. Latin American farmers). Thirdly, Beehive Collective redistributes the information they have received through their graphic campaigns and travels. Their work represents the dream of a relationship between the people of the North and South Americas.

*Pan-Americas* is an exhibition that encourages us to appreciate three different versions of the problematic relationship between Latin and North America. The Panamerican Highway, as a dream of integration and communication between the Americas, is an unfulfilled proposal. The artists in this exhibition take part in this dream while acknowledging the political impositions that have turned it into a nightmare.

Arlan Londoño



**Eugenio Salas**, *Tunnel*, 2010. Installation, plywood and siding, variable dimensions. Courtesy of the Artist.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Pablo Helguera** is a visual artist based in New York. His work generally employs unusual formats, ranging from experimental symposiums, phonograph recordings, exhibition audio-guides, publications or nomadic museums. Helguera has presented his work at an individual level at the Museum of Modern Art of New York (performance: *Parallel Lives*, 2003) and at the Royal College of Art of London (*Los del Este*, 2004, Monique Beudert Curatorial Program). He has also shown his work in various biennials such as the 8th Havana Biennial, San Juan's Poly-graphic Triennial (2004) and PERFORMA 05, New York's first performance art biennial.

**Beehive Collective**, based in Toronto and in Machias (Maine, USA), is appreciated internationally for its educational graphics campaigns, at a regional level for its stone mosaic murals and apprentice program, and locally for its dedication to the revitalization of the old Machias Valley Grange Hall, a landmark building in their small, rural town. The Hive has been going and growing since 2000, at full speed!

**Eugenio Salas** is a media artist whose video work has been exhibited in a number of festivals. He is presently based in Toronto where he has collaborated with other local and international artists at WADE, a biennale installation and performance project spread through the City of Toronto's wading pools; with Chicano performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña at Toronto Free Gallery, and with Danish collective Morton Goll & Nielsen at Mercer Union. Eugenio has also curated Latin experimental video for Inside Out Lesbian and Gay Film Festival in Toronto.

**Arlan Londoño** has focused his investigations on electronic arts. In 2004 Londoño co-created e-fagia collective, a multidisciplinary group that focuses on contemporary arts in the digital era. Since 2006 he has organized and curated Digital Event, an annual web, media, and new media art exhibition presented in Toronto and online: <http://www.e-fagia.org>.

## WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

### Pablo Helguera

*The School of Panamerican Unrest*, 2006. Installation, variable dimensions.

*Panamerican Suite*, 2007. Posters and collage works, 9" x 12".

*Panamerican Diary*, 2006. Posters, 18" x 24".

### Eugenio Salas

*Tunnel*, 2010. Installation, plywood and siding, variable dimensions.

### Beehive Collective

*Plan Colombia*, 2002. Posters, 19.5" x 72.5"; flag-banner, 9' x 4'; brochures, 8.5" x 11".

*Free Trade Area of the Americas*, 2000. Posters, 19.5" x 72.5"; flag-banner, 4' x 9'; brochures, 8.5" x 11".

## UTAC University of Toronto Art Centre

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**Cover Image:** Beehive Collective, *Plan Colombia*, [detail] 2002. Poster, 19.5" x 72.5". Courtesy of the Artists.

### Acknowledgements:

Arlan Londoño would like to thank the artists for the wonderful projects that inspired the exhibition, Barbara Fischer for her guidance and enthusiasm during the process of creating this exhibition, Lisa Steele and Sunny Kerr for their comments and solid support, and Jennifer Rudder and Shauna Thompson for their companionship. I would also like to thank Victor Ruiz for his assistance and enthusiasm to complete *Tunnel* project, and Julieta Maria for her continuous support.

**Artists' Talk:** April 8, 2010, 6:30 to 8 pm.

JMB.

University of Toronto Department of Art  
Masters of Visual Studies  
**MVS**

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This exhibition is produced as part of the requirements for the MVS degree in Curatorial Studies at the University of Toronto.

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