GOWER, Terence (b. Vernon, British Columbia, 1965 / né à Vernon (Colombie-Britannique) en 1965)

Terence Gower is a Canadian artist who lives and works in New York. His works most often take the form of archival research projects that delineate particular histories of Modernism and how modernist forms, ideas and architecture have been adapted and developed within specific social and geographic locales. One region of strong interest for Gower has been Mexico City where he has lived and worked for a number of years over the past decade. The way in which Modernist architecture of 1950s and 60s Mexico intersects with kitsch and pop culture of the similar period and place is the subject of the artist’s 2004 production Ciudad Moderna which re-edits scenes from director Juan de Orduña’s 1967 film Despedida de Casada. Gower’s intervention into the pulp director’s glossy musical removes actors and narrative to focus solely on the stylized modernist interiors, facades and streetscapes in which the movie was set.

In 2002 Gower was commissioned to create a functional sculptural pavilion for the Colección Jumex in Mexico City. The result was El pabellón de bicicletas, a stylized bike rack located on the grounds of the Jumex factory. In the piece, workers’ bicycles hang under a colourful rectangular glass and steel structure that itself serves as a rest area serviced by a spiral staircase to one side. In this case Gower culled from a combination of Le Corbusier and Jose Luis Sert while paying homage to the mid-20th Century Mexican architectural movement funcionalismo. In 2008 the artist turned his attention northward for a sculpture and video installation at the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC, that investigated Joseph Hirshhorn’s proposed “town of culture” in the Canadian wilderness of Northwestern Ontario, the location of the late philanthropist’s uranium interests. The video Gower created for the project, Wilderness Utopia (2008), takes the form of a computer-rendered fictional prospectus for the town of Hirshhorn, Ontario, based on architect Philip Johnson’s conceived but never realized plans for an ideal city in which work, housing and culture achieved a perfect balance.

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