

CONSUELO

14.3. – 26.4.2025

Guadalupe Ruiz

In recent months, Guadalupe Ruiz has been working on a book titled *El Libro ilustrado/The Picture Book*. The artist describes it as a "potpourri," blending staged images of her home, analog photographs of her son Octavio—whom we see at all ages up to eight years old—as well as various collections of images. While the book already has a title and 190 well-composed pages, it is still in limbo, meaning it currently exists only as a PDF file and a few printed double-page spreads that you can see in the exhibition.

On the book's cover, there is a large red tomato, the artist's signature, and a small handwritten note in Spanish that means "cut out the tomato and detach it." Faced with the overwhelming amount of visual information that follows, this modest drawing of a tomato might seem anecdotal. Yet, it serves as an ideal entry point into the artist's work. First, because she loves anecdotes and often draws inspiration from coincidences. But more importantly, because it is a drawing she made in early childhood, which her mother kept. Now, in turn, the artist methodically archives and preserves Octavio's drawings and crafts (she has also compiled his first words in Spanish, which constitutes the majority of the book's texts).

Besides, the tomato is one of the most striking emblems of the history of colonisation and globalisation. This fruit, often mistakenly associated today with Mediterranean cultures, was entirely unknown in Europe until the 16th century, when it was imported from South America by Spanish conquistadors. It so happens that Guadalupe Ruiz is both from Biel/Bienne and Colombia. She emigrated to Switzerland almost thirty years ago, where she studied and built her life. In some ways, this tomato becomes a kind of self-portrait or an unexpected biographical allegory (just as when she highlights the history of printed cotton fabrics—indiennes, which she is currently researching—by pointing out that she herself is an "Indian").

This tomato, ultimately, has a beautiful red shape that contrasts perfectly with the green border of the book's cover. It may remind those who know of the joyful Pop Art tomato painting that Swiss artist Peter Stämpfli created in 1964, or evoke the forms of geometric abstraction—or even the long tradition of still life painting and

photography (to which Guadalupe Ruiz has contributed, notably with her magnificent 2013 photographic series *Flora*, dedicated to popular floral arrangements in Colombia). This round and simple tomato on the book cover thus carries multiple stories, each marking a key aspect of her work: family life and the domestic sphere, migration and cultural and linguistic heritage, a deep sensitivity to the history of forms (particularly in design), and a strong desire to blur the traditional hierarchies between what is classified as art and what is considered creative hobbyism.

In fact, she prefers the term *domestic art* to describe practices such as embroidery, weaving, or basketry—forms of work doubly stigmatised for being seen as merely functional and for being traditionally associated with women's labor. The artist's method consists of layering stories and embedding them silently within the objects and forms she creates. It would be entirely possible to undertake a similar journey with every element of her work, unraveling the interwoven personal, artistic, and political narratives present in each piece.

Take, for example, the wooden furniture in the exhibition. These are copies. This process, which she connects to the widespread practice of counterfeiting in Colombia's working-class communities, recurs throughout her work: over time, she has reproduced her mother's embroideries, various found images, furniture, and everyday objects. The desk and chair are enlarged replicas (scaled up tenfold) of IKEA plastic toys. The cabinet is a five-times-enlarged version of a doll's wardrobe found at the Nidau flea market. The armchair, meanwhile, combines two sources: one from IDEAS (a decorative arts and DIY magazine that her mother frequently used and that the artist herself read and reread as a child) and another from *Living on the Earth*, the bestselling book by American author Alicia Bay Laurel. This proto-encyclopedia of hippie lifestyle records the knowledge needed for a return to nature.

It is only through close attention to these handmade objects that one begins to perceive subtle dissonances—such as the slightly oversized red handles or the massive proportions of the furniture surfaces—and realises that these pieces function less as furniture and more as sculptures (or, more simply, that the distinction between

these categories may not hold much meaning). Through their precisely crafted materiality, these objects speak of the passage of time, the transmission of skills, family, miniature living, childhood, and the models we carry with us into adulthood. Is adulthood merely a replica of childhood? The artist's mother used to help her own mother sew collars for shirts. At the age of eighteen, she learned embroidery from her godmother, then passed this knowledge on to her daughter. In fact, most of the embroideries in the exhibition were made by her mother (the others by the artist herself).

Here again, the embroidered images in the exhibition tell stories of trust and learning—of patience, of love for our loved ones and for abandoned objects. "I collect a lot. Printed things. Objects," says the artist, who passionately frequents Biel's many flea markets.

Finally, a word about the entrance to the exhibition, which houses a collection of photography books. These books come from a private donation to the city of Biel made about thirty years ago—roughly when Guadalupe Ruiz arrived in Switzerland to study art and photography. She explored this vast collection of over 6,000 volumes and carefully selected and curated the titles displayed here. This library thus represents the intersection of a public collection and her own subjective classification system.

Guadalupe Ruiz copies, accumulates, preserves, sorts, organizes, and classifies. Through images, books, and objects, she intertwines the stories of perfect strangers, the space of art and that of domestic life, narratives from distant cities and from her adopted home, as well as the lives of those closest to her. And it is her mother, Consuelo, who gives the exhibition its title.

Text by Jill Gasparina

Born in Bogotá in 1978, Guadalupe Ruiz came to Switzerland in 1996 to study art. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in photography from ECAL in Lausanne (2002) and HGKZ in Zurich (2006), and a Master's degree in Fine Arts from the FHNW in Basel (2019). In 2018, she published "Lupita, je garde un abricot pour toi dans l'abricotier. Je lui ai dit de t'attendre", in which she tells her son about her home town in pictures and words. In 2015, she self-published "Kleine Fotoenzyklopädie", an iconographic documentation of various places where she has lived. She now lives in Biel and is working on her new project, Las indianas.

Guadalupe kindly thanks Consuelo, Jill Gasparina, Camille Regli, Adrien, Alexandre Horni, Thalles Piaget, Hannah Külling, Gil Pellaton, Sarah Infanger, and of course Octavio Horni!

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Vernissage

Fr, 14.3.2025, 18:00

19:30 Sound Performance Tobias Maria Koch

21:00 DJ set HMOT

Workshop

Sa, 15.3.2025, 15:00-17:00

Embroidery with Consuelo Cifuentes

Workshop

Sa, 22.3.2025, 15:00-17:00

Fermentation with Byungseo Yoo

Workshop

Sa, 29.3.2025, 15:00-17:00

Embroidery for kids with Consuelo Cifuentes

Finissage

Sa, 26.4.2025

17:30 Sound Performance Tobias Maria Koch

BACKROOM

Tobias Maria Koch
Sight Unseen, 2025
33min, on loop

FRONTROOM

Guadalupe Ruiz

1. Stationed in the collection of the city of Biel until a buyer is found, the H. Bouquet collection brings together a wide variety of books, reflecting the eclectic purchases of its collector. While the majority of the books are of a general nature, certain titles relating to photography and contemporary publishing stand out due to their rarity. The collection consists of over 6,000 books, and is presented here as a limited edition, non-consultable, becoming an exhibition object.

2. *Bordado 2*, 2024

Wool knitting on jute, 42 x 51 cm

3. *Cover "El Libro ilustrado"*, 2025

Laser print, 16 x 21,6 cm

4. *Bordado 1*, circa 1976

Wool knitting on jute, 42 x 51 cm

5. *Cabinet*, 2025

Yellow pine and agglomerated wood, 94 x 116 x 60 cm

6. *Dibujo*, 2021-2022

Embroidery on cotton, cotton thread, 113 x 83 cm

7. *El cuadro de las mariposas*, 1978

Embroidery on cotton, anchor pearl cotton thread,
87 x 116 cm

8. *The Ikea toy desk*, 2025

Desk: yellow pine and agglomerated wood,
750 x 1600 x 600 mm

Chair: Arve, 850 x 400 x 445 mm

9. *Wood curvy chair*, 2025

Yellow pine, 80 x 95 cm

10. *Rombos*, 2025

Embroidery on cotton, anchor pearl cotton thread,
78 x 105 cm

11. *Pages 122 - 123 / 30 - 31 / 52 - 53*, 2025

Laser print; yellow pine, MDF, glass, 104 x 52 x 12 cm

12. *Pages 22 - 23 / 178 - 179*, 2025

Laser print; yellow pine, MDF, glass, 104 x 52 x 12 cm

