



GALA BERGER

LOS PREMIOS

March - May 2026

Los premios – Gala Berger

Notes for an Exhibition in Three Acts

1. In this exhibition, Gala Berger revisits a series of gestures associated with postwar avant-garde practices in Latin America: the battle cry, the detonation of stink bombs, and the throwing of eggs at reactionary artists, timid critics, mediocre officials, and repressive police forces within the exhibition halls of public museums.
2. Here, “repair” operates as displacement. Berger re-situates these subversive gestures in their public dimension, tracing them back to the specific traditions from which they emerged—namely, the intertwined narratives of the “new,” “youth,” the “avant-garde,” “politics,” and “revolution,” all condensed in a year that functions, in global terms, as a chronotope: 1968. (The quotation marks above do not simply signal skepticism; they come loaded—with eggs and projectiles. Consider yourself warned.)
3. The exhibition’s plural title refers to a distinctly postwar model: juried competitions for young artists, often with monetary awards, organized throughout the 1960s by public museums, diplomatic institutions, and national industries. Berger’s project draws, through deliberately transgressive documentary maneuvers, on two exhibitions held in 1968 at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires:

a. *Georges Braque Prize 1968* (July). Controversy erupted around an ambiguous clause that artists interpreted as opening the door to censorship, against a backdrop of global student repression. The award ceremony was disrupted by shouted slogans, eggs thrown at the prize-winning works, and

the distribution of flyers by the Anti-Imperialist Front of Cultural Workers (FATRAC), declaring: “WE REJECT ANY FORM OF ECONOMIC TUTELAGE THAT LEGITIMIZES THE SYSTEM OF OPPRESSION PREVAILING IN THE CAPITALIST WORLD, AND WE REJECT ANY FORM OF CENSORSHIP OF OUR WORK.”

b. *Materials, New Techniques, New Expressions* (September). “Some artists, dissatisfied with the jury’s decision, covered their works with sheets of paper as an act of protest. Earlier that afternoon, in statements to the press, they voiced strong اعتراض to the conduct of two foreign jurors.” (*El Clarín*, September 20, 1968, p. 22.)

4. The exhibition unfolds in three parts—closely aligned with the architecture of the gallery space:

a. **Act One.** Suspended textiles illuminated by LED light. Suspension here is also historical: flashes of prizes—those conferred by juries and those “awarded” (eggs and bombs) by revolutionary artists. The presence of the police is, unsurprisingly, unmistakable.

On one side, Roberto Jacoby is detained “for disturbing the event” (Braque ’68). On the other, an ode to egg-throwing: the egg as artistic gesture, the artisticization of the throw.

Nearby, Rogelio Polesello receives the First Prize in Painting from the French ambassador (Braque ’68), while profiles of winning artists celebrate their victories across both exhibitions.

b. **Act Two.** This section stages a form of outsider transvestism. Works originally shown in Braque ’68 and *Materials* are transformed into reverse glass paintings, a technique Berger recuperates through her research into the now-defunct Gallery of Primitive Art in Zagreb. Painting on glass requires working backwards—starting with the details, proceeding in reverse.

c. **Act Three.** A tribunal-like atmosphere emerges. The faces of artists, critics, and officials who served on the juries appear as 3D models printed on fabric, hovering as two-dimensional mobiles among American seeds—an element central to Berger’s earlier work and to her ongoing “repairs” across visual and political registers. In a flickering choreography, eleven specters materialize, including Antonio Berni, Jorge Romero Brest, Jean Clay, and Lucy Lippard.

5. A return to the present. *Gala Berger’s Prizes* unsettles the notion of rebellion, protest, and revolt as qualities inherently belonging to youth. Instead, Berger frames them as constructs with use value—historically contingent tools, scarcely two centuries old. Within this history we find not only luminous antifascist and antibourgeois youth, but also figures of rigid conformity—and their contemporary alt-right counterparts. While extreme forms of rebellion are often cast today as resistance (and are, in some cases, trapped in their own reactionary logics), they frequently operate through constellations of enduring abstractions—“the people,” “the family,” “the land”—that reproduce mythical violence and echo older forms of aggression, closer to book burnings (and witch burnings) than to emancipation.
6. The act of throwing eggs or stink bombs presupposes the identification of a target—a typology: the less politicized artist, the risk-averse organizer, the controlling bureaucrat, and, above all, the police.
7. Through a layered play of reflections, transparencies, and textures, Berger repositions these gestures as a choral field of critical seeds directed at those who, today, invoke freedom while advancing regimes of confinement, violence, and submission. *Vade retro*, ultras.

Julio García Murillo

(Mexico City, March 2026)

Gala Berger (b. 1983, Villa Gesell) is a visual artist, curator, and independent researcher. She has lived in Buenos Aires, Lima, and San José (Costa Rica), and is currently based in Mexico City. Her work has been developed across the Americas, Europe, and Asia, as well as in Senegal and Uganda.

Rooted in collective experience, her practice weaves together artistic production and critical inquiry. She is a founding member of the experimental museum La Ene (Buenos Aires), Casa Ma (Costa Rica), and the collective Retablos por la Memoria (Peru), among other initiatives.

Collage operates as a central methodology in her work, through which she assembles carefully researched materials that draw on and connect diverse cultural traditions.

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