

This is the only political art exhibition you need

Victoria Colmegna presents watercolors about the world of bilingual private schools, a display case inspired by the Buenos Aires Herald headline about the 1976 coup, two school uniforms, a coloring book based on drawings by José López Rega, and a series of paintings on the front and back covers of 1970s Ford Falcon models.

By Claudio Iglesias

The sad music playing in barbershops staffed by young men could be music from any era, but it's the music of today. The guys cutting hair are full of life. The sweet rhythms emanating from the speaker dissolve into the air, like wisps of smoke, so you can fall asleep and forget the problems that plague you, just as they've forgotten Abimael Guzmán and Comrade Maritza, Mario Roberto and Ana Villareal (and Patricia, who was with him at the end). Oblivion spreads over their feet like perfume. An entire demographic segment knows nothing of the armed struggle, the coup, or the ups and downs of the post-dictatorship. They are the Lolitas and Lolitos (more like Lolitos) who gave in the country the government in 2023.

Private schools seized power long ago. They took their pacts and their silences to the highest levels of government. San Javier, Cardenal Newman, Manuel Belgrano: a network of clubs and educational institutions with an aspirational British flavor spreads across the globe. Scottish attire becomes iconic. 1975: Frightened by abductions, the boys take off their sweaty blazers as they leave. The girls wear kilts, which they cannot remove. 1976: "Tanks advance toward Buenos Aires." While the oligarchy toasts, a character commits class betrayal: like Judas, he turns his head away.

In older issues of Frieze or Texte zur Kunst, one can find references to the case of Mr. Werner: an ad painter whom Martin Kippenberger hired to create some paintings. It was the era of Kippenberger the businessman, impeccably dressed in a suit and tie.

The proclamation of outsourced painting has two points:

- 1) Let someone else get their hands dirty;
- 2) I can deny everything I commission because it's not mine. When Argentina's economic elite has to do dirty work, they also call in someone "different." An "outsider." According to Silvia Schwarzböck's theory, responsibility for the 1976 coup should be attributed to its beneficiaries (the economic elite, precisely those who refuse to take responsibility) and not to its material executors.

This is JLR's theory, not as a black monk or puppeteer in the shadows, but as a puppet of real power. Victoria takes his drawings, from the esoteric books JLR wrote, and turns them into coloring pages.

Now, by having young artists crayon this pages and showing them infographic-style content about the coup, Victoria Colmegna does several things. One thing she does is, through JLR's lines, transform herself into an authority figure, a kind of Master-finally; she is now a recognized artist whose discourse is poured out in performances before an audience of young people.

And she does something else: she makes the ruling class speak through her. And what the ruling class says is very clear. That's why this is an exhibition full of bad feelings, unlike all the other exhibitions you're going to see. The stories of upper-class teenagers in the germinal climate of the coup d'état are a reflection of the stories of the present. They are a mirror of our time. If you only knew what the ruling class thinks of this country! But that leaves an open question: because concrete answers to our situation, and good intentions, must come from other classes and other social spheres.