



Armando Romero, *Regents*, 2006, oil on canvas, 45 1/2" x 53". Inception.

as Tweety Bird, Sylvester the Cat, Batman, Robin, and the Smurfs into compositions where they don't belong. The additions seem to be glued on top, like children's stickers or decals. The title figures in *Futuristic Architects* (2008), for example, who appear to have been displaced from an Italian fresco, dream of a bright-pink Disneyland castle while the Goodyear blimp flies high overhead.

In another series, "Vandalism and Other Irreverences," Romero deftly defiles his own reproductions of masterworks. His doodles of spaceships, robots, King Kong, and a dinosaur in *La Ciudad* (2012) transform an interpretation of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's 1559 *Netherlandish Proverbs* into an apocalyptic nightmare. And in *Regents* (2006), Romero scribbled jagged white lines over the stern figures in his copy of Frans Hals's 1664 *Regents of the Old Men's Almshouse at Haarlem*—his marks evoking both chalk on a blackboard and the work of Cy Twombly. Romero is a bad-boy iconoclast who unapologetically topples artistic preconceptions and encourages us to take a different look at works that we have traditionally canonized. —Laurie Hurwitz

Mohamed Bourouissa

Galerie Kamel Mennour
Paris

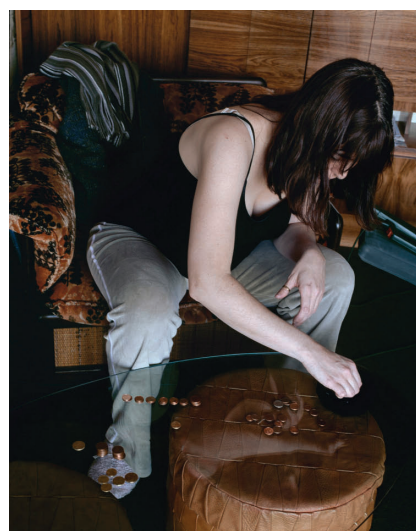
Mohamed Bourouissa, an Algerian-born French photographer and video artist, first gained attention for his photographs depicting urban youths in the rough suburbs of Paris. In that series, dead-end streets and anonymous hotel

lobbies became settings for elaborately staged scenes addressing issues of immigration and displacement. This multimedia exhibition, titled "All-in," was anchored by a video of the same name that had the look and feel of a decadent music video and dealt with luxury and excess.

Conceived as a site-specific work for the Paris Mint in 2012, *ALL-IN* was filmed throughout its elegant Neoclassical headquarters. Set to music by French rapper Booba—with lyrics that

embrace the materialistic ideals of rap culture—the video recounts the process of making a medal emblazoned with the rapper's face. Sleek images of the coin's production culminate in a shower of the glittering objects on the debauched remnants of a decadent party. In this film, every man's dream of moneyed luxury comes true, as the mint immortalizes Booba's image on a limited-edition coin—but in the end, Bourouissa suggests that merging the man with the money might have a more destructive cost.

Stock 1 (2013), a monumental photograph à la Gursky, depicting money piled up at a minting factory, has a sleek, cold geometry. That sterile image was counteracted by *Agnès* (2013), an intimate photograph of a young woman hunched over a table, carefully counting her coins.



Mohamed Bourouissa, *Agnès*, 2013, Lambda print laminated on aluminum, 25" x 20". Galerie Kamel Mennour.

Nearby, the large mobile *Un poids deux mesures* (Double standards), 2013, balanced a clean photograph of a minting machine with a brushy painting of a potato that wryly refers to the French slang word for "money." Here again, an impersonal image of commerce contrasted with a messier image that served to remind us of the harsh reality of money—that it's a necessary part of human life.

—Laurie Hurwitz

The Central American Biennial of Visual Art 8

Panama City Museum of Contemporary Art
Panama City, Panama

The Central American Biennial of Visual Art, known by its acronym BAVIC, was founded in 2002 as a survey of the region's contemporary art, with an army of curators culling work from six countries. For its eighth edition, held in Panama City, 35 of the 36 artists showed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, which occupies a converted Masonic temple inside the formerly U.S.-controlled Canal Zone. It was a fitting spot for a roster of artists whose work often deals with immigration and cultural border-crossing.

Riffing on the cross-cultural theme, Luis Cornejo's classically proportioned oil portraits of sassy urban women evoked U.S. hip-hop culture as filtered into his native El Salvador. The five-man Guatemalan group known as La Torana, whose works are signed individually and exhibited collectively, delved into issues of dislocation and violence using traditional materials and a dark sense of humor to create some of the event's strongest work. Among Torana member Marlov Barrios's wooden constructions was a sleek maquette of a Mayan pyramid topped with a replica of the Chrysler Building—a visually harmonious yet jarring combination of two soaring monuments to power, one representing a fallen cultural order, the other the triumph of American capitalism. In the chilling but strangely beautiful installation *Derrocamiento* (*Piara*), 2012, Torana member Josué Romero projected moving images, including an army propaganda film, onto a plaster bust of CIA-installed 1950s dictator Carlos Castillo Armas.