Alejandro Almanza Pereda and Alexandre Arrechea
Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery

Curated by Ernesto Pujol, Ideational Architec-
tures proposes the pairing of two artists that work
in similar conceptual arenas and communicate
their ideas through the use of architectural struc-
tures in mediums like drawing, sculpture, and
photography, questioning our relationships with
everyday objects and their connotations. At first
sight it would seem as Alejandro Almanza Pereda
(Mexico, b. 1977) and Alexandre Arrechea (Cuba,
1970) share the same aesthetic—Almanza’s
serigraph All mad cows and living in the same
block, 2010, where a display of 79 different views
and versions of cement blocks (arranged in 9
rows by 9 columns; the last row short by two),
struck me as a characteristic “Arrechea drawing.”
at first, but upon closer inspection, the message
was obviously different, as the different patterns
and unsuspected gaps of the blocks made them
non-functional, “cows” that obviously could not be
used in construction. The same sort of composition
appears in his other drawings, where a section
view of a wall is reflecting a bucket that is not
really there and another serigraph where a scale
is placed on top of a case of eggs. Almanza’s work
is characterized by this idea—it deceives your eye
and year mind with the unusual combinations of
elements that seem to put the viewer and the
objects themselves in safety hazards, such as in
the object-sculpture Home is where you lay your
hat, 2010, which is a glass door with a metal
doorknocker. The consequences of knocking on
that door seem obvious due to the nature of the
materials it is made out of.

Arrechea’s combination of materials is more
symbolic and not as “dangerous.” His hybridiza-
tion of objects and scenes, such as Masculinity
2, 2010, a photograph of a construction crane
holding a butterfly, which does not only represent
a different approach to photography—Arrechea
photographs the light and colors reflected on
metallic surfaces (the shapes of the objects in
the image)—but also continues on his exploration
of improbable amalgams like a building on a
spinning top, or a running man with helicopters
replacing his head and feet. Both Almanza and
Arrechea work on the limits of the possible and
the impossible, constantly challenging the viewer
to question the codes associated with the nature
and function of everyday objects and how we
recognize their “correct” purpose in the contradic-
tions of their compositions. Almanza’s main piece
in the exhibition is Change the world or go home,
2009, a scaffolding structure created with fluores-
cent light bulbs in place of metal pipes, a develop-
ment on his Andamento from 2007, which explores
a twist on the exigency—a test on fate—of a
structure made to support materials and people
during a construction. This impossible construc-
tion in which Almanza gives protagonism to trivial
materials such as light bulbs by providing them
with a silent “power” or control over the viewer’s
safety and the safety of the materials themselves,
creates a nice dialogue with Arrechea’s works
about rolled buildings, such as in his watercolors
titled After the Monumental Series, 2009, and the
themselves in the impossible situation of being
rolled in a reel as a cord or a film, acquiring a
vulnerability that could not be real according
to the laws of physics. A work originally produced
for the Havana Biennial of 2009, The Room of
All, works as a physical representation of the
processes of the stock market index, as well as an
ironic comment since the sculpture is made
with steel panels, playing again with our notions
about the connotations of certain materials, in
this case steel, and how we associate it with qualities
such as durability and indestructibility.

The common language that these artists share,
their “ideational” architecture, as Pujol appropri-
ately describes it, should not be mistaken as an
idealization or utopia of architecture in their works,
but instead of the use of the language of architec-
ture as a suitable system to convey their ideas. The
sensible curatorial choice of presenting these two
artists together at the Los Angeles Municipal
Art Gallery was a perfect opportunity to experience
two different formal approaches from Latin-
American artists that do not subscribe to the conven-
tional resort of narrative. Almanza’s impossible pairing of