

University of California, Merced
School of Social Science, Humanities and Arts
Center for Research in the Humanities and Arts

Monday, May 6, 2013

1:00pm - 2:00pm

California Room

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**“FABRE IN THE MUSEUM & BOLAÑO AT LARGE: APORIAS OF
RECENT MEXICAN LITERATURE”**

In this presentation, I discuss the zone that appears when the work of Roberto Bolaño and Luis Felipe Fabre are read together. This zone is linked to the crucial tension that I call museum aporia: the fact that in order for an artifact to be deemed worthy of exhibition in its context must have undergone an important enough devastation so that most of its original cultural context is now extinct. Yet, and hence the aporia, the piece is expected to recreate the very lost context that creates its museographic value.

At least since the 1950's the archaeological has become an important part of Mexican literature: "Chac Mool" is one of the short stories that comprise Carlos Fuentes inaugural collection *Los días enmascarados* from 1956, Octavio Paz's masterpiece "Piedra de sol" was published only a year after. And in 1964 the modern Museum of Anthropology opened its doors to the public. Eight years afterwards José Emilio Pacheco published his classic short story "La fiesta brava" in the collection *El principio del placer*.

Yet, this logic has only slowly become hegemonic. The devastation caused by the earthquake of 1985, the gradual dismantling of a good part of the country's social safety net during the ongoing neoliberal turn, as well as the nefarious war on narco have all been instrumental in creating the sensation that not only the Pre-Columbian past or the Viceregal times are irretrievably lost, but that even the optimism about Mexican modernity that crystallized in the Museum, arguably the magnum opus of architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez.

My two main objects of study are the brief collection of poems *Cabaret Provenza* by Luis Felipe Fabre and the mammoth *2666* by Roberto Bolaño. My contention is that the delicate activation of the museum aporia in Fabre, allows for a subtler reading of very important tracts of Bolaño's novel that have remained underexamined, namely, the prevalent logics of partial presence and haunting absence, from the elusive Archiboldi who opens and closes the novel, to the daunting exploration of the murders in Santa Teresa (Ciudad Juárez). The attention to the archaeological fragment that Fabre achieves in his poetry, provides us with the logic necessary to analyze not only the more obvious relationship between Bolaño's text and its relationship with its historical referent, but the way the absent, the fragmented, the unexplained gives rise to an effort to reconnect to a whole again, and how this labor creates new forms of community.

**This presentation is sponsored by the UCM Center for Research in the Humanities and Arts.
For additional information or questions, please contact Ignacio Lopez-Calvo: ilopez-calvo@ucmerced.edu.**