Fernando Bryce

CENTRO FUNDACIÓN TELEFÓNICA/
MUSEO DE ARTE DE LIMA

This work was among those shown in “Fernando Bryce: Dibujando la historia moderna” (Fernando Bryce: Drawing Modern History). Organized by Tatiana Cuevas and Natalia Majul, the exhibition was divided between one public and one private institution, reflecting Bryce's standing as one of Peru's most prominent contemporary artists, with the Centro Fundación Telefónica showing earlier works and the Museo de Arte de Lima bringing the story up to date. (The exhibition will travel to the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City, and then to Fundación Constantino, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires.) After studying in Paris in the late 1980s and then living in Berlin, Bryce returned to Lima in 1999 and developed the prolific drawing practice he terms análisis mimético (mimetic analysis); the copying of images or entire documents from archives so that they can be considered as groups. One of the first examples of this, Atlas Perú, 2000–2001, consists of 494 drawings from various sources representing the country's twentieth-century history: newspapers, magazines, diplomatic reports, tourist pamphlets, and more. The title makes reference to Gerhard Richter's famous scrapbook of sources for his paintings, but Bryce's version is geographically and historically focused in scope, neatly parsed into five eras; more historian than romantic, he seeks precise juxtapositions. His hand was freer than in more recent works, his deviations from his sources more explicit.

It is clear from Bryce's newest suite, El mundo en llamas (The World in Flames), 2010–11, shown at Alexander and Bonin in New York in the spring of 2011 and redisplayed in its entirety at MALT, that análisis mimético has become a potentially limitless personal medium, as well as a surprisingly elastic language. Having moved on from the spare information of magazine covers and captioned portraits of East Asia Review, 2006, or Die Welt, 2008, Bryce is now experimenting with overload. Dense, dramatic coverage of World War II on the front pages of the New York Times, Le Figaro, and other newspapers is contrasted with equally overblown movie posters from both the Axis and Allied nations; texts, images, and the ideologies of the respective culture industries compete for scale and volume. The drawings read left to right, up and down, across diagonals created by affinities of information or graphic design. Less compelling in its flourishes of virtuoso draftsmanship than on the level of content, Bryce's project is at its most powerful when connections accrue manically, in a sort of vertigo, as mal d'archive turns to network fever.

—Daniel Quiles