

# ARTFORUM

INTERNATIONAL

LIMA, PERU

## Fernando Bryce

CENTRO FUNDACIÓN TELEFÓNICA/  
MUSEO DE ARTE DE LIMAFernando Bryce, *El mundo en llamas* (The World in Flames), 2010–11

Fernando Bryce's *Visión de la pintura occidental* (Vision of Western Painting), 2002, consists of thirty-nine offset reproductions of canonical Western paintings hung salon style, surrounded by two additional walls of printed copies of ninety-six ink drawings aligned in double rows. The offset reproductions are original objects from the Museo de Reproducciones Pictóricas in Lima, Peru, which was initiated by the city's Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in 1951 and closed in 1997. The museum's aim was to provide access to reproduced European masterpieces that Peruvians could not otherwise see in person. For the printed drawings, Bryce copied, by hand, typewritten letters and inventory statements from the museum in all their detail, which in turn appear as copies: an archive of an archive of an archive (an alternate version of the piece ironically swaps photographs of the reproductions and Bryce's original drawings). Yet the end result escapes absurdity or tautology, thanks to a kind of signature: the artist's imperfect, highly recognizable drawing style (in particular, his handwriting is always the same, even though he is usually replicating mechanical text). Consistent from image to image, homogenizing all its scans, Bryce's hand converts "authentic" traces of history into meticulously selected choices of what to display.

This work was among those shown in "*Fernando Bryce: Dibujando la historia moderna*" (Fernando Bryce: Drawing Modern History). Organized by Tatiana Cuevas and Natalia Majluf, 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 Constantini, 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, propaganda posters, 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 then 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 MALI, 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 virtuosic 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