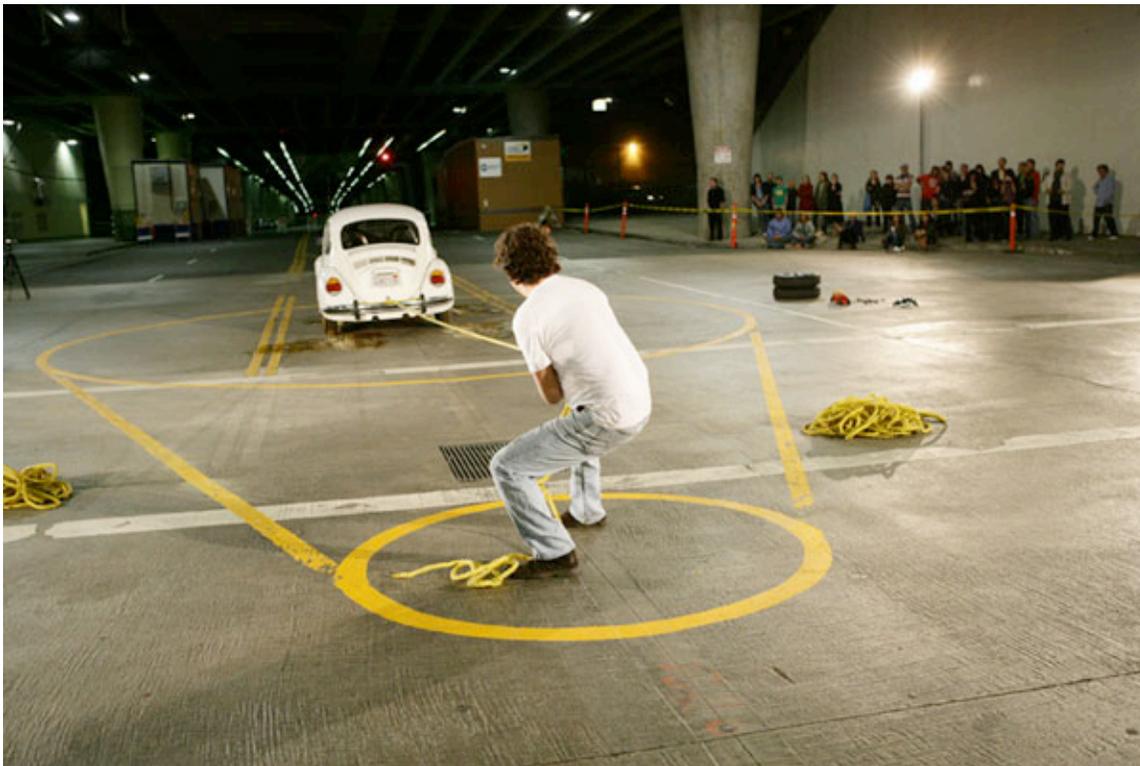


**DAMIÁN ORTEGA: THE BEETLE TRILOGY AND OTHER WORKS****November 3, 2005 - January 15, 2006****Opening reception: Thursday, November 3, 2005, 6 - 9 pm**

Damián Ortega. *Moby Dick* performance documentation, June 3, 2005. Courtesy REDCAT and the artist.
Photo: Scott Groller

Damián Ortega: The Beetle Trilogy and Other Works is comprised of the three components, or episodes, of *The Beetle Trilogy* as well as a new site-specific work commissioned by REDCAT that expands on his fascination with conceptual practice, social organization, and humor. Initiated by REDCAT in collaboration with The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), this ambitious exhibition features concurrent installations of the artist's works at two downtown contemporary art venues to support a complex presentation of Damián Ortega's art and process.

Concurrent to the exhibition at REDCAT, MOCA will present *Cosmic Thing*, the first episode of *The Beetle Trilogy*, created in 2002 and featured in the Venice Biennale in

2003. The work, a suspended 1989 Volkswagen Beetle, is part of MOCA's permanent collection, and this will be its Los Angeles debut. The exploded/expanded car recalls a brochure for mechanical parts or a dissected insect realized in three dimensions. MOCA Associate Curator Alma Ruiz will organize this part of the presentation, which will be on view at MOCA Grand Avenue. MOCA will hold a media preview on Thursday, November 3 from 9:00 am - 11:00 am.

The second and third components of the trilogy will be produced as part of the artist's residency at REDCAT. *Moby Dick*, the second episode, is an action/performance that takes place in the street on Lower Grand Avenue, a kind of accidental amphitheater emerging from the road that connects the loading docks of REDCAT and MOCA. Ortega's late night action is a physical struggle between artist and machine, a tug-of-war in which the artist attempts to control the movements of a white Volkswagen Beetle with a series of ropes and pulleys. The struggle references mythologies of man versus nature, the prodigal son, and related narratives of the heroic in the context of a contemporary urban hunt. The action includes live musicians performing Led Zeppelin's *Moby Dick* with John Bonham's legendary drum solo as an accompaniment and aural text. This episode reveals a historical continuum in Ortega's vision of contemporary mythology, the quest for cosmic identity, and how this manifests in human cultural expression.

Beetle '83, Escarabajo is the third episode of the trilogy. In it the artist returns the car to its possible place of birth in Puebla, Mexico, home of the North American Volkswagen factory--the last site of production for the original Beetle. From Mexico City to Los Angeles and back to Puebla, the vehicle travels a mythic journey of exploration and return. Somewhere along the roadside near Puebla, the car is laid to rest; buried upside down, like a bug that cannot move when lying on its back. This last action completes the "epic journey" of the return of the prodigal son; the homecoming of the hero to his place of origin and the end of a life cycle.

The November exhibition at REDCAT will feature a 16mm film installation of *Moby Dick* and an installation that responds to the *Beetle '83, Escarabajo* action, tying the trilogy together, in an investigation of icons of modern society, narratives of heroism, and the (dis)function of mechanical systems. A fully illustrated, bilingual catalogue will accompany the exhibition and will include contributions by novelist Hari Kunzru, MOCA Associate Curator Alma Ruiz, Gallery at REDCAT Director and Curator Eungie Joo, and the artist.

Damián Ortega has exhibited at Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; The 4th Gwangju Biennale; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; The 50th Venice Biennale; Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; White Cube, London; Kunsthalle Basel; and Tate Modern, London. He has also produced several projects with kurimanzutto in Mexico. *The Beetle Trilogy and Other Works* will be the first solo exhibition of Ortega's work on the West Coast of the United States.

Damián Ortega: The Beetle Trilogy and Other Works is a collaboration with The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. The exhibition and publication are made

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Gallery hours: noon to 6pm or curtain, closed Mondays

Admission to the gallery is always free

Visit www.redcat.org or call +1.213.237.2800 for more information

REDCAT
631 West 2nd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012 USA