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Still Lie (Apple)
Mixed media
2000

He arrived at Maiquetia Airport late one October night. He came on a mission, a very special mission. For security, our son Jorge, had eighty rounds of ammunition for his fully automatic pistol ready, just in case. We had a long ride up the mountain to Caracas. Ross' three week South American adventure was about to begin.

His mission involved a three week installation course at the Centro Piloto, an experimental art school in nearby Valencia, where I teach. I had met Ross back in 1990 while at Washington State University in Pullman as a Fulbrighter in the MFA program. Since then he had visited us twice.

In just three weeks he went through quite amazing experiences that contrast with his silent and tranquil life in Moscow. He drank Cuba-Libres next to a waterfall deep in the tropical rainforest, and kept a sharp eye out for petroglyphs and rare stones; he traveled by canoe to the world's tallest waterfall, Angel Falls in Indian country at Canaima Park; he found out that "realismo magico" does exist; he ate capybara stew, arepas with carne mechada, cachapas, hallaquitas with chicharron almost every day; he talked about art with Al and me for hours and hours; he

had cold showers after he systematically blew out the lights every morning; he was confronted by dangerous thieves who made him bite the dust with guns to his head up in Maria Lionza's magical Santeria Mountain; he was left barefoot and empty handed; he now knows what it's like to have fuzzy edges and be a "non-person" for a few days; he visited an underground clandestine inventor's metal shop and got to hold a Galil 5.56 mm. for a while; he saw lots of huge butterflies, some of them iridescent blue; and most of all, he stole everyone's heart.

The installation workshop was intense. Sixty participants in three groups. Ross and I made a pretty good team. I would translate and sometimes even anticipate what he was about to say about our favourite slides. After three weeks we had an opening celebration with twenty installations in every room, corner and staircase of our small colonial school building. Energy flowed, cameras flashed, everyone wanted to take pictures with Ross, the Old Gringo. He has certainly made a difference in the artistic community with his visit. Valencia will talk about him for a long while. Hasta la vista Ross.

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