



# #questiontime

WEATHER



**TODAY**  
High 19°C/66°F  
Low 15°C/58°F  
Rainy



**TOMORROW**  
High 20°C/68°F  
Low 16°C/60°F  
Rainy



**THURSDAY**  
High 20°C/68°F  
Low 17°C/62°F  
Cloudy



## CV

**1958, Santa Fe**  
**Studies:** studied engineering for a time, went to film school in Cuba on a scholarship.  
**Books:** *Retratos* (1993), *Pop Latino* (2000) and *Pop Latino Plus* (2007), *Sub-realismo Criollo* (2003), *El Jugador* (2007).  
**Film:** Ramón Ayala, documentary fiction about the composer, musician and painter which won the Audience Award at BAFICI 2013.

BY CRISTIANA VISAN  
HERALD STAFF

## Marcos López, visual artist

# 'I'm a prisoner of Latino Pop'

**Marcos López is a seemingly calm but deeply tempestuous maelstrom of words, images and need to outstrip it all and go beyond.** His style, which has come to be known as Latino Pop, has pushed him to the fore with his trademark kitsch collages caricaturing everyday life in garish colours. After the release of his first movie, *Ramón Ayala*, the artist received the *Herald* at his studio to talk about the challenges of filmmaking, unrestrained artistic egos and the bleakness concealed by the flashy layers of humour.

provinces thinking they'll gain more visibility for their work in the city — and I was one of those once —, we're all clinging like monkeys and I'm sure we don't even know why. There's no escaping the city, no way out.

### That is a layer in your work, which you often use to create contrasts.

The polarity is inbred, perhaps. The Argentine culture is built like this, always looking up to Europe wistfully, as a paradigm of validation of our aesthetic harmony. My work focuses on the contrast between that wishful image and what we have here, thinking about that image but showing the faces of Constitución, where everything may come down to some kid sniffing glue, to the sounds of Paraguayan night clubs, Dominican hair salons, Bolivian fried food... All this unrestrained force of Buenos Aires, the travesties at the traffic lights, the bauble peddlers, the fake soccer shirts...

### The world of your photos.

Yes, it is what I've captured in my photos and it's as if I almost can't speak about anything else as a visual artist; it entraps me. One might say I'm a prisoner of Latino Pop. At this point I'm not sure whether I like it or not. But you have to take life as it comes — I often go to Europe and I'm told: 'We want to hire Marcos López to play the part of Marcos López.' What is Marcos López? A stuffed bull? An image of Japanese tourists taking photos?

### How did you find the role of Marcos López, the filmmaker?

Well, this film was made from an unbridled impulse, an overwhelming lack of control on my part. I must have some 20 travellings of Villa 31, where I went alone, driving with one hand while holding the camera in the other hand. This is one of the main issues of today's cinema for me, the accumulation of material, since the costs on digital are almost zero. One could almost say the digital is a deal with the devil and it's worse when you're as compulsive as I am.

### So you had to face the medium's lack of limitations as well as your own unrestraint.

Not exactly, I've had financial limitations because my editor was charging a monthly fee

and had a limited time to process my unrestraint. On the other hand, I have a slightly different approach. Look, I've never graduated from university, from engineering school or from film school in Cuba where I studied with García Márquez, Fernando Birri. It's almost a teen-like attitude of rejecting rules. How can I be expected to limit myself to a specific dramatic structure? I film what I want and that's it.

### How did you manage to control your lack of control then?

It wasn't easy to admit that I had to stop. I wanted to keep embellishing. You could say embellishing is my specialty. I even had an argument with my editor after I saw that she had created this folder on the computer called 'Beauty Shots.' So I was shooting scene after scene and she just relegated everything to 'Beauty Shots.' I asked her what she meant by it. I mean, I thought I was shooting key scenes, the core of my film, for instance a close-up of a woman sweeping the floor in pink flip-flops, the reddish ground and the rosy plastic, and you call that 'Beauty Shots'?

### There's a certain element of pride in this, but what was it that made you proudest?

What gives me pride is the possibility to speak about honest poetic gestures such as some of Ramón Ayala's songs, I'm proud that I was able to film a craftsman painting porcelain piggies, I'm proud that I could save forever an image of Juan Falú playing some songs, I'm proud that I could finish this film with my own money, it makes me feel like I am a better man.

### What are you seeking by migrating from photography to painting to cinema?

I believe I've gotten pretty good at photographing,

I know I'm a good photographer and that there's almost no need for me to take more photos. I've understood what photography is about. Painting, however, provides me with a physical relationship of sorts, I think about so many things as I paint, like so many forms of knowledge, you see. I'm painting and it's like I've gone to therapy, I understand things about my past, there are all these images popping into my mind. It helps me assess, because when you can't paint well enough you become more aware of those who do.

### Few are the artists willing to own up to their ego in such an open manner.

You mean like me.

### Exactly.

Well... I admit I have this unrestrained, childlike ego but such an unbridled personality is too necessary if you want to become a strong artist. My wife, who is an excellent sound designer and has worked with me on this film, often comments on my need to always put myself at the centre, to have everyone else focusing on me all the time. But it's part of the profession, you know? There are so many things I'd like to do but can't bring myself to do. Meditate maybe, close my Facebook page for two years... It would be wiser and healthier. But it wouldn't be me.

### What does Ayala's music bring to mind?

I'm bound to ask myself that question, since everybody has been asking me why I've done this film. Honestly, I don't think you can have such a crystal clear idea of why you choose to do something at any time. This is possibly the only film I'll do in my entire life, so it's very likely that I've tried to convey something essential and intimately structural about myself.

### When seeing the film, it's apparent that it's not about one creator but two: you as well as Ayala.

Good point. I see now that the film goes beyond Ramón Ayala, it is a certain meditation on the world on my part, it conveys my thoughts on life, on why I say what I say, on what I say it for, on why I live in this horrid city, so full of grime and traffic and reflections of the social gap. I went walking on 9 de Julio today and no less than eight street peddlers approached me with packs of tissues. They look you in the eye and say, 'Help me out, please.'

### You've often exalted the urban jungle. Do you resent it then?

Not really but the city is oppressive for all of us and here we are, clinging like monkeys... the Paraguayan construction workers coming to seek a better life, the artists coming from the

'When I'm painting, you see, it's like I've gone to therapy, I understand things about my past, there are all these images popping into my mind.'

