

Aspen Art Museum
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Educator Notes



Installation view: Gabriel Kuri, *with personal thanks to their contractual thingness*, 2014. Photo: Tony Prikryl

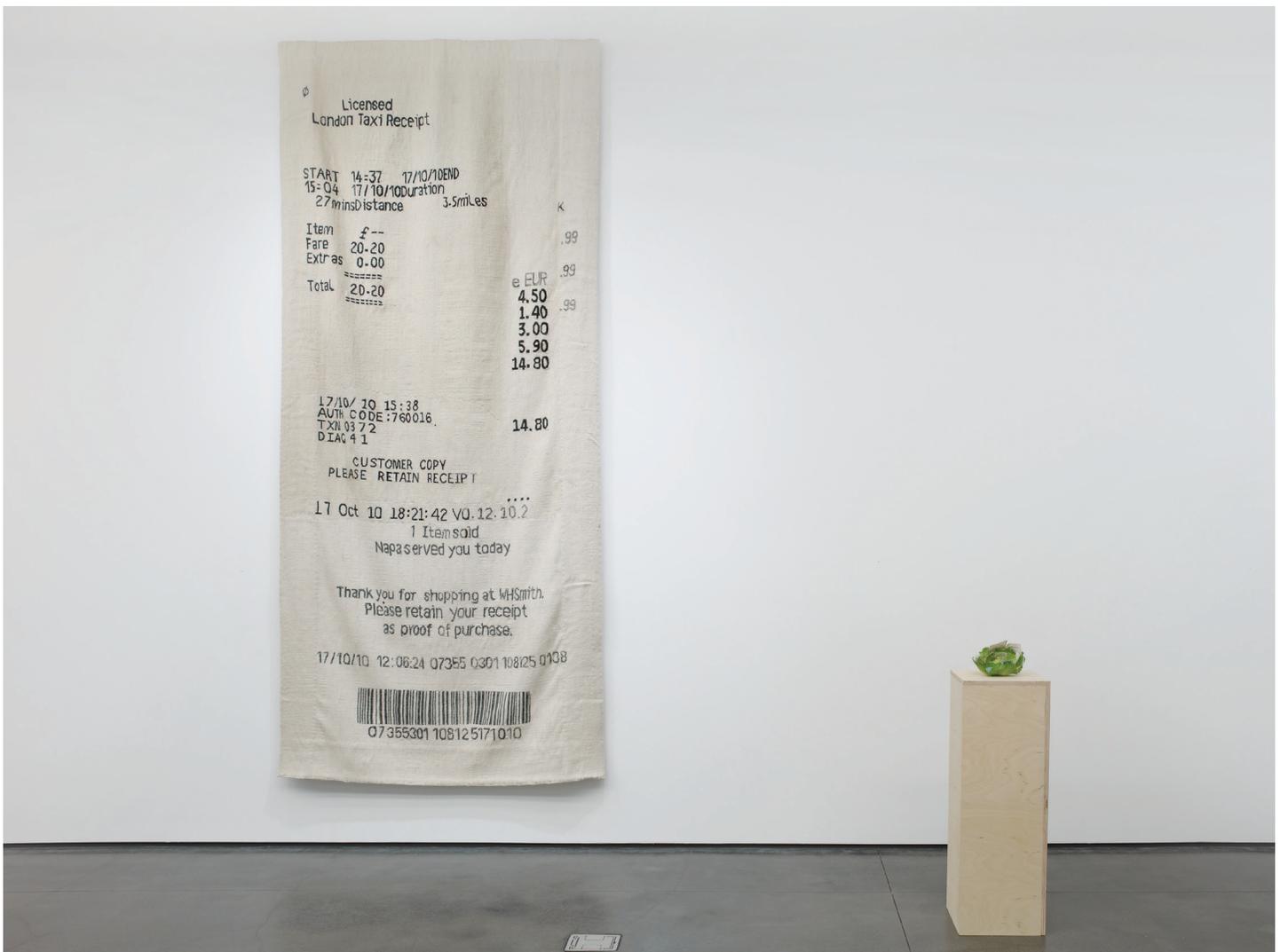
Gabriel Kuri with personal thanks to their contractual thingness

December 20, 2014–March 15, 2015

About the artist

Gabriel Kuri was born in Mexico City in 1970 and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. He studied at Goldsmiths College in London and Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas in Mexico City. Working across various media, he often explores the experience of collage and sculpture. Kuri gained recognition as part of a circle of influential artists—including Abraham Cruzvillegas, Dr. Lakra (Jerónimo López Ramírez), and Damián Ortega—who met regularly in the Mexico City studio of Gabriel Orozco in the late eighties and early nineties. Kuri works within a long legacy of artists who explored found materials and their relationships to society and culture.

Kuri is the Gabriela and Ramiro Garza Distinguished Artist in Residence at the Aspen Art Museum.



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About the exhibition

Presenting a selected survey of works created over the past decade, Kuri's Aspen Art Museum exhibition examines the artist's interest in consumer culture and the transactions of our daily lives. Interested in the idea that we live in a global world where everything is available at any time with the click of a button, he asks us to slow down and examine both what we do and who we are in our everyday interactions through his work.

This exhibition brings together, for the first time, a series of Kuri's hand-woven Gobelins, a labor-intensive form of traditional weaving found in Guadalajara, Mexico. Instead of elaborate patterns or fantastical scenes, the artist incorporates mundane images of evidence of transactions, such as grocery store or taxi receipts. By changing the form and size of these items, which are so often taken for granted and thrown away, Kuri draws our attention to them for more careful consideration. Responding to the work of artisans who were required to carefully weave each thread, we are invited to acknowledge the traces we leave behind each day and perhaps take greater care in our actions and exchanges.

Kuri also elevates the ordinary in sculptures such as *Waiting, Giving, Spent* (2012), in which steel paper towel dispensers and matchsticks are larger than life. By manipulating the scale of these objects, we consider the question: how do these objects relate to monuments? Monuments are usually large sculptures that elevate moments or individuals that society wishes to recognize and remember collectively. What do we want to remember about these objects that Kuri made?

Just as these questions might reveal how we ascribe value to objects, many collages in this exhibition use found objects that relate to economic experiences, such as coin wrappers, parking tickets, waiting stubs, labels, and stickers taken from fruit and other perishable items. Taken out of their

ordinary context and arranged or juxtaposed with unexpected images, they also invite a deeper reading into actions that so often go unnoticed.

The words "please" and "thank you," often printed on receipts or plastic bags, also find their way into Kuri's work. These simple forms of communication exemplify connections with others that are needed to create a transaction. Furthermore, they reflect the moment of agreement that is needed for an exchange. As the title of the exhibition (*with personal thanks to their contractual thingness*) suggests, these artworks serve as reminders of the behavior of our interactions—physical, social, and emotional.

Questions for discussion

- I How many different types of exchanges or transactions do you experience in a normal day?
- I What do we collect every day? What do we leave behind? What happens with our waste?
- I What is something you use every day without giving it much thought?

Suggested activities

Points of Connection

- I Invite students to examine the contents in their backpack. Set any textbooks, pencils, pens, or other large objects aside and lay out smaller items such as gum wrappers, graded homework, or other paper scraps that might be in their bag. What story do these items tell about the student and with whom they have interacted?
- I Have students choose one item that they found in their backpack. Can they create a sculpture that produces energy when this item is placed in contact with a new object? Search around the school, home, or outdoors for the object that can serve as the other point of connection.

Advertisement Diversion

- I Ask students if they have ever made a collage using newspaper or magazine images. This activity will have a twist for those students who might be familiar with cutting out images to make new meanings.
- I Have students cut out an advertisement from a newspaper or magazine.
- I Then have students create a mixed media work that changes the original meaning. How can they make a new image or even a new story from the advertisement?

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspenartmuseum.org.

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