

# ART PROVOCATION

By Regina de Con Cossío



LUIS HAMPSHIRE  
Oaxaca de Juarez, 1975  
Lives and Works in Mexico

Artist, Independent Curator, and Art Promoter. Luis Hampshire employs art to find his place in the world, to inhabit and understand it. Art as a medium permits him to separate from his own self and discover the otherness.

Hampshire studied arts at the Claustro de Sor Juana (USCJ) in Mexico City, he co-founded the art space Ediciones Plan B with Jessica Wzony. In addition to this, as an independent curator, he has set up exhibitions nationally and internationally. Between 2011 and 2013 he directed the “Taller de Artes Plásticas Rufino Tamayo” (Rufino Tamayo Plastic Arts Workshop), in Oaxaca. Moreover, he was the director of MUPO (Museum of the Oaxaca Painters).

His creative process dates back to his youth. The Imaginarium he lived in as a child in a small town was widened through the underground world of skateboarding, full of album covers and illustrations. This allowed him to draw a contrast between his local world and other worlds. The discovery of this contrast set in motion his creative process. He is inspired by what can be found in the daily and ordinary, his passion for plants and architecture, design and crafts, high-culture, low-culture, crafts, food, literature and language, games, arts and of course artists. These influences are present in the art pieces he creates.

He views painting, his signature medium to create art, as a “world-platform”. It transcends beyond the technical and into a space to interact with meanings, contrasts, and different worlds. Recurring elements in his works are the body and representations of its fragments, humor, sex, and the derisory. Almost as an obsession coming back and forth we see the cutout and paste. In his work color is used as a mechanism to construct spatiality and narratives. Painting transforms into writing and exploring history traces.

He has the sensibility of an artist and the experience of running an Institution. This positions him in an interesting spot to have an opinion on the current challenges facing the art world.



REGINA: From your perspective, what is the role an artist should play in times of uncertainty?

HAMPSHIRE: An advanced one, art has always been and is in the future possible. In these moments of closure not only health, but political, social, and economic, art is important to dissent, diverge, and generate a broad present that is consolidated in the future. But always from the possible, the democratic, the radical, and the beautiful.

R: Historically, the figure of the artist has been understood as an uncomprehended genius by society. However, in more recent times, art has been used as a manifestation of social participation. Should the artist take an active place in the social changes or is his duty to represent what is before his eyes?

H: Making art is a political act in itself. Politics is the possibility of having a voice in the public space and art has it when it opens up to say the unspeakable. But going beyond the aesthetic and assuming an active role in the definition and expansion of identity, culture, democracy, and politics in the now. Otherwise, it is just a decoration or a luxury souvenir.

R: If artworks are usually seen in galleries, museums, and public spaces, from your perspective, how will the dynamic change after the pandemic?

H: The system of distribution and promotion of art has changed radically from the post-avant-garde to our days, and even more so with the expansion of the phenomenon by digital media and the internet. Now more than ever it is necessary to rethink the appropriate means and mechanisms for each medium, language, and open up to everything. Nothing is fixed but inflow.

R: Some of your work considers the world of screens as space where new proposals can be made. Do you think that screens, cell phones, etc., are going to take an even more leading role to show and/or produce art? Will we see experimental and risky things on our cell phones?

H: Yes and no. An important part of doing and living in art, as well as our body, has to do with the physical, the presence, the erotic of the encounter. The dialectic of the other affects and alters me. In this way, the presence of matter, the problem of the exhibition is only reconsidered through various mechanisms.

Not closing but the opening is what is today. The radical is multiple.

R: If art ceases to show in museums and galleries and turns around screens. What will the role of the curator be? What will happen to the art fairs?

H: I think the roles of the art world expand and find different paths. Museums, galleries, fairs, and alternative spaces are developing alongside physical space in digital space. The job will be to put the correct messages on the correct media. Or deny them and rethink them in other formats. All this 2020 shows us that nothing closes but reinvents itself as a mechanism for survival or even resistance.

Hampshire's work is currently exhibited at Karen Huber Gallery. I had the opportunity to visit and experience an outstanding trademark of his work. The whole setup gives the impression of walking through a stage's scenography as if a play is taking place. Yet by a closer examination of each art piece, one discovers an autonomous scene on its own. The artist achieves this through the use of the collage technique and the marriage between different materials. Cuts and pastes, edited passages, overlapping worlds, layers of history, meanings reshaped. That's what Hampshire's work is about. Isn't it also what we seem to be doing every day, nowadays? 

Selected material to learn more about the artist:

<http://www.saladeprensacdc.unam.mx/index.php/direccion-de-artes-visuales/item/1716-estos-dias-luis-hampshire-en-muca-roma>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbPNRaQFsRo>

<https://www.rotativooaxaca.com.mx/uncategorized/luis-hampshire-refrenda-su-identidad-con-metate-ola-chica/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brk304KcfD8>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtV\\_HUWzVP8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtV_HUWzVP8)

<https://vimeo.com/432309835>

<http://privilegemagazine.com.mx/admin/el-gran-sur-estados-de-animo-fuera-del-centro/>

<https://ondamx.art/evento/mauricio-marcin-VjhR29atbTjVI94kAFAV>

<https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/after-office/luis-hampshire-rinde-tributo-a-ta-mayo-con-exposicion-en-el-muca-roma>



