

PAPER IN PROFILE:

MIXOGRAFIA  
AND TALLER  
DE GRÁFICA  
MEXICANA

**June 4 – August 21, 2016**

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia

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# MATHIAS GOERITZ

*Mensaje*, which translates as “message,” is one in a series of works by the same name that modernist architect, painter, and sculptor Mathias Goeritz transmitted to the universe in the latter half of his life while working in Mexico.

A waterfall of gold runs down a honey combed landscape of soft and pliable calcifications in this gilded print that resembles a punctured sheet of metal. In fact, Goeritz created just such objects of punctured metal over wood when he began the series, in 1958. He returned to *Mensaje* some two decades later, when Mixografia’s unique printmaking process made it possible to achieve a similarly mottled, notched field on paper.

The *Mensaje* series consists of monochromatic tablets that Goeritz developed in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s using gold leaf. He made work after work using different underlying supports and dimensions and experimenting with assorted perforations in a kind of mystic devotion. Goeritz began creating these golden messages after the death of his wife, Marianne Gast, in 1958. He became more spiritual after her death and, in fact, likened this artistic production to visual prayer. Rather than decadence, the golden luster was meant to inspire reflection. Gold leaf signified spirituality for the artist, perhaps because it recalls the opulent decoration of Catholic churches. Goeritz strategically deploys the rich texture and radiance of the *Mensaje* works to create an instinctual engagement and encourage contemplation, as with traditional religious icons.

Goeritz’s act of devotion recalls the lighting of a candle. As the viewer’s eye revels in the gleam of the gold leaf, it lingers over the holes. The material softens the mechanical quality that the punctures might otherwise suggest, implicating a human hand. Can their patterns be deciphered, like Morse code? On the



contrary, the *Mensaje* series harmonizes with Goeritz's better known legacy of "emotional architecture," an architecture that rejects functionalism to create spaces for emotional response. Similarly, the content of *Mensaje* is communicated to the viewer through the material experience of the work rather than intellectually. Its code remains private, while its emotional significance sinks in intuitively.

at the School of Architecture at the Universidad de Guadalajara. He spent the rest of his life in Mexico. Goeritz is best known for monumental architectural projects that blur the boundaries among building, environment, and sculpture, including Mexico City's El Eco Experimental Museum (1953) and Satellite Towers (1957–58), a collaborative work with the Mexican architect Luis Barragán. Widely influential as an artist

## GOERITZ FORGED HIS RADICAL POLITICAL BELIEFS . . .

*Mensaje* presents a more intimate side of the artist's work than his emotional architecture does. Goeritz propagated that architectural movement as an émigré artist in midcentury Mexico. Its principles were less directly engaged in politics than the figurative art and propaganda that dominated the Mexican art scene at the time, but quietly argued for abstraction and social progress in tandem. Goeritz forged his radical political beliefs and found respite in art in Berlin during the tumultuous interwar period that saw the rise of the Nazi Party. As a Jewish intellectual, he fled to North Africa in 1941. After a brief period in Spain, he went to Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1949, where he was invited to teach

and teacher, Goeritz promoted a modern visual language that combined geometric abstraction and European avant-garde ideas with a redemptive spirituality.

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(page 102)  
Mathias Goeritz (Mexican, b. Germany, 1915–1990)  
*Mensaje*, 1982  
Mixografia print on handmade paper, gold leaf  
25 x 15 inches

(above)  
Portrait of the artist

# JOE GOODE



Joe Goode (American, b. 1937)  
*Pollution-R4*, 1995  
Mixografia print on handmade paper  
12 x 15 inches

**S**mog hovers in layers over sprawling Los Angeles, especially in summer. The sight of it is familiar to American painter Joe Goode, who has lived in the area since the 1960s. The artist has shown a consistent fascination with what the average person simply sees through: matter such as pollution, air, water, or glass. Goode's *Pollution* series (1995) extrapolates the nuclear-waste-colored haze of atmospheric effect to small abstract prints. Goode highlights the beauty in the contemporary phenomenon of air pollution by stripping it down to essential colors of light and sky. He made these prints concurrently with a series of large paintings by the same name, which share intense colors and use cropped compositions, as if only a fragment of a vast field were captured. Even when Goode works in an abstract mode, his paintings and prints tend to recall broad expanses of nature, such as the sky or sea.

The Mixografia technique creates substantial depth for a print, as seen in *Pollution*'s saturated blue background and protruding orange highlights. The printing process exerts such

The inclusion of Goode's work in the seminal exhibition *New Painting of Common Objects* at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1962 placed him in the company of emerging pop artists such as Roy Lichtenstein, Ed Ruscha, Andy Warhol, and Jim Dine, but his focus on perception since this debut argues for a reevaluation of that association. Rather than the concern with consumerism or media typically associated with pop art, the artist considers the more conceptual nature of seeing, framed through the everyday. The *Pollution* series aligns with Goode's abiding interest in how we see and what we quite literally see through.

One finds this divergence from the common themes of pop art in *Pollution-R4*, which evokes far earlier artistic styles. It boasts the kind of high-key Venetian color found in luminous Renaissance landscape paintings. In its suggestion of a deep recess of sky, the print recalls the baroque-period trompe l'oeil tricks of ceiling paintings in cathedrals, in which angels and saints appear to ascend to or descend from the heavens. At the same time, *Pollution-R4* could

## THE INCLUSION OF GOODE'S WORK ... PLACED HIM IN THE COMPANY OF EMERGING POP ARTISTS SUCH AS ROY LICHTENSTEIN, ED RUSCHA, ANDY WARHOL, AND JIM DINE ...

pressure that the blue ink deeply penetrates the paper rather than merely sitting on its surface, enhancing the sense of receding into the background that cool colors, like blue, already possess. Goode often incorporates nontraditional materials into his work, and for this series he used an industrial-grade heat gun to melt wax onto a wooden printing plate. The relief of the wax's gummy materiality, transferred via the printing process, clogs the surface of the print like pollution in the air, creating a visceral reminder of the texture and feeling of smog itself. The vibrancy and depth of the print suggest that the viewer looks not at a representation of the thing, but a transmutation of the thing itself—pollution brought forth to hover on the wall.

almost be a fragment of a painting by Claude Monet—a snapshot of sunset reflecting in the pond at Giverny. The built-up areas of pigment created through the Mixografia technique create the effect of ripples on the water. Monet and the impressionists sought to capture the lively, transitory modern world—subject matter that contemporaries typically deemed as unlovely as pollution. Goode captures an unheralded splendor to the smog, even while the *Pollution* series overall cites a worrying global phenomenon.

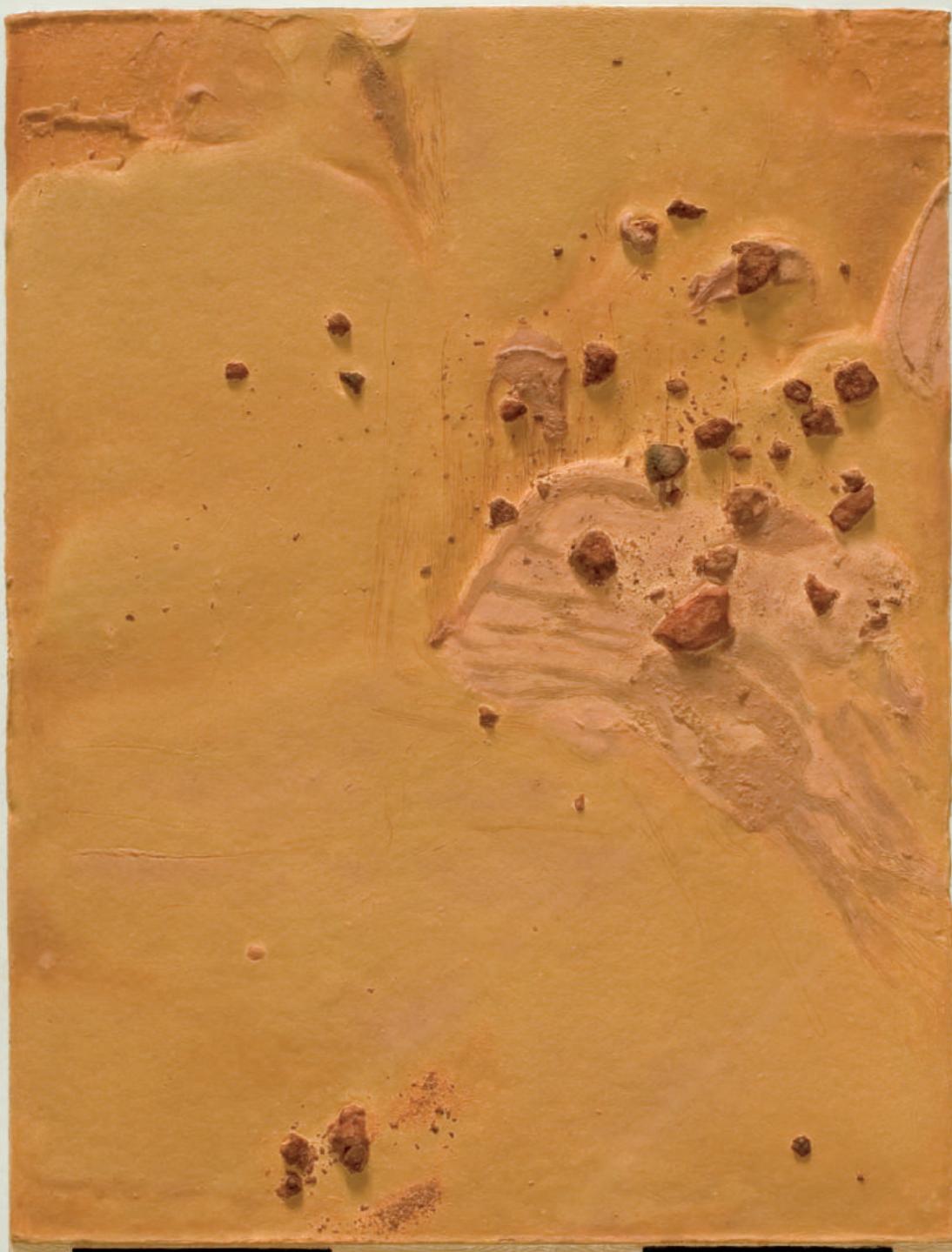
LW

# JULIÃO SARMENTO

~~Relations that are strange, privileged, sometimes exclusive, and that can only with difficulty withstand being shared with others; relations of invisibility in full light~~



limping duck



AERIA AND ARABIA

AUGUST 11, 2012

20/05

Tim Hansen 2013

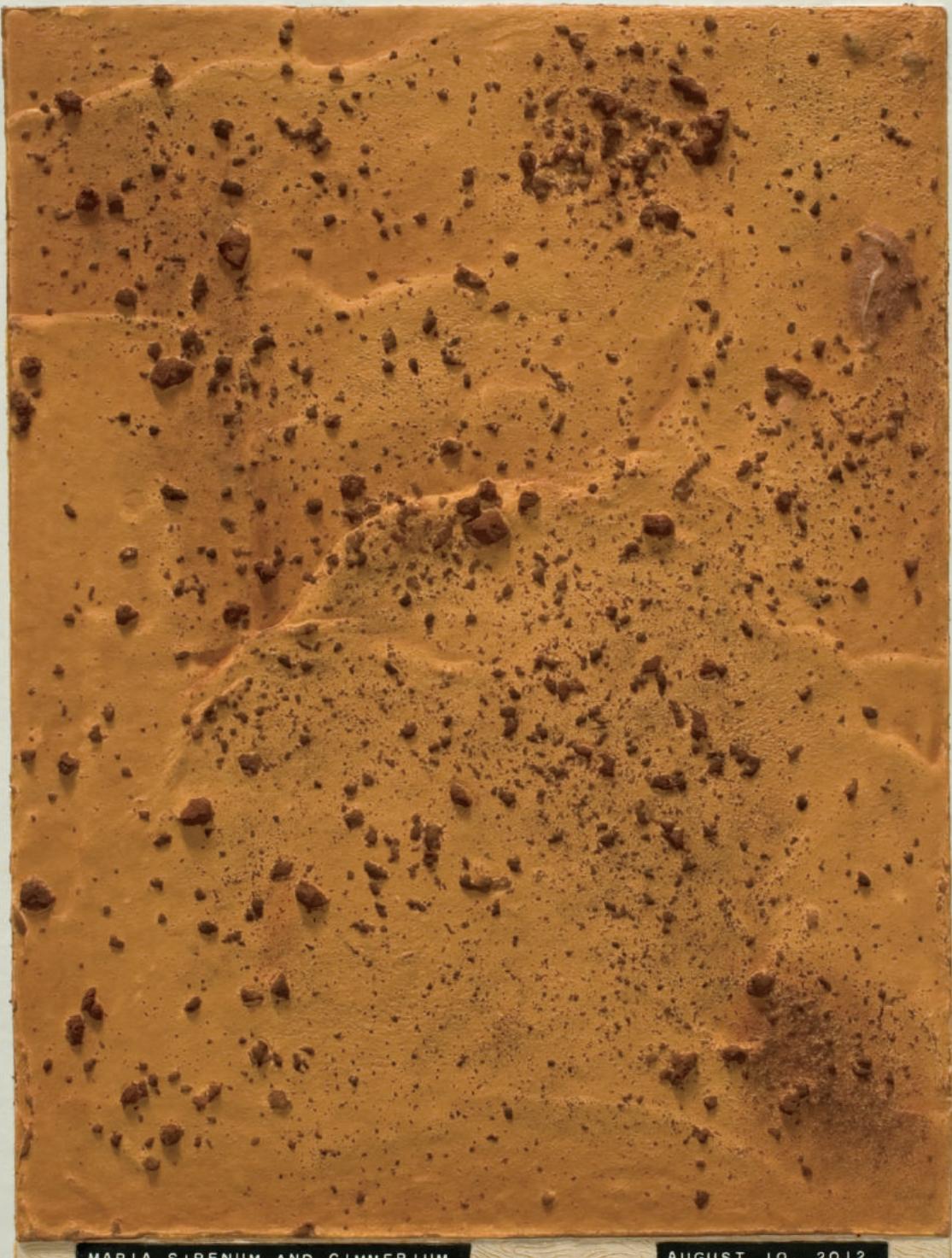
**Two different poles of the work of Julião Sarmento seem to be on view in these prints. The earlier—*Limping Duck*—deploys the visual vocabulary of flat, black-and-white imagery mixed with text that is familiar from his paintings. The later prints—from the artist's *Curiosity's Eye* series—appear more abstract, if equally concerned with surface.**

The artist's canvases are richly textured with uneven swaths of paint, and they frequently feature significant text within the composition as well as in the title. These components parallel how Sarmento approached both of these Mixografia prints, in which a combination of title, painterly surface, and embedded text inform our final understanding.

In the upper right corner of *Limping Duck*, on a black background as if pasted onto the surface of the print, text in a white serifed font posits: "Relations that are strange, privileged, sometimes exclusive, and that can only with difficulty

withstand being shared with others; relations of invisibility in full light." Given the appearance of a whited-out block of text preceding these words, it is clear that we are missing part of what could be anything from a dictionary definition of romantic love to a conspiracy theorist's musing on institutional power. Below, in a type-writer-style font, the words "limping duck" undercut pretensions at philosophy. The juxtaposition of meanings creates melancholy, recalling Sarmento's recurring themes of psychological interaction, duality, memory, transgression, and sensuality. Sarmento contrasts these texts with the material presence conjured up by the work. The creamy white background of rough-edged handmade paper is spotted with protrusions and black smudges. A black t-shirt seems to materialize from the pencil of the artist up into the fully formed article, the shoulders of which peel out from the paper. The emptiness of the shirt suggests the individual, or, more specifically, a missing presence. Solitary and incomplete in themselves, the texts and image suggest the possibility of meaning if considered in relation with one another. Yet the connection remains indeterminate. The elements literally are what they are and no more.

A similar insistence on the literal governs the *Curiosity's Eye* series, represented here by two prints. Although the prints might appear to be an abstract explosion of ochre, ground down unevenly across a surface and tacked onto paper, official-looking labels provide a clue to a different story. "AERIA AND ARABIA" and "AUGUST 11, 2012" pinpoint a particular place and time. The recent date is straightforward; the other phrase less so. "Aeria" and "Arabia Terra" are scientific terms for areas in the northern hemisphere of Mars. The *Curiosity's Eye* series depicts what the Mars Rover Curiosity recorded through its lens when it landed on the Red Planet in 2012. Sarmento's use of "Arabia," here uncoupled from "Terra," recalls the Arabian Peninsula on Earth. Sarmento both presents a straightforward representation of the rich orange earth and dust of the distant planet and draws a comparison to the deserts of Arabia. For centuries, the two places have been loci of the imagination for people who have never seen them, as evidenced by the popular tales of the Arabian Nights and science fiction novels. By acknowledging the "eye" through which we see distant Mars and including the word "curiosity,"



MARIA SIRENUM AND CIMMERIUM

AUGUST 10, 2012

20/25

2013

Sarmento infuses quixotic longing into this nonhuman enterprise. Even if his carefully labeled, richly hued depiction seems to be made of the very sands of Mars itself, we are reminded that it and the planet itself hold a quasifictional status in our minds.

One of the most respected Portuguese artists of his generation, Sarmento studied painting and architecture at the Escola Superior de Belas-Artes in Lisbon from 1967 to 1970, later receiving a master's degree from the same institution. He has exhibited extensively worldwide since the 1970s. Throughout his career, Sarmento has worked in a wide range of media, including painting, drawing, sculpture, film, performance, and architecture, but relies on similar images and visual strategies regardless of medium. As can be seen in the playfulness of these prints, Sarmento's complex and conceptual work requires the active imagination of the viewer to bridge its free-floating set of meanings.

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(page 191)  
Julião Sarmento (Portuguese, b. 1948)  
*Limping Duck*, 2007  
Mixografia print on handmade paper, graphite  
35 x 35 inches  
Courtesy of Julião Sarmento & Mixografia, Los Angeles

(page 192)  
Julião Sarmento (Portuguese, b. 1948)  
*Curiosity's Eye (Aeria and Arabia)*, 2013  
Mixografia print on handmade paper  
18 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 14 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches  
Courtesy of Julião Sarmento & Mixografia, Los Angeles

(left)  
Julião Sarmento (Portuguese, b. 1948)  
*Curiosity's Eye (Maria Sirenum and Cimmerium)*, 2013  
Mixografia print on handmade paper  
18 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 14 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches  
Courtesy of Julião Sarmento & Mixografia, Los Angeles

(right)  
Julião Sarmento, *Curiosity's Eye (Aeria and Arabia)* (detail)

