

museum of arts and design

**Dead or Alive**

Museum of Arts and Design  
2 Columbus Circle  
New York, New York 10019

Published in conjunction with the exhibition  
*Dead or Alive* organized by the  
Museum of Arts and Design  
April 27, 2010–October 24, 2010

Copyright © 2010 Museum of Arts and Design

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission in writing from the publishers.

*Dead or Alive* is made possible, in part, through the generous support of the National Endowment for the Arts and American Express, with additional support from the Mondriaan Foundation, Amsterdam.



Edited by Martina D'Alton  
Designed by Linda Florio, Florio Design

ISBN: 978-1-890385-20-0

Printed and bound by The Studley Press, Dalton, Massachusetts

All measurements: height x width x depth, unless otherwise noted.  
The titles of the objects featured in the exhibition are indicated in the picture captions in **boldface** type.

Front cover: Fabián Peña. *The Impossibility of Storage for the Soul I (Self-Portrait)*, 2007; Cockroach wing fragments, translucent paper, light boxes; 15 x 15 x 15 in. (38.1 x 38.1 x 38.1 cm) each  
Collection of the West Collection, Oaks, Pennsylvania  
Photo: Oriol Tarridas

Frontispiece: Prepping pigeon feathers for installation "Discharge" in *Dead or Alive*. Photo: Kate McGwire.

Half title page: *Paradise Insect/Symbiotic Relationship #118*, 2007  
Mixed insect and bone parts with glass eyes and paint  
Diptych two, frame sizes: 36 x 22 1/2 x 2 in. (91.4 x 57.1 x 5 cm)

Back cover: Levi van Veluw. *Landscape I*, from the Landscapes series, 2008  
Lambdaprint on dibond, antireflex Perspex (2 prints); 47 1/4 x 39 3/8 in. (120 x 100 cm); 23 5/8 x 19 11/16 in. (60 x 50 cm)  
Courtesy of Galerie Ron Mandos, Amsterdam/Rotterdam  
Photo: Levi van Veluw





**EMU FLAG + CLOAK (FLURO ORANGE)**,  
 2006–8  
 Nylon netting, emu feathers, glue, fiberglass  
 rod, metal, lambda print  
 47 x 55 x 23 in. (119.3 x 139.7 x 58.4 cm)  
 (cloak)  
 Courtesy of the artist; Sicardi Gallery, Ha

**RUANA**, 2008  
 Lambda print on photographic paper  
 70 3/4 x 47 1/4 in. (180 x 120 cm)  
 Edition 1/3 + 1AP  
 Courtesy of the artist; Sicardi Gallery, Ha





## Maria Fernanda Cardoso

**T**HE DESIRE TO DISAPPEAR, to become invisible or blend in, intrigues me. Being the biggest, strongest, or loudest will not always result in the best chance of survival or success. Quite often, to mimic—to pretend to be “other” rather than “self”—might be more effective. Even better, it might be possible to play both roles at the same time according to the occasion. Mimicry is not just about looks, but also about behavior.

*Emu Flag + Cloak* is both things. It’s a way to mimic and to get attention. It works with one national emblem to create another (a new flag or ceremonial cloak). It was my intention to re-create and to re-present the Australian landscape by using an indigenous material. The texture and color of emu feathers have evolved over millions of years to look and move exactly like the scrub in the Australian bush. When worn, the cloak’s feathers bounce and move like grasses in the wind. I consider my work with emu feathers to belong to a new kind of landscape genre.

Ceremonial feather cloaks traditionally have not been made in Australia, although possum cloaks have, and Kiwi feather cloaks were made in New Zealand. In both places, the use of such garments was primarily ceremonial. As a feather cloak, *Emu Flag + Cloak* also refers to the “Captain Cook Cloak,” a Hawaiian feather cloak that belonged to the famous explorer’s collection and is now considered an Australian national treasure. It is ironic that an imported object became a symbol of national identity. Could the cloak do the same for me, as an immigrant artist? Working with the National Bird of Australia is a humorous attempt to “blend in” to the Australian art scene and my new place of residence.

The choice of color for the netting material provides a visual contrast to enhance the natural colors of the emu feathers. The netting refers to the vividly colored feathers used in other traditions of feather art, especially in South America. The fluoro orange net makes the piece quite visible and disruptive, an apparent contradiction between the dull colors of the emu feathers and the exuberance of a tropical bird. It was not until I understood that in the tropical rain forest, vibrant reds, yellows, blues, and greens mimic fruiting vegetation and the blue of the sky and were not to attract attention, that I realized the need to use, respect, and enhance the feather’s quiet colors to reflect this dry continent.



ESCHA THORNS / CORONA DE  
ESCHA, 1990/2002  
metal  
8 in. (195 x 90 x 20 cm)  
artist; Sicardi Gallery, Houston

UNTITLED / SIN TITULO, 1990  
Preserved frogs, metal  
70 3/4 x 59 x 14 3/4 in. (180 x 150 x 37.5 cm)  
Private collection  
Courtesy of the artist; Sicardi Gallery, Houston

