

make it, and as such it can become embodied in unconventional things and places. As in the case of Maria Sáez's *Puerto Rico* (c. 1955), *Desnudo frente a espejo* (Nude in front of the Mirror, 1960) (pl. 32) and Teresa Ferrero's *México* (c. 1955, active in Mexico and United States), *Boca de table* (Wooden Mouth, 2007) (pl. 46), González's choice of the "table mirrored" dressing table as the vehicle for her proposal thus highlights the particular sense of "home" while referring us to an intimate space associated with the construction of a woman's self. And yet, instead of an individualized face, the flat-painted "reflected" gaze reveals an icon of Renaissance art: a Madonna in solid colors, thereby both obstructing and expanding the process of self-identification. In such a context, the iconic image operates on various levels. It is both religious and a paradigm of so-called universal (i.e., European) art. On one level, it suggests the limitations imposed by "affiliation or work on's social roles. On another, the vibrant colors and the smooth, flat textures of the common oil enamel paint and metal sheets employed by González challenge the previous execution of the original. Her representation of Raphael's masterpiece is, in effect, closer to the type of oil-based paintings or popular illustrations that circulate in Colombia than to the Italian master's painting. Through a series of subversions, the artist brings attention to the unexpected ways images circulate and are received in the periphery of urban centers. The fact that she still considers these furniture pieces "paintings" and not sculptures reveals a great deal about her aesthetic principles and methodology. As Carmen María Caraballo suggests, in these works, painting sheds its function as static medium to become a conceptual practice.⁶⁵

González's approach to "home" as a virtual system of images finds a productive counterpoint in Jorge Pedro Núñez's (*Venezuela*, b. 1976, active in France) *El sueño de una casa* series (*The Dream of a House*, 2011) (pls. 37–43), in which the artist repurposes images of shantytowns and middle-class homes to address issues of inequality and privilege as they relate to the middle-class dream of stability, comfort, and success embodied in the physical structure of a house. The source of his proposal is a book containing color photographs of trees native to his country, which was published by the Shell Oil Company of Venezuela.⁶⁵ Employing his preferred practice of superimposition, Núñez used the book's pages as the support for collages composed from color photographs of urban sprawl, shantytowns, or the interiors of upscale homes that he cut from used and remaindered books found in bookstores in Caracas.⁶⁶ The superimposed images dialogue chromatically with the landscape elements, so that the choice of these native trees as the support upon which to develop a particular concept of "home" is

revealing. The lushness and tropical exuberance of the Venezuelan landscape in all its manifestations—valleys, mountains, rivers, and flora—has, since the colonial period, been considered a strong marker of the nation's "identity," as conveyed by painter-travelers, writers, musicians, and architects who made it the focus of their work. Moreover, trees embody microenvironments that sustain life and can be used as primitive dwellings. *El sueño de una casa* activates the contrast between the exuberant vernacular landscape and the precariousness of shantytown architecture. By positioning the images of "ranchos" and middle-class homes over these popular emblems, Núñez not only juxtaposes the life-giving tree with the suffocating aspects of poor urban constructions that he experienced while living in Caracas (in the 1980s and 1990s) but also, and more important, underscores the failure of the Venezuelan post-World War II developmentalist project, which was boosted by oil but characterized by poor urban planning and sharp socioeconomic gaps. Despite its status since the 1930s as one of the world's top countries with respect to oil reserves, Venezuela proved unable to lift a considerable percentage of the population out of poverty and into the promise of a middle-class future. In this regard, the fact that the source of the tree imagery is a book published by Shell Oil is noteworthy. Núñez is undoubtedly taking advantage of a significant irony: a major transnational company that engages in deforestation and the exploitation of natural resources publishing a book on native trees. In his own words, this connection only "makes more directly evident the relationship between oil, progress, modernity and national identity."⁶⁷ Furthermore, Núñez's strategy is not unlike that utilized by Ramiro Gomez (*United States*, b. 1986) in his domestic interiors series (pls. 58–67). In both cases, the collage medium makes possible the jarring juxtaposition of different social classes and cultures, exposing the limitations of the middle-class dream, specifically the elusiveness of the comforts and social status provided by home ownership.⁶⁸

By contrast, the appropriation of a single X-ray provides the starting point for Julio César Morales's (*Mexico*, b. 1966, active in United States) heart-wrenching animated video *Boy in Suitcase* (2015) (pl. 90), in which "home" emerges as a transportable readymade. The work powerfully evokes the real-life story of an eight-year-old boy, smuggled inside a suitcase, whose journey takes him from the Ivory Coast through Morocco and into Spain. The work is part of the artist's long-standing research into failed border crossings and human trafficking throughout the world, which led him to take on the combined role of sociologist and anthropologist. His ongoing explorations of these subjects have led Morales to assemble an archive of over five hundred images of failed border crossings that he strategically appropriates from the Internet