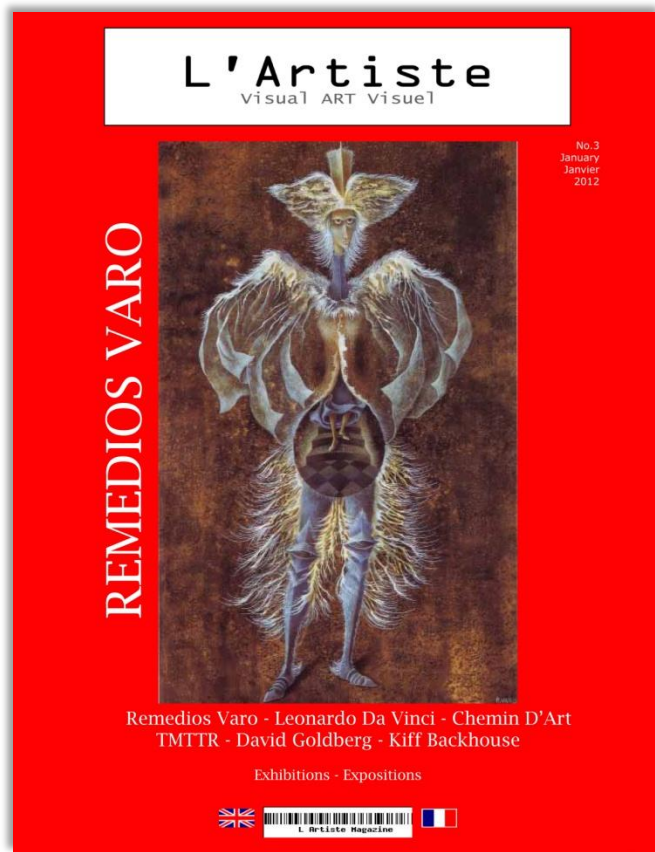
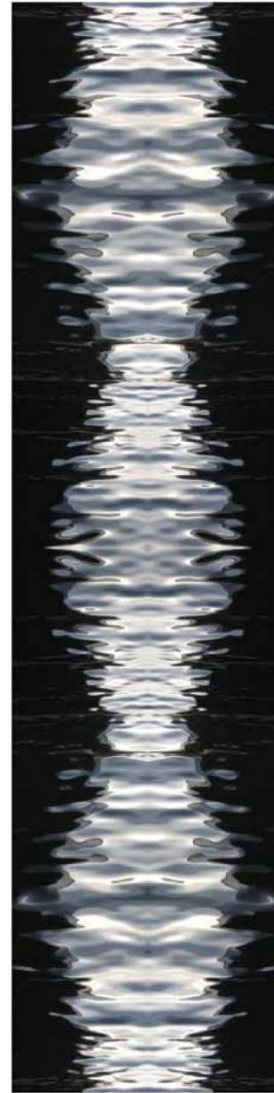


John Brown Photography



L'Artiste
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John H. Brown, Jr.
Untitled, 2012
Photo-based Pigment Print on Canvas
30" x 96"

obvious that to create a powerful and coherent exhibition, there should be a common theme. After throwing thematic ideas around for a little while river and water were decided. Water is a rich and multifaceted symbol and metaphor. It can signify everything from destruction to salvation, as in the song Take Me To The River (hence the title of the exhibition and ensuing artists' collective). And there were two rivers involved: the Nile and the Potomac.

Despite having established a theme for the exhibition, the participating artists were unsettled by the prospect of the exhibition itself. The al-Qaeda attack in New York, six months earlier, was still very much in everyone's mind, and the Bush Administration was indicating at the time that it fully intended to invade Iraq. All four artists were fundamentally opposed to a US invasion of Iraq and the message this unilateral invasion would send to the world, and particularly the Islamic world. They decided to use the Cairo exhibition as an opportunity to send a message, however small, to the Islamic world: There were people in America who were strongly opposed to the potential invasion of Iraq.

In order to make a larger and more powerful statement through the exhibition more artists were invited who would reflect the positive values of the United States. In total twelve artists - six men and six women; six Americans and six artists from other countries - were invited to take part. One of the positive aspects of the Washington arts community is that there are a large number of artists from other countries living and working there. It was not difficult to find artist friends from other countries who strongly appreciated the good qualities of America but were as horrified as the American artists by what they considered to be the Bush Administration's unilateral warmongering.

By expanding the number and diversity of artists in the exhibition the immediate intention was to have the exhibition serve, overall, as a symbol of Americans and people from other countries working together toward a common goal, in contrast to how the Bush regime approached foreign policy.

In essence, the mission of the first TMTR exhibition evolved into an exercise of soft diplomacy: The diverse nature of the artists working together for the exhibition was to be a statement that a core value of the United States was to work cooperatively with people of different heritage, whether domestically or internationally. As Take Me To The River moved forward with other projects the statement that TMTR wished to make through its projects expanded beyond a focus on the United States to a larger vision of people everywhere in the world working together toward a common good.

The project has continued to go from strength to strength, it has secured funding support from major institutions and has held exhibitions and outreach programmes around the world.

Forthcoming events :