



In San Francisco for his retrospective at SERGE SOROKKO GALLERY, the Mexican artist speaks with Victor Vargas about traveling troops, designing for the stage and appearing in his works.

Untitled Oil on Canvas 1973/1974 Signed on Verso. [SERGE SOROKKO GALLERY](#) Tel. (415) 421.7770

Internationally acclaimed Mexican artist Miguel Condé grew up between México and the United States and has made Spain his home for the last forty-four years. Condé's works are collected by the [MOMA](#) in New York, the [Art Institute of Chicago](#), the [Smithsonian](#) and many other important art institutions worldwide. In San Francisco last month for the debut of his latest large-scale exhibition at [SERGE SOROKKO GALLERY](#), Condé spoke with Victor Vargas about traveling troops, designing for the stage, and appearing in his works.

Victor Vargas: You're a highly accomplished artist and this is the first time you've been back on our shores in a long time. What are your feelings towards the American Art Market today?

Miguel Condé: I have been exhibiting in the United States for a long time now. I had my first professional exhibition, a one man show in Provincetown, Massachusetts a long time ago, that was 1958 or something like that. Then I had a show in 1970 – was it the '72 season, '71 or '72 season – I've done so many shows – in the New York gallery of [GIMPEL & WEITZENHOFFER](#) and they are to this day still a very prominent British gallery. The American market is of course, huge and in many ways self sustaining and in the period of my lifetime it has changed radically as you can imagine. When I was a young man, the serious collectors still thought that the place to go to was Paris to buy contemporary art. I'm simplifying but it was true then and it's no longer true. Now, the other side of the coin is that New York above all, we have to be honest about these things, has been the epicenter of the contemporary art market for a long time and that's the way it is. Whether I think it's a good thing or a bad thing it's inconsequential. It is the way it is. All art markets are developing at a very unusual and unpredictable rate. The Far Eastern, the Asian art market, I mean we're in a world of flux and it becomes more and more exaggerated with each day that passes. Having said this, the American art market, the New York art market is vital, it's vast, it's dynamic and it's exciting and it's very consequente.

Victor Vargas: You grew up in Mexico and the United States and you now live in Spain. Which country has impacted your work the most?

Miguel Condé: Some times I am asked a similar question, más o menos, by people who ask 'has your work been affected by living in Spain for more than forty years?' My answer is: If my wife and I had spent the last 44 years in Reykjavik, Iceland my work would be different. I think perhaps I respond to the Southern European – Mediterranean culture, lifestyle, climate etc. more than any other place that we've lived.

Victor Vargas: For me it was interesting because when I first saw your work, I assumed you were a Spanish Artist so I was surprised to see you billed as a Mexican Artist. It just looked very European.

Miguel Condé: It is.

Victor Vargas: Some of your paintings depict what appear to be recurring characters and some would speculate they could be self-portraits. Can you please comment on that?

Miguel Condé: Somebody, I can't remember who but a person wiser than me – was it wiser than me or wiser than I, let's say it's wiser than me – once said that every painting is a self portrait, every novel is an autobiography. This is a wild simplification but there is certainly something to it. In my case, perhaps a little more so because there are a lot of people floating around with beards and long hair. I no longer have the long hair but I do have a designer stubble so ... (laughs)

Victor Vargas: Some of these characters in your paintings appear to be members of The Church. Has religion inspired you?

Miguel Condé: I would prefer saying they appear to be members of a traveling troop of actors or comédiens, which maybe the case in some churches... I think of it more as theater. People have said, 'Miguel your work reminds us of Commedia dell'arte'. There are costumes from different periods, there are ceremonial hats or capes but in my mind they don't represent a specific religion. It looks nice and it's has a flow and ... it's a personage comédien. A cast of characters.

Victor Vargas: Yes, that is definitely what it looks like. That brings me to my next question: some Mexicans believe that Harlequins ward off evil, were you ever presented with such a notion as a young boy? (The French also claim that Harlequin is a derivative of Hellequin, a black-faced emissary of the devil who roamed the countryside with a group of demons chasing the damned souls of evil people to Hell).

Miguel Condé: No, I lived several years of my youth really, in México in a sustained time frame but I never picked up that specific analogy. Quién sabe...

Victor Vargas: Do you enjoy sculpture?

Miguel Condé: I'm a frustrated foundry, I did some sculpture, I did several pieces cast in bronze in the '60s when I was teaching at the University of Iowa. They had a bronze foundry and the professor of sculpture in those days – who's name I can't quite grasp right now – was very kind and let me cast a few pieces. I love it and as a matter of fact, I've recently been approached by a foundry in Spain. I've been asked to do some prototypes for future editions so the answer is yes! I love sculpture and I want to do some sculpture. It's a different set up, it's a different kind of atelier, it's a different rhythm, the whole thing is different but it's very, very attractive to me.

Victor Vargas: Do you have a preference for charcoals, watercolors, or oil on canvas?

Miguel Condé: I go through phases. There are times when I've been painting very intensely for a few months or a year, a year and a half and then I'll suddenly stop and I'll say 'okay basta'. I have a few hundred sheets of paper that I like working on – I'm only going to draw for the next few months or I'm going to do printmaking or if I do sculpture, that will happen with sculpture. It comes and goes without any rhyme or reason.

Victor Vargas: It depends on what you feel like doing at the time?

Miguel Condé: Yes.

Victor Vargas: Which artists have influenced you the most and how?

Miguel Condé: It would be too long to go into that but all periods of art have produced consequential, demanding, beautiful and complex bodies of work. All through history. So, I wonder through the museum of the mind – Le Musée du Silence. I had some school kids once ask me a similar questions and my answer was: My favorite artists are artists who's names no one knows. They thought this was some kind of cruel ... set up for a quiz or something like that. You know, nobody knows the names of the first artists, the artists of [LASCAUX](#) or [ALTAMIRA](#) and they are among my favorite artists.

Victor Vargas: You have said that some of your works could be carried out on stage or even in film. Are you interested in working in theater or in film?

Miguel Condé: I've always been interested in working in theater! If there's anybody who wants to hire me to design sets and costumes, I'm available!

Victor Vargas: I think that you would be fantastic! You obviously have an appreciation for colors and drama.

Miguel Condé: Right! I've always wanted to do it and it just hasn't happened so, I turn around and go to my studio and paint big paintings or small paintings but I've always wanted to do something in theater.

MIGUEL CONDÉ: A Retrospective August 20 to October 19, 2013

SERGE SOROKKO GALLERY 55 Geary Street San Francisco, CA 94108 Tel. (415) 421.7770



Bio



Latest Posts



Victor Vargas

Since 1994, Victor Vargas has been masterminding fashion, celebrity and cover sittings for some of the world's most prestigious publications, working with such stars as Milla Jovovich, Iman, Isabella Rossellini, Carmen Electra and Ryan Reynolds. He has been creating editorial and advertising images with an eclectic mix of photographers on a wide range of projects from a Courvoisier Campaign with Karina Taira, an Eli Lilly campaign with Hollywood legend Julie Andrews and photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders to styling all of the Editors in Chief at Hearst Publications. With a natural talent and eye for polished looks, Victor has worked alongside fashion's elite for the last 15 years, including such entities as the art world's Tina Barney. The assignment was a double page spread commissioned by [VOGUE HOMME'S](#) Richard Buckley. His career as fashion editor and stylist reads like a "Who's Who" of the international fashion world. Having started his career at the young age of 22 at San Francisco's society paper, The Nob Hill Gazette, Victor has since moved on to style for publications such as [PAPER](#), [IN STYLE](#) and the [LA Times Magazine](#) among others. Victor has served as contributing fashion editor for [SOMA](#) as well as Singapore's [Brave Magazine](#). He's worked with new and established Hollywood royalty (Chloe Sevigny, Christina Ricci, Eartha Kitt and Tim Burton to name a few). He has also worked on a sea of fashion stories, TV commercials and advertising campaigns. As fashion editor at [Improper Bostonian](#) magazine, he began writing about designers such as Michael Bastian and Alessandra Facchinetti. Victor is represented by [Stockland Martel](#) in New York and is the founder of [LUXETIGERS](#). He and his two miniature pinschers now split their time between San Francisco and New York City.