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**Título:** Language Games: perderse en traducciones es una sensación de otredad

**Title:** Language Games: Getting Lost in Translation is a Feeling of Otherness

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**Resumen:** La exhibición *Language Games*, de Ana Rebecca Campos, traduce a las formas del diseño las fallas en la comunicación a través del empleo de una lengua que no es la propia. Así refleja el carácter lúdico que nace de estas experiencias y la perplejidad que también generan.

**Abstract:** *Language Games*, an exhibition by Ana Rebecca Campos, translates communication errors into design forms through the use of a foreign language. This way, the artists reflects the ludic aspect that arises from these experiences and the puzzlement they also generate.

**Palabras clave:** Ana Rebecca Campos, La Productora, Lenguaje, Juego, Diseño, Yazmín Crespo Claudio

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## Language Games: Getting Lost in Translation is a Feeling of Otherness

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...civilization is not something absolute, but...is relative, and...  
our ideas and conceptions are true only so far as our civilization goes.

—Franz Boas

A recollection of events emerges from conversations spoken with foreigners. A mispronunciation provokes doubt from both parties and a feeling of misunderstanding or getting *lost in translation*. *Language Games*, Ana Rebecca Campos' first solo exhibition, is an exploration employing meticulously designed pieces that reflect on experiences lived in Milan, Italy, and the ludic nature of communication. A dialogue: a pool of culturally diverse exchanges between colleagues and friends; a common language, English, which aims to help mediate understanding but somehow triggers puzzlement.

The morphology of communicative intent and the correct interpretation of the message are transformed into a unique and elaborate yet abstract semantics. Frequently, meanings are formed from what we know based on our own culture and on previous experiences. Yet, in the midst of a culturally diverse group of people, we often wonder—which are the spoken (sound) forms and the unspoken (gesture) forms of communication? Connecting and interacting becomes a challenge. Suddenly an understanding of *cultural relativism* [1] becomes a lived experience. Who is the outsider? EVERYONE.



Ana Rebecca Campos, *A very cheap ship*, 2016. Photo: Mariángel Catalina González.

Encoding and decoding constitute a mixture of never heard or seen forms of pronunciation; gestures and symbols, humor that in many cases causes confusion. However, the feeling of constantly being misunderstood or the constant misunderstanding of others is unavoidable. *Language Games* explores the way we communicate, or miscommunicate, translated into design objects. Because speaking within an international context, where anyone can be included, becomes a constant *art of deduction*.

The seven works in this exhibition, which seek to describe the feeling of perplexity transformed into functional and demonstrative designs, consider both action/gesture and simple form. By applying a form of language common to all, The Archetype, the design reveals phrases that merge words frequently confused because of “wrong” intonation, Campos explains. As a result they are a collection that plays with confusion and embraces multiplicity of meanings. Did I say, “I want to *chew*? or did I say I want to *choose*? or do I want a *shoe*?”; “Is it a *ship* or a *chip*?,” as Ana Rebecca puts it.

The minimalist expression of the design objects—influenced by Oki Sato of Nendo, and his concept of the stories hidden within design—emerges through the artist’s clever “sleight-of-mind,” and her conceptual skill. For Campos, critical analysis serves to render the invisible visible—to develop simple lines and clean shapes that form a bond with the viewer. It should be noted that simple solutions do not necessarily create ready-made designs. While the artist’s attentiveness to detail and precision-oriented forms were influenced by her graduate studies in design at the Domus Academy in Milan, her critical thinking and constant search for conceptual narratives originate from her interest in design and theory which evolved during her undergraduate years studying architecture.

After all, conceptual narrative is the infrastructure for all things design. The unconscious itself is structured like a language, as Jacques Lacan observed. It is a network governed by association of a mostly symbolic nature. Campos conceives of meaning as cultural experience, as a recurring symbol. Her exhibition reveals design content through external patterns that link together with the internal, creating an intertwined concept of behavior. *Language Games* traces the complex feeling of otherness (a Spanish mother tongue that also speaks English as a second language), while probing the intimate idiolect—that unique way each of us has of speaking and making sense of reconstructed messages—and its interpreted object.



Ana Rebcca Campos, *A chair to shear*, 2016.  
Photo: Mariángel Catalina González.

Viewing the material/exhibition, and imagining a figure climbing a ladder and jumping into a black hole, elicits the sense of moving across the ocean to a new world in order to confront new experiences and challenges with language, culture, and reality. Campos, who teaches at the International School of Design and Architecture at the University of Turabo, made judicious selections in terms of both content and materiality. The choice of copper and white oak, which evoke purity and genuineness, feel as intimate as our mother tongue. Copper ages and transforms its appearance over time. Oak exhibits a soft and natural appearance.

The work titled *Chair as Stair* is an archetypal representation of Campos' notion of the symbol: where two disparate objects merge into one; a design restructured by the meaning of a phrase and a black hole. Similarly, *Chair to Share* represents a gesture: an implicit e/motion of sliding open to accommodate two. Common words are jumbled through pronunciation and rendered as an everyday object. The installation *A Very Cheap Ship* refers to speech as a collaborative operation and an expression of thought. The viewer interacts with this mobile by replacing paper ships with a dollar bill. As Ludwig Wittgenstein noted, to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life. Similarly, an idea becomes a sketch, and an object, a ludic form of design.



Ana Rebecca Campos, *Chair as stair*, 2016.  
Photo: Mariángel Catalina Gonzealez.

What do we do when we find pleasure in an object, a text, or a conversation? We communicate in the most personal way. Ana Rebecca Campos has found a way to literally confess, to speak with all the captivated conviction of a designer, to offer up a series of fragments—phrases, objects, words—and to render visible certain design quandaries and provide poetic responses. The sounds of language—it crackles, entangles, punctures, and soars. Yet language is also broken.

Notes:

[1] “is the principle that an individual human’s beliefs and activities should be understood by others in terms of that individual’s own culture.” D.A. Bekerian, A.B. Levey. *Applied Psychology Putting Theory into Practice*. Oxford, 2012.

**Edited by David Auerbach**