

SLOUGHT FOUNDATION PRESS ROOM

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"Cielito lindo"
Featuring Julio Grinblatt

Slought Foundation Vault Exhibition | February 19 - May 19, 2005

Reception: Saturday, February 19, 2005 ; 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Free admission (Reservation not required)

Curated by Osvaldo Romberg
Part of the Exhibition Openings Series ([Learn about Exhibition Openings](#))

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Julio Grinblatt, "Cielito lindo," 2004



Project Website: <http://slought.org/content/11265/>

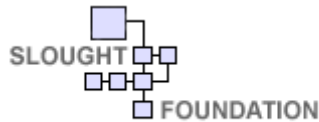
Slought Foundation presents "Cielito lindo," an exhibition of new work by Julio Grinblatt, on display from February 19 - May 19, 2005. Please join us for the opening reception on Saturday, February 19, 2005 from 6:30-8:30pm. This exhibition features photographs that resulted from the following instructions:

- 1) I took a photograph of a clear sky. The photograph had no references whatsoever.
- 2) I sent the negative to a professional color lab.
- 3) I asked the printer to print a beautiful sky.
- 4) I repeated this operation in different color labs and/or in different cities.
- 5) I aim to map the variation of the idea of beauty.

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Julio Grinblatt currently resides in New York. Recent solo exhibitions of his work "People facing their birthday cakes," include FFi - Fotografie Forum international, Frankfurt, Germany (2004) and Ruth Benzacar Gallery, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2003). "Corridors" was recently exhibited at Baró Cruz Gallery, São Paulo, Brazil (2005); Laura Marsiaj Arte Contemporânea, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil (2003); Society for Contemporary Photography, Kansas City, MO (2002); Sicardi Gallery, Houston, TX (2000); and ICI, Buenos Aires, Argentina (1999). "Photos of others" was recently exhibited at Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, OR (2003); Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2001). Recent group exhibitions include "Argentina," at Track 16, Los Angeles, CA (2005); "Traces of Friday," at ICA, Philadelphia, PA (2003), and "Mapas abiertos: Fotografía Latinoamericana 1991-2002," at Centro de la imagen, Mexico DF (2004), P. de la Virreina, Barcelona, Spain (2003); F. Telefónica, Madrid, Spain (2003). He also participated in "The S-Files," at El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (2002), "New Tendencies," at the Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2002), "Tipping Point," at White Columns, New York, NY, (2001), and "Beyond the Document," at MNCA Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain, (2000). He appears in publications including "Uses of Photography," FFi - Fotografie Forum international, Frankfurt, Germany (2004), "Contact Sheet," from Light Work, Syracuse, NY, Issue #127, July 2004, "Mapas abiertos - Fotografía Latinoamericana 1991-2002," Lunweg Editores, Madrid, Spain (2003), "Blue Sky # 38," Blue Sky Gallery, Portland, OR, December 2003, and "Blink," Phaidon, UK (2002).

This program is made possible in part through the generous sponsorship or support of Photolabs Professional Color and Buenos Aires Color (Buenos Aires, Argentina), LMI (Mexico City, Mexico), Fotosíntesis (Madrid, Spain), Plus Color (Córdoba, Argentina), Guillermo Stein and Steinbranding, Philip Sofaer, Nicolás Guagnini, Bibi Calderaro, and Nina Grinblatt



Evolution, Revolution, and *Cielito Lindo*

By *Osvaldo Romberg, Senior Curator*

Printed on the occasion of "Cielito Lindo", a photography exhibition at Slought Foundation (February 19-May 19, 2005) of new work by Julio Grinblatt. For more information: <http://www.slought.org/content/11265/>

Photography has evidently been deemed "hot" in the last several years, as nearly fifty percent of exhibitions today in New York, Paris, Berlin or any other international city attest. This circumstance compels us to pose the following questions: What is photography today? How does a photographer become "accepted" in the field of art? To what extent has the banality of subject matter characteristic of so many contemporary practices and exhibitions plunged photography into a parade of decadence?

Artistic photography has historically struggled to define itself as an autonomous medium, competing against other forms such as advertising and photojournalism. Though many in the arts attempt to erase the difference between artistic and commercial photography, I still believe in the need to continue this struggle for independence. Anything can pass for art, but not everything that passes for art is *art for a long time*.

The work of Julio Grinblatt resists the mediocrity found in the field of photography today, insofar as he resists banal subject matter and an exaggerated dependence on technology. His series of *Pasillos*, small black and white photographs of sterile hallways completed a few years ago, with its Kafkaesque connotations and puritan language, provides us with an example of sobriety in display and strong conceptualization without megalomania.

Photos of others, a series in which Grinblatt photographs the flash of another photographer in action (see his photograph of Nitsch displayed in our storefront), is an extraordinary achievement that gestures towards the complexity and richness of the Old Masters, who employed multiple characters, perspectives, and lighting. That Grinblatt omits color in this series is a remarkable abstention that evades the decorative tendencies of much contemporary photography.

In Uruguay and Argentina (Grinblatt's country of origin), the word *cielito* means "small sky" but also speaks to the idea of a modest happiness. *Cielito* was also an 18th Century dance popular among revolutionary gauchos. The original *Tupamaros*, who fought the Spanish conquerors, had a dance called *cielito de los Tupamaros*, and the first sentence of the song begins: *Cielito, Cielito lindo...* When Grinblatt gives his new work on display at Slought Foundation the title "Cielito Lindo," he creates an interesting contradiction between the revolutionary and melancholic connotation found in the title "small sky," and the cool and programmed style of production in this particular project.

In this exhibition, Grinblatt photographed a blue sky, and then distributed the negative to photographic labs in different countries, with the simple request that they print the most beautiful sky. This work creates a kind of corny conceptualism by joining the subtle mockery of patriotism and sentimentality with a radical avant-garde procedure. I support this approach and satiric aspect because it is, perhaps, one of the few ways to make art today without collapsing into kitsch, repetition, or entertainment. As such, it suggests a position of reflexivity and humor vis-à-vis our own discourses, which I find encouraging.

The images that we see on the walls involve just one negative, and copies printed in different countries by different printers. They enact a sophisticated commentary on the idea of taste. I understand the project to comment with deliberate literalness on the current prevalence of an easy or weak multiculturalism, a multiculturalism which presupposes that nationalism or ethnicity defines taste. Such ideas are promoted by two seemingly opposing groups, those who embrace globalization and late capitalism with a vengeance, and the curators of the so-called Third World, who believe that they oppose the economic underpinnings of the art world by organizing peripheral art biennales. This show succeeds in avoiding both tendencies in a sober and playful way at the same time. Grinblatt belongs to a new tendency for which irony has become a category of taste and of value. Which should not prevent us from looking with renewed fervor and no sunshades to our "beautiful, small sky"...