



### **Another Mermaid (Otra Sirena)**

piece by María Raquel Cochez

*The Panamanian artist María Raquel Cochez, internationally renown for her intimate and conceptual work, presents a new and irreverent public art piece.*

Summertime evokes sun, beach, and fun, all qualities that advertising agencies use to promote the season's products and trends. Inspired by the stylish photos of one particular campaign shown on large billboards in Panama city, Cochez, one of the country's most relevant contemporary artists, decided to "play the game" with her one of a kind piece, **Another Mermaid**.

Displayed on a billboard just off Vía Brasil, in one of the city's most trafficked areas, **Another Mermaid** consists of an enormous printed vinyl billboard measuring 14 x 48 feet, conceptually following the line that Cochez has represented in her previous work, which questions the beauty standards that dominate our society in a playful yet incisive way.

The piece is a self-portrait of the artist posing on a pool, with a bathing suit and fashionable accessories, in the photographic style of an this particular fashion campaign. In this piece the artist presents questions such as: what is a mermaid? What really makes a woman beautiful? The answer, of course, will come from the public.

The initial motivation for the piece originated from an ad campaign for a local exclusive department store, in which the models, showing off summery accessories, appear resting over aquatic backgrounds. The copy on the photos boasts that mermaids do exist.

This is not the first time that Cochez has been protagonist for an art piece related to image in the media. In 2010 she portrayed herself as a "mamisona", or a sexy woman,

in an illustration on the back of a Diablo Rojo traditional Panamanian bus, whose kitsch like style has become iconic in local urban art. In 2006 she presented CKMe, a photographic series in black and white, done in the sensual style of classic Calvin Klein ads, only this time allowing the imperfections of her body, mistreated by drastic weight fluctuations, to clearly show.

Self-acceptance is one of the most important themes of this artists' catalogue. With **Another Mermaid**, just like with her previous works, Cochez joins the discourse on how women's image is publicly communicated, challenging the media to include a more realistic selection of female bodies, and making good use of the impact that the printed image and advertising have on the general public.

It's still surprising how a woman, however physically "imperfect" she may be, with the proper illumination, make up, and the right photographer, can look like a "mermaid", and even be accepted, admired, and considered important just for appearing on a massive billboard or an ad campaign.

**Another Mermaid**, which will be exhibited from March 7<sup>th</sup> until April 6<sup>th</sup>, is the stepping stone to the "**Wet n' Wild**" solo show the artist will have in May in Arteconsult Gallery, also in Panama City, where Cochez will continue exploring body acceptance... now in the revealing context of the bathing suit.

*Raul Altamar Arias*  
*March 2014*



*“Mermaids Do Exist”*



*Publicity Campaign of renown department store in Panama City, Panama- summer season 2014 (Dec. 2013- March 2014)*

