

Jose Dávila
BALTIC Exhibition
review
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Jose Dávila, BALTIC Artist's Award, 15 July - 30 October 2017

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Jose Dávila is an innovative artist who explores the spatial occupation and “transitory nature of physical structures,” using: sculpture, installations, painting and photography. Originally from Guadalajara and born in 1974, Dávila produces works which engage and occupy spaces while delving into the instrumental values of architecture and art history.

Currently, Dávila’s work is being shown at BALTIC on level 3, as part of BALTIC’s Artist Award, where visitors can vote for their preferred artist.

Immediately as I entered the space I was astounded and intrigued by the pure scale and simplicity of Davila’s huge formations! Two large steel structures stood “balanced precariously but in perfect equilibrium.” As if defying gravity! Dávila purposely composed the structures at particular angles to create an almost imposing feeling as you enter, but also sparking visitor’s curiosity. By designing work that compliments the space around it, Dávila has emphasised BALTIC’s height and volume, creating sculptures which encompass the space.”How” was the first question I asked myself when I entered the exhibition. I was amazed at the angles at which the artworks appeared to be balanced, shadowing the room in their precision and magic.

My favourite part of the work was the rock and balloon balanced on top of each other, because I liked the use of antithetical imagery suspended at a height. I interpreted the red balloon as the embodiment of new aspirations meanwhile the boulder above signifies our cracked society which appears to be trying to crush the cluster of new and unheard of innovations. Boulders usually have properties such as strength, weathered surface and weight. In this work it appears the balloon is pushing against gravity, or society until it reaches a balanced compromise. My idea of new innovations also links to Dávila’s original theme based on Gateshead’s industrial past and new innovations- like BALTIC. The balloons’ positioning and height therefore may symbolise how far Gateshead has developed, but how fragile its development is and therefore how easily it could be destroyed.

This piece makes me feel curious and therefore fuels my imagination, however simultaneously it creates a sense of calm throughout. The simplicity and stillness of each structure feels almost like a snapshot of time as if they are free falling. The pure, earthy rocks juxtapose the impenetrable steel, yet they also appear to lean in perfect equilibrium as one. I appreciate the fact the piece does not come with any text or sound, (as many sculptures do,) because it allows peoples thoughts to hang in the air without interruption or influence.

Overall I feel Dávila has created a work which has a clear theme yet is intriguing and open to interpretation. Their imposing silhouettes leave visitors astounded. Leave children as believers of magic. And left me inspired! My only criticism is the combination of exhibitions in the room, because I feel like Dávila’s work needs space to be fully appreciated and shouldn’t be surrounded by other objects, however I would highly recommend this exhibition running until 1 October 2017. And maybe if you visit you will be able to answer Dávila’s question: where do the artists hands begin and end?

Written by Josie Burdon.

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