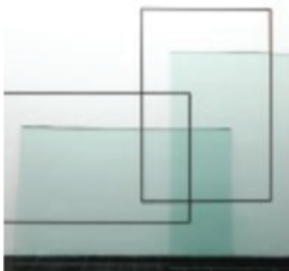


Jose Dávila
Adriana Herrera

July 18, 2011

Online published article **Friday November 5, 2010**

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José Dávila
OMR, Mexico City
by Adriana Herrera

In José Dávila's one-person exhibition at OMR Gallery in Mexico City, Ningún donde puede ser aquí a title inspired by the expression "Nowhere can be there", found in a letter by Gordon Matta Clark this artist born in Guadalajara in 1974 features a show that is as consistent in terms of his own trajectory as it is enlightening with regard to reflection about the properties of the bodies and the ways in which matter and representation interrelate in the bordering territories between art and architecture.

This photography installation featuring 35 shots, manipulated and framed separately, of constructions that have an iconic character from the Pyramid of Cheops to Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, the house above the waterfall; from the Roman Coliseum to the Niemeyer Museum poses queries about the relationship between space and the construction of forms, or between contour and volume. Through a look that has drifted away from the naturalness with which we incorporate in the world buildings that then become an inseparable part of the landscape, and in a certain way, we cease to be surprised by their forms, the artist revises the great architectonic projects of mankind in an unusual way: he transforms them into cutout silhouettes. Seen in this way, they become shapes without perspective, reminiscent of shadow puppets, and tinged with unreality. And nevertheless, they are real. Oddly enough, this distance brings these architectures, whose common trait is immensity, back to the realm of the human dream, which is ultimately the origin of every constructed space. And back to an unusual relationship with utopia. Because they have existed. But their visual intervention rigorous, insofar as it does not alter the forms but only dissolves volume and details refers them to the empty space. Dávila makes a dissection, not of the constructions, like Matta Clark, but of the perception of the way in which, by darkening them, these legendary constructions become abstract shapes. And, as the artist himself explains, this involves the lacanian notion of "extimacy", a reference to the shift by which the intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and vice versa. For the work refers the viewer to the biography of the artist's searches, to that long fascination distance relationship with architecture, from which he learned the rigor of requisites and key rules for composition during his formative period, but which he had to transcend in order to enter the domain of artistic creation. In architecture, there is no such thing as a blank page: the point of departure is always a place.

Part of the search for a no place and at the same time, of the posing of a set of rules, unfolds in another fantastic work, photographically documented, that explores the possibility of making a drawing without the direct intervention of the hand. Dávila tied a red balloon laden with a poetics, with references to a string that remains vertical thanks to a small weight that keeps it balanced, and at the end of the string, he placed a felt tip pen. He allowed the pen to descend gradually on a page so that it would imprint its trace randomly until it went beyond the edge of the page or stopped moving. None of the resulting drawings are identical, even though the number of times this procedure is repeated equals the number of images that comprise this subset.

Another way of approaching the relationship between painting and architecture is to resort to construction elements such as glass and its shadow, or the wall he has intervened in by featuring black squares or stripes to create, three-dimensionally, abstract geometric works that evoke a long pictorial tradition, from the Russian suprematists, through the optical artists or the minimalists, to the pioneers of Concrete Invention art. Reflection on matter and form reaches its culminating point in the sculpture the artist fabricates with building bricks which are very cheap and therefore rustic, endowed with organicity and slightly different from one another and which he surrounds with neon squares on all sides. While

the piece evokes Carl André, or Dan Flavin and Lewitt, at the same time it trans-figures all that tradition through the selection of an imperfect material, such as the brick that constructs the volume, and its contrasts with the perfection of neon. In his work, the relationship rules he explores based on a certain set of pre-established procedures, but from a vast mental field, are subject to a permanent tension between art and architecture (with all their tradition), or between the conceptual and its formal solution. But the unequivocal sign is unceasing transformation.

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