

STATE OF REST  
Geovana Ibarra

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Nevertheless, everything remains unchanged, in a state of rest.

Francis Bacon argued that a state of total rest could only be found in the depths of the Earth. But this state is in fact relative and apparent; external resistance impedes action, resulting in immobility.

Equilibrium occurs when opposing forces balance and cancel each other out,, as if forced to freeze, to take a break or enter a state of rest. The idea of equilibrium between opposing forces is central to this series of sculptures

by José Dávila, in which the artist uses tension to test the relationship between antagonistic materials; to explore the very notions of activity and rest. In this series of disturbingly tranquil compositions, the marble does not rest calmly; the apparent serenity of each sculpture is the result of a balance of forces, between the stone's natural tendency to fall to the ground and all the elements of the sculpture that prevent it from doing so.

Rest is calm and patient waiting. It is pure possibility and po-

tential, suspension and suspense: Like Bartleby's famous line, "I would prefer not to", it can be interpreted as neither affirmation nor negation, but rather an absence of definition. Dávila's formula is that of dynamic equilibrium in which movement can only exist parenthetically, like a suggestion. It is a pause from which various discontinuous forms arise: they continue to be form, but give us a sense of their interrupted movement. This resistance to change the movement and direction of their inert compositions gives rise to an incipient battle manifested in the force and power of the lines that define the shape, while simultaneously limiting its movement and making it rest.

Gilles Deleuze's reading of Bartleby's motto is enriched by that author's use of Stoicism as formulated in *The Logic of Sense*, in which he distinguishes between two categories of things: bodies and the non-corporal effects that they bring about. The effect of a body can only be understood as an event and not as a thing. Bodies act, and as such are located on the plane of the living present, whereas due to their non-physical nature, events only exist in the infinite dimension of the past

and the future. As suggestions of movement, Dávila's sculptures can no longer be limited to the realm of the corporal. The absence of the body is precisely what makes a distinction of time and space possible. "They are not nouns, or adjectives, or verbs [...] They are not continuous presents or infinitives." The rupture of balance and equilibrium, which would imply the existence of movement, only occurs as a past or future event, never a present one. Balance and equilibrium exist due to tension; as verbs, as infinitives. As a result, repose is just a visual appearance. The elements that make up these apparently static systems are intrinsically linked by forces that neutralise one another; their activity is constant and constitutive. The state of rest depends on the successful correlation between the materials involved.

Thus we have marble sculptures scarcely supported by the simple gesture of a few lines anchored to a single point, a point that also indicates where they must return in order for the geometry of the system to work. Points, lines and planes as basic elements of drawing; eyebolts, straps and marble as fundamental elements of composition and construction.

This results in static, spatial and abstract forms, a cross between constructivist experiment, sculpture and drawing. These compositions function as a summary and reduction of the principles present in every work of architecture: resistance to the force of gravity, spatial variation, and the tensile relationships between the materials employed. Dávila achieves the dynamism of an asymmetrical equilibrium that seemingly arises in the interstices between architecture and sculpture, juxtaposing the two disciplines in a correlative exercise structural knowledge is deployed to serve the impractical.

This series of exercises reflects the repeated testing out of an idea, manifesting a process of development and growing confidence with regard to complexity, taking greater and greater risks; fragility and tension make themselves more radically apparent by distancing and diverting the equilibrium of geometrical simplicity through carefully tested complications. As a result, these works move away from the pictorial and two-dimensional and towards the eccentric equilibrium of the sculpture/space.

The forms remain and find their expression in the structured inner

sum of the system of tensions that create it. They delimit a tension between the conflict of forces and a potential synthesis, which is the result of the very intensity of the construction. There is an ongoing conflict or struggle: unresolved, slow, interrupted. Nonetheless, this is not just a question of equilibrium or of neutralised conflict, but also of an exhaustive functionalising of the elements that comprise the structural system. No element can escape it; they are all subject to a law, a task and the intensity of an order. Each element has been arranged in favour of the plastic and pictorial dimension of the structural system.

Dávila draws like a tightrope walker, testing out the “degree zero” of a sculptural form: the moment just before it falls. He traces a movement and at just the right moment he suspends it, he holds it at the limit, knowing that to hesitate would lead to failure. Still in a state of calm, flat, the slab is ready to resume its movement, serenely awaiting the moment that will bring its rest to an end. It opposes its weight to the force and will of the strap. Perception can merely intuit the end of that movement; in this equilibrium of forces, balance is not symmetrical,

and contains an element of devastation.

The situation of these compositions, suspended and in suspense, is undoubtedly an extremely fragile one, and it is impossible not to contemplate the potential failure of these systems; disinterested and suspended contemplation is also frightened by the precarious equilibrium achieved. It would be more appropriate to refer to incomplete sculptural acts that can only culminate in the unsatisfied intuition of the viewer, who attempts to complete what she

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observes with something that does not happen: the rupture of a system that remains unrealistically balanced and harmonised. Consequently, it is not only movement that is put on hold, but also everyday happenings. This brings to mind Borges' definition of the aesthetic act: "the imminence of a revelation that does not come about". Dávila's works thus put off disaster, hold it in unresolved tension, detain the event before the ending can come about, an ending we can only foresee.