

SENIOR WEB

"Colossus in Unstable Balance"

Ruth Vuilleumier

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Colossus in unstable balance

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The Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich dedicates a solo exhibition "Memory of a Telluric Movement" with paintings and sculptures to the Mexican artist Jose Dávila. The spacious installations were created in confrontation with the space on site.

Jose Dávila (*1974) is interested in space and mass as well as mathematical laws and physical phenomena. The play with gravity and apparent weightlessness is visible on all exhibition levels and creates exciting moments. Because they are not delicate mobiles, but massive and heavy materials such as iron and stone that have to keep themselves in a fragile balance without falling over like dominoes.



Exhibition view: The act of being together, 2021, steel, metal, natural stone. Photo: Stefan Altenburger.

The high steel beams and natural stone chunks on the ground floor remind of an archaic landscape, of Stone Age ritual places. Four-meter-high steel girders and boulders are connected in pairs with steel cables that lie on the ceiling above a hook. Each of these twenty-one pairs of objects keeps itself in a fragile balancing act, not only because both parts have a similar weight, but also because of the tensile of the steel cables that holds them together - a physical Herculean task. The exciting interaction is as attractive as it is threatening to the visitor.



Curator Sabine Schaschl in conversation with the artist Jose Dávila, whose work is characterized by his early training in architecture. Photo: rv

Dávila loves gimmicks with statics and dynamics, tension and compression powers as well as those unstable moments before something collapses. This is part of the essence of his work. From natural and industrially crafted materials, which he contrasts in unstable balance, he creates poetic works that are formulated both sensually and structurally.

With the minimalist-looking construction made of steel and stone, the artist symbolizes the balance of togetherness as a socially relevant value. In addition, with the material combination of natural stone and industrial material, it creates references to the duality of nature and culture, also in the context of climate change. The artist sees his fascination for balanced systems in his own experiences, because in his native Mexico the earth shakes again and again and gets the world out of balance.



Will has moved mountains, 2020, spy mirror, wood, metals, concrete, boulder and tension belt. Photo: Stefan Altenburger.

Upstairs, two works from 2020 will be merged: the eponymous red painting *Memory of a telluric movement* on the wall for the exhibition and the installation *Will has moved mountains* on the podium. This installation, in German *Faith can move mountains*, also amazes you. Here, not individual pairs of objects keep in balance, like the megatinerers on the ground floor, but tension straps connect all objects into a spatial sculpture that is only stable in the coherent wholeness: the tilted concrete cube standing on a stone, two stacked wooden beams on top of each other and four large-format oblique mirrors.



*Exhibition view: Will has moved mountains.
Photo: rv*

The fragile stability of this installation is the result of a precisely balanced agreement between the forces, supports and angles of inclination of all objects. Even the minimal displacement of a single part would cause the whole system to collapse.

In the five-part red painting *Memory of a telluric movement* on the wall behind the installation, the fourth picture dances out of line. It is slightly offset downwards and shows a gray cut square shape, which is supplemented in the last panneau. The oblique square shows the same angle of inclination as the tilted concrete cube on the pedestal. Both works thus enter into a dialogue with each other and represent the phenomenon of gravity: once three-dimensional in space and once two-dimensional on the screen.

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has something of the unreal, 2022. Photo: Stefan Altenburger.

A wide selection of objects is presented in the columned hall. Many of them are positioned individually, while others form exciting groups. The space becomes a lively sculpture landscape as a whole due to the fine coordination of the proportions, lines of view, reflections and possibilities of movement as a whole. The works shown here are the result of combinations or variations of previous works.



The fact of constantly returning to the same point or situation, 2022, photo: Agustín Arce.

During the corona pandemic, the artist dealt intensively with the iconography of the circle in the art history of the 20th century. century apart. As a symbol, the circle stands for perfection, infinity or return in the form of the snake of Uroboros biting into the tail. Paintings are also about recurring geometries. The new circle images all bear the same title *The fact of constantly returning to the same point or situation*. The circles appear disassembled, halved, duplicated, cut out and ultimately fit together to form a large composition.



Acapulco chair stack, 2021, photo: Agustín Arce.

Jose Dávila's works all bear a title that underlines the surreal situation of sculptures in philosophical-poetic language, for example for two concrete blocks that clamp a boulder *The exception that proves the rule*. References to art history can also be found, such as *imObject du Voyageur*, a bicycle on a stacking tower of metal, concrete and brick alluding to Marcel Duchamp's Readymade *Roue de Bicyclette* from 1913 or *Acapulco chair stack*, an artistic-poetic interpretation of the furniture design classic.

Photos: House Constructive and rv

Until 11. September

Jose Dávila, "Memory of a Telluric Movement" at Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, [more see here](#)

Two other exhibitions at Haus Konstruktiv: Collages of "Elisabeth Wild" and "News from the Collection", [more see here](#)