

JOHANNES VOGT

LATERCERA

October 20, 2015

Galería Gabriela Mistral celebra 25 años con tres exhibiciones

La colección de arte contemporáneo se inició en 1990 con donaciones. Las obras estarán en el espacio de Alameda, el MAVI y en Valparaíso.

Hace cuatro años la Galería Gabriela Mistral, ubicada en Alameda 1381, vivía su momento más crítico. Algunos comentarios hablaban de trasladarla a Valparaíso, otros de un cierre inminente. Finalmente y luego de la movilización de la propia escena artística -se reunieron 785 firmas de curadores, artistas y galeristas, como Alfredo Jaar, Adriana Valdés y Tomás Andreu-, el Consejo de la Cultura (CNCA), del cual depende, decidió seguir con la sala creada en 1990.

A cargo de la gestora cultural Florencia Loewenthal desde 2012, el espacio ha debido reinventarse. Lo más evidente fue la desaparición de uno de sus muros, convertido en una gran vitrina que da a plena Alameda y que visibilizó la sala. Pero también, la directora ha insistido en trabajar con la colección: catalogando, investigando y haciendo circular las 160 obras reunidas desde 1995 hasta hoy.

Desde mañana, parte de este acervo se vuelve a desplegar en tres exhibiciones paralelas. El motivo es celebrar los 25 años de la galería, que durante los 90 se convirtió en plataforma clave del arte contemporáneo postdictadura, promoviendo el trabajo de artistas jóvenes como Patrick Hamilton, Voluspa Jarpa e Iván Navarro.

La primera muestra parte mañana en el MAVI. Se trata de Nosotras. De la sin razón venidas, curada por la cubana Dermis León, que cruza obras de la colección de la galería Gabriela Mistral con piezas del MAVI, todas realizadas por mujeres artistas. La muestra incluye trabajos de Magdalena Atria, Natalia Babarovic, Nury González y Julen Birken, entre otras. Al día siguiente, en la misma galería, se abre una muestra con las últimas adquisiciones, con obras de Livia Marín, Andrés Vial, Johanna Unzueta y Alfredo Jaar.

“La política de la galería ha sido coleccionar obras de artistas que han exhibido en ella, y hasta ahora todas han sido donadas por los propios autores. Ahora por primera vez, un privado, la galerista Patricia Ready, nos donó como regalo de cumpleaños dos obras de Norton Maza y Cristobal Lehyt. Es importante, porque nuestra intención es crear vínculos con los privados, y que este acervo se siga expandiendo al mismo tiempo que aumenta su valor”, señala Florencia Loewenthal, quien cuenta con un financiamiento anual de sobre los \$ 100 millones, otorgados por el CNCA, para producir montajes, seminarios y catálogos.

Para esta celebración, mañana en el MAVI se lanzará también un libro de 300 páginas que reúne toda la colección del espacio. El 5 de noviembre, además, se inaugura la tercera muestra en el Centex (Centro de Extensión de CNCA) de Valparaíso, con curatoría de Sebastián Vidal, quien reúne obras de Samy Benmayor, José Pedro Godoy y Nicolás Franco, entre otros.

En 1990, la periodista Luisa Ulibarri impulsó la creación de una galería estatal que terminó transformándose en un símbolo de la transición democrática chilena. Es justamente este espíritu el que Loewenthal quiere reafirmar y fortalecer. “Este es un espacio que al no ser comercial funciona con una lógica distinta. Aquí todavía se pueden tomar riesgos y hay lugar para la experimentación. El último caso es el del fotógrafo Andrés Durán, quien luego de exhibir su serie Monumentos en la galería, ganó la Beca de Arte CCU y ahora exhibe en Londres el mismo trabajo”, cuenta Loewenthal.

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Las claves de ARTBO, el motor del arte actual en Colombia

October 3, 2016

Mañana cierra la feria de arte de Bogotá, con 69 galerías de 33 ciudades. Desde 2005, su primer año, superó a sus símiles de Argentina y México.

Se repite en pasillos y sale de la boca de coleccionistas, galeristas y el público: "ARTBO es la feria más importante de la región". No es difícil creerlo. Abrió el jueves con 69 galerías de 33 ciudades del mundo, además de 15 espacios para proyectos independientes, desplegados en los 15 mil metros cuadrados de Corferias, un recinto para eventos internacionales, desde exposiciones científicas, de automóviles y café.

Partió en 2005, organizada por la Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá, con la idea de convertir la ciudad en un polo de las artes visuales. Al inicio eran sólo 29 galerías, y su crecimiento es explosivo. Su directora, María Paz Gaviria, evita dar cifras de transacciones, pero dice estar satisfecha por la visibilidad que ha logrado. "El crecimiento se ve en las cientos de postulaciones que cada año llegan de galerías de todo el mundo. Nos gusta el tamaño que hemos logrado, no queremos seguir creciendo. Estamos enfocados en seguir subiendo la calidad y afianzar los vínculos extranjeros", dice. Este año hay 450 invitados internacionales, y se espera superar las 31.500 visitas del año pasado.

inRead invented by Teads

En sus stands, los galeristas exhiben sus mejores propuestas y parecen confiados en el éxito que podrían tener. "Hemos venido a las últimas siete ediciones a ARTBO y la calidad es lejos la mejor de la región. También vamos a México, Perú y Argentina, pero aquí encontramos a más coleccionistas extranjeros", dice el argentino Ignacio Lirardi. Lo mismo opina Alex Mor, galerista de la francesa Mor Charpentier. "Hace 5 años teníamos un espacio de 18 metros cuadrados y hoy vamos en 63. Eso demuestra el potencial del mercado colombiano. Siempre nos va muy bien, y ya ayer vendimos varias piezas importantes".

Berlín, Madrid, Nueva York, Zurich, Milan, Montevideo, Miami, Caracas, Buenos Aires, París y Guayaquil son algunas de las ciudades presentes. Santiago también participa con dos galerías: Isabel Aninat, con obras de Mónica Bengoa, Lotty Rosenfeld, Loreto Buttazzoni y Francisco Peró, y la joven XS, que apuesta por obras de Francisca Aninat, Nicolás Radic y Alvaro Oyarzún.

"En seis años hemos podido palpar el crecimiento de la feria. Es un fenómeno para el arte y la cultura de la ciudad. Realmente la calidad es altísima, aquí no hay galerías malas porque tienen un comité de selección muy exigente. La verdad es que Chile está muy lejos de este nivel", dice Javiera García Huidobro, de la galería Isabel Aninat. Además, hay artistas locales en otros espacios. Nicolás Franco va representado por la galería peruana González y González, Voluspa Jarpa en Mor Charpentier, Cristóbal Lehyt en Johannes Vogt (EE.UU.), y Manuela Viera-Gallo participa con un mural de aserrín en Sitio, sección dedicada a proyectos experimentales.

También hay espacio para artistas de fama mundial, como la argentina Marta Minujín, el colombiano Nadin Ospina, el cubano Wifredo Lam o el estadounidense Robert Mapplethorpe. Asimismo, 400 artistas logran visibilidad en el evento. Los precios también son variados, de los US\$ 4.000 a los US\$ 300 mil.

Otra gracia de ARTBO es su plataforma no comercial y que presenta propuestas más atrevidas o educativas. Artecámara reúne obras de 33 artistas jóvenes prometedores de Colombia; Articularte fomenta la creación en niños; Referente, curada por Ana María Lozano, exhibe piezas de 1920 a 1980, y de artistas que influyeron en el arte regional, como Cildo Meirelles, Jesús Rafael Soto o Joaquín Torres García. Y Foro, una serie de charlas bajo la curaduría de José Roca de la Tate Gallery de Londres, ha elegido temáticas diversas como la creación artística en el paisaje natural, el coleccionista como productor de arte y el rol de las bienales en la era del capital global.

En Bogotá se ha consolidado el dicho de que octubre es el mes de las artes visuales, y no sólo por ARTBO. En paralelo, otras cuatro ferias de arte, más pequeñas, independientes y que se alimentan del éxito de la feria madre, permanecen abiertas: Odeón, con 17 galerías de siete países y con Brasil como invitado especial; la Feria del Millón, con 52 artistas sin representación y precios hasta el millón de pesos; Barcú, en el histórico barrio La Candelaria y con sólo 11 galerías, pero que suma un ciclo de cine y charlas; y ArtChicó, con un puñado de artistas de mediana trayectoria, que parte mañana.

"No somos competencia, la verdad nos encanta que hayan nacido otras ferias porque es fantástico para la ciudad y comprueba lo catalizador que ha sido ARTBO para todo el circuito local", resume María Paz Gaviria.

JOHANNES VOGT

“Grado Cero” la exposición que disecciona los primeros 10 años post dictadura

January 5th, 2015

El Centro de las Artes 660 / CA 660 inaugurará su Temporada 2015 de la Sala de Artes Visuales con la exposición Grado Cero, 10 años de arte contemporáneo chileno. Organizada en conjunto con el gestor cultural Paul Birke y el equipo de CorpArtes, reúne una selección de obras creadas durante la primera década del Siglo XXI por 34 reconocidos artistas nacionales.

El objetivo central de esta puesta en escena es presentar, por primera vez en un mismo espacio, el trabajo de una generación de artistas nacionales -de entre 40 y 50 años de edad aproximadamente- que se encuentra en su segunda etapa formativa/creativa. Luego de haber cumplido con la tarea de visibilizar su obra en el circuito expositivo local, actualmente están concentrados en internacionalizar su trabajo.

Obra “La caída del orden” de Norton Maza

Obra “La caída del orden” de Norton Maza

Las obras que componen esta exposición fueron elegidas por un comité local -conformado por Ana María Yaconi, directora del Museo de Artes Visuales (MAVI); Pedro Montes, director de galería Departamento 21 y Sergio Parra, de Metales Pesados Visual- y otro internacional, constituido por el curador italiano, experto en arte latinoamericano, Jacopo Crivelli. “Al reunirnos a pensar los criterios para esta muestra, coincidimos en que hubo un momento dentro de la plástica nacional en que se produjo un cierto viraje de lo que había venido aconteciendo en los años anteriores y pusimos como eje el año 2000 hasta el 2010, recordando las obras que nos parecieran más icónicas de artistas nacidos entre 1965 y 1975”, explica Ana María Yaconi.

Si bien esta exhibición da cuenta de trabajos creados por una generación de artistas, no pretende ser un reflejo de dicha generación en específico, sino más bien una lectura retrospectiva de un grupo de obras que, según estos expertos, marcaron los primeros 10 años del siglo XXI. “Esta no es una muestra exhaustiva del período al que nos abocamos, pero permite generar una visión bastante global de los intereses, cuestionamientos y medios utilizados por los artistas visuales de esta etapa determinada en su rol de creadores al interior de una sociedad”, cuenta Pedro Montes.

“La muestra propone ofrecer, en el marco de los límites puestos por nosotros mismos, una mirada a esa década, que marcaba los diez años post dictadura, con sus transiciones temáticas y quizás una mayor sutileza representativa en el arte chileno. Dejar expuesto este período que, aún por lo cercano en el tiempo, no tiene análisis ni lecturas definitivas. Que lleva su herencia y quiere dejarla atrás también”, afirma Yaconi.

Las obras que forman parte de esta exposición fueron desarrolladas con técnicas tan diversas como escultura, pintura, video, fotomontaje, slideshow y otras expresiones digitales. “La fuerza poética, visual y de contenido crítico de gran parte de las obras es uno de los puntos que destacamos de esta exposición. Es decir, estas obras seleccionadas hablan desde un lugar, una sociedad y una contingencia política y social”, explica Sergio Parra.

Obra de Patrick Hamilton

Obra de Patrick Hamilton

“Grado Cero es una muestra abierta, que puede tener resonancia en un público bastante amplio, por la época que abarca, cercana y aún viva en la memoria de todos”, dice Yaconi. Y Parra lo reafirma al aseverar que: “sin duda esta muestra despertará gran interés en el público, ya que habla desde un lugar llamado Chile, con todas sus fragilidades. Obras muy elocuentes en razón de su contexto. Una exposición que muestra un arte contemporáneo globalizado, pero siempre sin perder su política de lugar”.

Los artistas invitados son: Claudia Aravena-Abughosh, Magdalena Atria, Natalia Babarovic, Mónica Bengoa, Francisca Benítez, Claudio Correa, Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira, Paula De Solminihac, Claudia Del Fierro, Andrés Durán, Nicolás Franco, Josefina Guilisasti, Francisca García, Ignacio Gumucio, Patrick Hamilton, Hoffmann's House (Rodrigo Vergara y José Pablo Díaz), Voluspa Jarpa, Cristóbal Lehyt, Livia Marín, Norton Maza, Felipe Mujica, Iván Navarro, Mario Navarro, Fernando Prats, Sebastián Preece, Tomás Rivas, Cristián Salineros, Francisca Sánchez, Demian Schopf, Cristián Silva-Avária, Cristián Silva, Johanna Unzueta y Camilo Yáñez.

Grado Cero, 10 años de arte contemporáneo chileno estará abierta al público desde el 7 al 31 de enero de 2015 en el Centro de las Artes 660 / CA 660. Entrada gratuita. Rosario Norte 660, nivel -2, Las Condes. Metro Manquehue. Estacionamiento gratuito.

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Art in America

Cristóbal Lehyt

BY: Eric Sutphin

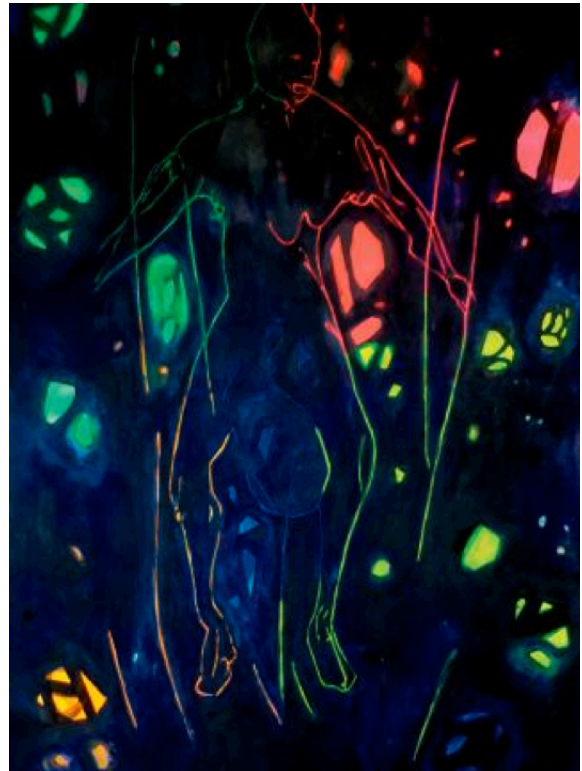
March 14, 2014

Cristóbal Lehyt made his first foray into site-specific sculpture in the exhibition “Iris Sheets” at the Americas Society. For this show, the artist, born in Chile in 1973, built a massive, untitled structure out of sweetgum and oak logs, which had been soaked in Chilean red wine. The burgundy-stained segments of tree were bolted together in a series of interconnected triangular modules that spanned the length of the main gallery. Bifurcating the space, the sculpture forced the viewer to negotiate its form in order to get to the alcove at the back, where two more works from 2013 were on view. Aquarium consists of two small sealed glass boxes filled with sand, wine and sulphur. Iris Sheets, part of his ongoing “Drama Projections” series, is a black-light-enhanced fluorescent wall mural, featuring five genderless, contour figures in a black expanse punctuated by neon orbs and flecks of paint.

Concurrent with the Americas Society show was “Iris Sheets II: This Time It’s Personal” at Johannes Vogt. Here, Lehyt showed seven large paintings (all 2013) on unstretched polyester,

each depicting one figure. Like the wall mural, several of the paintings were made by creating a polychromatic ground and overlaying it with a matte-black surface. Lehyt then drew his figures by scratching into the black to reveal the neon and primary acrylic colors. One such work at Vogt presents the outline of a body with its arms held slightly out to the sides; its eyes, mere dots, are set in a bald, misshapen head and seem to stare blankly forward.

A selection of pencil drawings on layered sheets of tracing paper (made between 2003 and 2013) were presented in glass vitrines in the rear gallery. It was the first time Lehyt’s source drawings have been publicly exhibited. Among the drawings, we recognize a frontal view of a bowlegged figure from the mural at the Americas Society that also appears in one of the paintings at Vogt. Despite the series title “Drama Projections,” Lehyt did not project the



Cristóbal Lehyt: Untitled, from the series “Drama Projections,” 2013, acrylic on polyester, 106 by 60 inches; at Johannes Vogt.

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pencil drawings onto the canvas, but drew each figure freehand. The viewer is easily deceived, as the large versions appear to be exact replicas of the drawings.

In one painting, a slouching creature, its crested head tilted forward, seems to be in mid-step, emerging from a blue nebula on the left of the canvas and heading toward a trapezoidal form that juts in from the right. Another painting shows a winged person that looks like a mutant Icarus. Its body is rendered in a spare, rust-colored line against a pink stain that mirrors the general shape of the body. This work stood out since a majority of the canvas was left white, allowing the viewer to see the history of the artist's stains and markings.

While Lehyt's personnages share an aspect of the contorted postures of Egon Schiele's figures as well as the tragicomic characters of Maria Lassnig, they do not have the same degree of specificity and detail; instead Lehyt's bodies have the look of space aliens. Lehyt noted in a recent lecture that he tries to draw "as if he were someone else." This approach, in addition to his simplification and repetition of forms, accounts for the hollow, disembodied feeling of his creatures. Always cast in indeterminate voids, Lehyt's figures are images of alienation incarnate.

JOHANNES VOGT

EL MERCURIO

El último chileno que conquistó al MOMA

By Daniela Silva Astorga

May 2013

El último chileno que conquistó al MoMA

El museo adquirió su serie de dibujos "Drama Projection (Stuttgart)". Será conservada junto a las obras de Matta, Downey y Dittborn, entre otros grandes artistas locales que integran la misma colección.

DANIELA SILVA ASTORGA

Que es medio flojo. Eso dice Cristóbal Lehyt (39), radicado en Nueva York hace 18 años, sobre sí mismo, mientras cuenta cómo ha sido su vida allí: completamente en línea con las expectativas. Trabaja con la galería de Johannes Vogt, imparte clases, expone seguido y, además, siente que las buenas obras de otros y la obsesión que algunos tienen por el trabajo lo empujaron a crear sin recreo, a que pasen cosas entretenidas y a que "nunca se me vaya la onda", dice el artista.

Ese comentario puede creérselo alguien que jamás ha hablado con él o contemplado su arte. Pero no es verdad. No si viene de un creador que, como Lehyt, ha recibido las becas Guggenheim, Art Forum (de Harvard) y AMA. Ha expuesto en Estados Unidos, Alemania, Brasil, México, China y en bienales como la del Mercosur, y que ahora hace clases en The New School y The Cooper Union, las más prestigiosas escuelas de arte de Estados Unidos. Así, ante el autor de obras materialmente sencillas, pero llenas de contenido, que no necesita refugiarse en las teorías crípticas del arte, no cabe pensar en flojera.

Más aun si ocho piezas de su serie de



Obra de la serie "Drama Projection (Stuttgart)", del MoMA.



Uno de los acrílicos que exhibirá, en noviembre, en la Galería Johannes Vogt.

inteligencia visual, combinada con su profundo conocimiento de la historia del arte, lo ha situado entre los más creativos de este momento. Su obra está imponiéndose hoy como la única innovadora en el

dibujos "Drama Projection (Stuttgart)" —hechos, sin control, bajo una especie de trance en un castillo— fueron adquiridas en abril por el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York (MoMA), que hasta ahora conserva obras de chilenos de la talla de Roberto Matta, Juan Downey y Eugenio Dittborn. Pero Lehyt tiende a aterrizar no sólo su obra, sino también sus logros. Ha dicho, por ejemplo, que con suerte tiene una idea buena al año.

No le acomoda sonar grandilocuente. Aunque, sin duda, es uno de los mejores artistas de su generación. Lo reafirma Alfredo Jaar, de quien Lehyt fue ayudante: "Su

dibujo. Me llena de orgullo que haya sido mi asistente. Pero no le enseñé nada; él ya lo sabía todo". Y Paul Birke, director de la Galería Die Ecke, que representa a Lehyt en Chile, agrega: "Ya al mirar su exposición 'El penúltimo paisaje', hace cuatro años, nos dimos cuenta de que tiene un cuerpo de obra original y destacado".

EN EL CIRCUITO OFICIAL

"Estar en el MoMA es súper bonito y emocionalmente entretenido. También, útil para la carrera. Significa, de cierta forma, que eres súper oficial. Eso sí, depende: a la gente que ya me tomaba en serio le dará lo mismo, y los que no me conocían ahora me tomarán en serio", comenta Lehyt, quien trabaja con la convicción absoluta de que el arte no debe ser complejo, lejano ni elitista.

"Me importa que la obra se entienda o, al menos, que sea una experiencia entretenida. Que el espectador piense algo al respecto. Siempre me preocupo del contexto donde la presentaré, en qué es lo que querrían ver las personas que van al lugar. Eso es fundamental para que el público sienta que está pasando algo. Además, uso recursos complejos y otros que son súper fáciles", remata.



CARLA PINILLA

JOHANNES VOGT

WHITEHOT MAGAZINE TM

March 2012: In Conversation with Cristóbal Lehyt

This interview occurred on the eve of Cristóbal Lehyt's exhibition *Eat Your Emblem* at Vogt Gallery in Chelsea. Running from March 9 through April 21, 2012.

Cristóbal Lehyt has been living in NYC for 17 years. He shows his work in the US and internationally, including Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart, Fundación Telefonica Chile, Or gallery, Kunsthaus Dresden, Artists Space, The Shanghai Biennale, The Mercosul Biennial, The Whitney Museum of American Art and Queens Museum among others. Prior to this interview he supplied a pdf of a wonderful catalog *Drama Projection* published by JRP/Ringier in 2008 on the occasion of his exhibition in Stuttgart, Germany. Available at D.A.P., 155 Sixth Ave. 2nd fl. NY, NY, it includes writing by Sabeth Buchmann, Javier Tellez, and Julia Bryan Wilson. *Drama Projection* provides a thorough and complex overview of Lehyt's making and thinking and a starting place for this conversation.

Thomas Butter: For this show of yours coming up in Chelsea, I am thinking about the way you employ notion of "Center". NYC certainly is a center, I would guess this would have an importance for you. Cristóbal Lehyt: No, not so much. The show in New York is important because I live in New York, but it's as important as anything else. The audience that is going to the show is not more informed than an audience in Sao Paulo Brazil, it's maybe a question of being differently informed. So the "center-periphery" thing is operational in many ways in society, but I don't think necessarily in the art world. All audiences know certain things, and don't know other things. Maybe that is why I am not using "center-periphery".



Images courtesy of the artist and Vogt Gallery



Images courtesy of the artist and Vogt Gallery

Maybe it is implied with the money the institutions have, or the means they have to make the pieces, but it's not in the way the audience relates to the works. Everywhere is a center in a way. Hopefully...and vice versa.

Butter: But you were talking about whether the language of the center is usable or available to you.

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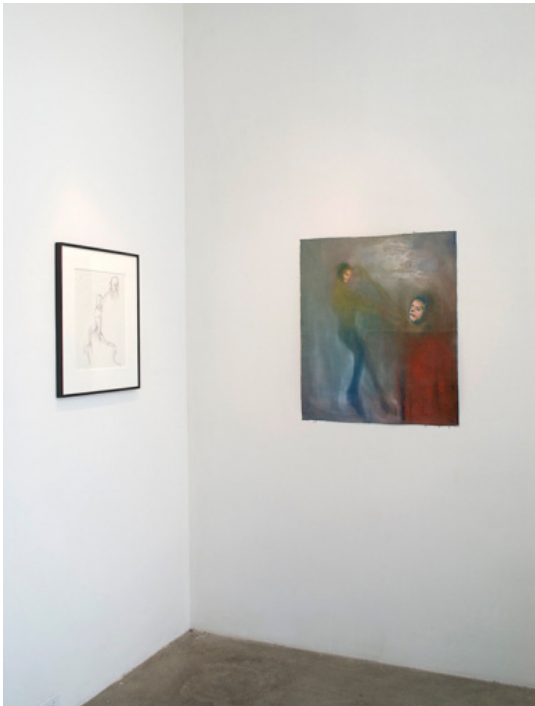
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Images courtesy of the artist and Vogt Gallery



Lehyt: Oh yes, there are certain languages that are only understood in specific areas because they come from that area, or they have been viewed so many times in those areas. Yeah of course. I still think that painting is a European and American thing. Even though there is painting everywhere else, the codes that are used are the ones from the center, yeah, in that sense, absolutely.

Butter: So that is what I am wondering about in terms of you showing here, at the “Center”.

Lehyt: Yes, you are right, maybe I am taking the questions a bit differently. Yes, there are paintings there for example, they are kind-of in-between, becoming, they are not quite “painting” painting. They are trying to become... they are painted on Belgian linen, for example. They are supposed to look beautiful, but they don’t actually look beautiful, they look kind of strange, and they’re just going to be tacked onto the wall, instead of stretched. So they are just going to look like these in-between things... I think I am always doing that. They are pretty small paintings, oil on canvas, tacked to the wall. They are very elegant, but they also look un-elegant, trying to be crappy.

Butter: Are they done the way you draw?

Lehyt: Similarly, but I changed the way I work a bit, I want them to work in a specific way. You know you work so you find something out...

Butter: Right.

Lehyt: I was trying to figure something out with those paintings. I like them a lot because they are not resolved, they are uncomfortable. They are more present, but less visible. I look at them and then can’t stop looking at them. I like that.

Butter: Do they have something to do with the way you were making the drawings in Stuttgart?

I don’t like the word the interviewer used- “trance” but do you use the same strategies you used there, kind of getting in a state that is “in-between”?

Lehyt: Yes. I do like the word trance, because it reminds people of a state, but it is not a trance. I say it is a semi-trance, or close to a trance. I don’t say it is a trance, it’s not. But the logic of them is that I am thinking of fictional characters from a novel, dramatic figures. And I am doing that consciously. Because when I paint I can’t be too automatic.

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Butter: So they are literary then!

Lehyt: Yes, absolutely, they are characters or actors. I think the paintings mostly come out of the writer Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day*. I was reading that book, listening while I was doing them, and then I read the book to make sure it made sense in some way...which was unnecessary! I think I read the book just to make sure it was not only that I had heard it (laughs).

Butter: Do the titles correspond to characters? Is it one-to-one?

Lehyt: No, not at all. They are more like the feeling I think these characters have, and then they are mutated. They are floating. In the show, there is a wall of 7 really big Cprints, *The Anarchists*, that are beautiful, but they are from these really tiny paintings on paper, done with crayons. Then they are blown up and they look like paintings but they are actually just these tiny little crayon drawings. They are mounted and framed, with Plexiglas covering them, so it looks official, like it is asking for its importance, but if you trace back how it is made you see that it actually comes from another place. *The Anarchists*, the C-prints, are based on one specific novel: *The Man Who Was Thursday* by G. K. Chesterton. The characters are the days of the week...specifically. According to me. They are not transcriptions of the way they are described, it is more the way I see them through painting. They are tiny, and made with crayons. Fancy Swiss crayons that permit very many effects. Not Crayola. But now that I think of it, maybe it would be cool to use those kind! But these have scribbles and things and when they are blown up they have a scale that I really like. It is a very funny book, I dreamt about it actually, that's why I did it. I had a dream about characters who had names from days of the week. They were in a strange, weird plot, something strange was happening. Then I researched it, found out there was a book *The Man Who Was Thursday* and then read it, and realized, oh, this is what I dreamt!

Butter: Really!

Lehyt: But I must have seen an adaptation somewhere and it came to mind, and then I found out I actually had the book, in Spanish, in my library! But I had never read it, I just had it. Which is funny...

Butter: So it entered your dream through the object.

Lehyt: I think so! The book is wonderful, it is like a dream. Really beautiful. These characters are all supposed to be anarchists, but then at the end, they are (almost) all undercover policemen. So it is a complete conspiracy, with police all pretending to be anarchists!

Butter: And they don't know each other!

Lehyt: No. They all realize, oh no, you're a cop, and you're a cop too! And then eventually, the last anarchist, we don't know who he is. He is a weird, ambiguous figure nobody knows and we don't either. It is a super funny book, and very British. Since my works called *Drama Projections* represent ideas related to the unconscious I thought it would be cool to do representations of characters from a novel that has no grounding, it just explodes somewhere. They are very dramatic, they look like characters in a play, they are very baroque. I like that. They are very strange and seductive and I don't know what they are doing...as prints they are very beautiful...they look like serious art, even though they come from a strange place.

Butter: What are the other elements of the show?

Lehyt: There is a third element, which are the *Drama Projections*. There are going to be two *Drama Projections* of New York. These are the drawings done in the kind of trance/non-trance we spoke about before, in this case made of people in

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NY. These have color, and are different from the ones in Germany, or Brazil, or Chile. There will be two of these, ink-jet prints pinned to the wall, and then a smaller, original drawing, over towards the office, I have never shown an original drawing in a show before, it is framed. So four elements: the Anarchists the Drama Projections ink jet prints, the paintings, and the original drawing. They are all figures floating, these weird sexualized/asexual figures floating. They look mostly like men, but could be women, or in-between. The medium determines how they are -- I really couldn't do a "painting" painting. I am using the materials of painting, but they are not completely "satisfied" as paintings. They are inbetween. And the other ones, the C-prints, are trying to be paintings, but they aren't quite either.

Butter: So is the "in-betweenness" of the work shown also suspending us between media?

Lehyt: They are each part of a discrete series. They are talking to each other, and maybe that will happen. I hadn't thought about it at all. In general these pieces seem to be more finished works, because that's what we think galleries want you to do, as opposed to what another kind of cultural institution might want. These are based on rules I think of in my head, based on having seen so many shows here in Chelsea. You can do a weird installation in a Kunsthalle for example that is about something. In a gallery for some reason I don't think you can, unless you have already established some sort of body of work that is recognizable. You can't just do an installation that nobody gets! So what do you do? You mimic what art in galleries looks like. That's what I am doing. Mimicking painting...

Butter: Do you want us to know this directly?

Lehyt: I think you will. That is the thing that is cynical. They are trying to be paintings but they are photographs. And the paintings are paintings but they are pinned or stuck to the wall. They are not doing what they should be doing. They try but they don't reach it, or they go overboard, by being works that use "painting" and still behave like paintings. I hope that happens. It sounds complicated but it's actually just how I paint, not believing completely yet doing it, trying to show that process,

Butter: Now I don't feel I am projecting without reason. I like that I haven't seen it all, that you only sent me a piece of it. It makes it more contingent. (laughter)

Lehyt: That makes it interesting to me, but I don't know how it will work. I like when things aren't behaving how they should. I like when you think about it for 2 seconds and then they turn into something else. That's great!

Butter: You are the most philosophical artist I have interviewed...that means to me that you are thinking about thinking. That is not necessarily better, it just means that is your subject. I am fascinated the way you "travel", not only from Chile to here or Germany but that you are always shifting the context. But because of you, I started thinking what it has meant to grow up as an adult here in the center, New York.

Lehyt: One could say that you had a safe ground. You could trust in having a sense of identity that could relate to whatever was happening in New York, or LA or Chicago. If you are from somewhere else, you know you don't have a safe ground, and you distrust your judgment. You are kind of fucked. But then you want to learn about the other judgments. And you see that they are also very lost, but they think that they are not.

Butter: Having safe ground is not necessarily safe! Because you don't have to look at everything. You take a lot for granted.

Lehyt: Exactly. So in that way it is a privileged position to be in between. But there is envy, absolutely, and a sense of longing for a tradition that is very stable, and "good and amazing". What has happened in New York is amazing.

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JOHANNES VOGT

Butter: You quote a writer who embodies “in-betweeness” –Homi Bhabha.

Lehyt: Yes. He talks about camouflage and what it means. The idea comes from Lacan, that camouflage is the effect of mimicry, not being like the thing you are matching, but just looking like it -- matching it, not harmonizing -- so that you are safe. The biggest thing I know that is different from someone who grew up here as a limitation is that if you are far away you copy what is happening in the Center -- which could be here or Europe supposedly, China at this point. The Center moves. You copy the way it looks, but you don't know why it came to look that way. There are so many people who copied Eva Hesse, for example, but she comes from somewhere. If you understand the tradition of Eva Hesse, you will not make an Eva Hesse. You will make your own work. Differently. But if you are from really far away, you just make an Eva Hesse. It is a great privilege to know the logic by having been at the Center.

Butter: I understand. I remember in my 20's and looking at a Mondrian and finally realizing how it was painted matter, it changed everything. In art books you can't see how it is painted. But there is an assumption that by just being at the Center, you understand. But there is a blindness at the Center, often nothing is examined closely, there are a lot of assumptions.

Lehyt: But those assumptions make you feel safer, it makes you more self-assured. You can do whatever you want.

Butter: You may be able to do what you want, but you aren't necessarily informed, because you haven't had to struggle with anything!

Lehyt: The reason New York is a good city is that it is an open city. As someone who grew up here, you have the chance to think about these issues because of all the people who come here are from elsewhere and have so many different experiences.

Butter: Yes.

Lehyt: Even though it can be provincial. All cities are provincial! But the least provincial is New York. But in art, I don't think you need to be so informed necessarily. When I was a kid, I read all the time, I imported books, I was obsessed with sculpture when I was 14 or 15. I copied Picasso's, I read Foucault, I loved Brancusi...

Butter: Can you compare this upcoming show to others of yours?

Lehyt: Well my previous works were responses to the circumstance, to the context and to the site. These works are as well. They are done after I got married, and once I realized I wanted to do a show in a gallery in Chelsea. These works are equally site specific, it is just that the site-specificity of a gallery is more undefined, you know?

Undefined in a way that is not so easily conceptualized, the audience is more random or more specific at the same time. It is not only cultural event, it is a commercial event as well. I think I am still in control in the same way. But the place makes it stranger- the white, supposedly neutral place, makes it stranger. So both the location and the changes in my life are determining what I am making. Now I don't think I need to be so clear about what the work should be doing. I'm older that way, it isn't as necessary. In those interviews you read, I am making it very clear I wanted to have certain things happen...

Butter: The works are also very autobiographical. They are very much about your thought and activities in the present. For example: in Stuttgart what you are taking in and putting out is very much about you. But again, you are not a native there. How long have you lived here?

Lehyt: 17 years.

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Butter: So this is home.

Lehyt: Yes. Absolutely. But it is always autobiographical though, it is about the choices you make based on the situation you are in...if you are invited to do a show in Germany or Brazil or Mexico, I would like to know, what are the circumstances of the show? What is the budget, how much time do I have to figure this out? But if the show is in New York in a gallery that is 5 blocks away from my house then I know what is going on in a way that maybe determines the work, and makes it even more open, potentially. I don't need to target it so much, the framework is my framework. I think this is a good thing to do. The only thing I am thankful for, is that knowing when you are being normal, you are being normal only because of a certain set of circumstances. And actually some people who live outside of those circumstances have to make an effort to be in those circumstances. People in NY think it is so normal, that this is the way you make contemporary art. There are so many people all over the world making work with other parameters, parameters not visible in the States. They are not using the codes of Chelsea or of MoMA, or of Berlin, or of London. Knowing that makes a difference.

Butter: And that's how you are using the word normal, "normal" would be knowing that?

Lehyt: Normal for both the people in New York and the people outside of New York. There are different "normals". There are different logics and different ambitions. You were here for the whole problem of multi-culturalism and post-colonial art. People from other places showing contemporary art in New York don't necessarily know how the work is going to be read, and they are being used in many cases. But if you live here, you know the codes that are going to be used to read your work. If you know that, then you can play with it. I think I am doing that by doing the paintings, but still thinking of being somewhere outside too. Hopefully. But I am more relaxed about it. I don't think it is such a big deal, because everything gets absorbed anyway. Having a militant attitude gets absorbed too! (laughs)

Butter: Yes you spoke about having a subversive quality, and how that can get absorbed very quickly. It is hard to maintain.

Lehyt: Yes a few people do it. I mentioned Yvonne Rainer, she is very interesting because she has managed to sustain that resistance.

Butter: And Cage you mentioned too.

Lehyt: Yes. Cage is extraordinary, because he is in the middle of it, and he is out of it. He is such an interesting artist. Rainer and Cage are very good examples. But the mediums I am using don't lend themselves to that. They lend themselves to certain layers of reading, of misinterpretations, misrecognitions, which I like a lot. I think that is part of more advanced work in the mediums that I use, using their limitations. But we have had discussions about this. Sometimes you think one is being cynical. But the examples we have used have been about people being cynical. I accept the potential of using that cynicism, but it doesn't mean I don't care about what I am doing, it is a strategic position you can have.

Butter: In the interview you said that the information presented, all the facts, could be seen as cynical, but the presence of the work, its physical presence and the way it involves the viewer, you never thought as being cynical.

CL: Yes. Absolutely. They are there, looking at something you have done. It could be a lie, in the sense that what is presented is not important. In the catalog I talk about the McGuffin, which is super-interesting in Hitchcock.

Butter: Which is what you call the information, the equivalent.

Lehyt: It is the thing that advances the plot, but is not the point. Which is fine. In the States this is very advanced. Some artists do that very, very well. I like using that, it is part of the tools to use. But, yes, I do respect the fact that someone is

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staring at something I have done. Or being in the space of something you could be wasting their time with, something you have done...so you have to make it worth their while somehow.

Butter: The word that was used in an essay -- "dissociation"-- doesn't seem like the right word here. Even if you were in an altered state for the paintings it doesn't seem like a word I would attach to this show...

Lehyt: In this case, actually yes I would say it is operational. Dissociation as Julia BryanWilson uses it is, in one sense, about saying something and then dissociating yourself from what you said -- depersonalizing and fragmenting. And that becoming part of the reading of the work. It is sort of maybe a Latin-American thing, maybe a European thing, maybe a Mediterranean thing. You do what you have to do to get things done. It could involve lying, which is very different from the American perspective, which is if you lie, then the whole thing becomes corrupt. If the whole system is corrupt, then lying is just being aware of how things are functioning, and simply using it for your goals. And if our goals are similar, then it works.

Butter: This is part of the notion of fatalism which you were very eloquent about in the interviews. Since things aren't going to work, then the present has to be more sensual.

Lehyt: Yes, the idea of achieving something is very suspect. If it is suspect, then what is really attainable? It may be that moment in which a person is really staring at the work.

Butter: So does the present need to be heightened?

Lehyt: I'm not sure it needs to be heightened, if you are aware of it, that is enough. That is why Yvonne Rainer and John Cage are so great, because they talk about, and use, presentness. Not in the Michael Fried way, but more knowing where you are and what you are perceiving. Latin American art does have this thing about fatalism in this sense: the structure that is giving you the information is corrupt, yet the moment of reading it is to be protected and taken care of, and experienced.

Butter: It seems to give a heightened urgency to that.

Lehyt: Yes definitely. It is more vital. It is vital that this moment means something to us, that we are here together talking about something. Because there is nothing after it. I believe that, I do think this is true. I just came from a class. When the class is good, it doesn't matter what we said, we all experienced it differently, but we all figured out something. And that's great! But there is this belief in the States, that when you do things right, and you keep doing them right, things will happen. There is a progression, and a belief there is an advancement of things.

Butter: Progress.

Lehyt: Progress, right. And this does operate, because if enough people believe in it, then it is happening! It's true. If you have a really good show, or you do a really good piece, people will take you seriously and talk with you about it. In Chile or Brazil, say, it is relative. Some people will, some people won't, but for completely random reasons not tied to what you did.

Butter: Why?

Lehyt: People don't believe in things working that way. It is funny, it may come down to commitment. You either believe in things progressing, or you commit to things being important only in that moment. For some reason it might be an either/or thing, which is bizarre. At least the way I have experienced it in the States. Maybe in Germany as well. I have always liked the way Germans look at art. They do get "lost in the moment", and they do believe things have to go forward. I have

JOHANNES VOGT

always found this surprising, because they are very intense and then they want to know: "What do we do now?" In the States it is more: "Next"

Butter: A bit of irony in our field is that there is no progress in art in some basic way. Everything is repeated. I agree with your the notion of progress in the States, and I think it stems from technological progress and the cult of physical mastery, in all forms, including sports.

Lehyt: But art has moved forward! Don't you think it has?

Butter: It is really interesting. If you want progress, that makes the critical agenda particular.

Lehyt: We would have to define what that progress is. The biggest jump for me, now that I teach art, is teaching Roland Barthes. The idea that the author has died. It is from the '60's but it is great to teach.

Butter: It is one of the strands of post-modernism, I think.

Lehyt: Yes, definitely. It is still operational in the sense that if you have a good reader, then things do progress, because they use it for their lives. The onus is no longer on the hierarchical figure, but on the person who is receiving/reading the thing. I think that is amazing. That is beautiful. It means it should be a rigorous reading, meaning somebody is committed to what is going on, as opposed to consuming it. A big difference.

Butter: Right.

Lehyt: But there have been big leaps. Everybody talks about Duchamp all the time. It was a big leap, he opened things up completely. And many things that happened in the States were pretty amazing, like Rainer or Cage, or Kaprow or Ryman. Right now, it is horrible what you see in the galleries, it is very lame and facile, it is just about creating products. But sometimes you see good shows.

Butter: Sure.

Lehyt: Once a month you can see a good show!

Butter: Yes.

Lehyt: That is progress, no? (laughs)

Butter: There is this idea that there is a given historical moment that demands a particular kind of response, and that the response is keyed to the moment. There is technological progress. But in terms of human development, I don't see progress. In the biggest sense, the art reflects that.

Lehyt: Oh, ok. I was talking about languages of art and viewer participation. Butter: But even with art through time. You have the writer addressing the reader directly very early in literature. Or onstage, the actor addressing the audience. Very sophisticated layers reflecting each other. I am more and more suspicious of the notion of progress in art.

Lehyt: It is interesting. In the larger scheme, yes I don't think there is progress. When I was a kid and we were studying Plato in school, if you read Plato, and you read it attentively, it can be as satisfying or as amazing as anything you could ever think! It is completely current. But I do think, that within art there is progress, but not in relation to the human, but in

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JOHANNES VOGT

relation to the field. But this brings it back to the idea of the context. Things have to change in order to keep thinking about the things that really matter. It has to change, it doesn't mean that is progress, it is just keeping up with what is going on... then the thing would be to figure out which things are urgent.

Butter: What about the idea of the melancholic?

Lehyt: My current work seems to be referring to painting or to drawing or the idea of contemplation. We think we associate contemplation with art, but it is not really operational. It doesn't really happen anymore. As theorized by Jonathan Crary, it changed from contemplation to concentration. I think it works like that. Which is crazy. It is melancholic in that sense. When I refer to Chesterton or other historical authors the characters are romantic figures who are tragic, they are caught in a comic drama. There is a sense of "miss-encounter" that is melancholic, which is reflected in the medium I am using. They are drawings, paintings, and photographs which refer to something...

Butter: Lost?

Lehyt: Well it's not quite there. When you are looking at it, it is not quite "what it is". Like when you have lost somebody and you are looking at a picture of them.

Butter: It used to be there, or it is coming?

Lehyt: No, it used to be there. It is not coming. We think it used to be there, but we don't know, exactly. It is not exactly where we want it to be. That could be melancholic depending on your disposition.

Butter: You are looking backward.

Lehyt: Yes. Something happened and you are not sure what is happening. But then by the act of looking at it again, it becomes active. But I don't know how abstract that is. That is the language of painting, though, it is very interesting. It has presence, absence and memory. References and connections. In those interviews you were referring to before, that was very specific. I was making portraits of people in Stuttgart, and they could say those things to me about my relation to the things in front of me. But now I am making portraits of characters in a novel, and it has been filtered so much, how do I relate to this image? I relate to it aesthetically, but it has a story, so what do I do with the story? There is a sense of displacement there. The images are romantic because they are dramatic and melancholic, but I don't know if the viewer will feel like that.

Butter: There is something lost in the image.

Lehyt: I think so. I hope so. What do you think? You have seen them.

Butter: I am interested in the way you are handling heads. Also true for the drawings in Stuttgart. Heads are developed as a source for, and the result of, a character. There is something here about consciousness that is your subject.

Lehyt: In the way that they are like portraits, in the sense that you can see the character's face?

Butter: Yes you start to project the character's nature on them. Which is one of the ideas you have for the work: it is made for us to project upon. This is explicit.

Lehyt: Yes that may be why they are melancholic. If you look at them and you engage with these characters, and then you see they are just characters, they fall apart, partially because of the process by which they are made. We can't trace them

JOHANNES VOGT

back to any specific dramatic engagement. It is more: a reading, of a reading, of a reading, of a painting that has been scanned. You are engaging with a ghost of some sort. That is a melancholic feeling: connecting to something that is not there anymore. So the heads are important in the sense that they have to be very particular characters.

Buttrt: I haven't seen the paintings, but I am starting to think that hanging them in the same show with the C-prints is quite provocative. Is that a split in the work you are creating for this show?

Lehyt: The figures are somewhat similar in the sense that they have very defined faces, but they are embedded in the linen. They are more ghostly. They are apparitions. I didn't prepare the linen, all the pigments have sunk into the fabric itself.

Part 2

We are talking about Raphael Rubenstein's article "Provisional Painting Part 2: To Rest Lightly On Earth" in *Art in America* February 2, 2012

Lehyt: He is trying to clarify something that is very complex. It is a very good attempt I think. I gave it to my students. I have been trying to explain to them about paintings that don't quite work. I ask them: "Do you know why they are done that way? You don't have to necessarily have to do a good painting." I talk with them about a work that shows that it is giving up. It can be as successful as a work that is trumping itself. It is interesting. Many of the artists Rubenstein mentions are really good. There is a really interesting text by Jim Lewis, in one of the Christopher Wool books, where he refers to a Nabokov story about a tiger. Lewis is talking about Christopher Wool. He said everybody thought the tiger was painting its stripes, when actually it was painting the bars of the cell. That's why Wool's paintings are so annoying. They are showing the problem, representing the problem and they do it in a scale and a way that makes sense to me.

Butter: This is a question of values, deciding what is important in life. And the way this is resolved is by living, by doing this, or that. Based on action. But painting for example is all symbolic, none of it is what it is, it is all symbolic. Painting is not the same kind of symbol system as writing is...you can look up a word...but in art, everyone reinvents the system of communication in their work. Your notion of Christopher Wool re-representing the problem, or depicting the problem is a very particular philosophical position. It is using gestural brushstrokes but not for the purpose one might assume, which would be expression.

Lehyt: Yes. But the brushstroke has been so codified. My favorite brushstrokes are Lichtenstein's. They are insane, they are so funny. They show that there is no expression, he doesn't believe in direct expression.

Butter: But how about using a brushstroke as a moment of direct action in the world?

Lehyt: It is displaced expression. I seriously don't believe in direct expression in that way. In the same way as when Cy Twombly makes a scribble, it is a contextualized scribble, it isn't necessarily his moment of passion- of say lust or despair. He wants to make a scribble in relation to this other scribble so that they start doing something together. And maybe some of them he did drunk, or with the opposite hand, or an awkward stick, but it doesn't matter, then they work in some other way. They are not in themselves expressive, they are so only in relation to other things...

TB: There are different purposes, and some are not self-referential. A painting is always self-referential, but that is not necessarily its end point. But if you are making art about thinking, then there is an end-point that is self-referential. You mentioned last week that you thought Duchamp opened this; that his art is about thinking in a different way than art that is about the world.

Lehyt: He made it explicit. You could say it was already happening with Courbet, Manet, or Velasquez. But you know,

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DaVinci said it is a mental thing. Duchamp just made it evident in the form, in opposition or as an alternative to painting.

Butter: But I want to say, on the continuum, if you take Manet, it is his thinking, but it is applied to the visual world. The world as represented reflects his thinking. Cezanne is an even better example- the cliché is that it is about doubt, which is a thought. But even with that, there is a mountain there. With Duchamp there is no world in the work, there is his mind, and his mind is the world. The piece of his, Paris Air, is nameable, but I wouldn't say the work is "about" the air in Paris.

Lehyt: No.

Butter: But you could say Cezanne's painting is partially about the mountain.

Lehyt: Yes. You could say Duchamp makes things general and abstracts them in a conceptual way. They are not specifically about the world. But I don't think that is the only thing they do. It can start that way, it can be about the mind but then, if you keep going, it goes back to the world in another way. It is about the world, but doesn't present that in the beginning of the reading or in the initial experience of the work. It goes back to the world because it activates you. The piece can be about logic, or about breaking with something or displacing context, or thinking about art in general. The piece where he sends instructions to his sister as a wedding gift: to put a geometry book, it's supposed to be put it on her terrace, leave it open, let it get wet, let the wind blow through it, the sun bleach it. It is initially a piece criticizing rationality and our relation to nature and knowledge. It is very thought out. It has been interpreted as this moment where he wants to break with his sister. The piece itself is too obviously about how rational ways of describing the world are not enough. It is beautiful, it is about the world. It is superconceptual, just an instruction sent to her while he was in Buenos Aires. It is an operation, a poetic and somewhat obvious meaning, and a break with tradition -- it is all those things, and more than about us understanding that multiplicity as a proposal for us to question our reality.

Butter: You attribute this thought to him as a thinker, not as a maker. The air in Paris Air is from Paris, it's in there, but not the point, quite. The acuteness of his thought represented in material. Material is always contingent with Duchamp.

Lehyt: Yes.

Butter: In our case, my feeling is that you are more of this type of artist, and part of what you are doing is camouflaging this for your show, you are putting on a mask. Rubenstein talks about "major art masquerading as minor art". You put this on for certain reasons of your own. They are

Lehyt: I would disagree. Not getting inside of my head, but getting inside of the head of the piece. The piece is not my head, it is a set of relationships I let go of, and I hope they function enough for you to want to get into. That is where I wanted to talk about content. I think it is important they are figures that are floating but that they have to do with characters in fiction. They show that they are displaced already. I'm not painting...in these paintings the most obvious reference is Sherrie Levine for example because she copies art: for example she takes pictures of Walker Evans. But I create the original, then I copy the original, and then I change it around, and then I change it around once more. So the original is, maybe, I don't know, connected to what you are saying about Cezanne -- there is a connection to reality somewhere. There is the intent of expression. I'm not canceling that at all. I do believe there is a moment where the brushstroke can be expressive, but it can only be expressive if you go through this super annoying -- (it is annoying to me too!) -- acknowledgment of the filters and distances we have in order to connect to something, so hopefully it destabilizes that automatic desire to want to connect to something. It is an obvious reference to what I grew up with -- PostModernism -- the subject has been so alienated from any specific connection to reality that we have to deal with the codes and things in between, how important they are and how real they can be. Some of the codes and things I have that are in between have to do with what we talked about: I come from somewhere else, and Post-Modern theory was very important and so on, they are givens. Being from far away it

JOHANNES VOGT

makes you see things differently; the works are not necessarily so different from things that were done in New York already, like the "Pictures" generation. They are different only because of the things I care about, that I am using. I am not talking about American Pop culture, I'm talking about figures in literature, like Chesterton, or talking about anarchists. How do you show an anarchist? I couldn't do a portrait of an anarchist, but I can talk about anarchists through this whole thing, which hopefully, when you see the work, because of that whole thing you can relate to it in another way, as opposed to just absorbing it simply as a piece of art immediately. Hopefully. It is a gamble! That is why one of my favorite artists is Marcel Broodthaers for example. He delays your sense of presentness until you have read all these horrible series of signs, but sometimes you just get it, it is the same as looking at a Manet, but you have to go through language to get to that point. Which is what you are saying about coming through the mind. That is how I see art. Even Cy Twombly -- I can't just look at a painting -- I have to understand why he did it before I can relate to it. I can't visually relate to a Cy Twombly unless I understand his whole context and his historical situation. The silly facts: that he was at Black Mountain College, friends with Rauschenberg, moved to Rome. All those things are part of it. Understanding what the scribble is, for example, a misreading of Pollock possibly. All those things give me the freedom to eventually relate to the painting in a way that I wouldn't have before. I need all that information to relate to it. That is how I think. It is not philosophical, it is acknowledging all the obstacles. Putting them there, seeing them, and then moving around them. Using them to your advantage. Transforming them. I don't think I'm that clever, I think that I get stuck and still try to keep going being aware that being stuck is part of the meaning. What I am doing is pretty basic, it looks or sounds complicated. Maybe I am acknowledging reading art is complicated, as opposed to thinking I could immediately make a piece that people could relate to. I don't believe in that.

Butter: For anyone?

Lehty: No, for me. I trust that people can do that, of course. But that is why Richter and Polke are so important when I was growing up. They acknowledged their social situation and all the limits of representation. Polke is amazing that way, because he shows how much crap there is to get to the point where everything falls apart. That is amazing. He loved museums, he loved bright colors, he loved space, he loved taking drugs, he loved celebrating all of it. You can see this in the paintings, you feel they are vital, in a way that other artists aren't. Even though he is acknowledging how alienated he is from things.

Butter: Is there one step more with Kippenberger? Is that a fair statement?

Lehty: Yeah it is a different position. Because Kippenberger is from the 80's and Polke is from the 70's.

Butter: But it isn't just time...it is part of what interested Rubenstein...Kippenberger is a precursor to this phenomenon he is interested in...

Lehty: But I think the ultimate precursor is Picabia. He is the one who figured out painting could be just crappy and still be a painting. What I meant by 70's and 80's is about the historical framework. Polke is from the 70's during the time of hardcore conceptualism and he is doing his paintings. And Kippenberger being semi-absorbed by the Neo-expressionist wave, or the Neo-conceptualists. He was showing partly with Bazelitz and partly with Jeff Koons. That's how he was framed in the beginning. And then later with Robert Gober! Which is funny! It is important because he saw himself in those contexts there is an interview where he talks about Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Louise Lawler, and Andrea Fraser and how interesting he finds them. But I still think Polke is more interesting than Kippenberger because it is more unresolved. I have a deep attachment to him. I thought about other things as well. We talked about context and place, but that is possibly the superstructure of the work. But the specificity is that I am doing portraits of anarchists, I'm showing an image that is sort of sexualized and strange, the show is called Eat Your Emblem which is sort of incorrect English. There is a weird resistance somewhere. I was at a lecture of Josephine Pryde a few years ago, and she was talking about "pre-recuperation". Recuperation is where the system absorbs whatever it is you are doing, it can be from the Situationists.

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You do something really revolutionary and then it is recuperated by the system and then it becomes fashion, or whatever. But prerecuperation is where you do it yourself. Before they even get their hands on it. You package it yourself, so that it can resist. The whole operation is a way of protecting something. This is the idea of resistance, even though these works of mine mimic “nice” objects, they are strange, they look strange and they do operate strangely. They look like they shouldn’t be strange, but they are. That is something I am trying to do. I don’t know if it is going to work. I hope so... When I saw the prints, I thought, “ok, it works: they look like paintings but they’re scans of small paintings.” That makes them annoying, even though they are very luscious, and pretty. But I don’t know how they are going to look in the gallery. But they do that. This idea of pre-recuperation is interesting to me. It relates to a Chilean thing, an old thing, something I grew up with: works should be read only by the people who you want them to be read by. The other people will misinterpret them, misread them. That is ingrained in the logic of the work. This idea is very formative for all contemporary Chilean artists. It is called the “zone of resistance”. It started mostly in the visual arts -- it happened because of the dictatorship. The idea was that they didn’t want the military or the police to know what they were talking about, but you wanted other people who shared your values/commitments to know what you were talking about. Because if the people in power understood, they would put you away. That is the basis of conceptualism in Chile from the 70’s. Late conceptualism. I am still showing something I am interested in but it has been disguised.

Butter: That would be the mask I’m talking about.

Lehyt: Right.

Butter: So in addition to the uncovering there is the notion that only certain people will be able to uncover it.

CL: But in New York it is different; I can switch it to, “anybody can think anything they want” without really meaning it completely. I think in previous works, in Chile and other places, it was more focused and specific, but in this case I am using the art world (it is Chelsea after all!) and “art reading” conventions. Everybody could access it but maybe some people who I do not agree with will not agree with the work. But they will still like it because they will misread it. It is interesting to me because it is not a real person I am anticipating, more of a mythical idea of resisting a structure. If you do all these operations, somehow you are trying to resist. Not quite completely because they are framed pretty prints. Like old-fashioned resistance would mean to not make commercial work. So what is the alternative to not making commercial work? Maybe it can be making commercial work that acts out its contradictions.



CRISTÓBAL LEHYT Y FELIPE MUJICA

By Cristóbal Lehyt and Felipe Mujica
October 3, 2011

Artistas a los Artistas es una sección en la que dos artistas conversan de forma casual o formal, en vivo o por correo electrónico, sobre temas de su interés. En esta ocasión dialogan los artistas chilenos asentados en Nueva York Cristóbal Lehyt y Felipe Mujica. Artistas-amigos, ambos han conversado muchas veces y de diferentes formas. Ahora más “viejos”, y con “supuestamente cosas que decir”, realizan esta conversación: Mujica, con tiempo para explicar bastante bien como funciona su trabajo, y Lehyt, sin tantas ganas de explicar, más bien con ganas de entender por qué Felipe Mujica hace lo que hace. Esta conversación trata de encontrar ese punto donde algo no tan claro aparece entre ideas y anécdotas.



Linea de Hormigas, 2007, Felipe Mujica en colaboración con Cristóbal Lehyt.

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Cristóbal: Empecemos por la cosa de la abstracción, tú la usas y yo la uso, de forma diferente, claro. Mi posición es cambiante y poco clara, la tuya también, pero me dan ganas de decir que tú crees en ella de alguna forma. ¿Puedes hablar en qué forma? **Felipe:** Si, claro que creo en ella, si no, no la usaría... o a lo mejor debería decir que me siento cómodo usándola. Creer en algo es como bien básico como herramienta de motivación pero también es bien fuerte ya que tiene connotaciones ideológicas y religiosas, y yo no creo que mi posible afinidad o comodidad con la abstracción vaya por ese lado.

Todo empezó en la escuela de arte donde uno muchas veces hacía las cosas sin saber por qué. Cuando estudié en el área de grabado no me entusiasmaban las texturas o la expresividad de las rayitas que uno podía hacer en la plancha o hacer una imagen media simbólica-latinoamericana, lo que me interesaba era el proceso de trabajo, modificar mínimamente la matriz, incluso NO modificarla y jugar con cambios de color, repetición en el papel, etc. Entonces lo que surgió fue una natural reducción y de esa forma si me daban ganas de trabajar. Luego con el tiempo uno va haciendo asociaciones. Y obviamente en esa época como un estudiante medio para arriba uno tenía conocimientos básicos sobre el modernismo Europeo, el Constructivismo Ruso y el Minimalismo Norte Americano (y muy poco sobre modernismo Latinoamericano). Entonces se puede decir que comencé trabajando con la abstracción geométrica porque me interesaba su historia, pero también era una forma de trabajo con la cual sentía que podía hacer algo interesante, algo que no expresara como me sentía o qué opinaba de tal evento, algo que funcionaba como un sistema independiente a uno, con sus reglas propias.



Felipe Mujica, Kidnapping a Sculpture, 2010, Papel mural y tintura, 238 x 162 cm. Message Salon, Zürich

JOHANNES VOGT

En el fondo soy un nostálgico ya que me gustaría creer en la abstracción como un motor de cambio social como lo planteó la Bauhaus o el Constructivismo Ruso. Es decir, creo en esa historia y en lo que significó, tanto para ciertas sociedades y para la historia del arte, pero también sé que desde un punto de vista “real”, digamos desde la sociología o economía, el modernismo fracasó y en el mejor de los casos tenemos algunos edificios que nos la recuerdan de manera hiper-simbólica (cuando están bien hechos) y de manera brutal y cruda (cuando están mal hechos). Ahora creo en sus posibilidades futuras, como dije antes, si no, no la usaría. Pero debo confesar que también soy sospechoso. Por eso me cuesta hacer NUEVA ABSTRACCIÓN y me quedo bien pegado en la apropiación de otras abstracciones. Haciéndome un auto-análisis a lo mejor es un mecanismo de defensa en el cual incorporo la historia de la abstracción y le hago un twist lo cual produce una cosa entremedio... un resultado raro, incómodo, ya que no sé si realmente logré algo o no... no sé si cumplí mi papel de artista o no... y esa duda me interesa, no tener súper claro por dónde va la cosa o por dónde va uno. Yo veo que tu usas la abstracción de manera más orgánica y tal vez sujeto a una historia más relacionada con la pintura mala, ya que cuando, por ejemplo, haces tus esculturas flotantes son bien matéricas y chorrean y salpican para todos lados de mala manera y con algo de rabia (como Albert Oehlen en 3D!). En mi opinión hablan de eso, de un punto entremedio y bien fino entre el exceso y el control, entre lo que debería ser bonito y oficial y lo que parece cualquier cosa, una lesera, un chiste formal y poético con fanfarrea. En contraste a eso lo que yo hago tiene cierta esperanza, lo tuyo es más nihilista. ¿Puede ser esa la diferencia?



Felipe Mujica, No State, 2007, Tela e hilo de coser, 300 x 160 cm. Cortesía Die Ecke Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile

JOHANNES VOGT

Cristóbal: Lo que me cuentas me parece muy bien, cómo lo ves, como te lo dices a ti mismo. Yo sé que eres un hombre sincero -parece una canción- y que tu forma de contar cómo ha sido tu historia es así. Yo sí dudo de ciertas conclusiones que sacas. La más importante sería la de que el Modernismo fracasó y dejó unos edificios... eso no creo que sea verdad. Pero no sé que tan interesante sería leer sobre nuestras posiciones con respecto al Modernismo, es mejor para mí pensar en todo ese proceso del que hablas. Es bien transparente todo, excepto cómo quieres que funcionen tus obras. Que éstas queden entremedio y que tu rol de artista sea poco definido. Ahí es donde yo entiendo muy bien lo que haces. Lo que me parece un problema es lo de citar: eso está demasiado determinado por un discurso que yo asimilé demasiado fuertemente con la gente del Pop del Nueva York histórico y los de la Pictures Generation, después toda la cita Latinoamericana ayudada por el discurso poscolonial. Ellos son los que definen para mí lo que es citar. Se que tú haces algo diferente pero igual se me pega eso, no se si de flojo de mi parte o de pegado o las dos cosas.

Hay algo muy valioso en como trabajas tú, algo que compartes con algunos artistas europeos medio alemanes que hay por ahí, ser riguroso y diseñar tus obras, pensar como diseñador en el mejor sentido. Pensar en las diferencias mínimas de colores y de arreglos de objetos, espacios y personas para entender el significado del trabajo, eso me parece increíblemente valioso, complicado y francamente poco agradable de tener que hacer. Me hace pensar en el diseño japonés, en la abstracción conceptual -la contemporánea-, basada en el performance y las historias de ideologías y pensamientos "secundarios" o menores (en el sentido de la literatura menor de Deleuze y Guattari), pero ahora tiene otra carga, más indefinida aparentemente. El problema es que esa indefinición es un buen lugar en el cual operar, uno que está decodificado por las prácticas que ya conocemos. Así que es complicado trabajar ahí, creo yo.

Cuando me preguntas por lo que hago yo, sería un poco como evitar eso. De repente por eso parece "nihilista", cuando realmente es medio desesperado, escapando de las lecturas que se me ocurren que podrían tener los trabajos. Entonces trato de clausurar lo conocible, cuando tú si buscas lo conocible pero por otro lado, con motivos más o menos definidos basados en lo social. Yo te preguntaría ¿qué se logra con eso? Es medio heavy lo que te pregunto porque es preguntarte que se saca con tratar de incluir al espectador y re-localizar las lecturas. ¿Qué ganas tú con eso? ¿Es algo que tu necesitas hacer para ti o crees que es una necesidad que la gente tiene y tu les das algo donde poder situar ese deseo?

Felipe: Entiendo tus dudas sobre cómo utilizo la cita o apropiación en mi trabajo. Pero también creo que es importante no confrontar todo lo que uno hace con la historia específica de Nueva York. Para mí el Pop y el Pictures Generation trabajaron la cita específicamente en relación al contexto Norteamericano. Creo que yo

JOHANNES VOGT



Cristóbal Lehyt, Violeta, 2006, 455 x 325 cm, pancarta de vinilo instalada en Kunsthaus, Dresden, frente a un parque infantil

trabajo con la cita de manera diferente, tiene más que ver con una historia que me interesa – que es mas universal – y a la vez la representación de esas historias. Ellos en cambio trabajaban directamente con la cultura popular de acá de acuerdo a lógicas y estrategias de representación de cada época.

Lo principal en mi caso podría ser que utilizo la cita como una herramienta educativa. Si el espectador logra traspasar el primer impacto visual/formal quiero que aprenda de esa historia específica, la que está detrás de la obra. En un segundo nivel la cita es auto-educativa, ya que la referencia se transforma en un ejercicio de aprendizaje para mí también. Finalmente, en un tercer nivel, me interesa producir un momento en que el resultado, la nueva forma de la cita, sea cuestionada... que pase un poco lo que hablábamos antes, el no saber en que condiciones quedó la cosa, su real "logro". Esta tercera etapa en el fondo está cuestionando las dos anteriores, es decir, intento producir algo que admite sus propias fallas o dudas. Y aquí llegamos el tema de la indefinición. Si, es complicado trabajar desde esa perspectiva, pero me parece más productivo. Prefiero hacer obras abiertas e incompletas, ya que al no tener una meta definida no hay un cierre, no hay final. Uno avanza y avanza pero lo que parece la meta se aleja y aleja. Tiene que ver con la estructura de trabajo más que con el brillo de su superficie (como un edificio que no se acaba de construir).

JOHANNES VOGT



Felipe Mujica, Sunrise and Fall, instalación (paneles de madera, pintura y dibujo). Instalación en Galerie Christian Nagel, Miami Design District, 2005

El espectador me interesa y creo valioso incorporarlo ya que es él/ella quien puede aportar a este proceso de reconstrucción (o intento de reconstrucción) del trabajo. Tengo claro que esa participación puede ser muy activa o muy pasiva, sin embargo creo que vale la pena probar y buscarla. Por otro lado lo que intento con esa participación es algo así como completar un ciclo... o más bien producir un loop histórico. El Modernismo y los movimientos sociales de los 60-70 tienen en común su intención de cambiar el mundo, ambos buscaban y existieron y fueron importantes gracias a la colaboración entre sus integrantes, gracias a la disposición al diálogo y a la búsqueda del un "bien común" (o de algún objetivo común). Entonces mis obras, al incorporar y buscar la participación del espectador de una forma súper directa -ya sea público general o especializado- en el fondo están siendo conscientes con esa historia y no solo eso si no que además la ponen en práctica. Puede ser que mi posición sea muy optimista, pero creo que esta apertura es necesaria, para mí ciertamente, pero también, ojalá, para todos los que afecta o participen de ella. ¿A lo mejor para hablar de utopías hay que ser utópico

JOHANNES VOGT

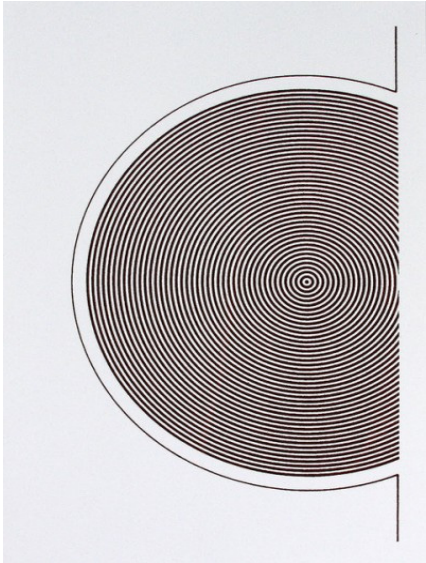


Cristóbal Lehyt, Mar de Bolivia, 2006, vistas de instalación en Die Ecke Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile.

Cristóbal: Si, bueno yo decía que para mi es así lo de la cita, sobre todo porque es una forma de contener lo que es la cultura de masas y eso fue hecho de forma más efectiva en arte acá en NY (después de asumir lo que pasó en Europa). La teoría pos-colonial dio otra alternativa a cómo leer la cita, pero es en relación a trabajos que necesitan de más contexto, uno no hegemónico, porque lamentablemente yo pienso que los códigos del “Arte Contemporáneo” siguen siendo dictaminados por la Historia del Arte, la consensual y sobredeterminada por estructuras que tienen agendas bien predecibles....luchar contra eso es o lidiar con eso directamente, o como tú lo haces, buscando historias y lecturas determinadas por lo que hablas de utópico y hacerlo por el lado. Eso, yo creo, es casi imposible de hacer y depende de lecturas y sobreentendidos refinados en los centros como el arte Alemán o el de acá (en NY). Así que para mi la cosa da vuelta y vuelta. Usar esas imágenes es perpetuarlas para el consumo, no para una emancipación del espectador, y la participación potencial es contextual y determinada por lógicas hegemónicas y codificadas por las instituciones. Por si acaso, no creo que nadie haya encontrado la solución a eso (ahora funciona , inventando un pasado que tal vez no fue como es descrito actualmente, como las instalaciones de Oiticica por ejemplo).

Lo que hace tu obra efectiva para mi es el intento, serio, metódico y tu compromiso, pero eso no hace que funcionen sino que hace que uno piense que tal vez hay que seguir tratando.

JOHANNES VOGT



Felipe Mujica, serigrafía exhibida en Hay una luz en cada ventana, muestra individual en Die Ecke Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile, 2010

Felipe: Si, tal vez hay un manto de duda sobre lo efectivo o no de mi trabajo pero eso depende también desde donde y cómo uno lo está mirando. Sinceramente creo que tu postura está muy determinada por tu experiencia en la escena e historia de Nueva York. Ambos trabajamos y vivimos aquí, pero creo que tu ves la historia del arte desde un ángulo muy específico de acá y entonces tal vez por eso hay ciertas formas o soluciones o intenciones de mi trabajo que bajo esa mirada parecen poco resueltas. Por ejemplo el otro día en la charla en galería VOGT en Chelsea, donde explicaste cómo y por qué comenzaste a trabajar con las esculturas abstractas... es gracioso que todo haya comenzado como una respuesta a la pregunta de una curadora (algo así como “¿qué relación tiene tu trabajo con el neo concretismo brasileño?”). En el fondo esas obras – las esculturas abstractas – fueron una reacción al estereotipo/mirada desde el “primer mundo” sobre el arte Latinoamericano, como “una sola cosa”, o posiblemente, como “esa cosa” que la define históricamente, que ahora toca ser el arte neo concreto de Brasil. Y en ese sentido esas obras funcionan con una doble lectura, por un lado sincera y directa, es decir son abstractas y juguetones y bonitas y las hiciste así a propósito, y por otro lado de manera cínica e irónica, ya que están hechas para llenar un vacío, para cumplir una función: la lectura desde acá de la obra de un artista “Latinoamericano”. Creo que la diferencia con mi trabajo es que yo comencé y sigo trabajando con la abstracción de una manera mas “honesta”, en el sentido de que, como tu dijiste al principio, yo “si creo en la abstracción”, creo en la fuerza que contiene como estructura de trabajo autónomo y eso sobre pasa, para mi, cualquier lectura predeterminada o impuesta que pueda haber. En el fondo, el objetivo final de la abstracción es ser un lenguaje universal y atemporal, y en ese sentido si creo en ella, aunque suene naïve. Por otro lado esta situación de creer puede ser muy cómoda, ya que me permite hacer un trabajo medio alemán o medio brasileño o medio neoyorquino (medio chileno tal vez...).

JOHANNES VOGT

Ahora, hablando de esto y juntándolo con lo que hemos hablado de la cita o referencia (o más bien las influencias culturales), me acordé de una situación que me tocó vivir en Beijing, China, hace un par de años. Una amiga austríaca que por coincidencia estaba también ahí haciendo una residencia me invitó a un club-bar a una noche de death metal chino. Fuimos y fue increíble... vimos cuatro bandas de chicos y chicas de 18 años o menos y todas eran excelentes, muy confiados y trabajando las varias aristas que el death metal contiene (la agonía elegante: voz gutural en contraste de voz aguda y semi-clásica, partes rápidas y al chanco versus partes melódicas y suaves, etc.). Los chicos y chicas estaban vestidos de manera metalera e incluso gótica, con la cara pintada de blanco y con joyas negras y con zapatos con terraplén o bototos (estoy hablando de los músicos y del público). Sin embargo, había algo raro en el ambiente, algo particular de ese lugar en esa ciudad... sus vestimentas de alguna insertaban el animé y la moda asiática en todo el asunto. Como esas faldas que parecen del siglo IXX, o camisas con mangas con vuelos en el caso de los chicos. Además, una de las mejores bandas tenía una chica que cantaba vestida con un traje tradicional chino tipo burdel de Shanghai años 30. Bueno, no sé muy bien a dónde voy con esto, pero en el fondo me hace ver de una manera más Pop lo que fue la antropofagia. Toda la teoría detrás del modernismo brasileño – el paradigma de este diálogo! – es la de alimentarse, o más bien la ceremonia de absorber al enemigo, incorporarlo a través del canibalismo (cultural). Si Brasil de los 40 (¿no será 50-60?) absorbió y masticó el modernismo europeo para luego escupir y producir su propio modernismo eso es una lectura histórica que esta clarísima, es lineal, y lo gracioso es que haya tomado tanto tiempo en transformarse en una lectura histórica oficial entendida y aceptada acá, incluso dentro de los “especialistas”. El problema con uno (digo nosotros) es que estamos entremedio, vivimos acá pero somos parcialmente de allá, y las revisiones históricas de ambos lados nos pueden ayudar y a la vez confundir o, peor, catalogar de manera muy ligera. En el fondo estamos en un proceso de antropofagia continua y además en dos direcciones, sospechosos de todo... como mordiéndonos la cola todo el tiempo ¿Se entiende eso?



Cristóbal Lehyt, Dramaprojektion, 2008, instalación en Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, Alemania

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Y para terminar, me quedan dando vueltas las dudas que tienes sobre la participación del espectador en mi trabajo. Aquí pasa algo parecido con lo de la cita. Creo ya que estás comparando mi trabajo con lecturas y estrategias que tienen que ver con la historia del arte Norteamericano, y creo que mi trabajo si bien debe ser consciente de esa historia, no necesariamente debe ser definida por esa historia. Por ejemplo el trabajo de Michael Asher. Desde los 60 hasta ahora el ha desarrollado casi todas las variantes posibles de participación del público y toda esa historia está determinada por la historia y el rol de las instituciones de acá, la cual es muy diferente a mi contexto e historia institucional (al menos de origen). ¿Cómo pensamos en crítica institucional en Chile cuando no hay instituciones de verdad? O si las hay, funcionan a medias. Ahí creo que Galería Chilena fue muy efectiva y dinámica, ya que trabajó ese problema desde el principio, volviéndose un reflejo de otro reflejo, una ilusión de galería que buscaba crear la ilusión de un mercado y todo eso se sostenía por la ilusión de un aparato crítico. En ese contexto, los trabajos “participativos” que yo hago, principalmente las cortinas, funcionan de una manera parecida: crean espacios de diálogo y encuentro temporales, pero creo que más autónomas al espacio-contexto que los acoge... como medio huérfanas... no buscan explicar su relación o función dentro de la institución, más bien buscan crear su propia mini institución, o al menos un modelo de funcionamiento independiente.



Cristóbal Lehyt, Drama Projection – Violeta, 2006 , 96 x 72 pulgadas cada una, 32 impresiones sobre papel. Instalación en Or Gallery, Vancouver, Canada

JOHANNES VOGT

Cristóbal: Churra Felipe! Nos vamos a pelear...Bueno, yo hablo de la cosa poscolonial porque es algo que aún está operando por ahí y estamos hablando para un sitio web chileno (como artistas de la transición que se fueron y “viven en uno de los centros” etc.). No es algo que piense constantemente como un problema, es más bien algo asumido/absorbido sin solución, más que la personal. Ahí es donde hemos definido dos cosas: que tú eres “honesto” y yo soy “cínico”. Tanto es así, que lo que tú hablas de lo que dije el otro día sobre los móviles (que realmente no se mueven), la razón de hacerlos es bien poco honesta de mi parte, era solo una forma de explicar los trabajos rápido en ese contexto de una charla en una galería, para no ser demasiado aburrido y dar una idea por el lado de cómo se pueden empezar a ver esos trabajos. Era todo mentira. Mucho más aburrido sería explicar las verdaderas razones, entonces uno usa mentiras para encauzar lecturas... tú no haces eso, crees en los elementos que usas y los usas tomándoles el peso que tienen originalmente, algo que a mí me parece un problema. Es raro, porque somos amigos, pero estamos en desacuerdo absoluto!



Felipe Mujica, Raising Sun, instalación (pintura on penales móviles), Centro Cultural Matucana 100, Santiago de Chile, 2004

Como lo que dices de Asher: él no ha hecho lo que tú dices, sino que trabaja en relación a la institución y a través de ella al espectador que lee la institución como un agente que determina la subjetividad del individuo, no como participación con el público. El trabajo de Asher tiene mucho de lecturas y códigos de lecturas que parten de la crítica institucional. Eso no entra en tu trabajo y es ahí donde hemos llegado...

Felipe: No es mi intención pelear! Para nada. En todo caso lo de hacer los “móviles” de manera “menos honesta” yo lo veo más como un piropo que como un ataque. Yo asumo que mi posición “honesto” con respecto a la abstracción es problemática porque supuestamente todo lo que estoy intentando hacer ya está hecho o ha sido solucionado de manera mucho más efectiva. Pero yo lo veo como un método y lo sigo y, bueno, en eso estoy, luchando contra ello. Si tu me dices que la explicación que diste el otro día era mentira y solo era la versión light del asunto, te creo. En todo caso, la explicación me gustó y no me parece mal hacer trabajo que tenga varias lecturas y que dentro de esa variedad hayan algunas más honestas y otras más cínicas. Ahí, repito, lo mío puede parecer más honesto, pero también por eso puede perder poder de ataque, le falta “maldad” ¿Algo vital no?

JOHANNES VOGT

Y lo de Asher no veo problemas en que lo leamos de manera diferente. Si bien él como el espectador participaba en el trabajo estaba determinado por el rol de la institución, a mi si me parece que era un tema recurrente, desde los trabajos iniciales, por ejemplo los trabajos tempranos y más sensoriales en donde el ruido que producía el público era importante para determinar su posición (física y social), hasta el trabajo donde contrata un grupo de gente para mirar dos pinturas modernistas (una de Picasso y otra de Duchamp). En todo momento hay variaciones entre las funciones individuales y colectivas y si, tienes razón de que todo está filtrado y enfocado desde el comportamiento institucional, pero creo que al final el gran tema es el público, cómo funciona con respecto a las obras, dentro de ellas y como éstas están a su vez sujetas a la institución y ésta a su vez a la sociedad en su totalidad. Es súper estructuralista, pero de todos modos yo veo el lado personal del asunto, veo que el tema final es la participación (como un agente más en la cadena de funcionamiento). Un paréntesis: uno de mis trabajos favoritos de Asher es cuando contrató y colaboró con estudiantes de dos High School de Los Angeles y les asigna re instalar la parte de la colección del LACMA. El resultado es increíble y pone en jaque la lectura y organización histórica que tenemos de una colección. Aquí el grupo de estudiantes funciona como un representante de la sociedad en general y al estar directamente metido en cómo las obras de la colección son leídas y contextualizadas (con música de fondo de John Coltrane, asientos de paraderos de bus con carteles informativos, postes de luz con señalética sobre las obras, un espejo mural con forma de skyline, pinturas modernistas instaladas sobre plintos en forma 3D, etc.). Aquí la participación es real y es una extensión del rol institucional y es también una utopía. O sea, logra una igualdad entre las partes pero a la vez esta misma sirve de ejemplo a la gran desigualdad entre las partes. Eso me gusta e interesa ene, como un ejemplo donde teoría y práctica se combinan y funcionan, de la manito. ¿Por ahí si podemos estar de acuerdo, no?

El artista chileno que quiere conquistar el mundo

By Denisse Espinoza
May 6, 2011

Cultura



En 2009, Lehyt expuso en Fundación Telefónica una escultura hecha con greda destruída de Pomaire.

Denisse Espinoza

Cristóbal Lehyt llegó a EEUU soñando ser artista. Fue en 1995, cuando tenía 22 años, había cursado sólo tres años en la Facultad de Arte de la Universidad Católica y su escultórica obra no había sido expuesta nunca. Pero tenía decisión. Sin un currículum que lo avalara, tocó la puerta del taller de Alfredo Jaar en Nueva York y le pidió ser su ayudante. Jaar aceptó. Por 10 años, Lehyt se encargó de que, mientras el artista chileno estuviese de viaje, todo anduviera perfecto con sus obras. "Yo era más bien un janitor, veía que todo funcionara bien. Igual aprendí mucho de la actitud de Alfredo Jaar. De cómo ser un artista serio, riguroso y que tus obras sean impecables", dice Lehyt.

Mientras asistía a Jaar, terminó sus estudios en Hunter College y su obra llamó la atención de centros como el Museo Whitney, el Museo Queens y el Museo del Barrio de Manhattan. En 2005 dio el salto: ganó la beca Guggenheim para producción artística y dejó a Jaar. Hoy, el autor de *This is not America* destaca la obra de su antiguo ayudante: "Es notable. Maneja conceptos y formas con una libertad vertiginosa. Cristóbal es un artista que corre riesgos y su obra exige al espectador un esfuerzo intelectual que pocas obras demandan hoy", señala Jaar.

Desde la Gran Manzana, su centro de operaciones, Lehyt se alza hoy como uno de los artistas chilenos más promisorios. En los últimos cinco años su trabajo ha circulado por galerías de EEUU, Alemania, China, México y Río de Janeiro. Y los premios continúan: acaba de ganar la Beca AMA, creada por Juan Yarur para apoyar el trabajo de artistas chilenos en el extranjero. Así, participó en el verano en una residencia en

El artista chileno que quiere conquistar el mundo

Radicado hace 15 años en Nueva York, Cristóbal Lehyt fue por una década asistente de Alfredo Jaar. Hoy hace fama propia con muestras en Alemania, Brasil y China. También acaba de ganar la beca AMA, de Juan Yarur, que lo llevó a hacer su primera muestra en Londres.



CRISTÓBAL LEHYT

artista visual

■ Nació en 1973 en Santiago. Desde 1995 vive y trabaja en Nueva York. Por 10 años fue ayudante de Alfredo Jaar.

■ Ha tenido exposiciones individuales en Stuttgart, California y Bogotá. En 2009 estuvo en la Bienal del Mercosur.

Londres y durante marzo y abril expuso, por primera vez, una selección de obras en la galería House of Propellers, de esa misma ciudad. En su obra, Lehyt reflexiona sobre la identidad nacional, reactualizando, a través de la fotografía, el video y el dibujo, el significado de ser chileno en el extranjero. En Londres mostró algunas esculturas, hechas con cordel, cola fría y pasta de muro, que evocan osamentas trépidas de huano y salitre, como las que se ven en el norte del país. "Esta obra ya la mostré en galería Die Ecke y en la Bienal del Mercosur el año pasado. Luego vendrá algo inspirado en mi residencia en Londres. Me demoro en digerir las experiencias, pero son útiles. En las residencias te obligan a pensar de manera distinta, participas en conferencias, debates y conoces a artistas y curadores", cuenta Lehyt.

Chileno gringo

Radicado en Nueva York hace 15

años, Lehyt siente imposible echar raíces en Chile. "Aquí puedo ver el arte que quiero. Sólo en Chile, mi barrio, hay 400 galerías, es el centro del mundo. Además existe una competencia que no hay en otro lugar. Yo soy flojo y me sirve estar con gente que te mantiene despierto, que te obliga a hacer las cosas bien. En cambio, en Chile tienes una muestra increíble y no pasa nada. Acá, el esfuerzo vale la pena", dice el artista.

En la exposición de Londres, Lehyt muestra también algunas de sus obras más rigurosas. Se trata de dibujos que realiza en sesiones de ocho horas seguidas "Son raros, hechos en estado de trance. Hice unos en Alemania, dentro de un castillo, fue una experiencia un tanto terrorífica", cuenta.

Sin embargo, su obra más importante hace siempre referencia a Chile, inspirándose en paisajes, costumbres y tradiciones. En 2009, realizó su mayor muestra en el país, en la sala

Telefónica, donde mostró una gigantesca escultura de 36 metros de largo hecha con cerámicas de greda de Pomaire, destruídas y amontonadas. Y una segunda, de 12 metros, que asemeja un gran contenedor del puerto de Antofagasta. Igualmente conocía es su serie de fotos y pinturas del desierto chileno, del 2003. "Desde Alemania a EEUU, la gente se relaciona de manera afectiva y espiritual con el desierto. Es súper potente, es como el paisaje cero", dice el artista que en noviembre tendrá una muestra con obras inéditas en el Museo de Artes Visuales. "Mi obra responde a querer sacarse encima el tema de Chile. Me siento chileno, a pesar de ser muy agringado. La vez que poor hablé sobre mi trabajo fue en una conferencia en el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo. Estaba muy nervioso. No importaba lo famoso que fuese en el extranjero, me preocupaba que mi obra gustara aquí, a la tía, a la abuelita".

JOHANNES VOGT



Lehyt CHRISTOPHER: THE OBJECT WORKED

By ROCIO ARANDA-ALVARADO

May 6, 2011

Some themes have been repeated frequently in recent years in the work of Christopher Lehyt. Perhaps the most important is the examination of the relationship between work and production, including the manufacture of an object and its consumption, and between the art object, its maker and the viewer. Using the landscape, the handicrafts, the class structure, the history of industry and labor, and analyzes the artificial relationships built between these ideas and the development of national identity.



Dramatic Projection (Vitacura), installation view Patricia Ready Gallery, Santiago (Chile)

Among his most recent works is one that addresses all of these ideas. His exhibition, Christopher Lehyt: If Organizing Is the Answer, What's the Question was presented at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard University between March 4 and April 4, 2010. This exhibition included a container large scale plywood fact located in the center of the space. Inside the container, the artist placed hundreds of small sculptures. To underline the gulf between real and symbolic objects in the container and the viewer, pierced one wall and made a small window through which viewers saw works hard. The container was accompanied by a set of 260 pictures. These were installed in the walls around the centerpiece and showed images of dreamy landscapes. Symbols of each working day of the year, small paintings evoke the time and space in which the work is carried out by imitating the effort viewer to view the works inside the big wooden box.

JOHANNES VOGT

Another work that also addressed the issues of labor and consumption with the addition of cultural nationalism is its giant *Pomaire* 2009. This sculpture is a large vessel, 36 meters long, and shaped the geographical boundary of Chile. *Pomaire* is a small town near Santiago known for its pottery tradition. The wooden form contains the remains of thousands of broken pottery vessels, representing the legacy of a violent past and suggests a breakdown of the self-image that the country has. In work that has been developing since 2003, *El Norte*, the artist has explored the culture of northern Chile through its television and print media, audio, light handling and presentation of information, whose meaning is not immediately obvious to the viewer. Among the images of this work are representations of the endless desert landscape closely related to the arid north of Chile. Also included are images of the indigenous population, local print media images photographed again and aerial



views of the desert. This visual clues hint seeking allude to information, or the inclusion of texts that are both informative and misleading once also part of the artist's work, playing with assumptions and actual meanings of public texts and intentions .

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Underlining his exploration of northern Chile is a group of abstract sculptures that the artist has made from unexpected, such as rope, wood, glue and plaster or masonry composite materials. The artist adapts these materials “low tech” their sculptured works, made in the language of modernism: pure abstraction. This contradiction between a vocabulary of fine art materials and contractors, carpenters and laborers is also typical of his work. The organic forms of the sculptures also come into conflict with its austere, above a long table supported by two sawhorses work location. As biological samples arranged for observation, evoking the works of Gabriel Orozco and Louise Bourgeois. These two artists have also presented a variety of objects that merge the language of modernist abstraction with a humble submission that serves to dislocate objects and sometimes the viewer.



Just before his exhibition at Harvard, the artist presented his Ecstasy of St. Teresa (“The Ecstasy of St. Teresa”) Gasworks Gallery in London in March 2010. A collaboration between Lehyt and Alessandra Pohlmann, oversized work was largest intentionally created to fill a small space. Acting as a contemporary metaphor of the sensitivity of the Baroque monumental curtain reinscribes, in a very physical way, much of the emotional impact of the Baroque. Forcing viewers to go through the tight space, the folds of cloth are both the subject and the triggers of the work. The reference to the magnificent work of Bernini also highlights the continuing efforts of Lehyt to give the viewer the opportunity to experience the work implied in the realization of a work of art and its emotional impact. This work was created on two stands, making it look like the same heavy and light, as in the original work of Bernini time. The artist examines closely the idea of carving a cloud from a solid piece of marble, and the viewer’s experience of this apparent contradiction. The concern of the Baroque master with movement, rhythm, and emotional impact of the work is reflected in the super enlarged Lehyt makes its object, a giant of the original detail in the depiction of movement is a central force.

JOHANNES VOGT

Simultaneously with the presentation of this work at Gasworks, the artist also exhibited a solo project in the House of Propellers, also in London. This exhibition featured works from his series “ El Norte “in a variety of media, including drawings, photographs, videos and sculptures. For this space, added a series of portraits of people from Stuttgart made specifically for a 2008 exhibition in Germany. Together, the works of El Norte and portraits of Stuttgart aim at exploring the various notions of place. The portraits created in pencil, evoke a dream world in which the artist imagines the guise of another. Although read like portraits, faces and bodies lack sufficient detail to be identifiable. Are they real figures, fictional characters created by artist or a paradoxical combination of both? The empty eye sockets and awkward poses evoke a visceral drama, to Bacon. It is clear, however, which are closely linked to his own vision of the human figure and emotional representation.



The latest exhibition Christopher Lehyt takes place in Santiago Patricia Ready Gallery, featuring works from the series Dramatic Projection (Vitacura) and Sculptures . As with previous works, these projects again blur the boundaries between between the common object, the work of art and the everyday landscape. This body of work is intended as a kind of portrait of the Santiago found in the gallery, specifically the area between the street Alonso de Córdoba and Vitacura Avenue. As the

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As the artist, “is the municipality where I was born, where I grew up and where I still live part of my family.”

Made in the spirit of Surrealism’s automatic drawings, these are created by the artist during a trance-like state that lasts for days. During this period, the artist concentrates on the years in which he lived in the area. He states “the works are made without obvious control, they are spontaneous, and develop out of concentration, boredom, total absorption and, at the same time, the loss of control because they arise from this process without any apparent control.” Like his portraits from Stuttgart, these evade a clear distinction between art and reality, evoking a landscape that is infused with details from the actual world and the psychological influence of a particular place. The title of the series bears also on the Baroque nature of image making. The artist astutely notes, “every work of art is a dramatic projection.” The dramatic projections are drawn, photographed, enlarged, printed, altered in color, and then reconfigured in life-size. The related sculptures vaguely recall objects and forms already familiar to the spectator, including references to mid-twentieth century Modernism, organic patterns, and allusions to things both visible and invisible. Like the shapes of Miró or Arp, his sculpted figures seem to move and transform as they are viewed.

In terms of the history of art, Cristobal Lehyt’s work relates to that of his predecessor, Francisco Brugnoli, particularly in the kinds of gestures that both artists make, and the meanings these gestures reveal to the spectator. Both artists cannot be simply tied to a single medium. Indeed, their work evokes precisely a facility that ranges from sculpture to painting, to video, to installation, to works on paper. Both artists use a variety of intervened ordinary objects or existing images (including photography and video), in order to explore the development and outcomes of various social systems, including education and political processes. Underscoring delicate and sometimes obscure connections between forms, content, ideas, knowledge, and the objects of art, Cristobal Lehyt creates narratives that equally address the specific and the universal, the national and the global, the personal and the political.

Cristóbal Lehyt (1973), lives and works in New York. His solo exhibitions include UAG/Room Gallery, UC Irvine; Künstlerhaus Stuttgart; and Fundación Telefónica, Chile. Group exhibitions include the Mercosur Biennial (2009); New Ghost Entertainment— Entitled, Or Gallery and Kunsthaus Dresden (2006); When Artists Say We, Artists Space (2006); Metaphysics of Youth, Fuori Uso (2006); the Shanghai Biennale (2004); The Freedom Salon, Deitch Projects (2004); The American Effect, Whitney Museum of American Art (2003); Freewaves Latin America, MoCA Los Angeles (2002), as well as exhibitions in Santiago, Bogotá, Caracas, Mexico City, Berlin, Vienna, Beijing and Rio de Janeiro. He has received the Art Forum Fellowship, Harvard University and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation

JOHANNES VOGT

Fellowship. He has studied at New York City University's Hunter College and also has participated in the competitive Whitney Independent Study Program.

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ARTFORUM

Cristobal Lehyt

Carpenter Center For The Visual Arts

By Julia Bryan Wilson

May 2010

CAMBRIDGE, MA

Cristóbal Lehyt

CARPENTER CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

From Gustave Courbet's stone breakers to task-based dance, artists have variously attempted to depict the laboring body. Chilean-born, New York-based Cristóbal Lehyt's latest solo endeavor also references industry, effort, and production: The show consists of a series of 260 paintings (the number of workdays in a year) and a large plywood box containing dozens of tangled and woven string sculptures that obliquely refer to textile manufacturing and its obsolescence. Though the exhibition is the culmination of the artist's 2008–2009 residency at Harvard University's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and the law school's Labor and Worklife Program, his abstract pieces make no attempt to directly represent his extensive readings and interviews on labor history in the Massachusetts region completed during that period. Instead, the lyric paintings, rendered in varnish and oil paint on paper, and the quasi-anthropological container of objects relate only in an associative way to his research.

The exhibition's title, "If Organizing Is the Answer, What's the Question?" is taken from Harvard labor historian Elaine Bernard, but Lehyt has long troubled the line between query and return. Throughout his searching practice, which has included video, installation, and photography, he plays with the politics of illegibility—his work often appears to be something we think we know, only to veer into unexpected territories. (In previous projects, the coast of California substituted seamlessly for Chile's shoreline, or a dancer was depicted posing like a protester.) Here, Lehyt returns to the most traditional artistic media, painting and sculpture, to speculate about the ways in which nonrepresentational gestures might organize information—and to thwart such tidy systemization. For instance, the paintings, hung in a loose, calendar-like grid, resemble moody landscapes that have been turned on their axes so that they are oriented vertically instead of horizontally. While they are hardly dour, their crepuscular grays and blues capture shifting conditions of light and are markers or inscriptions of the passage of time in space.

The strongest element of the show is the box, which is chest-high. The viewer must bend down low to peer into the small window cut into one wall and view the collection of sculptures inside. Made of white cotton string dipped in glue and wall compound and hardened into stiff shapes, they have a compelling and nervous energy, as if they were the obsessive products of a frustrated weaver who fashioned them out of scraps secreted away from the factory floor. These objects are dense with cross-temporal references that span the globe: Brassaï's "Sculptures

devolontaires," Eva Hesse's process pieces, Native American basketry, the knotted-cord communication system of linear quipu. Set within the immense interior of the box and illuminated with a black light, Lehyt's sculptures also become specimens, the lot of them suggesting a cemetery of defunct or cast-off artifacts. As he began thinking about how to make sense of his Harvard residency in an exhibition, Lehyt considered additional literal figurations, such as making one sculpture per worker killed during the early-twentieth-century textile strikes in Massachusetts mill towns, but he turned increasingly to what could be called abstract conceptualism. How can a colored panel or twisted cotton function as usable, decodable information? Except for the precise number of paintings, which indicate the potential working days each year, Lehyt's evocative forms do not yield up facts or histories; instead, together they create an affective archive that speaks to labor—both artistic and otherwise—in all its gratifications, alienations, frustrations, and excesses.

—Julia Bryan Wilson



Cristóbal Lehyt,
"If Organizing Is the
Answer, What's the
Question?" (detail),
2010. Wooden box,
lights, string, wood
glue, wall compound.
4' 5" x 20" x 10"

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ARTFORUM

Shiny Pyrrhic Victories (On Cristóbal Lehyt's If Organizing is the Answer, What's the Question?)

By José Luis Falconi
April 4, 2010

If someone can rest assured of the robustness of our logical system, and perhaps even find shelter in the dreadful paradoxes that unravel when one tries to go against its most basic principles, that someone has to be Cristóbal Lehyt—whose artistic proposals have always been based on teasing out a number of the most illustrious of logical aporias one can think of. Indeed, if there is one defining trait in Lehyt's body of work (which he has developed for just over ten years), it is his consistent proclivity for inconsistencies, which he has managed to exploit without getting trapped in circular, self-defeating syllogisms.

Consider the predicament that he has led himself into this time, and that we are about to witness in this show: after spending a couple of years of residency at this institution and having the possibility of addressing any aspect of this diverse, grandiloquent university, he chose to concentrate precisely on the impossibility of processing all the information coming his way in a meaningful way.¹ In brief, the show he prepared while at residency at this illustrious house of knowledge is precisely about the impossibility of acquiring it.

I guess one should have expected such a daring (anti) proposal from Lehyt, whose (com)pulsion for staging almost impossible situations is already well known despite his short career.

Take his 2006 show in his hometown of Santiago de Chile entitled "El Mar de Bolivia" (Bolivian Sea) in which he not only aimed to address, head on, the difficult history and the continuous tension between his natal Chile and neighboring Bolivia—the latter lost its coastal territory to Chile, in a war in the 1870s—but, most significantly, it was another one of his attempts to address an impossibility: trying to evoke and render that which does not, actually, exist.

And though no one is able to refer to such sea because, alas, it doesn't exist, Lehyt was able to craft out of this exercise in futility a tenuous yet successful landscape, forged only through connotation—achieved solely through the associations carried by the materials (their texture, especially) he used in the installation. Thus, he managed to produce in the viewers, with a simple gesture—the suspension of a thin and rusty pipeline at the center of a gallery, whose walls were completely covered with thermal insulating paper—the faint sensation that they were witnessing the emergence of a fragile horizon at the very center of a claustrophobic space. If Bolivia's boxed-in territory was suggested by the meticulously enclosed gallery space, the suspended pipeline was the most effective allusion to a coastal line: its rust inevitably evoked

JOHANNES VOGT

water, and its functional qualities (a conduit) evoked the natural resources (oil, natural gas) that Bolivia has always claimed it could export, if it ever had access to the Pacific coast.

Nonetheless, to set up an artistic project in the treacherous waters of nonexistent oceans, is not only a risky business but, most importantly, an onerous one: to make it, one needs to sacrifice almost everything in the attempt. Lehyt happens to like those waters, and takes on the challenge, fully conscious that even if he is able to swim ashore, he might still end up collapsing on the beach.

To embark upon such an enterprise implies, for an artist, to be reduced to a bare minimum of expressive resources, because the possibility of direct reference to the object(s) in question is denied from the onset. With almost the whole expressive arsenal out of reach from the onset, the only trick left in deck of cards is the good old self-reflexive one: to transform the quest—the struggle to represent—into the subject of the piece itself. In other words: with direct reference off the table, the only story left to tell is the one about the impossibility of telling.

What one can actually tell, however, is that underneath their precarious, muted appearances, one needs to see Lehyt's process as part of an illustrious tradition that, in Latin America (as most modernist formulas did) acquired its most definite version in the literary musings of Jorge Luis Borges. More precisely, in the masterful opening paragraphs of some of his most enduring stories, in which the narrator acknowledges from the start that he is unfit to tell the story he is about to refer to.

Under the notable influence of Chesterton (contriver and embellisher of elegant mysteries) and the palace counselor Leibniz (inventor of the pre-established harmony), in my idle afternoons I have imagined this story plot, which I shall perhaps write someday and which already justifies me somehow. Details, rectifications, adjustments are lacking; there are zones of the story not yet revealed to me; today, January 3rd, 1944, I seem to see it as follows [...] 2

Nonetheless, if Borges's proclivity for preciseness began by making transparent to the reader the exact application of the formula, the opposite can be said of Lehyt, whose process is at best opaque in the sunniest of days at his studio.

In fact, one can be assured that things are not that easy with Lehyt, because they have not been easy for him either. The first one to blame for the hard times is, of course, Borges.

The fact that it became the favorite maneuver of the late modernist arsenal to the point of ending the characterization of the alleged "crisis of representation" of late modernity so paradigmatically that it is almost self-defeating—becomes a contentious issue to wrestle instead of a tradition to find comfort in. Ultimately, after almost a whole century of overuse, it hardly constitutes a surprise at all. How much "more barer" (!) can one get after Beckett's plays, Carver's short stories or the one two factorization process undertaken on the artistic object led by minimalism and conceptualism in the 1960s and 1970s in the realm of the visual arts?

JOHANNES VOGT

For that reason, Lehyt's hand is, by all means, more rigorously (i.e. more desperately) reduced a new bare minimum: the only trick left is not really available because it is, alas, cliché. So, how to proceed from here? Or, more pointedly: What drives Lehyt to corner himself in such a way? Why would an artist start out in such disadvantageous position?

One should not despair though, because if there is something we can be sure of—and Lehyt's work seems to be there, to remind us of this—it's that there are always new lows. And this shouldn't be taken as a negative assessment on his work; much on the contrary, it needs to be seen as the ultimate recognition of Lehyt's capacity to point out the exuberance of even the most barren of deserts.

One can contend that this evident mastery with the noticeably slippery and sharp Occam razor stems, in Lehyt's case, from the fact that his predilection for the impoverishment of its expressive resources is not just a recurrent trait, but rather the most crucial aspect of his artistic practice. It is, without a doubt, a central feature apparent to not only the most noted critics of Lehyt work but, most importantly, to the artist himself—whose hyper consciousness of his own process allows him to theorize about it.³ Thus, explaining the seminal anecdote behind one of his latest show, Lehyt reveals how this process of “reduction” is at the center of the installation:

Reduced to Insults [the title of his show] is meant to conjure up the idea of being reduced or left with very little after being defeated but still wanting to put up a fight, even if its ironic or desperate since one knows it will have no real effect [...] I was thinking about the position artists have because we too are reduced to insults...what one would want art to do – effect tangible, social change—it doesn't. But still, this sense of incompleteness can be production.⁴

Two significant things, I believe, can be concluded from this seemingly innocuous anecdote. The first one is that whether due to injury or insult (or both), Lehyt starts from the same place—trying to pick himself up from the ground—because all his work is, precisely, about the struggle itself. The second one is that his conviction in the “productivity of incompleteness” reveals an artist with a strong belief in the persistence of selfhood against almost any odd. Selfhood might look empty, but it is never vacant.

And it is precisely this belief in the perseverance of selfhood which is at the base of Lehyt's artistic practice: if he didn't believe in its endurance, he wouldn't situate his artistic practice either at the moment immediately after or immediately before the alleged complete demise of communicative possibilities. In that sense, his work not only “thematizes” but inhabits the space prior to the final demise of expressiveness. Lehyt's work is in itself the penultimate landscape (as one of his shows in Santiago de Chile was aptly entitled), which signals that we might be close, but never at the very bottom of the barrel in this process of expressive elimination.

This might be a minimal distance, but it is a critical one, as it marks the distance between (final) self-defeat and the emergence of a dimmed, fragile process of reconstitution of the self. In fact, if there is a reward to be found in these pyrrhic victories at the core of his artistic practice, it might not only be the possibility of shining a light on this darkest of processes but

JOHANNES VOGT

also to display the traces of this tortuous journey as art.

What—if not the shiny display of traces (residual or seminal) of this process of elimination/restoration—constitutes the centerpiece of the show he has prepared during his residency at Harvard University?

And is it only when we are able to understand that these amorphous objects (creatures?)—which resist any identification and which are treated either as jewels or as the most delicate of specimens (arranged over a velvety surface, and displayed inside a tightly closed, oversized container)—can be both, the last remnants of the once booming textile industry in Massachusetts and the (latent) fragments of selfhood which resist to dissolve into nothingness, that we can start appreciating the project he has prepared for Harvard. In it, Lehyt has managed to make the theme of his research conducted at the university coincide with his unique, relentless questioning of the communicative process: the process of “elimination” that has led to the demise of the textile industry in the state (and with it, the seeming collapse of all its workers unions), mirrors the very core process he has pursued in his research and artistic process for the show. Going (literally) from riches to rags, and beyond, we are left the same residual debris—both precious in its latency, but scary and sad in its material condition. Sure enough, things can redevelop from there, but at this stage they are so bare, fragile and crude that it doesn't feel quite right. Achieving this slight discomfort in the viewer is the proof that Lehyt's pieces are starting to succeed. It is for this reason that Lehyt's works are the strangest of flowers: they depend on the most adverse conditions to flourish. Oppositional by nature, they require serious problems of communication to blossom—Lehyt needs to fight something and where there is no adversary to be found, he will pick one up, starting with the expectations of his spectator.

Thus, his well-known proclivity for producing work that would go (directly) against the expectations of his viewers needs to be understood, first and foremost, as a tactical move (i.e. the trigger that will unravel the eliminative/restorative process) and not as the final intention of his pieces. Anything different will effectively reduce him to an artist only reactive to context, and too driven on contingencies and stereotypes.

His practice needs to start by playing with the expectations that are created surrounding his shows and residencies—or what he assumes might be expected of him in the different places he has been requested to exhibit—because what he is really after is the communicational process promised in a show, in art. 5 In this particular show, such a conscious boycott of the communicational act promised in art, begins, one may contend, in the title of the show.

It is not that the gesture of appropriating a question first posed by Elaine Bernard in one of her articles, and making it the title of the show is, by itself, a destabilizing move—and hopefully a vexed homage of Steve Allen's memorable Question Man routine.⁶ What makes it particularly poignant is the fact that it is a question that beckons a question as its answer.

JOHANNES VOGT

This peculiarity of the question itself does not mean that it is voided of meaning—either tautological or circular in its structure. Just as the installation in itself, the question might be onerous to answer, and pyrrhic in its pursuit, but it is not selfdefeating, nor empty of content. Lehyt’s own labor pains reside in making this critical distance apparent, to laboriously craft a space one step prior, one step after, meaning vanishes forever.

What is tricky, uniquely tricky I would venture, with Lehyt is that he forges the penultimate space by appealing to a temporal device. When Julia Bryan Wilson ends her insightful essay on Lehyt’s penultimate show by asking “The penultimate is the not yet, the almost, the next to last. If there is no future, what comes after, now? What will be the final scene?”⁷, she is already providing us with the answer: by claiming a “penultimate” stage (spatial/temporal), Lehyt necessarily infuses the work with a sense of imminence and, therefore, of possibility. That is to say: by appealing to the alleged immediate antecedent of the final stage of a process, one ends up guaranteeing that it will never come to an end. The penultimate guarantees that something, somehow, at some moment, will come next.

Ultimately, Lehyt’s work seems to suggest, one time after the other, that imminence is the ultimate savior of its ultimate demise. Bend down a bit in the gallery, look inside the box; you will see a collection of these onerous trophies still lingering around.

José Luis Falconi
Harvard University

1 Cristóbal Lehyt’s project for the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University formally started in the summer 2008. During the whole 2008–2009 academic year Lehyt made monthly visits to the Labor and Worklife Program at the Harvard Law School, where he conducted his research under the coordination of Dr. John Trumbour, the Research Director of the Center, and which culminated after a month long residency on campus during the summer of 2009.

2 Jorge Luis Borges, “Theme of the Traitor and the Hero,” (1944) in *Labyrinths* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1964), p. 72.

3 In an interview for the accompanying catalogue to a 2007 exhibition at Praxis Gallery, in New York City, curator Gabriela Rangel points out this feature of Lehyt’s work as part of one of her questions to the artist: “Looking at the images that you appropriate, thinking about their legibility, the red and white artist books sprinkled with hermetic, impenetrable images, they seem to be images that resist a public reading, even though they’re extracted from the public realm. You work with material that is produced and reproduced by the media, topical, journalistic images...stereotypes. In overlying an almost laboratory-like treatment upon these images, you suppress their public potential, that which makes them commonplace, to draw them outward.” “Cristóbal Lehyt” in Gabriela Rangel, and others, eds. in *Three Artists/Three Curators* (New York: Praxis Gallery, 2007), p. 14.

JOHANNES VOGT

Similarly, the curator of the show “Reduced to Insults” (2007) Juli Carson, stresses this particular quality of Lehyt’s production when reviewing his work for the show: “Lehyt thus stages a series of reduced “situations” that promise a connection between the subject of art and the real world in□as□much as they solicit a failed connection between the two.” Juli Carson, “Cristóbal Lehyt’s Reduced to Insults” in Room Gallery Exhibit Brochure, (Irvine, CA: University of California at Irvine, October 2007), p. 3.

Echoing these two insights, fellow artist Sharon Hayes has also marked this aspect of Lehyt’s work as central when discussing his show *El Penúltimo Paisaje*, exhibited in Santiago in 2009: “I think there is something in these works that you use often in your work that does refuse a kind of reading. For me, your works have a boundary or an outline or a frame around them that announces them to both be and not be what they appear to be.” Sharon Hayes and Cristóbal Lehyt, “Conversación/Conversation” in Cristóbal Lehyt, ed., *El Penúltimo Paisaje*. (Santiago de Chile: Fundación Telefónica, 2009), p. 94□95.

4 Juli Carson, “Cristóbal Lehyt’s Reduced to Insults” in Room Gallery Exhibit Brochure, (Irvine, CA: University of California at Irvine, October 2007), p. 4.

5 For a direct explanation by the artist on the importance of playing with the potential viewers’ expectations see the interview conducted by Rodrigo Canala, *Cristóbal Lehyt: 31 esculturas y 6 preguntas* (Santiago de Chile: Galería Die Ecke, 2010) and the roundtable discussion he engaged in with fellow Chilean artists Felipe Mujica and Johanna Unzueta, *Sunset from the Empire State Building*. (Vienna: SeZession Wichtelgasse, 2008).

6 The passage that Lehyt lifts from Elaine Bernard is a subtitle of her article entitled “The State of U.S. Labor & Building Union Power” which appeared in *Democratic Left* (New York: Fall 2008, Vol. XXXVI, N. 2, p. 4□6).

7 Julia Bryan□Wilson, “562 (Where California Meets Chile)” in Cristóbal Lehyt, ed., *El Penúltimo Paisaje*. (Santiago de Chile: Fundación Telefónica, 2009), p. 112.

JOHANNES VOGT

ARTFORUM

Cristobal Lehyt
FUNDACION TELEFONICA

By Cecilia Brunson
Sep. 2009

SANTIAGO, CHILE

Cristóbal Lehyt
FUNDACIÓN TELEFÓNICA

In "The Penultimate Landscape," Cristóbal Lehyt presented a compelling meditation on systems of representation and the impossibility of



communicating an "authentic" national identity. The artist, a Chilean living in New York since 1995, explored these contradictions, inconsistencies, and contrasting modes of nationality through three precisely crafted new works named after places in Chile: *Pomaire* (all works 2009), a town outside Santiago known for its pottery; *Antofagasta*, a key port city in northern Chile, once part of the Inca Empire; and *La Costa*, the Pacific coastline that threads down the length of this sliverlike country.

The exhibition departed dramatically from the artist's previous work, typically "lo-fi" constructions using video, photocopy, or pencil drawing. *Pomaire* is a monumental accumulation of hundreds of handmade clay objects—pots, plates, containers, and piggy banks, seemingly crushed into one another either by accident or as the result of a geological collision. Here, Lehyt takes on concepts of discontinuity and rupture. The brute strength and size of the work—which

make the viewer uneasily aware of his smallness—seem a long way from the ephemeral and understated approach in previous pieces. Likewise, the scale of *Antofagasta* is central to its impact. Constructed in plywood to the exact size of a shipping container, its dimensions make it a visual metonym for global movement or traffic. Through a cutaway window, we could see an interior room with small objects, apparently archaeological relics. Yet in contrast to the container itself, the meaning of these objects seems deliberately obscured, as if the passage of time has inexorably erased from them any significance.

La Costa was the video component of the exhibition, projected as a single channel onto a large wall. To a Chilean viewer, the scene might resemble Chile, but is actually Long Beach, California: "California looks like the future of Chile," as Lehyt told me. One scene depicts a couple having a lovers' quarrel. Their confrontation evokes all the conflicts of intimacy, opening an emotional vein in an exhibition otherwise characterized by its sense of clinical detachment toward the folklore and local culture it references. Indeed, Chile's reality is infused with similarly contrasting extremes: the volte-face from a pre-Columbian agrarian landscape into an industrial economy fueled by copper and global tourism; the repressive policies of a seventeen-year dictatorship whose economic policies have nevertheless been touted as progressive and enlightened. The exhibition's conflicting, antithetical realities immersed the visitor in three environments that were all the more remarkable because they were so apt in their explorations of the tropes and stereotypes of space.

—Cecilia Brunson

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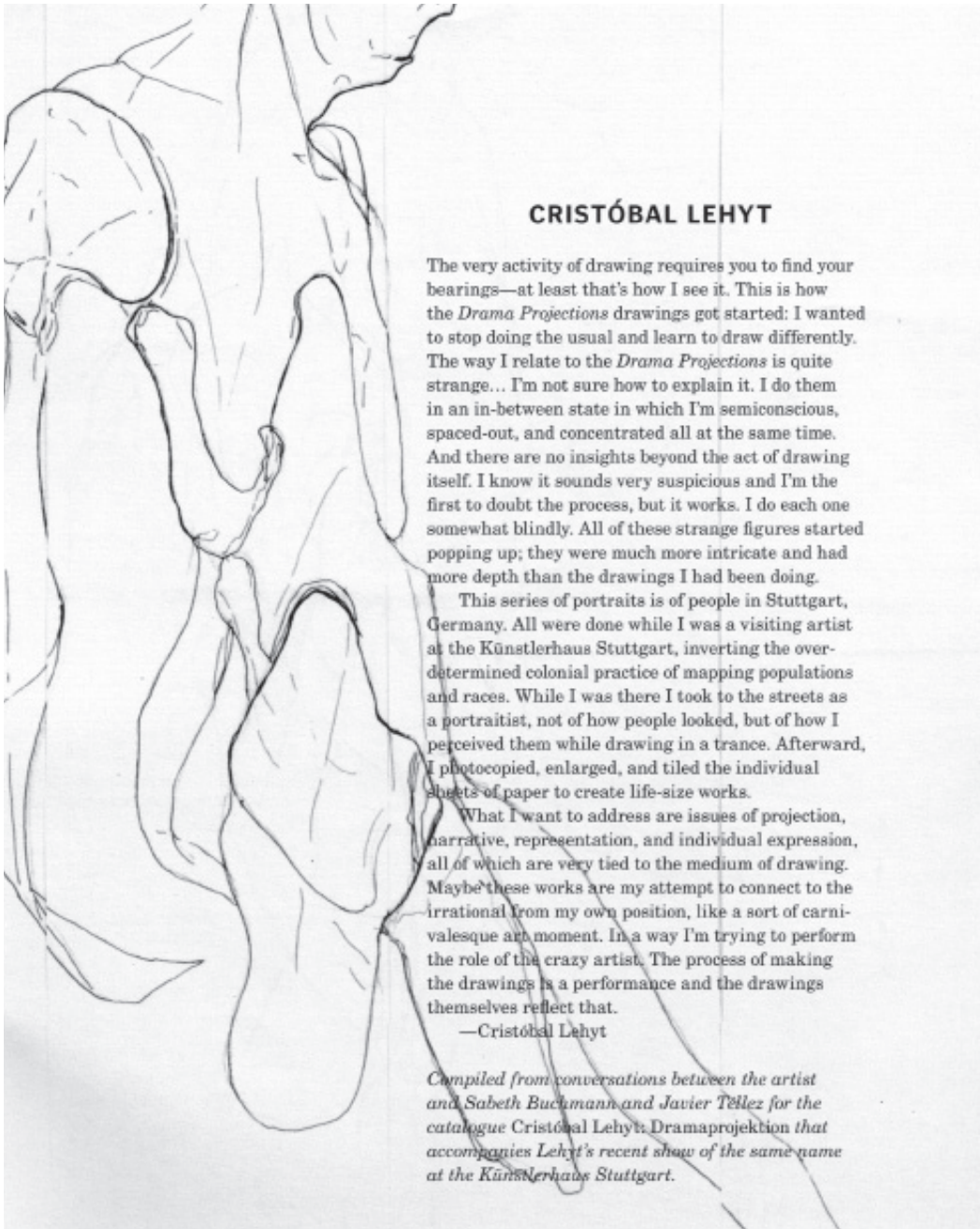
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BOMB

CRISTOBAL LEHYT

By Cristobal Lehyt



CRISTÓBAL LEHYT

The very activity of drawing requires you to find your bearings—at least that's how I see it. This is how the *Drama Projections* drawings got started: I wanted to stop doing the usual and learn to draw differently. The way I relate to the *Drama Projections* is quite strange... I'm not sure how to explain it. I do them in an in-between state in which I'm semiconscious, spaced-out, and concentrated all at the same time. And there are no insights beyond the act of drawing itself. I know it sounds very suspicious and I'm the first to doubt the process, but it works. I do each one somewhat blindly. All of these strange figures started popping up; they were much more intricate and had more depth than the drawings I had been doing.

This series of portraits is of people in Stuttgart, Germany. All were done while I was a visiting artist at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, inverting the over-determined colonial practice of mapping populations and races. While I was there I took to the streets as a portraitist, not of how people looked, but of how I perceived them while drawing in a trance. Afterward, I photocopied, enlarged, and tiled the individual sheets of paper to create life-size works.

What I want to address are issues of projection, narrative, representation, and individual expression, all of which are very tied to the medium of drawing. Maybe these works are my attempt to connect to the irrational from my own position, like a sort of carnivalesque art moment. In a way I'm trying to perform the role of the crazy artist. The process of making the drawings is a performance and the drawings themselves reflect that.

—Cristóbal Lehyt

Compiled from conversations between the artist and Sabeth Buchmann and Javier Téllez for the catalogue Cristóbal Lehyt: Dramaprojektion that accompanies Lehyt's recent show of the same name at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart.

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CRISTOBAL LEHYT: “El arte no ene que ser tan serio”

By Pablo Andulce Troncoso

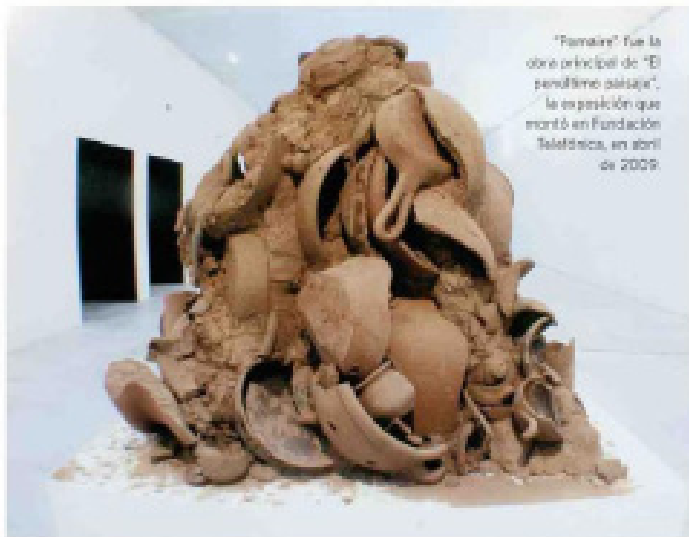


Cristóbal Lehyt en la galería House of Propellers, frente a uno de sus dibujos gigantes.

“El arte no tiene que ser tan serio”

Cristóbal Lehyt se fue a Nueva York hace quince años. Allí continuó los estudios de Arte que inició en la Universidad Católica, y trabajó diez años como ayudante de Alfredo Jaar. Las becas que recibió le permitieron independizarse, y desde entonces desarrolla una ascendente carrera que ya suma más de 30 exposiciones en distintas partes del mundo. Entre enero y marzo de este año estuvo trabajando en Londres gracias a la beca AMA, una instancia que lo hizo reflexionar en torno al modo en que se trata el arte en Chile.

TEXTO: PABLO ANDULCE TRONCOSO | FOTOGRAFÍAS: GUSTAVO CRISTÓBAL LEHYT



“Pomarine” fue la obra principal de “El penúltimo paisaje”, la exposición que montó en Fundación Telefónica, en abril de 2009.

La voz de Cristóbal Lehyt llega a Santiago con un poco de eco. Suena similar a como uno podría imaginar la voz de la conciencia o de un ser omnipotente. Pero no tiene de las mabes ni de un arbuato en Damao. Viaja desde Nueva York a través de internet y sale -profunda, ligeramente metalizada, pero amable- de varios parlantes conectados a un computador.

Este efecto supraterrrenal contrasta con lo que el artista -que nació en Santiago en 1973, que se inició en la UC, que se fue a Nueva York a los 22 años y se graduó del Hunter College y el Whitney Independent Study Program, que ganó una Beca Guggenheim y una de Harvard y que fue ayudante de Alfredo Jaar por diez años- tiene para decir: básicamente que el arte no necesita una condición de divinidad, de lejanía, de complejidad y elitismo que se le atribuye. Que puede ser algo normal, directo y comprensible. Lo dice todo en buen chileno -que no pierde después de quince años fuera del país-, salpicado de cashas, tomes, modismos y risas.

Desde que dejó el taller de Jaar en 2005, ha sido una sucesión de becas las que lo han

permitido vivir y trabajar con independencia. La última que recibió, la Beca AMA -creada por Juan Yáñez como homenaje a su padre, Amador- lo mantuvo en Londres desde principios de enero hasta hace un par de semanas: “En mi caso fue una residencia en Greenwich, una organización de arte contemporáneo al sur de Londres. Uno vive tres meses allí, se dan casa, taller y materiales para que produzcas y trabajes. Al final hay un open studio y la gente ve lo que hiciste”.

Lo que los asistentes vieron allí fue un trabajo

que montó, junto a la artista brasileña Alessandra Pohlmann, sobre dos cabaleros de madera con redes metálicas cubiertas de tela y pasta de maiz. Aunque lo bautizaron igual que una de las obras maestras del Barroco italiano -“El festín de Santa Teresa”-, Cristóbal lo describe, como hace siempre con su producción, en los términos más sencillos que encuentra: “Era como una ballenita blanca estacionada en un pequeño cuarto. Había que caminar pegado a la pared para poder verla”. Además de esa pieza,

JOHANNES VOGT



"El norte" es una obra compuesta por gigantografías. Como condición conceptual nunca puede presentarse en Chile porque perdería el exotismo que tiene en otros países.

durante la residencia en Casworkx desarrolló una serie de esculturas que fueron expuestas entre el 30 de marzo hasta el marzo pasado en la galería House of Propellers.

"El cambio de escenario me inspiró para hacer una obra distinta a la habitual. Es raro, tuve que pensarla de otra forma. Esa es la gracia de las residencias en general". Las ciudades que visita tienen un impacto en su trabajo y las diferencias que percibió entre Londres y Nueva York lo sorprendieron: "Uno pensaría que son parecidas, pero nada que ver. Nueva York me tiene equivalente. Es mucho más dura. Siempre te sientes agredido o lleno de energía así. Londres es otra onda, mucho más amable, más de vecindarios, más como Nueva y Providencia. Estar en una capital mundial tan tranquila es raro. Es algo que sigo pensando. En dos años más se me va a ocurrir una obra que tengo que ver con la sensación que tuve. Mientras, lo estoy digitando".

Bromea acerca de ese proceso lento de "digerir" las experiencias antes de poder traducirlas en trabajos concretos: "Yo tengo una idea buena al año, ¡pon suerte!". La abundante producción que lo ha llevado a exponer a más de treinta ciudades del mundo -Nueva York, Berlín, Londres, Shanghai, Río de Janeiro, Ciudad de México, Boston, Viena y Madrid, entre otras- demuestra que sus buenas ideas no son tan escasas.

"El penúltimo paisaje", su exposición individual más importante hasta ahora, tuvo lugar en el edificio de la Fundación Telefónica. Requirió docenas de preparaciones y fue acompañada por un catálogo a la altura: "Ahí me menciona hasta a Roberto Carlos, onda yo quiero tener un millón de amigos. Puede sonar súper estúpido, pero



Esta obra de 36 metros de largo, hecha de cacharros de greda destruidos y aplastados, evoca la cordillera y la forma de Chile.

quería que la gente lo leyera y aborreciera las letras teóricas de los típicos catálogos. Creo que en Chile el arte se toma demasiado en serio, de una forma que me ayuda, que es media castrante y muy lenta".

La pieza principal en esa exposición era una escultura de 36 metros de largo, por 1,80 de alto y 1,20 de ancho. "Porcaine" estaba hecha de miles de cacharros de greda destruidos y aplastados sobre una plataforma: "Si alguien ve eso va a preguntarse: ¿qué significa esta cues-

tión?", pero de a poco va a ir descubriendo el significado de estos cacharros transformados en una cordillera. Preguntándose eso uno puede leer la obra y eso es lo que me interesa".

La frecuencia con que Vogt muestra su trabajo en su propio país ha venido aumentando con el reconocimiento internacional. Solo durante el año pasado recibió dos invitaciones, la de Fundación Telefónica en abril y otra de Die Ecke en diciembre.

El "show" de Die Ecke consistió en esculturas

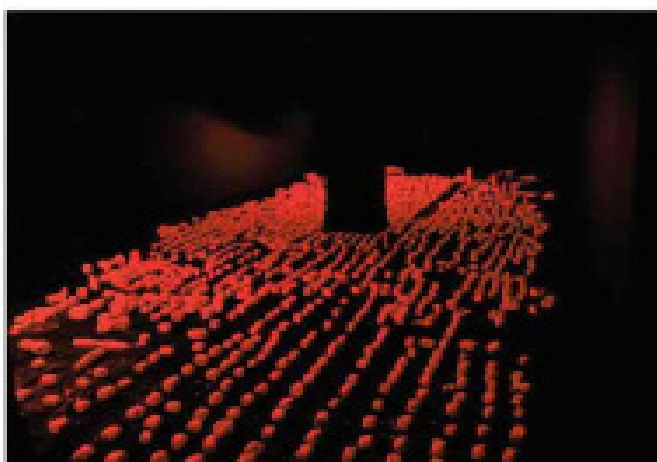
JOHANNES VOGT



Este video se instaló en el baño de Chile Eche. Los inmigrantes evocaban el desierto y los objetos que se usen en la fabricación de drogas.

Los tubos en "El mar de Bolivia" podrían ser gasoductos cubiertos de guano y salitre, un horizonte o líneas de coca.

El interior de la caja que presentó en Stuttgart era un modelo de la ciudad hecho con basura que recogió de sus calles.



que el artista desarrolló en Brasil y en Chile, con materiales tan sencillos como coriel, palos de brocheta, pasta de muro y cola fría. "Son objetos como taresa de colegio", dice riendo, "parecen objetos precolombinos encontrados en el desierto. Borneo de salitre; casi basuritas pero tienen una gracia rara".

De eso se trata su producción reciente. De eso y de los dibujos que hace bajo una especie de trance: "Me siento y dibujo por horas hasta que me vuelvo y empiezan a aparecer las figuras. Son un poco raras en el sentido de que yo no las controlo, son como bien esotéricas. Me salen medias góticas, medias marga (pómic japonés)". Utiliza lápiz y papel corriente, luego fotografía los dibujos y los amplía hasta dos metros y medio. "Cada uno parece una persona grande y fantasmagórica".

Lohyt insiste en la simplicidad como un valor fundamental de su trabajo y su postura artística. Explica que cuando expone en Chile siempre

hata de que el material se conecte con el público, y que cuando afirma tan ligeramente que sus esculturas son como taresa de colegio, él sabe que no es así. Es la impresión de que lo hace para restarle importancia y para no imponer su visión sobre las lecturas posibles. "Uno tiene la idea de que es una cosa súper simple y difícil de interpretar. Mi interés es hacer trabajos que la gente normal pueda entender. A pesar de que parecen raros, uno los mira y son lo que son".

Le da un poco de pudor, viviendo en Nueva York hace tanto tiempo, ser el primer chileno en hacer la residencia en Garworks. Esos tres meses que pasó trabajando en Londres lo han hecho reflexionar sobre la necesidad de salir del estado de comodidad que acompaña a la rutina, para poder crear cosas nuevas. "Es una de las razones por las que me fui de Chile: uno se puede relajar demasiado allá y terminar en las parilladas no más. Esa sensación de que todo el mundo quiere estar tranquilo, de que

está todo bien, a mí me produce ansiedad. Eso es súper raro".

"Eramos bien giles, firmos la generación de la transición", dice recordando los tres años que estuvo en la Universidad Católica. "Llegamos súper optimistas pero nos encontramos con un montón de prejuicios y problemas estructurales que no podíamos asumir". Cuenta que la mayoría de los artistas con que compartió clases y talleres en esa época emigraron también, escapando de las limitaciones que imponía el arte típicamente chileno. "Lo que me define como artista es buscar que mi trabajo funcione en diferentes lugares". Cada fin de año, cuando viene a Chile por razones familiares, no sólo aprovecha para montar exposiciones, también visita talleres y se reúne con estudiantes de arte. "Habría de darles ánimos. Pero claro, ahora los jóvenes son más atropados. Es algo que tiene que ver con la edad también. Nosotros nos sentíamos los atropados en esa época". **VO**