

THE LIFE OF OBJECTS

November 11 – December 17, 2011

Mauricio Alejo, Johanna Unzueta, Pablo Guardiola, Mario de Vega, Juan Pablo Villegas, and Oscar Santillan

Curated by María del Carmen Carrión

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

Architecture conceals a latent narrative in which its spaces and objects function as sets and props for possible plots, biographies, or travel journals. *The Life of Objects* explores that hidden potential, proposing a narrative built around a missing body. An account centered on the internal space of a house and the objects that inhabit it. The narrative voice is turned toward the psychologically charged architecture and a set of objects that possess an animist quality.

Objects become fragments of biographical narratives, recounting in small bits the whereabouts of a persona. They create a possible journey of places visited, those that exist in reality and those we have been longing for. Maps, souvenirs, a compass: they appear charged with a corporeal presence that directly resonates with that of a territory. They possess a mnemonic quality – triggered by solitude, they bring back memories and affections.

Johanna Unzueta and Mauricio Alejo both explore architecture as an entity that mutates and transforms, as well as the spatially charged interior of a house. Unzueta focuses on industrially fabricated elements—pipes, faucets—that she re-inscribes through meticulous labor. She pulls the objects out of the assembly line and back into the realm of the one of a kind, undoing the gesture of the found object. Mauricio Alejo creates out-of-the-ordinary situations for common objects, infusing them with a vital force. His work navigates domestic space and highlights the uncanny experience of quotidian life.

Domestic objects and furniture are closely connected to the body, serving in many cases as extensions of it. Couches are molded by the weight of our bodies; chairs and tables wear out through repetitive contact with our skin. Pablo Guardiola's "Untitled," 2009 depicts the shadow of a table, which functions as a stand in for an absent person. Its disappearing quality marks a double absence: that of the phantom object, and of the person who once used it. Both of these seem to have resurfaced due to an intense exercise in evoking a memory. Oscar Santillan's photograph "Cascade," 2010-2011 portrays an object overflowing its immediate significance. Photographed in an exterior setting, the object mimics a body that discharges fluids.

Altered states of perception and undetermined limits of the body filter our awareness of reality. The limits of our awareness are being incessantly tested, sometimes as a displacement of normality. We are constantly confronted with stimuli we cannot process, like certain frequencies of sound that fall off our range of perception. Just as our participation in a soundscape occurs when we take in the sound, our understanding of

an object is mediated through a mental process that assigns it a function and use. Objects and sounds pierce the body, leaving a trace on its surface. That encounter is physical and symbolic, with the balance sometimes being overpowered by one or the other. Mario de Vega's record "Feedback," 2011 conceals analog audio that is physically encoded in the record. On its surface an appropriated image is also engraved: that of a body trespassed violently by objects.

Juan Pablo Villegas's video "Fe"—the chemical symbol for iron from the Latin *ferratum*, but also the Spanish word for faith—proposes a twisted act of belief. Metal has no organic life, however we assume that what we see and hear relates to a familiar realm. Unaware of the magnetic field that provokes the grated iron to move and thus generate sound, we project life into an inanimate object that appears to crawl, to squeal.

The works in the exhibition invoke a suspension of disbelief. They invite us to focus our attention not on the quotidian uses and utility they have, but in the surprising turns that our perception brings onto them. Some works appear to emanate life and pour out emotion, while others acquire a bodily presence, which resonates with the functions of our own being. The idea of the body as explored in this exhibition refers to a fracture of its integrity. The body produced by artistic practices of symbolic significance is the one at play here. The fragility of objects, the rapid pace at which they become outmoded and obsolete corresponds to the physicality of a body that deteriorates with the passing of time.

María del Carmen Carrión