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Uncomfortable Art

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March 2023

One of the most appealing things about art is its multiplicity, its polysemy, its expansiveness. There is not only one way of approaching art, no right or wrong approach; they are all legitimate and therein lies its power. What some may regard as errors, others may see innovation; some look for answers while others find questions; there are those who rely on representation as an excuse, while others rule it out in search of new shapes where some are bent on finding figures. Perhaps this happens because complexity can be intimidating; it can raise doubt, uncertainty, fear, unpleasant sensations that make us uncomfortable. But how is it possible to create, grow and do anything without discomfort? Every propelling movement stems, to some degree, from discomfort; it is an engine that pushes us to break free from alienation, from inertial repetition, from involuntary movement. Active discomfort and art are supposed to make us uncomfortable.

The artwork on display in this exhibition are in contact with, navigate and flirt with abstraction, but, ultimately, what is abstraction?

For some, it involves experimenting with another kind of language. A return to technique to study the possible relationships and tensions between background, form, light, medium and matter. Geometry, for example, is used to create a new perceptive reality. Intention lies in the formal elements of the composition and in the relationships the latter establish in a quest to return to the essence.

Carlos Presto's artworks find endless concrete resolutions to convey something intangible. Geometric shapes, order, color, a detailed mathematical structure and a methodology are his allies and more important resources to do this. By means of a language and a special, personal perspective, he comes up with his own interpretation of the world and himself; the differences in terms of outcome arise from the relationship between the various shapes, movements, rhythms, structures and uses of color, which always reach a well-balanced composition that perfectly observes the golden ratio.

In turn, **Francisca Maya** puts forward a set of geometric shapes, volumes that cast shadows in improbable spaces, arrangements that are only possible on the plane. She ushers us into an indeterminate space or dimension, which only exists there, in her work, where logic, perspective-based relationships, forces, light and shadows follow different rules and give rise to unexpected encounters and situations.

Others want the concrete to blur, turning images and elements we know indivisible and confusing. There is a declared intention to inhabit the stain, which gives us another look at reality and the familiar. There is a deliberate intention to dwell in the smear, which provides another perspective on reality and the familiar, giving relationships another dimension. What do we choose to see in these artworks? Do we try to recognize elements or get lost in them?

Slow-paced and unhurried processes are characteristic of **Elián Stolarsky**'s work. Her art pieces are marked by her family history, in which memories take the form of fabric scraps and remembrances, becoming blurry. These synthesized forms act as a hazy, dim, vague memory, which must be completed by the beholder – a fortuitous or sought-after oblivion? The narration is partial, fragmented and choral, like the scraps of clothes that are reused to create her collages.

Uzi Sabah manages to create stripped-down, uncluttered, well-balanced and calm images through a long process of classification, selection, assemblage and collage. On occasions, the starting materials are recognizable and may convey past contents and emotions, or have the latter washed away through a new composition and use. Photography and remembrance serve as brushstrokes in his creations, which produce new layers of meaning that link different times and contexts.

How deeply embedded can certain images be in our brain or memory? How much information can one image carry and condense? **Juanito Conte** has been creating art from the memories of other images that have become integral to his self after having been decomposed, synthesized, and fractured in a prior stage. This is how he develops the planes and landscapes that reduce a great deal of accumulated information and in which he plays with the public and with himself, so as not to let any traces left by him when creating the work be seen.

Victoria Ismach defies photography by setting out to capture movement –not moments of perfect stillness–, blurring the edges, pasting together, transforming, and coming up with new visualities. Dance, the body and its movement become sequences, rhythms, and increasingly abstract shapes in conversation with each other. Through these resources, the photographer obtains a

labile, uncertain, and imperfect image, sinuous and, at the same time, relatable.

What is the connection between abstraction and mathematics, geometry, perfection? Mathematical formulas and theorems iterated with proportions taken from nature to generate an artifice, to trick the eye, to create something different from what we really see or to make us see beyond what we have in front of us. How can the landscape or a geography be reflected in an abstract way?

For some time now, **Sebastián Barranteguy** has been exploring the relationship between geometry and nature, the form of the latter, the way geometry enables us to capture and organize organic shapes. In his artworks, he manages to reflect with incisive sharpness the instability, the cracks, the fractures, the fragility, the alternating translucence and opacity of the landscapes he inhabits.

Measuring things is ultimately an abstraction, an artifice. However, not everything is measurable, and every measurement taken has a margin of error. In **Pedro Tyler**'s work, tape measures and rulers are re-signified, they lose their practical use and become inputs for his work. At the same time, the artist takes elements, compositions and shapes from nature. How can the impossible be measured? What is the measure of our emotions?

Fidel Sclavo's three pieces on display are like a whisper: to what extent can the elements of a composition affect, associate with and touch each other without impacting each other? These color planes manage to keep a flawless balance, offsetting shapes and colors, without disappearing or blurring into each other. The point is to know how to appreciate, amidst the hustle and bustle of our world, the harmony, the exact moment and the number of components and gestures needed so as not to lose stability.

Can abstraction be considered in material terms? How are elements broken down? What is their essence or distinctive feature? What is their minimal expression?

Guadalupe Ayala's artwork exudes tension. Each element is placed in such a way that it enables a delicate, almost unsustainable balance. There is a quest to push what is materially possible to the extreme and to test its limits. Her art pieces become unhinged, opening up new paths, thus retelling and revisiting the old historical or institutional narratives. The fragile, the rigid and the sharp-edged coexist in a harmony that seems to be suspended in an instant frozen in time.

On occasions, an artist's work ushers in a new narrative, but sometimes it serves as a reply to an existing narrative. It works as a response and starts a conversation. These narratives may be works of fiction or not, contemporary or vintage, but visual arts offer a different standpoint from which to think about them. The art pieces of **Victor Lema Riqué** invite us to lose ourselves in the vanishing points of imaginary, carbon-copied cities and spaces, a result of the intersection between literature and imagination. With a resource as simple and powerful as a drawing pencil, the artist manages to convey a thousand and one possible stories. His work is very expansive by nature; using very few elements, he creates spaces, volumes, structures, architecture, shapes, light and shadows which convey both speed and movement as well as motionlessness.

On the other hand, other artists resort to abstraction to obtain freedom, an emancipation from shape, content, themes, mimesis, representation. This expressive looseness sometimes occurs at a frantic, erratic speed not devoid of a degree of catharsis. In other cases, it is exercised from a place of stillness: minimal, almost imperceptible gestures, sometimes repetitive

and sometimes unique. For instance, there is the work **Magalí Milkis** has been doing for a while now, letting go of formal restrictions to embrace a relationship with painting and matter which is much more intuitive, physical, emotional, an exercise in self-awareness and personal meta-reflection. She wants to capture the moment, vital and fleeting, as if it were an archive in the making. In her canvases, two moments coexist: one gestural and another based on a recollection. In the smeared paint we can feel the body in motion and its movement across space, while in the small figurations we can glimpse reflections, thoughts – the conscious plane.

Gustavo Genta, on the other hand, produces 3-D drawings in 3D using wire. He likes to weave and create light structures that can later be inhabited by the visitors. Each piece features a different sequence / internal structure based on previously gathered knowledge. The slight detail of the mirrors allows him to accentuate movement, reflections and light. They are artworks created for establishing a conversation between the space and with the public, to be walked through and inhabited.

Some resort to abstraction to think of and put forward untapped ideas, or ideas lacking a preconceived shape. **Fernando Velázquez** explores the nature vs. nurture duality through algorithmic images that he creates, edits and modifies. The use of technological resources as well as transdisciplinary and emerging methodologies are key in his research, which seeks to generate new images and sensory experiences, shaped by various transition, movement, dynamism or disruption-related processes.

Andrea Finkelstein invites us to lose ourselves in a mental landscape. She draws both inner and outer territories that speak to us about what is inside and outside. In the action of drawing itself

there is an element of letting go, a back and forth of the pencil, the hand, and its movement. Finkelstein's intent is not representational, but neither does she seek abstraction per se; she is interested in gray areas, in-between spaces, aiming at generating a third possibility: these mental spaces.

How can the history of art, or the art system, be revisited through abstraction? Is this a game within the realm of possibility? What happens when a painting is pulled apart or stripped of their content? Of their internal figuration and structure? **Pablo Uribe** has been working on the *Croma* series for several years. In it, he reproduces the exact colors, technique, and format of works of art by renowned Uruguayan artists, detaching them from their form and subject matter. The stretchers, colors and composition he builds between them become a completely new piece of art, although it takes us back to the remote starting point.

Silvina Arismendi behaves in a different way. In her artwork, there is a critical, playful intention, an irreverent gesture toward fine arts, which gives away the tensions inherent to these limits. Deconstructing a stretcher, rearranging its structure – which becomes a mere pile of wooden boards– to tie it up and wrap it with colored threads. He uses materials foreign to the visual arts, industrial and urban materials, which sneak into the art world to color everything in disrespectful and unrestricted colors that breaks with tradition and art history, penetrating pop culture.

Some think of abstraction as a disruptive strategy, tool and ally, a misalignment that forces the beholder to reposition and change perspective, inciting an instance of reflection. This applies, among others, to **Guillermo García Cruz**'s work, which intends to create confusion in the beholder. There is an intention to destabilize and make noise over what we already know to rethink it from a new perspective. In the act of pulling

apart, fractioning and bringing the paintings together again, he produces a noise, a glitch, that captivates and questions us in equal measure.

What is the role of chance and accidents in abstraction? **Martín Tisnés**' artwork questions and challenges us with its indecipherable and enigmatic nature, both complex and alluring. By overlapping layers, the artist achieves a densely rich result that demands to be contemplated slowly. His painting dwells in a world of uncertainty and doubt lacking a single unshakable truth; a world of trial and error, of trying things out.

In an era when truth and certainty prevail, making room for intuition is dangerous and creates uncertainty and uneasiness. How on Earth don't we know everything with precision and in detail when humans, through technology, have achieved so much complex knowledge? However, in this same context, the unknown and immeasurable finds a way, like a crack emerging to the surface from the center of the earth to remind us that we do not know everything nor do we have all the answers, and that we mostly go through life without them, in search for them, in a process of permanent construction and revision.

In all these works of art two processes go hand in hand: one inward, the other outward. Each artist does an exercise on introspection, while simultaneously projecting their ideas outward, thus encouraging us to look at and understand the world and its relationships from a different viewpoint. We hope all this acts as motivation and is seen as an invitation to promote movement and mutation.

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