

NOW&THEN



Rodrigo Hernández

1. Things are moving (Chus)
2015
oil on wood, 25 x 30 cms
From an ongoing series with the same title

“Things are moving” is an ongoing series of paintings that started in 2014 when I asked my friend curator Emiliano Valdés to decide a composition based on photos of paper cut-outs I sent him. Since then, I have invited different people to propose a change on

the last version of the image: I apply this change to do every time a new consecutive painting featuring the previous changes and adding the newest one.

The range of these transformations is thus only limited by the format and the medium so that, finally, every new piece is still an oil painting made on a 25 x 30 cm wooden surface. Aside from these two constraints the project anticipates finding freedom and instability since every suggestion/instruction needs a certain level of interpretation, sometimes even a further discussion to get to a point of relative clarity. This conversational aspect of the paintings -not necessarily evident to the eye of the spectator- makes me think about the humanity of abstraction: the ideas behind its codes and its interaction with language starting at the most basic level: what one is able to say to someone else. "The world that a painting represents can disappear, but the painting's own combination of colors and shapes will not", says Boris Groys.

Through something that I do with my own hands and at a slow pace, almost in a gesture-scale, this series of works is a reflection on two ideas: first and foremost abstraction -specially the trajectory of its function and status in certain contexts, but also its possibility of being a self-sufficient, unreadable system; and secondly: movement, one that is very slow and constant, progressing towards a point that is permanently receding and which is still impossible to imagine in the present.

2. Figure

2013

paper, plaster, wood powder, 162 x 53 cm

"Figure" is a sculpture depicting a human body in what for me was technically and conceptually the simplest possible form at the time I made it. This formal reduction is something that could difficultly experience any major changes; nevertheless through small variations and re-positioning I have been able to explore questions that have become essential to my work.

When I first thought about this figure I felt the need to give shape to a human perspective, as an immediate, almost literal way to ask myself "What do I see?" Around this human element all the other components of my work -many of them abstract- would find an axis. So much as this sculpture provides a clear image of a human, its essentially undefined identity would become the first step into a prolonged reflection, perhaps better based in experience than in concepts: who exactly does this figure represent? What is its relation with the context, always fluctuating and radically transformed by the presence of a viewer? What is it saying, and to whom? To my

satisfaction, this figure, as simple as it is, cannot stop feeding my curiosity and does so maybe because it doesn't spend too much energy in the dynamics of detail.

For this sculpture in particular, I always imagined it being the first thing the spectator's gaze would encounter when entering an exhibition space, just as when one comes into a room and surprisingly finds out someone else is already there. In the experience of an exhibition, it is interesting to notice the first, most immediate questions this encounter usually triggers: Who is this person? What is he doing? What is he doing here?

In this manner, "Figure" is for me a surface spawning worlds of ideas. As opaque as it might be, it is really a reflective object; one that makes us turn away in other directions, since the interior is impossible to access. It's not only important what it is, but where it sends us to. And, paradoxically, at the same time, it never stops calling attention to the physicality of the object, as it is and never stops being a recognizable human figure.

Rodrigo Hernández (Mexico City, 1983) is currently a resident of the Laurenz Stiftung in Basel. Previously he attended the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht and the Kunstakademie Karlsruhe as a Master student in the class of Silvia Bächli. He has also a BFA in Visual Arts from "La Esmeralda" in Mexico City. His work has been exhibited at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht; Elizabeth Foundation of the Arts, New York; Thomas Dane Gallery, London; Frac Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Marseille; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; NuMU - Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Guatemala; Galerie Fons Welters, Amsterdam; Kunsthalle Baden-Baden; Kunsthaus Baselland; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Kunstverein Freiburg and Museo de Arte Moderno México, Mexico City, among others.