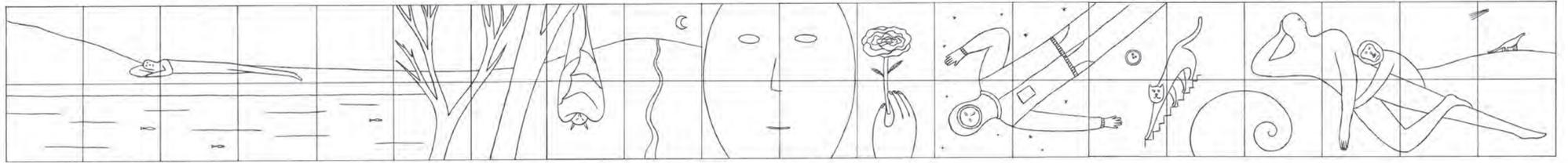




RODRIGO HERNÁNDEZ

Flux of Things



Rodrigo Hernández, *Flux of Things*, 2023 (Preparatory sketch)

Reminiscent of haiku, Rodrigo Hernández' works (paintings, sculptures, reliefs, installations) are lyrical explorations of most intimate moments of human relationships and the metaphysical states of mind. For Kestner Gesellschaft's facade, the artist has conceived a silver tableau at a confluence of his narrative language and the modernist grid of the architectural pattern. Meditative and sublime, *Flux of Things* is a horizontal storyboard of the everyday and mundane, composed of a sequence of loosely connected images that combine the nocturnal and the daily, peacefully unfolding as the passerby walks along.

A man lying on a hilly shore, contemplating a river flow, its stoic current and the fish, swimming; a tree on a quiet night under croissant moon, with a bat, starring anxiously though harmlessly, an ambitious figure; a face, a mask, a persona – occupying the centre of a discontinued narrative; a hand holding a rose, an offering, a dedication; a cosmonaut levitating in



Rodrigo Hernández, *Flux of Things*, 2023 (Detail)

the galaxy; a giant cat, descending the staircase, in disguise; the clock, unchained, hovering above, and a couple of lovers in embrace, time passing idly; oh, a lover is a monkey in an Ovidian drama of metamorphosis; meanwhile, a snail becomes a spiral, towards infinity, and a butterfly turns into a comet, chasing a dinosaur; silence and calmness are haptic sensations in a monochrome universe of *Flux of Things*, the agents of melancholia and longing, a temporary escape. Welcome to Rodrigo Hernández' forest of signs, a subversive allegory of turmoil and uncertainty.



Rodrigo Hernández, *Pearl's Bite VII*, 2021

The tapestry of narrative gestures *Flux of Things* floats above the main entrance to the building of the Kestner Gesellschaft, imitating a frieze on a glass facade of a contemporary architecture, squeezed between two historical parts of an early Art Nouveau edifice, along a busy traffic street. Composed of 40 square segments of thin silver metal sheets, Hernández' mural mesmerises with the smoothness of the surface, its glare, embracing daylight and the sunshine, its airy appearance and lightness of a passing cloud. *Flux of Things* is an act of masterfully crafted subtlety: a simplified drawing carefully curved on a polished, mirror-like, reflective membrane of a metal layer, like a paper cut-out, rendered on the verge of visibility, an origami of sorts, an evocation of the archetypal... As a talented storyteller, Hernández is a diligent dreamer; his *Flux of Things* is a reverie, a phantasmagoria, an airy scenario indeed, an encrypted confluence of a magic realism and a visceral realism, generously offering a spatial and temporal suspense, between fiction and fantasy, with a poetic intensity of a momentous withdrawal but simultaneously of a permanent affirmation of a deranged world of here and now. For the Mexican writer Roberto Bolaño, the visceral realism is "a love letter, the demented strutting of a dumb bird in the moonlight, something essentially cheap and meaningless", or in other

words, "a philosophy of the remainder, of remains, of incomplete burials, of forms of life animated by forces of death (and vice versa)", an ultimate (and probably most vicious) circulation of mental and corporeal matter, a flow of disconnected particles in a disenchanted universe of a failed science. Hernández' protagonists are "assistants of the void" in search of a once nonchalantly abandoned meaning and belief in the grand narratives of human thought and nature.

Rodrigo Hernández
on:

ARCHITECTURE

For *Flux of Things* I was not really thinking of directly referencing Byzantine or other religious temples. I have been inspired by what I saw in Mexico growing up which later found out was called "Integración plástica": a modernist local experiment in the early 50's to fuse architecture, painting and sculpture in buildings and projects that were meant to be functional and inhabited, most notably the campus of the National University near where I lived in the south of Mexico City. Most of these artistic interventions had a rather historical and nationalistic agenda, but independently from that didactical layer they were always very suggestive images and made a lasting impression on me. In any case we can say perhaps that these modernist interventions didn't land very far from what we see in many religious temples; or that they operate similarly but in a secular world.

FLUX OF THINGS

If that is the case, *Flux of Things* runs in parallel to both the religious and the historical universes but it's really outside of both: Maybe as something that looks into a possible future, or rather that is a dream in the future. This is perhaps a way to talk about something that is not bound to anything, something more open and less under control. The composition is full of identifiable images and objects that are left suspended in the air, freed from their defined meaning and from a cohesive narrative, sometimes even in contradiction: like a sequence of things that appear randomly in front of our eyes. But, again, we could ask what is the coherence or sense of the things that appear in front of us anyway. Perhaps the point is that things never stay quiet and never stop passing by. In that way, a big inspiration for this work is the Tao Te Ching's principle of constant change, and a wish to be in the disposition to embrace it.

POETRY

Poetry is something that fills my heart and gives something to my life that would be missing if it didn't exist. I just read something from Robert Caillou about dreams, where he was saying something like "a person without dreaming would not be a totally complete person". It's a bit like that with poetry. Very often I write down lines from poems or songs that really catch my attention and after some time I remember them and notice they can be a good way to sum up many thoughts and feelings that were in flux in me and just needed that ribbon to hold them together. And so a line from a song can become a title for a work or an exhibition, just how it happened with Szyborska for my show in Pivo in Sao Paulo!

CRAFT

Craft fascinates me a lot! I always discover and learn so much from getting close to it and it opens me doors to thinking new things related to the acts of thinking and making themselves. I love the dia-

THE INEFFABLE TAO



Look,

And you never can see it—
It is too Subtle.

Listen,

And you never can hear it—
It is too Faint.

Feel for it,

And you never can take hold of it—
It is too Elusive.

These three

Merge into the One,

They form

The Ineffable Whole

Of the Tao.

There is

No Realm of Brilliance

Above it,

No Realm of Darkness

Beneath,

Just Strand upon Strand

Of the Tao,

Unnameable,

Returning to Non-Matter,

Form without Form,

Ineffable Image

Without Substance.

Greet it,

And its Front cannot be seen.

Follow it,

And its Rear is invisible.

Attain Mastery

Of Present Being

By Understanding

The Tao of Old.

To Understand

The Ancient Beginning

Is the Binding Strand

Of the Tao.



logue that can be created with a material and the process of learning how to deal with it, or, better said, how to understand it and bend any objectives to its nature, to its resistance or disposition to alterations. In this sense, whichever material or technique one chooses to work with can result in a meditation of life and the human soul. The thing I love the most about craft is when I realise that while working, my hands, my eyes, my brain and my heart are all gathered, and none of them goes away.

INTERTEXTUALITY

I'm of the opinion that our place in the world is unjustifiable and absurd and our time here is brief, but nevertheless humans have been able to spawn a culture that only thrives further, that continuously expands through the formation of links between its existing parts and, occasionally, through the introduction of new elements that get linked to that connection jumble. I don't know if this cultural buildup is a response to our absurd existence, or how exactly they relate, but through some artistic and cultural expressions and moments I feel we might – or I do –, get a glimpse of the human soul and how it tries to deal with this perhaps paradoxical rapport between existence and culture. I am, in any case, very curious to learn more and more about all these beautiful attempts and always get excited to find out how restless, deviceful and inspired the human soul seems to have been and still is when it comes to this question.



Rodrigo Hernández, *Maintenant*, 2019

DRAWING

I always begin with a drawing, which ideally occurs quickly and is only a subtle suggestion of something. The rest of the process is in a way just a reflection and a negotiation with that original drawing: working on its advancement into a painting, a sculpture or a large installation, but trying not to get too far from it, believing that there is something true and direct about it that should remain no matter what it gives form to. Some people compare drawing to writing, but I see it more as the act of remembering something and that moment before the remembered thing is annotated; drawing for me has that air of not belonging completely to the world of what's fully formed and settled. Then, exactly because of this quality, I find it very exciting to work with a drawing venturing in other media like sculpture; it feels like crossing into another dimension where all the footing has to be figured out and a new language should be invented, like having a map in a dream jungle.

Rodrigo Hernández (Mexico City, Mexico, 1983) lives in Mexico City. He studied at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe, and at Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht in 2013–2014. In the last years he has been a fellow of the Laurenz-Haus Stiftung in Basel (2015), Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart and the Cité International des Arts in Paris (2016).

His recent solo exhibitions include: Museo Jumex, Mexico City, MX; Swiss Institute, New York, US; Museo de Arte Moderno, Medellín, CO; Kunsthalle Kohta, Helsinki, FI; CIAJG, Guimarães, PT; SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia, USA; Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico City; Pivo, São Paulo; Kunsthalle Winterthur, CH; Midway Contemporary, Minneapolis; SALTS, Basel; Kim?, Riga; Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg; Kurimanzutto, Mexico City; Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City; Bonnefontenmuseum, Maastricht; Paralel Oaxaca, Oaxaca, MX.

Recently his work has been exhibited in venues such as: Istanbul Modern; PinchukArtCenter, Kiev; GaMec, Bergamo; ZKM Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe Resonanzen; Kunstverein Nürnberg, Nürnberg; Bonnefontenmuseum, Maastricht; Gladstone Gallery, Brussels; MendesWoodDM, Brussels; 12th Bienal Fems Monterrey, Monterrey; 5th Moscow Biennial for Young Art, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich; Kunsthalle Basel, Basel.

STORYTELLING

I've been obsessed with Patrick Modiano's writing since 2018, when I discovered by chance his novel *Missing Person*. I think in trying to describe my love for his work I could try to answer your question about my affinity to storytelling, fiction and reverie. Modiano once said that one chooses to write because there's something wrong. I think he means "wrong" in the sense of something memory cannot fully put together and that language seems to be unable to achieve. Regardless, it is through language that this wrong can somehow be dealt with. The result, though, can only be a language like that of Modiano, one that expresses a face-to-face meeting with this impossibility, with self-doubt and with the fear of oblivion. And, also, it is in language that we also find resources like *ellipsis* (...) – the set of three periods indicating an omission – that Modiano so often employs, graphically or metaphorically. All his locations and characters are glimpsed as if in a mist, a mist that is a sense of memory becoming imaginary, a sense that forgetfulness, loss and displacement are also building elements of our experience, perhaps the most fundamental ones. I relate a lot to this because most of the time I feel half asleep and I have the suspicion that whatever is woven in that time is very meaningful and formative to my life and I see it as clues I should try to follow in order to see a larger picture of things. I constantly muse about that somnambulist young detective that is the ever character of Modiano's narrative: a person shifting back and forth from "I" to "he" who is actually a spectator trying to retain details, to put some kind of order in his own memories and impressions, and to highlight something of all that happens in a perpetual flight of time.



Francisco Eppens, *La vida, la muerte, el mestizaje y los cuatro elementos (Life, death, miscegenation and the four elements)*, 1952

Curator
Adam Budak

Front page
Rodrigo Hernández, *Hold to the Center*, 2022; 40x45cm, oil on wood (detail); Courtesy of the artist, Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon; ChertLüdde, Berlin; P420, Bologna.

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Rodrigo Hernández, *Flux of Things*, 2023; Preparatory sketch; Courtesy of the artist, Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon; ChertLüdde, Berlin; P420, Bologna.

Rodrigo Hernández, *Flux of things*, 2023; hand-hammered stainless steel (detail); Courtesy of the artist, Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon; ChertLüdde, Berlin; P420, Bologna.

Rodrigo Hernández, *Pearl's Bite VII*, 2021, 40x45cm, oil on wood; Courtesy of the artist, Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon; ChertLüdde, Berlin; P420, Bologna.

Rodrigo Hernández, *Maintenant*, 2019 95x70cm, hand-hammered brass part of the installation *Nothing is solid, nothing can be held in my hand for long*; Courtesy of the artist, Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon; ChertLüdde, Berlin; P420, Bologna.

Francisco Eppens, *La vida, la muerte, el mestizaje y los cuatro elementos (Life, death, miscegenation and the four elements)*, 1952; Byzantine mosaic mural in the Medicine Faculty of the National University, Mexico City

Work cited
Lao-Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition 2018

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