

## Sies + Höke Galerie

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### **Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: Deus Ex Machina**

Opening: Friday, September 3, 11 am – 10 pm  
September 3 – October 2, 2021

#### **Press release**

In his second solo exhibition at Sies + Höke, and tying in with DC Open, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa (\*1978, Guatemala City) presents new wood panels and a sculptural mobile.

Having shown at some of the world's most prestigious institutions in recent years, Ramírez-Figueroa is clearly amongst the leading Latin American artists today. Working in performance, sculpture, drawing and printmaking, he creates fantastical allegories and symbolic tableaux based on the legacies of experimental theatre and political activism in Guatemala as well as personal memories. His narratives are often whimsy and playful, but also bear the weight of tragic events that have shaped the social and political climate of present day Guatemala.

The exhibition's title, *Deus Ex Machina*, refers to the device from Greek theatre, where a seemingly unsolvable problem in a plot is abruptly resolved and brought to a happy ending by an unexpected and unlikely appearance: a "god out of the machine" (*Deus ex machina*). A mobile carrying the same title is at the centre of the exhibition. Similar to the mechanism used in ancient Greek theatre to bring the unexpected "god" into appearance, a set of ropes and pulleys here carry a bronze cast tree branch as well as a group of mask-like resin sculptures. Resembling folk saints or deities that are typically invoked for the protection of nature in Guatemala and beyond, these masks point towards the desperate state in which we find not only today's tropical rainforests, but nature as a whole. It seems only a *Deus Ex Machina* can rescue us from the consequences of environmental crisis.

A series of paintings on carved wood panels, recalling tropical leaves, complete the exhibition. Ramírez-Figueroa has carefully structured plant shapes into patterns and abstractions that reflect not only nature itself, but also its appropriation through mankind across cultures and centuries, citing for example the shapes of Art Deco Tiffany lamps as an inspiration. The new series is based on the shape of Anthurium plants that have since the 19<sup>th</sup> century been the subject of much praise by collectors in Europe and North America, a situation which has sometimes led to over collection in the wild and the extinction of species in their natural habitat in South and Central America. The series of paintings act as a meditation on the geometry of the leaves, and how in loving and collecting them humans have made many disappear in nature.

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa was born in 1978 in Guatemala City. He holds a BFA from the Emily Carr University, Vancouver, an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and was a post-graduate researcher at Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht in 2013. He lives and works in Guatemala. Amongst others, Ramírez-Figueroa has held solo exhibitions at The Power Plant, Toronto (2020); the New Museum, New York (2018); CAPC, Bordeaux (2017); Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld (2017); Tate Modern, London (2015) and Castello di Rivoli (2013). His performances have been hosted by LACMA, Los Angeles, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, to name only a few. His work has been shown at the Site Santa Fe Biennial (2018), the 57th Venice Biennale (2017), the 32nd São Paulo Biennale (2016), as well as the 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014).