

Antonio Menchen

ojo mano

Opening: February 11, 2023

End: March 18, 2023

Galería Marta Cervera has the honor to present 'ojo mano', the first solo exhibition by Antonio Menchen at the gallery. The show will be on view from February 11 until March 18, 2023.

Perhaps this is like a traffic accident taking place in slow motion. The impact has yet to finish, the shards of glass to fly, the wounds to be inflicted, the scars to be marked out. And while we are in the car, tightly closing our eyes, all the images appear at once.

A person seen from behind. Locks of hair cover his neck, silently slipping down over the printed shirt. His face cannot be seen. The skull is a camera obscura. There are images that disappear behind others and re-emerge after a time: furniture, hairstyles, fashion, various products. The hands take them out of the boxes, move them about, superimpose them, turn them over, put them away again, select them in potential, almost tactile relationships. There is an invisible thread that, in a distant choreography, connects two differentiated particles that for a moment resemble each other. Parts are mobilised like someone stretching a piece of clothing to be able to finally see the seam.

All those trips by bus. All those bridges that we crossed. There are many types of bridges. At times words are scarce or there is too much distance between them and us. Language should be a bridge, but on too many occasions it proves to be an island. Placing something next to something else is the desire to trace a construction. We meet on bridges. We escape over bridges. The new language comes to life when the first is faltering. Like a gesture of the hand that goes out of control and becomes a marionette, showing itself to be more real than the spoken word. *There is another world, but it is inside this one.*

There is a deer's head set above the table in the restaurant. The cream-coloured hairs neatly surround the glazed resin eyes, a line that falls like a dense, black tear, the dry snout. Hovering over us is the rigidity of a sectioned, immobile body, the carcass of something that at one time must have been warm and had a beating heart. It is only a glove, a skin, an image that drags with it the memory of what was living. Taxidermy incarnates a death that never ends, a death that always continues to die. The living being only remains as a memory for those observing it from below while using our knives to separate flesh from bone, feeding ourselves, trying to forget that we too are travelling towards that destiny.

Do you remember when we thought that there were ghosts? A transparent glass full of water, upright, alone, which, in its fragile materiality, in its invisibility, waits to be discovered. The non-existence of the memory of that hand that moves it from the shelf to the formica counter, of that hand that turns the tap and fills it with water, makes a gap for suspicion. Perhaps it wasn't that. Perhaps we had simply forgotten the movements of our body, as if it had changed into an infinite series of spectral images that we were incapable of evoking. Lack of memory is like the lack of raccord in cinematographic editing. An image, an uncaught, lost fragment. *Raccord* comes French and in Spanish it sounds like *recuerdo*, but *recuerdo* really means *souvenir*. On raising the glass

there was a mark, a damp circle, a flat reproduction of its form that was a witness to the prolonged presence of the object on the furniture.

There are bodies that feel their way blindly in a dark room. A bright point of light. On the stage a miniature copy of himself is connected to his arm like an extension of his body. The ventriloquist makes his words descend to his stomach; he extends and projects them along his limb to make them emerge through the smaller, inert mouth, which replicates in form and function the one that remains closed. In this physical displacement of language, by means of this disguise, the ventriloquist explored the nuances of a new voice of his own. Or perhaps that miniature of himself was precisely the necessary alterity that provided him with the sensations and words that would emerge in his mind with renewed freshness. In the darkness and the silence we take part in that primitive, well-known and sincere theatricality, making ourselves a party to that substitute for the world encoded in duplicity. Like the insect that resembles a branch and mimetically transforms itself into a replica of its background, in an act of understanding and dissolution into the setting.

The limits of the body of work are increasingly difficult to distinguish, it is still not finished, it continues to grow in the room, it has not yet acquired its definitive forms, it is being made at each instant. A collection of photographs is an object that is ejected and no one knows where it will strike, its trajectory is still indecipherable. A hypothesis, a gesture towards the future but that is kept in a continuous present like an echo that lasts and expands, which breaks up continuity and accumulates in the air. Placing one image beside another generates spaces, hollows out spaces in the way that writing does.

When images are left alone, you can feel them moving on the other side of the wall. Like cellular tissue, each additional image acquires meaning due to the previous one, while altering the meaning of the ensemble. If you don't look at them, they melt into a formless, black and white mass, they become disordered, they change, waiting to be rescued once again by an eye that travels across them, that takes them up and reassembles them. Reading, according to Ezra Pound, is an art of replicating.

- Marta van Tartwijk
Translated by Robert Curwen

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Antonio Menchen (Toledo, 1983) lives and works in Madrid. He studied his BFA in the Fine Arts Academy of Madrid in 2007 and completed his education at the Sculpture and Film Departments of the Fine Arts Academy in Vienna in 2012, where he was a student of Julian Göthe and Constanze Ruhm. He received his MFA at Goldsmiths College of London in 2014. Solo exhibitions of his works have taken place at the project room of Luis Adelantado Gallery, Valencia (2021) and Bulegoa z/b, Bilbao (2019). His work has been exhibited at Galería Marta Cervera, Madrid (2021), Artium, Vitoria-Gasteiz (2020), Sant Andreu Contemporani, Barcelona (2019), TEA, Tenerife (2019), Harriak-EREMUAK, San Sebastian (2019), Fabra i Coats, Barcelona (2019), Centro Párraga, Murcia (2019), CA2M, Madrid (2018); The Showroom, London, (2015), Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien, Vienna, (2012) or Espacio F, Madrid, (2005). Menchen has been recipient of the Visual Arts Grant of the Botín Foundation, the Artistic Production Grant of the Blueproject Foundation and is now an artist in residency at the Fondation Fiminco in Paris.