

GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER

IGNASI ABALLÍ

27 APR – 17 JUN 2023

Wrong, Rejected, Discarded, Abandoned and Finally Exhibited Paintings

Opening: Thursday, April 27, 2023, 6 p.m.
Vienna 1, Domgasse 6

The small "Brautigan" library, situated in one of the most precious corners of the *Clark County Historical Museum* in Vancouver, houses unpublished manuscripts. It occupies not more than one wall and yet it provides space for a large number of nonexistent books. This library corresponds exactly to the one mentioned in the book "The Abortion - An Historical Romance 1966", written by Richard Brautigan - hence the name. Brautigan was a writer who owed his success to the premonition of his own failure. Disillusionment, according to him, was the safest place he had ever known, where no one could deny him the top spot. The shelves described in the book are filled with rejections, pages upon pages petrified in that stage of the manuscript to which is added something worse than the disappointment of non-publication: the verdict of the own failure, often as unjust as final. Books, thus, that do not exist.

Something comparable happens on the shelves of Ignasi Aballí's studio. Similar to the room with the abandoned novels, various ghost works live there. They represent failed attempts to complete some of Aballí's artistic works. Many of them are monochrome works that served him for years to reflect on the concept of color and its meaning. Now they hang on the wall without stretcher frames, revealing profile and back, marked by the traces of the staples by which they were attached to the wooden structures. Many works accumulate an excessive amount of paint, while some capture different shades of the same color; still others exhibit certain optical changes due to the brushstrokes' density. Certain works display a poorly executed ground coat as well as a brittle varnish; these will later find their way into Aballí's series *Pieles*. Those revealing irregular priming eventually become part of the well-known *Rótulos*. Those imperfectly executed works have been held in abeyance before their completion, carrying more doubt than venture. They have all undergone, to a certain extent, a temporary process of error, rejection, dismissal or abandonment, until they have now acquired a new, appropriate, perhaps even inherently correct meaning for the artist. These are ideas and concepts of error and correction that Aballí has been concerned with throughout his career and which are directly related to the *Corrección* project for the Spanish Pavilion in Venice at the 59th Biennale in 2022.

In the exhibition, which also emanates from the idea of error, the relationship between the concept of one's own failure and that of defeat is at least as peculiar. The inherent nature of failure makes it impossible to correspond to the reality of defeat. Practically, defeat cannot exist as an entity in its own right; it can consequently only be seen as the result of a process that presupposes realization. Thus, the previously rejected paintings can never be considered as defeats per se, since they, not fully realized, belong to the realm of failure. They hence depend directly on the non-completion of a process and are therefore exempt from presenting any result, expressing any judgment or comment, positive or negative. The essence of failure is on no account synonymous with the concept of defeat, just as giving up during a game of chess excludes its sporting result. Whereas a defeat leads to checkmate and thus to the end of the game, the act of failing translates the chess game into a situation deprived of consequences. A defeat marks, in other words, a conclusion, a negative conclusion, but a conclusion nonetheless, it embodies a process that has reached its logical end. On the contrary, the nature of one's own failure implies a dysfunction that disrupts the project in its course and development, thereby preventing any conclusion.

Following Brautigan's library of the unrealized, of that which never took place, Ignasi Aballí accordingly archives the failure of his own defeat. *Wrong, Rejected, Discarded, Abandoned and Finally Exhibited Paintings*, a collection of flawed paintings that the artist has kept in anticipation of the ideal exhibition opportunity, indicate this. At first glance, the exhibition tells of all that was not meant to see the light of day. This may, on one hand, include mistakes in execution, and, in other works, disordered, faded and

disconnected slides of famous artworks, which become eventually the basis for explaining an alternative *history of art (Historia del arte)* (2016), for mapping the recorded spaces of a museum closed to the public (*0-24h*) (2005), or for creating a shelf with rotten beams but no *books (Libros)* (2000). Despite the different aspects of each of those artistic works, it is possible to detect the main themes that have occupied Ignasi Aballí for over a decade, ranging from the reflection about the image's essence to the critical analysis of the conventions of art and representation; from the negative impulse as a driving force to the contradiction as a starting point; from this urge to expand the traditional boundaries of materials to the investigation of how the latter can transform into something else. Ignasi Aballí's work makes no concessions. It celebrates the minimal gesture and the pre-programmed hazard, inviting us, more than anything else, to pause and look.

Bea Espejo

IGNASI ABALLÍ, born in 1958 in Barcelona, Spain, lives and works in Barcelona. He studied Fine Arts at the University of Barcelona.

Aballí participated at the Venice Biennale (2022), the Cuenca Biennial (2016), the Guangzhou Triennial (2012), the Sharjah Biennial (2007), the Venice Biennale (2007) and the Biennale of Sydney (1998). He was awarded the Joan Miró Prize in 2015.

Selected Solo Exhibitions: Meadows Museum, Dallas, Texas (2022); Blueproject Foundation, Barcelona (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2018); Museo de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (2017); Joan Miró Foundation, Barcelona (2016); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2015); Pinacoteca do Estado, São Paulo (2010); Joan Miró Foundation, Barcelona (2008); ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe (2006); Serralves Museum, Porto (2006); MACBA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona, Barcelona (2005).

Selected Collections: Artium Centro Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo, Vitoria-Gasteiz; Centre d'Art La Panera, Lleida; CAAC Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla; Colección Banco de España, Madrid; Ellipse Foundation-Contemporary Art Collection, Cascais; Fundació Vila Casas, Barcelona; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museo Patio Herreriano de Arte Contemporáneo, Valladolid; MACBA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona, Barcelona; Museu de Granollers, Barcelona.

BEA ESPEJO is an independent curator and art critic.

Graduated in History of Art at Barcelona University with a Master in Art Critic and Communication at Gerona University, she is the director of Madrid45 in the Community of Madrid and director of arts in the Babelia supplement of El País. She has worked in the management and curatorship of exhibitions and has been a team member of the gallery Estrany-de la Mota (Barcelona) and Urroz Proyectos (Madrid). Her last major project has been Correction, with Ignasi Aballí, for the Spanish Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale.