

KÖNIG GALERIE

JOSE DÁVILA MEN CATCHING BIRDS

KÖNIG SEOUL | 1 JULY – 5 AUGUST 2023

KÖNIG SEOUL is pleased to present MEN CATCHING BIRDS, a new exhibition by Jose Dávila featuring two sculptural pieces and ten two-dimensional works. The latter draw from two different bodies of work that the artist has been working on for several years now – his cut-outs series and the series of paintings THE FACT OF CONSTANTLY RETURNING TO THE SAME POINT OR SITUATION – and each connects in their own way to the wide and unique range of influences that inform the artist's practice. These wall-hanging works synergize with the two sculptural installations, both untitled, which together build a complex and tensile investigation of space.

Dávila's approach to the medium of sculpture is truly singular among his contemporaries, drawing inspiration equally from the history of land and minimal art and the transnational genealogies of abstraction. In UNTITLED, 2023, made of concrete and volcanic rock and fabricated in Korea especially for this exhibition, Dávila puts otherwise disparate elements – manmade stone and natural deposit – into a relationship of fragile dependency with one another. This reveals the artist's conceptual reversals of the tradition of sculpture, historically understood as a process of forming out of an otherwise undifferentiated mass. Instead, for Dávila, these same coordinates are marshalled into the bringing together of elements rather than the process of their being molded, taking readymade things – objets trouvés and things made by acts of the natural world – that have already made their shapes and putting them into a kind of performative, associative nexus with one another. In UNTITLED, 2023, this is especially true, as two glass planes are propped vertically and held in tension with straps on either side of a rock that sits on the ground, allowing for the transparent glass to function as both a structural and visual element in the work's overall form. In essence, for Dávila, sculpture is that which holds divergent elements together, an external fabric, precarious and yet undeniably forceful.

The wall-bound works make use of entirely different properties – weight and gravity are figured pictorially rather than physically – though they complement the sculptural ideas found elsewhere. There are seven silkscreen and vinyl paint on linen paintings from THE FACT OF CONSTANTLY RETURNING TO THE SAME POINT OR SITUATION series, in which the artist demonstrates his enduring fascination with the properties of the circle. Is this geometric shape an ideal one, in that there is no way for a human hand to recreate its form perfectly? Drawing on art historical examples from Hilma af Klimt to Sonia Delaunay to Frank Stella, Dávila puts his own mark on the isolation of contingent graphical elements, which, much like his sculptural output, puts otherwise diverse things into dependent relationships with each other. In these works for Seoul, there are also chevrons woven amidst the circular fragments, creating a tapestry of symbolic devices. The circle, its history, and the attempts to render it pictorially, become almost like a found material on par with the volcanic rock that is juxtaposed with them in the exhibition space – here, not a ruin of the past, but an expression of time, accumulated through endless gestures of repetition.

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EXHIBITIONS

AYAKO ROKKAKU
Cute. Weird. Free.
KÖNIG GALERIE
28.07 – 03.09.2023

ALEXANDER WERTHEIM
Sunsets
KÖNIG GALERIE
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Tue – Sat 11 AM – 7 PM

With three cutout works, executed in archival pigment, Dávila appropriates directly from the history of Western painting, specifically 19th-century French, pulling source material from established monuments of modernism and isolating individual fragments by physically excising them from their original context and reinserting them elsewhere. Once enlarged and concentrated, these gestures of formative painting – water lilies, field workers, slivers of a sky – become something entirely other, estranged, but also reinvigorated, granted new life as found elements. This back and forth of absence and presence in the cutouts provides visual evidence of the artist's desire to remix the given, animating and instantiating new forces out of material that already exists. In this sense, the cutouts give similar voice to Dávila's methodology as bricoleur, taking found material and rearranging it in such a way that its meaning and resonance are forever altered.

Dávila's arrival in Seoul is an auspicious one, and MEN CATCHING BIRDS offers an exemplary presentation of the diversity and depth of the artist's practice for a new audience. The exhibition also highlights Dávila's acumen when it comes to choreographing a show as an organic totality, ever cognizant of the fact that it is only when viewed that that each work, and their belonging together, will finally come into focus.

Jose Dávila (b. 1974 in Guadalajara, Mexico) studied architecture in the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Occidente in Guadalajara, Mexico, however, he considers himself a self-taught artist, with an intuitive formation.

Jose Dávila's work is a constant search for moments of shared reciprocity between contradictory elements. By means of a structural intuition Dávila produces constructive situations in which tension and stillness, geometric order and random chaos, fragility and resistance, are fluctuating commonplaces for materials in continuous transformation. Based on the specificity of the materials that he uses, Dávila highlights their inherent contradictions, pushing the boundaries of perception in order to challenge the relation between form and content. The spectator is compelled to reexamine the ways in which we understand and consume the visual culture that surrounds us.

The sculptural work created by Dávila aims to materialize physical phenomena such as gravity, resistance, and the exchange of forces. These complex relations and their effects are reflected in the behavior of the sculptures and how they achieve to maintain their form thanks to a successful reciprocity. The materials used by the artist are engaged in an act of balance. This is replicated in a symbolic dimension since Dávila is constantly dissecting the historic evolution of sculpture through these situations that approach the possibility of collapse.

Dávila's work has been exhibited internationally in institutions such as the Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China; Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City, Mexico; Franz Josefs Kai 3, Vienna, Austria; Sammlung Philara, Dusseldorf, Germany; SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, USA; Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, The Netherlands; Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Mexico; among others. His work is included in various international public and private collections such as Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Pérez Art Museum Miami, USA; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Inhotim Collection, Brumadinho, Brazil; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.

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