

# Galería Ehrhardt Flórez

Secundino Hernández  
From September 14th to October 28th 2023

In 1913, *The American Art News* offered a ten-dollar reward to the first reader who could “find the naked lady” in Marcel Duchamp’s celebrated work *Nu descendant un escalier, n° 2*, which features a figure descending steps decomposed under what some critics called an “explosion in a tile factory.” In the exhibition that Secundino Hernández now presents at Galería Ehrhardt Flórez, the figures that occupy the surface of his new works are also hidden under a kinetic, abstract and “explosive” register.

This exhibition, which brings together a group of eight large silkscreen prints on cardboard and five small canvases, combines two main issues recurrent in Hernández’s work: his research into pictorial techniques and the representation of the human figure.

With unique compositions of different monochrome colours, the silkscreen prints represent sketches of figures lying down, reclining or seated. Giving new impetus to the representation of the human figure, Hernández explores the medium of silkscreen printing from a pictorial approach. Questioning the nature of this mechanical reproduction technique, he investigates its plastic possibilities of colour, form, light, depth and line.

The paintings on canvas, meanwhile, feature similar figures and poses, but using materials and procedures such as dyes, scratches, cut-outs and stitching.

The Barbizon School and the early French Impressionists had seen in the simple gestures of Japanese prints, especially those belonging to the Ukiyo-e genre, a pictorial method and a means of representation that would revolutionise the development of Western painting in the late 19th century. If the idea of painting ceased to be subject to plutocratic compulsion, it would display a variety of registers and subjects such as had never been imagined before. Influenced by what came to be known as *Japonisme*, some of these new pictorial techniques, linked to printmaking, gave impetus to new themes in modern painting.

In a way, Hernández now recovers the simplicity of the lines of the Japanese floating world. The immediacy and forcefulness of this graphic expression, the body language expressed in the figures, the intimacy of the scenes, and the strangeness of the poses depicted unveil a new pictorial atmosphere that concentrates the symbolic and the expressive.

Some of these new works are painted with connected and fluid strokes, while others employ intermittent patches and lines. At times the lines run smoothly, while at others they are marked with coarseness and repetition. The artist’s practice, in relation to these new themes he explores with his painting, is “discontinuous”: something slips and is interrupted.

It is said that that musician Sonny Rollins often uses rhythm as a foundational element, performing his whirlwind of broken and fractured improvisation in intervals over rhythmic rather than melodic patterns. Hernández transfers this to painting, with each figure, posture and colour, adjusted in this exhibition to narrow vertical formats, forming a thematic and compositional unity. Each moment in the course of the pictorial action, each section of a line drawing a body, is recorded in a few schematic strokes.

What is seen and not seen has been an essential aspect of Secundino Hernández’s painting over recent years, painting by accumulation and by absence. In both cases, the invisible has an undeniable presence.

Where previously constructed from what was removed, the paintings were “washed” or “emptied.” If the paintings were “cluttered”, what was left out of sight equally made up a fundamental part of the painting.

Now, whether visible or invisible, the process, with new techniques and subject matter, emerges as a pictorial trace or memory. The contorted figures, whether stitched, painted, screen-printed or printed on immense fields of colour, float as a resonance and echo of a trace that is at the origin and foundation of each piece.