

Lisa Alvarado
Spiral Yellow
The Modern Institute, Osborne Street
26th April – 25th May 2024
Preview: Thursday 25th April 2024, 5.30-7.30pm

Lisa Alvarado brings into alignment a set of free-hanging paintings, sand pieces and sound for *Spiral Yellow*. Collectively, the works reflect on time and its textural impressions on nature and material. The various circular forms – associated with tree rings – threaded through the presentation point to the relationship between the past and present, time's cyclic nature, and the repetition of natural events and human catastrophe. These formations relate to dendrochronology, the study of dating climate events through the analysis of the annual growth rings of trees. Trees carry the past with them into the present.

In producing these works, Alvarado has also been considering the use of metaphor to describe and articulate our relationship to time, as well as the existence of different conceptions of this metaphorical, and often spatial, relationship. A compelling parallel can be made between philosopher Walter Benjamin's *Angel of History* (caught in a storm with his face towards the past and continually blown into a future he cannot see) and the linguistic structures of the Aymara of the Bolivian Andes. The Aymara conceive of the past as in front of them, with older events positioned further away, and the future behind. This is the opposite of most European languages in which we understand the future as before us and extending out.

A new element introduced in *Spiral Yellow* is the use of found fabric collaged and sewn into the work's surfaces, further integrating textile into the paintings and simultaneously expanding the language of the hanging works with a set of assemblage qualities. Alvarado's use of sewing has opened up possibilities in this regard, allowing her to incorporate vintage fabric found on her tour travels and in thrift shops. This new approach is connected to the Chicano theorist Tomás Ybarra-Frausto's writing on *Raschuche*, a Mexican American make-shift assemblage aesthetic. As he writes in his essay *Rasquachismo: a Chicano sensibility*, 1989:

Resilience and resourcefulness spring from making do with what's at hand (hacer rendir las cosas). This utilization of available resources makes for hybridization, juxtaposition and integration. Rasquachismo is a sensibility attuned to mixtures and confluence. Communion is preferred over purity.

This attitude and resourcefulness come out of necessity but also have a compelling relationship to time and value. Objects of little or no value, or things which are often defunct find a new use. A new future is brought into being from the *wreckage* of the past, as Benjamin terms it – one that makes ancestral connections and incorporates historical perspectives.

As foregrounded by the exhibition title, many of the works have yellow fabric backings and the colour permeates the compositions of several pieces too. For Alvarado, it serves as both a cautionary colour but also a representation of energy, revitalisation and change. These latter qualities speak to the artist's conception of painting as a guiding of liquid material into a solid state. It can be understood as a recording device – like the growth rings of trees, a witness to time, change and human fragility.

Lisa Alvarado (b. 1982) is an artist and musician based in Chicago. Her practice incorporates painting, music and textiles. Her paintings are often accompanied by sound and have consistently formed part of mobile sets for performances by *Natural Information Society* since 2010, a minimalist musical ensemble for whom Alvarado plays harmonium. Selected solo exhibitions include: 'MATRIX 192 / Spinning Echo', Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford (2023); 'Pulse Meridian Foliation', REDCAT, Los Angeles (2023); 'Scab Diagram', The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane Bricks Space (2021); Thalweg, Bridget Donahue, New York (2020); Polyphonic Shadow Cloth, LC Queisser, Tbilisi (2018); Sound Talisman, Bridget Donahue, New York (2017); Traditional Object, Soccer Club Club, Chicago, Illinois (2013); Limpia, Soccer Club Club, Chicago, Illinois (2012). Selected group exhibitions include: 'ton not. not ton', Kunsthalle Münster, Münster (2023); 'Whitney Biennial 2022: Quiet as It's Kept' (2022); unFlagging, Ballroom Marfa, Marfa (2020); It Remains an Open Horizon, LC Queisser, Tbilisi (2020); Psychedelic Healing Center, Essex Flowers, New York (2019); Out of Easy Reach, Gallery 400, Chicago (2018); Alan Shields Project, Van Doren Waxter, New York (2018); The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2017) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2016); Material Issue, KMAC Museum, Louisville (2016); among others.

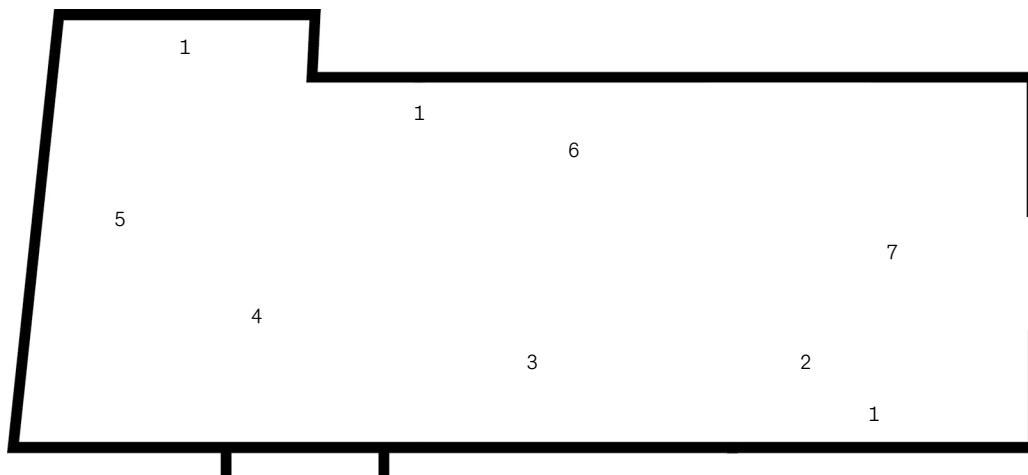
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| <p>1 <i>Yellow Spiral (Sand)</i>, 2024
Sand
Overall: 0.2 x 30 x 1535 cm
1/8 x 11 3/4 x 604 3/8 in</p> | <p>2 <i>Spiral Yellow 5</i>, 2024
Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood
218.4 x 180.3 x 2.5 cm
86 x 71 x 1 in</p> | <p>3 <i>Spiral Yellow 2</i>, 2024
Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood
198.1 x 172.7 x 2.5 cm
78 x 68 x 1 in</p> |
| <p>4 <i>Spiral Yellow 4</i>, 2024
Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood
247.7 x 193 x 2.5 cm
97 1/2 x 76 x 1 in</p> | <p>5 <i>Spiral Yellow 6</i>, 2024
Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood
198.1 x 172.7 x 2.5 cm
78 x 68 x 1 in</p> | |
| <p>7 <i>Spiral Yellow 3</i>, 2024
Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood
218.4 x 180.3 x 2.5 cm
86 x 71 x 1 in</p> | <p>8 <i>Spiral Yellow 1</i>, 2024
Acrylic, canvas, fabric, wood
245.1 x 203.2 x 2.5 cm
96 1/2 x 80 x 1 in</p> | |