

Galería Ehrhardt Flórez

FERNANDO GARCÍA

New Haven Paintings

From November 16th 2024 to January 11th 2025

Throughout his life, Fernando García has moved from Madrid to Los Endrinales, from Mexico to Barcelona, from Berlin to Jyväskylä, from Montreal to Puerto de Santa María, or from Premià de Dalt to Jerez de la Frontera. In his travels and relocations, and in his chronology, it is almost impossible to account for all aspects of his work, which includes numerous different series and countless individual pieces. Nevertheless, the chronology provides a structure for tracing the emergence of particular themes, techniques, media, modes of production and genres that have been constantly recycled, revised and reabsorbed as they have driven new work.

Fernando García's recent work, a part of which is now brought together in his fourth solo exhibition at the gallery under the title *New Haven Paintings*, refers not so much to personal experiences or the daily routines of his life as to other issues that have pushed his practice away from folklore or the indigenous and closer to a universal ideal in which the syncretism of methods and forms plays a foundational role. This collection of works on paper expresses a new reality. 'An art that transforms life and the world,' said Max Bill. It is hard to believe, in relation to Fernando García's other very characteristic bodies of work, where scale and process were decisive, that his will of knowledge and human spirit is made so explicit in these works of a much smaller size. Far removed from the canons of time and routine that his previous works had pursued, García now assumes certain principles of modernity with works of static and vibrant dynamism traversed by enigma, system and repetition.

As he has done on several occasions, he approaches milestones (literary, stylistic, conceptual and formal) of universal history in order to articulate a grammar based on their theoretical foundations, which are channelled into a great variety of disciplines, finishes, manufactures and styles. He has approached portraiture, landscape, ready-made, humour and phantasmagoria. His work bears the imprint of deceased artists with whom he has established strange collaborations in the form of tributes, while at the same time he has integrated others who are still alive, making them participants in his own works. From accumulation, collection and reductionism, he has carried out projects and exhibitions that either combine all these aspects in one or focus on a minimal field of action.

Closely related to the manual, his work is not confined solely to the visual. García's language, his practice, often deliberately hidden, shielded from outside gazes, and compiled in artist's books and sketchbooks, is framed as a way of redefining the role of the artist in relation to socio-political and socio-economic systems. Far from being autobiographical, his work is self-reflexive in the sense that it attempts to establish connections beyond the subjective, between his own practice, chronology and the world.

In order to situate his work in the different contexts in which it has developed, it is worth noting that some episodes of his work are much more conceptual than those of a more recent and nowadays more recognisable production. In his early production, using tools that could be considered traditional in the field of the visual arts, such as painting, the theme was inscribed in theoretical readings typical of conceptual currents. His 'Mexican works', 'text paintings', 'white paintings' (in collaboration with Ignasi Aballí) or his 'expensive paintings', to cite just a few examples, allowed pictorial and chromatic meanings to run parallel to reflections on the logic of the market and capital, or on the idea of authorship and originality.

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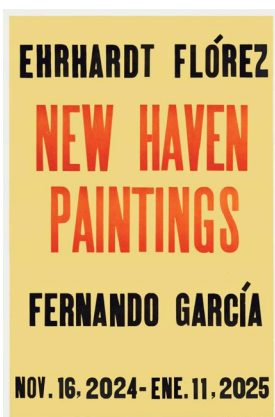
Meanwhile, and on the occasion of this exhibition, and accompanying the series of gouaches on paper, a new volume of his artist's notebooks is also being presented. It is impossible to consider García's work outside of his publications and self-published books. Almost every one of his most notable projects is accompanied by a publication, a poster or an advertising card of his own design. These materials are not complementary, but form a core of his practice. Like the hundreds of drawings, plans, sketches and texts on multiple possible exhibitions or works, the breadth of these notes, concentrated in different volumes that bring together ideas and projects over several years, offer a huge critical mass to his work. For Fernando García, often 'more is more', and not simply in the sense of size, the number of works or their volume: it is impossible to ignore this aspect throughout his career, although in this exhibition he shies away from it. The scope of his production, and the rereading and redefinition of distribution systems, are indicative of his interest in constructing and modelling a complete practice. Thus, the analysis of his work and his almost twenty-five-year career represents a challenge to classical systems of production, insofar as he insists that nothing be considered secondary or supplementary. Roberto Ohrt noted of Kippenberger that 'apart from Beuys, he was one of the few artists who determined all aspects, however unimportant, of the art system with equal (and sometimes, as in the case of the posters, even stylistically similar) detail.' García has tried not to miss the opportunity to extend his vision to areas generally considered superfluous in the art business, and in doing so, to try to define the process anew from that point.

He thus pays attention to the arrangement of all these details as a particular characteristic of himself as an artist, almost as a duty: that is, he assumes this responsibility at all times and under all conditions, and perceives it as a test of his own capacity for action, understanding it as a place from which to expand his scope of activity. The self-published books therefore constitute an exhaustive study of his work. It is worth mentioning here the origin of the poster for the exhibition *New Haven Paintings*: using as a reference a 1962 design by Ed Ruscha for a group exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum, and just as *The Clash* did when they reused the same design for their famous *London Calling* that had been used for Elvis Presley's debut album, García offers a new tribute with which he puts an end to his series of homages.

When, through his particular vision, García reflects on the role of the artist, he proposes a new way of conceptualising and producing. Using a varied and ample range of media for his production, he uses the act of selecting the work as a way of producing art. And this is precisely one of the essential parts of the current exhibition. Why this exhibition and not another? The answer can be found not so much in the type of work selected (it could be a very different work, also recent; or it could be a specific project not yet produced, but conceived in his notebooks), but in the choice of the precise moment at which each group of works, whether more recent or older, is to be made visible. Owing to this prodigious production that, in most cases, as we mentioned earlier, is not always made visible to the public, the question of which aspect, series or cycle makes up each exhibition becomes an artistic practice in itself.

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While García has had periods in which a certain degree of playfulness has had a very powerful presence in his work, we would not be mistaken to say that, strangely, his works have never been as joyful and immense as on this occasion. They are magnetic in their intimacy, minimal in their size, but liberating and enormous in their conception. And that, in difficult times, is very important. García's works propose a sequence of ascent and descent through different chromatic palettes and intensities. In a way he is both restrained and euphoric. There is a duality in this exhibition that combines two perspectives, one frontal and one floating, one individual and one a real approach to each work as an autonomous unit, and at the same time a rhythm, an echo or a chorus that intertwines all of them. His work in general could be interpreted as a practice full of edges that are difficult to evade but, as some voices commented at the time, after the publication of Bob Dylan's *The Man in Me* (1970), it is about allowing someone to enter the part of yourself that you hide from the world; and those simple steps now feel like an exhalation.



*New Haven Paintings poster, 2024

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