

Sies + Höke Galerie

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Press release

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: The Luminous Grid

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In his work, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa (born 1978 in Guatemala City, Guatemala) investigates history's impact on the body and bodily manifestations as well as its impact on the purely figurative. Largely based on personal memories, his sculptural installations, performances, drawings, and videos are characterized by theater-like scenery and appear as narratives written in the language of form and color.

In his first exhibition at Sies + Höke, *The Luminous Grid*, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa whisks us off into a bizarre setting. Along an illuminated grid that extends through the space, we encounter beings, who look as if they have arisen out of the realm of the subconscious. All sorts of mutant people and crops, peculiarly paired figures and objects as well as lush plants gather under a kind of suspended harvester. Leafy tendrils grow out of figurative legs, and wicker planters statically parry like rocks on the ground under an oppressive UV light-darkness. With its illuminated structure, the entire setting is reminiscent of visions of futuristic biotech, triggering a human sense of unease toward uncontrollable technological advancement.

The sculpture series on display at Sies and Höke was developed last year for the show *Linnæus in Tenebris* at CAPC Bordeaux. The impact of natural scientist Carl von Linné's eighteenth century theories form the historical point of departure for the series. He founded taxonomy—a hierarchical system for botanical classification—and paved the way for racial and gender-based hierarchies. In the days of Western colonization, Linné maintained close contact to Spanish scholars who researched Central American flora and fauna during the Enlightenment. With sculptures of banana bushels, cacao fruits, and vanilla orchids, Ramírez-Figueroa reconstructs plants in the exhibition space that represent Latin America's most powerful and controversial assets today. Like the deformed bodies, they speak to the social and ecological consequences of Latin America's colonial history.

The artist unites these threads with his seemingly naive formal aesthetic. In contrast to their shimmering exterior, the sculptures are raw. They are manufactured with simple styrofoam, transferring their historical references to the here and now and even the future. Like props or recreated relics of the everyday, they emphasize their material artificiality and, at once, question the Enlightenment's global significance.

Ramírez-Figueroa's work functions as an endless narration conveyed through dreamlike fragments and images of his own lived memories. He thus invites an abundance of interpretations and encourages personal extensions of his narrative.

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa (born 1978 in Guatemala City, Guatemala and raised in Canada) currently lives and works in Guatemala City and Berlin. His most recent solo exhibitions include: *Shit Baby and the Crumpled Giraffe*, Kunsthalle Lissabon (2017); *Linnæus in Tenebris*, CAPC, Bordeaux (2017); *Die Vereinigung zweier Flamingos auf einem Blechdach*, Mies van der Rohe-Stipendium, Haus Esters, Kunstmuseen Krefeld (2017); *God's Reptilian Finger*, Gasworks, London (2016). His performances have recently been hosted by LACMA, Los Angeles and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, among others. His work has additionally been shown at the fifty-seventh Venice Biennale (2017), the thirty-second São Paulo Biennale (2016), as well as the tenth Gwangju Biennale (2014). In 2016, he took part in the DAAD-Artist Program in Berlin and developed further performances and video works for international institutions with the support of the performance network Corpus. His works are a part of numerous collections across the globe including those of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the FRAC Grand Large – Hauts-de-France, Dunkerque.

Text: Dorothee Mosters

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