

CARLOS BUNGA

Pintura

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"I felt myself surrounded on all sides by painting, into which I had thus penetrated"

Wassily Kandinsky, *Reminiscences*

Wassily Kandinsky once experienced what would become a pivotal moment in his developing conception of the art of painting when, while on an expedition in rural Russia, he walked into a peasant's house. Everything in the small home was decoratively painted to an extreme, every architectural element, every object, every available surface. Stepping through the door Kandinsky was overcome with a sense that he had stepped not into a room but rather into a painting, an experience he would seek to re-create for viewers of his own paintings for the rest of his life.

This illustrative example of an "expanded field" of painting -- i.e. an extension of the medium beyond its traditional physical supports and confines, with all the concomitant conceptual implications - finds parallels throughout Carlos Bunga's work and career, and is especially apparent in the selection that comprises his current show at the Galería Elba Benítez. Simply yet aptly entitled *Pintura* (Painting), the exhibition displays Bunga's signature method of creating works that straddle the divide between painting, sculpture and architectural intervention, integrating themselves into their built environment while also drawing on the tools of performative practices. But Bunga in fact was educated primarily as a painter, and while characteristically multi-disciplinary, *Pintura* emphasizes above all his ongoing quest to expand the field of painting.

Pintura -- the artist's fourth exhibition at the Galería Elba Benítez -- includes new iterations from ongoing series by Bunga, such as *Intento de Conservación* (Attempt at Conservation) and *Nichos* (Niches). *Intento de Conservación* (2015) is a large work, a five-meter color field that, as is characteristic of Bunga's methodology, reveals the signs and materials of its own making, creating a stunning aesthetic experience that oscillates between objectivity and illusion. *Nichos*, on the other hand, are smaller works, pockets of color embedded into the wall high above the viewer's head. As their title indicates, they are reminiscent of the niches in religious sanctuaries, sacred places within sacred places, toward which the viewer must look upward literally and symbolically -- but here, rather than an image or relic of a saint, what the niche contains is a painterly blend of material, texture and color. In addition, *Pintura* includes free-standing sculptural works as well as a new series of works embedded directly into the floor.

Taken together, the works in *Pintura* (nearly all of which are created *in situ*) draw on a particular set of spatial, perceptual, temporal and phenomenological qualities, the employment of which Bunga has very much mastered. And yet they are also provocatively process-based, raising subversive questions about the role of permanence and

change and about reality and illusion in our understanding of what constitutes art. But ultimately, the 'expanded' nature of the works themselves endows them with such immediacy and such aesthetic presence that the impossibility of resolving the questions they raise only enhances the pleasure of the overall experience.

Bunga (Porto, 1976; lives and works in Barcelona) creates process-oriented works in various formats -- sculptures, paintings, drawings, performances, video, and above all *in situ* installations that refer to and intervene in their immediate architectural surroundings. While often using ordinary, unassuming materials such as packing cardboard and adhesive tape, Bunga's work involves a highly developed degree of aesthetic care and delicacy, as well as a conceptual complexity derived from the inter-relationship between doing and undoing, unmaking and remaking, the micro and the macro, investigation and conclusion. Straddling the divide between sculpture and painting, Bunga's deceptively delicate works are characterized by an intense study of the relationship between color and materiality, while at the same time emphasize the performative aspect of the creative act.

Carlos Bunga -- who was a finalist for the 2015 Artes Mundi 6 Award (Cardiff) -- has had solo shows at the Museo Amparo (Puebla), the Grand Rapids Public Museum (Michigan), the University Museum of Contemporary Art MUAC (Mexico D.F.), the Museu Serralves (Porto), the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles), the Miami Art Museum, the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Vigo MARCO. He has been included in numerous group exhibitions, such as at the Bronx Museum (New York), the Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo CA2M (Madrid), the Marcelino Botín Foundation (Santander), the Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno IVAM (Valencia) and the New Museum (New York). Bunga has been featured in major international art exhibitions such as the 14th Biennale Internazionale di Scultura di Carrara (2010), the 29th São Paulo Biennial (2010) and Manifesta 5 (San Sebastián, 2004). Upcoming exhibitions include at the Museum Haus Konstruktiv (Zurich), the Museo de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Bogotá), the Capella of Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona MACBA and the Chicago Architecture Biennial. His work forms part of numerous public and private collections internationally such as the Museum of Modern Art MoMA (New York), the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona MACBA or de Museu Serralves (Porto).

George Stolz