

galería elba benítez

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carlos bunga

Laboratorio

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Fragments are possessed of a particular power utterly unlike that of the whole. When viewing a fragment, the spectator sees (i.e. perceives) a physical presence while simultaneously imagining (i.e. conceiving) that which is not present. Hence the inimitable experience of viewing the ruins of classical statuary, where the viewer must reconstruct with that most exquisite and powerful of tools -- the imagination -- Apollo's missing head or Venus' missing limbs. Hence also the fragment's particular function in the grammar of conceptual art: a fragment achieves completion within the viewer's mind, which is thus activated and engaged beyond the immediate retinal and sensorial experience. And at the same time, fragments themselves can be richly suggestive on a perceptual level, representing what remains of a lost whole or a promise of future wholeness, a ruin or a seed.

This unique physical/conceptual quality of the fragment serves the generating principle of **Laboratorio** (Laboratory), **Carlos Bunga's** exhibition of new work at the Elba Benitez Gallery. Bunga (Portugal, 1976) creates process-oriented works in various formats -- installations, sculptures, paintings, performances, video, drawings -- that refer to and intervene in their immediate architectural surroundings. While often using ordinary, unassuming materials such as packing cardboard and adhesive tape, the results involve a highly developed degree of aesthetic care and delicacy, as well as a conceptual complexity derived from the inter-relationship between doing and undoing, between unmaking and remaking, between the micro and the macro, between investigation and conclusion.

In *Laboratorio* Bunga synchronizes these ongoing artistic concerns and well-established working methods with an intense and carefully orchestrated study of the fragment; taken together, they allow him to access absence as well as presence (and absence through presence) via a series of visually engaging objects. For instance, in *Fragmentos*, Bunga arranges 24 small painted cardboard sculptures in the gallery's central exhibition space. Each work shares the physical feature of having been severed, creating a visual repetition that in its accumulation gives rise to a multi-voiced symposium on form, texture, space and color. The sculptures are accompanied by a series of drawings related (although often directly) to the sculptures. Each drawing is in fact the sum of two overlaid drawings on translucent paper. The analytic/descriptive result, like a photographic double-exposure, mimics the dual experience of memory and imagination underlying the sculpture.

Laboratorio also includes a site-specific construction, created in situ by the artist and entitled *Columns* that again displays Bunga's capacity to merge his own sculptural interventions with the architectural environment; a series of deceptively delicate works, part painting and part sculpture *Construcción pictórica*, distributed counter-punctually throughout the gallery spaces; and a video entitled *Materia* that presents a slow-paced and fragmentary but nonetheless intense study of the combination of color and materiality characteristic of Bunga's overarching aesthetic.

Carlos Bunga has had solo shows at the MARCO Vigo Museum, Miami Art Museum, now he has a solo show at the Hammer Museum and the Pinacoteca de Sao Paulo Museum and he has participated in Manifesta 5, Carrara Sculpture Biennial, the Lisbon Architecture Triennial and the 29^a Sao Paulo Biennial. *Laboratorio* is his third solo show at the Elba Benítez Gallery.

George Stolz