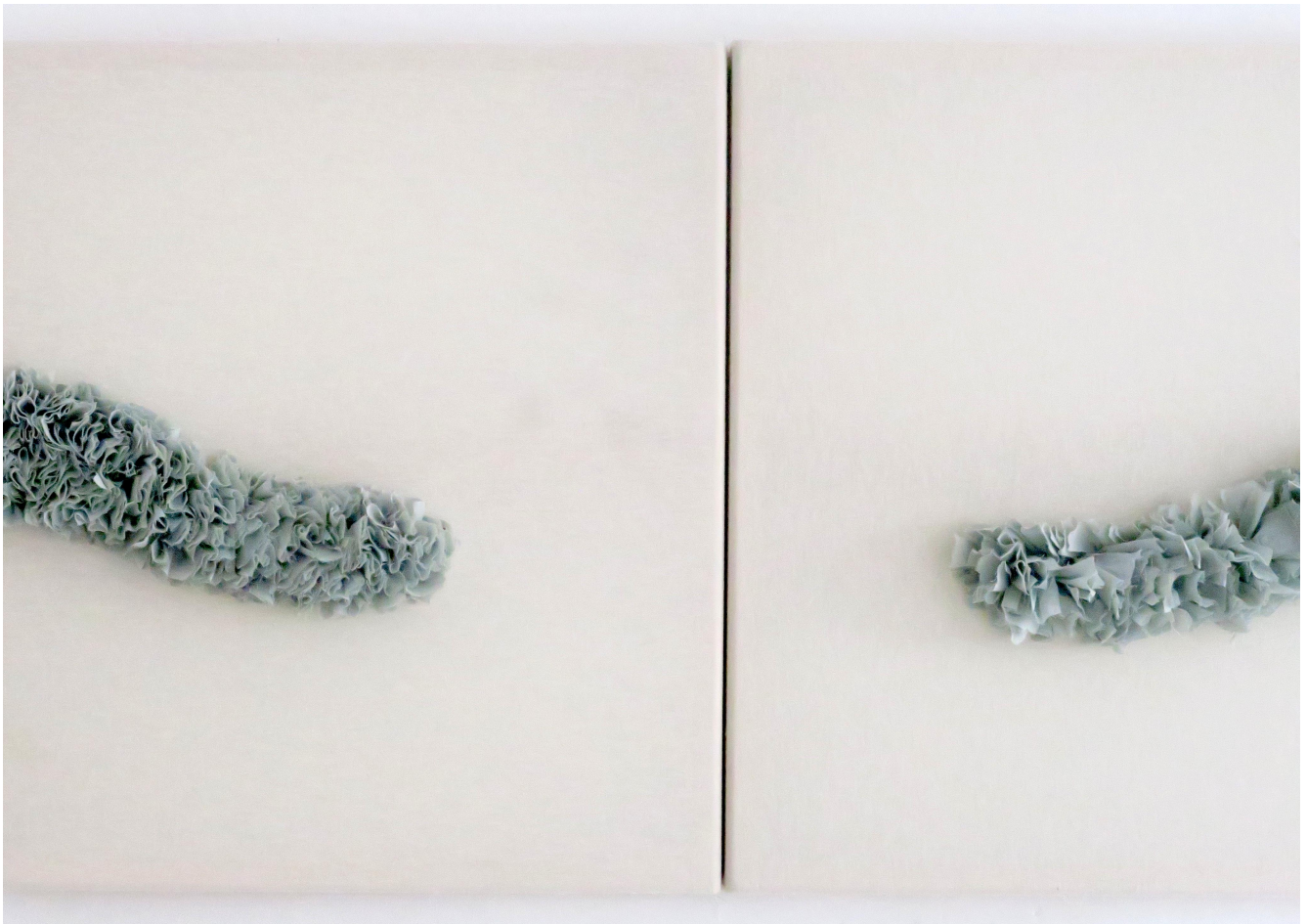


Galería Elba Benítez



Ernesto Neto

o segredo e o encontro

November 2020 – January 2021

“Como el Guadiana” (“like the Guadiana River”) — so goes the well-known Spanish saying that describes someone or something that, like the mysterious Iberian river, regularly disappears from view, only to re-appear elsewhere, its temporary absence from visibility belying what is, in fact, a continued presence. As with many such folk sayings, this one contains a deep and layered wisdom. For things do continue to exist, even when we can no longer see or otherwise sense them. Indeed, the formation of the mental schema necessary to arrive at this understanding in a physical sense — referred to as “object permanence” in psychology — is considered a crucial stage of our cognitive development during infancy: when a toy is hidden beneath a blanket, or when a person leaves a room, we must come to understand that they are still “there,” somewhere where we are not. Which, by an extension that cannot be evaded, means there is a “there” there, somewhere where we are not, a temporal or physical “there” that (as with a river) only briefly coincides with ourselves. Existence exists beyond our own.

Ernesto Neto’s exhibition *o segredo e o encontro* (the secret and the encounter), currently on view at the Galería Elba Benítez, draws conceptually on this sense of “object permanence” while at same time driving to manifest it objects themselves. The exhibition presents a series of theme-and-variation works that, in keeping with Neto’s oeuvre, elude conventional categorization. Part tapestry, part drawing, part modular wall-sculpture, these objects consist of sets of stretched canvases and hand-knotted

cords of colored fabric. The snaking “line” demarcated by the fabric twists and turns across the support structure, at times even wrapping around its edges to the far side where it is no longer visibly accessible to the viewer. Moreover, the cord is often broken into discrete segments that nonetheless seem to connect in the mind, thus transmitting a sense of continuity that (as in film) verges on the kinetic, despite the works’ physical stasis.

The deceptively simple works in *o segredo e o encontro* display Neto’s signature method of utilizing a bare minimum of means to impart a heightened phenomenological experience to the viewer. It is a haptic experience that is transmitted through the tactile immediacy of the knitted fabric and the exquisitely gentle palette of the colors: one need not touch these works to feel touched by them. And yet at the same time (and with an equal minimum of means) they reference a spiritual aspect that informs all of Neto’s practice, symbolizing the mind’s stitching together of the known and the unknown into what we experience as perception and consciousness, a stitching together that extends, for Neto, unto the vaster cosmological mysteries of existence, time and creation. This is all presented with extreme subtlety and understatement in *o segredo e o encontro*. And yet it is still very much “there.”

George Stolz

Ernesto Neto (Rio de Janeiro, 1964) creates sculpture and sculptural environments, often involving non-traditional art materials and techniques such as stretchy semi-translucent fabric, cushions and crochet, aromatic spices and music. Neto’s work speaks to the viewer’s entire body, converting the viewer into an active and autonomous participant in the experience of the art work.

Neto’s recent work has drawn on source material drawn from the indigenous cultures of Brazil, incorporating shamanism, cosmologies and belief systems, collaborative works and perception-altering practices. As in his highly tactile yet highly sculptural works, viewers are at once inside and outside, heightening the perceptual relationship of the body to the space that surrounds it, and, ultimately, back again, unto itself.

Neto has had solo shows at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2019), MALBA - Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (2019), Blueproject Foundation (Barcelona, 2017), MCA - Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2017), TBA21 - Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (Vienna, 2015), Aspen Art Museum (2014), Guggenheim Bilbao (2014), Nasher Sculpture Center (Dallas, 2012), MARCO - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey (2011), Fearnley Museum of Modern Art (Oslo, 2010), MoMA - The Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2010), Hayward Gallery (London, 2010), Park Avenue Armory (New York, 2009), MACRO - Museo di Arte Contemporanea di Roma (2008), Phantéon (Paris, 2006), Malmö Konsthall (2006), MOMAT - The National Museum of Modern Art (Tokyo, 2004), MCA - Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (Sydney, 2003), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, 2002), Kunsthalle Basel (2002), CGAC - Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea (Santiago de Compostela, 2001), ICA - Institute of Contemporary Arts (London, 2000), and elsewhere. He has participated in numerous major biennials and international exhibitions, including the Bienal de São Paulo (2010, 1998) and La Biennale di Venezia, where he represented Brazil in 2001. Currently, the Centro Cultural La Moneda of Santiago de Chile is showing a big retrospective of the artist.

o segredo e o encontro is Ernesto Neto’s fifth solo exhibition at the Galería Elba Benítez since 1996.