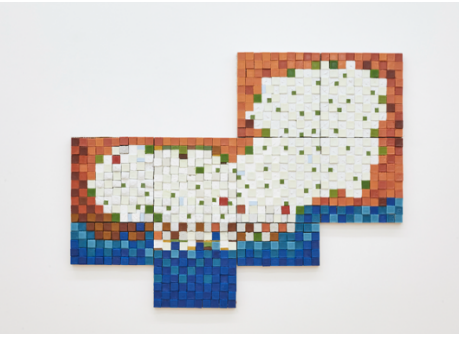


Galería Elba Benítez



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Painting and Geopolitics

Nohemí Pérez, Marwan Rechmaoui, Dierk Schmidt

September – November 2021

Painting Against the Border

If geopolitics entails an attempt to organize the world according to borders, painting might be considered a way of rebuilding it by breaking them. In both cases — in the world and in painting — what is involved are limits that have been imposed but that we violate day after day in order to make way for a space where experience can be liberated.

Faced with the dangers of globalization, geopolitics has reaffirmed the conviction that borders must be secured if the world is to survive. The logic of painting, however, has always been exactly the opposite. And if painting, from Altamira until today, has resuscitated each time its end has been declared, it has been able to do so precisely because it has breached its own limits. The history of painting is one of survival by expansion, the long march of conquering the contours that define it in order to survive the death that has so often been decreed.

To paint the world's conflicts is relatively easy. What is difficult is to incorporate those conflicts into the act of painting — in other words, to incarnate them. To paint a war, or a catastrophe, or an act of resistance — many artists are capable of that. What few artists are capable of is creating war-like paintings, catastrophic paintings, resistant paintings. Paintings that are not content with representing what is happening, but rather how it is happening, even at the risk of jeopardizing their own existence.

Nohemí Pérez, Marwan Rechmaoui and Dierk Schmidt belong to this select group of artists of what is difficult. They are dissidents, not only with regard to global or local or institutional borders, but also with regard to the borders of painting itself. Their works bear within them the world's conflicts while at the same time they make clear the tectonic realignment that takes place in the wake of such devastation. They propose three different ways of approaching the abyss and of taking the measurements of a cliff.

Nohemí Pérez draws us into images from which we begin to realize that something either occurred in the distant past, or is about to occur in the immediate future. Dierk Schmidt undermines our gaze, that same gaze that has been domesticated by centuries of institutional strategies that instruct us how to see and where to look. Pérez leads us to wonder about creatures and situations that are invisible; Schmidt reveals the mystery that lies hidden beneath what is hyper-visible. Marwan Rechmaoui, on the other hand, sometimes leads us into urban maps, other times into puzzles. In circumstances that we know have been ravaged by violence, Rechmaoui takes his revenge by presenting us with works that spur us to create our own cartographies of a devastated realm.

These three artists, working with different landscapes, lay waste to notions of what it means to paint — and also of what it means to see. Call it Catatumbo, or Beirut, or The Museum. Or Colombia, or Lebanon, or The Institution. Call it Art, or call it the World....

These works extend from the origins of painting to the origin of geopolitics. To their respective conquests and colonizations. It is a lengthy history, recovered in fragments. In the shards that remain after the diligent shattering of the walls of the world and of art, using the extra force needed to make difficult headway against the natural flow of events.

Artaud said that it was unnecessary to search for spirits in Van Gogh's paintings because in his work, unlike in that of Gauguin, everything was visible. The work of Nohemí Pérez, Marwan Rechmaoui and Dierk Schmidt is also inhabited by spirits. Even when we ourselves are those very specters, after having secretly entered their paintings in order to change their destinies or fulfill their meanings.

Painting and Geopolitics is an exhibition about the art of transcending the borders of the represented regions, and at the same time, the borders of how they are represented. It is a project that includes us as well, dealing us the cards we need to play in their territory and to draw their maps. To expand our physical and mental limits. And to transform us, for a few moments, into artists capable of shaking off the violence of our own prejudices, and thus exorcize the violence of the world.

Iván de la Nuez
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