



Photo: Jorge Pardo, L'Arlatan Hotel, 2018 | © Adrian Deweerdt

JORGE PARDO

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Art works are real, not philosophical questions.
Jorge Pardo

Ostranerie is the term used by the Russian critic and theorist Viktor Shklovsky to describe the effect that occurs when a work of art succeeds in intentionally inducing a state of estrangement —of strangeness per se, strangeness *qua* strangeness— in the spectator. This sought-after estrangement is often slight, no more than a mere moment's cognitive and perceptual slippage, and yet is all the more powerful for being so. And as the word slippage implies, it entails movement, not on the part of the artwork but rather an involuntary shift in the spectator's psyche via phenomenological experience. Such slippage, however, is a means, not an end; the goal of the prescribed *ostranerie* in fact lies in the subsequent *reverse* movement, in the shift *back* to the now de-estranged senses that have become heightened and revitalized in the process. As Shklovsky wrote in *Art as Technique*: "art exists so that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony."

'Making the stone stony' provides an apt (and quite lovely) way of describing a key component of Jorge Pardo's overall practice, as can be seen in his current exhibition at the Galería Elba Benítez. The show consists of a selection of works in various formats —paintings, drawings, lamps, an installation of ceramic tiles and a series of small artist's books associated with each of the artworks on view— all made specifically for the exhibition. As is generally the case in Pardo's multidisciplinary practice, both

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the individual works and the exhibition as a whole generate perceptual fields from color, texture and the oscillation between the visual and haptic senses. This immersive vividness, individual and collective, can sweep the spectator away, upending expectations thrillingly while also producing a kind of bafflement. Are these objects or events? Nouns or verbs? Cause or effect? Static or kinetic? The answer, of course, is that they are both. More specifically, in the paintings the expected figure-ground dichotomy enters a state of flux, presenting semi-abstract images in which the instability derives from the play between rigid digital processes and the more malleable immediacy of the physical objects. The tiles, with their dance of form and emotionally redolent color, produce an almost cinematic effect in their sequencing, yet without any movement or illusion of movement. And the functional and strategically placed lamps subversively break art's equivalent of theater's 'fourth wall', challenging the ostensible gap between display and use.

Challenge, however, is not Pardo's goal in the work on view at the Galería Elba Benítez; as in Schklovsky's *ostranerie*, it is rather a means to the end of identifying, locating and harnessing the mechanisms through which artworks can destabilize and ' estrange' our very capacity for experience, so as to allow for a revitalization and ultimately a restoration of that same capacity beyond the exhibition context. And given that so much of experience —art and otherwise— now takes place in the Screen Age, when scale, texture, availability, immediacy and even our own expectations have been flattened out, have been made uniform, have lost their feel and heft, making the stone stony once again is no small feat.

George Stolz

Jorge Pardo (Havana, Cuba, 1963; lives and works between Mérida, Mexico and New York City) synthesizes sculpture, painting, design and architecture into a wide-ranging art practice that combines aesthetics, craftsmanship and technology. Pardo often creates public and private environments in which color, texture, pattern, material and scale come together to form an immersive whole that blurs the distinction between fine art and functionality, while his individual exhibitions employ similar stylistic strategies but are driven more by the individuality of the objects on view.

Pardo's solo exhibitions include the SCAD Museum of Art (Savannah, 2023); the Museum of Art & Design, Miami Dade College (2021); the Kunsthalle Bielefeld (2021); the Pinacoteca de Estado São Paulo (2019); the Musée des Augustins (Toulouse, 2014); the Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin, 2010); the Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos (Burgos, 2010); K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (Düsseldorf, 2009); the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2008); and the Museum of Contemporary Art (Miami, 2007) and CaixaForum (Barcelona, 2004). In addition, the artist has created numerous projects for public space as well as permanent installations at the Landcraft Garden Foundation (Mattituck, 2024); the University of Houston (2021); the Hammer Museum Restaurant (Los Angeles, 2019); L'Arlatan (Arles, 2018); the New Collegiate Church St. Trinitats (Leipzig, 2015) and the Alexander Hotel (Indianapolis, 2013).

Jorge Pardo has been the recipient of many awards including the MacArthur Fellowship Award (2010); the Smithsonian American Art Museum Lucelia Artist Award (2001) and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (1995).

In 2007, Pardo created the permanent installation *Gran Vía 67* —a work that synthesizes art, architecture and design within an apartment in central Madrid— for the Galería Elba Benítez. The current exhibition, his first in the gallery space, is the result of a collaboration between Clarissa Bronfman and Galería Elba Benítez.

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