

Jaime Gili Derechos

Sept. 24th - Oct. 24th 2015

Intemperie (Outdoors)

Sometimes I would like to be able to go beyond, to see what's on the other side. But the barricade, far from being a flat barrier, is in fact a complex chamber. Of course it is also a surface, a wall in front of your eyes, an unsurmountable obstacle that cannot even be circumvented. However its surface has a unique characteristic, it can be penetrated. We live inside it. If a group exists, if there is a "we", it is because of the barricade's shape. Outside we would be disaggregated, each one to his own, unable to conform a common identity, but the barricade contains us, and between it and us there is a meaningful exchange. I don't know when this kind of life started. I think I have been here forever, serving and fulfilling my duties. I am satisfied, being able to be here, on the right side. I cannot complain, I am doing alright. Every family has been assigned a section of the barricade, which includes a servant. The family I serve includes a father, a mother, two children and their grandfather. Likewise, the barricade in the public realm fulfils an ornamental duty. It embellishes the surroundings, gives it character. Sometimes when I am back from fetching provisions, loaded with supermarket bags, I am surprised to rediscover how beautiful everything is: the agglomeration of matter, the masses of colour vibrating in the plaza, the anti-establishment aura, as if it was something wild and improvised under the morning sun. The grandfather of the family I serve told me this is called the Stendhal syndrome: to feel that one is capable of dying of so much beauty. And consider -said the father- that this is only a small portion of the world as we knew it before the catastrophe. The old man told me not to forget: our barricade is the last remnants of beauty and civilisation. Sometimes I would like to go through, when I come back from the supermarket. To penetrate the streets where, they say, any sign of the past and any distinctive trait of the old beauty is fiercely prosecuted. I can't deny it, sometimes I would cross the line that separates us from that barbaric world. Some days I would gladly expose myself to the contact of those poor people who cannot enjoy and do not know how to enjoy beauty. Why? You may say. I don't know, maybe to bring them some instruction, to tell them how we live inside the barricade, how we have organised our world to preserve what they destroy with their mere existence, without any effort, with disdain. Nonetheless, I know this is a fantasy I will never realise. Serving duties fully occupy my time and energy, the children and the grandfather require constant attention. On the other hand, the mother and her eternal sessions at the hairdresser are yet another sacrifice that our micro-society is willing to do in the name of beauty. At night we light fires and talk about the artworks disappeared after the cataclysm. We recall comedy lines from those wonderful programmes from the national TV that will never again be retransmitted. And so, months

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and years go by, under the rigour of all climates. Witnessing the changes in the external aspect of our world, we get old, taking care of our small, beautiful and weatherworn territory.

Juan Cárdenas

DERECHOS or the long history of the long format

Aside from the barricades that support them, which have their own story, we must say that the long format of these paintings called "Derechos" is -at least for viewers from Venezuela- a reference to a famous series of works made in lacquer on wood by artist Alejandro Otero between the 1950s and 1970s. Entitled "Colorritmos" these works by Otero mark an important moment in the history of Venezuelan art, when many artists like him came back to the Country from Europe, in his case from France, and helped to solidify Venezuelan modernism, at least in its formal aspect.

With the partial intent of advancing the research started by Otero in these works, in 1998, for a show in London, I installed two long planks with a red triangle painted on them. The planks were directed vertically towards the high ceiling of the exhibition hall, almost touching a series of functional acoustic plaques installed there by artist Carlos Cruz Diez in the eighties. I imagined at first that those yellow and blue plaques, placed in a diplomatic space, were there as a shy reference to the Venezuelan flag, left incomplete but still satisfying the paying diplomats.

The idea of the emptied patriotism of the flag, added to the tension that was already growing in the Venezuela thousands of miles away, gave shape to that piece, which rather than hang or lean, seems to climb towards the pre-existing work by Cruz Diez.

The context marked those planks, but later the same format appeared again in 2002, in a series of works exhibited at the Jerwood Space in London. Some fifteen paintings, 3 meters tall and 25 cm. wide were installed leaning on the walls, perhaps in the casual manner of some sports equipment, as some viewers pointed afterwards looking at its aerodynamic shapes and vivid colours.

Years later, I updated the Otero reference in the series "Exile Fleet". If the earlier planks had a purposefully clumsy quality, the works part of the "Exile fleet" series have a lush material quality in the surface. They make use of elements of my personal history as the works are made in metal and painted with car paints very near where my father started and ended his working life, and this is important to me because he introduced to me since my early childhood the dream that he shared, that of art and industry coming together in a modern world.

The title of the series implies the fact that most of these paintings are made with the city of Caracas in mind but away from it, and will probably end up in the homes of Caraqueños who live away from Caracas. As exiles, the works will travel and change context, in the eternal postponement, waiting for its natural place to accept them. Without wanting to be nostalgic or patriotic they don't avoid talking about the possibility of a future moment such as that of the return of Alejandro Otero to the country in the 1950s. A dream that is still there despite the heavy attacks on democracy.

Almost all of Otero's "Coloritmos" contain a slightly tilted, elongated grid. That is the grid to which Rosalind Krauss refers in her famous essay "The Grid", written in the peak moment of postmodernity and published initially in October Magazine. For her, the modern grid was paradoxically liberating in the beginning of abstraction, it meant a breaking point with the past, but its postmodern repetition does not transcend anymore, and literally becomes a prison into which the artists retreat voluntarily, but from which only the cell can be seen. It can only refer to its original, liberating moment. Personally, I think repetition and grid are elements to be found throughout history, tools as inevitable as memory, which we can only at times free from.

I later tried to work on that idea of blocking reality in a series of paintings shown at the exhibition *Ornament and Barricade* in Miami. I wanted to ask in the show if it is possible to decide on the openness of the barriers, to decide how much of the current affairs can enter the studio, the work, or, on the contrary, how much of the slow, natural process that lives naturally in the studio, prevails in the work. Obviously this refers mostly to my personal process and my own tempo, but I understand the effort to explain or justify the re-humanization of abstraction is one through which practically all abstract painters have had to deal in one moment or another.

These barricades on show in Cali, called "Derechos", literalize again that struggle between current affairs and the studio enclosure. However in the last few weeks the world has seen an increasing number of barricades and the borders seem to multiply instead of disappearing as a result of decades of short sighted policies, this interpretation might well be inevitable and overcome the other more subtle one despite me.

Jaime Gili
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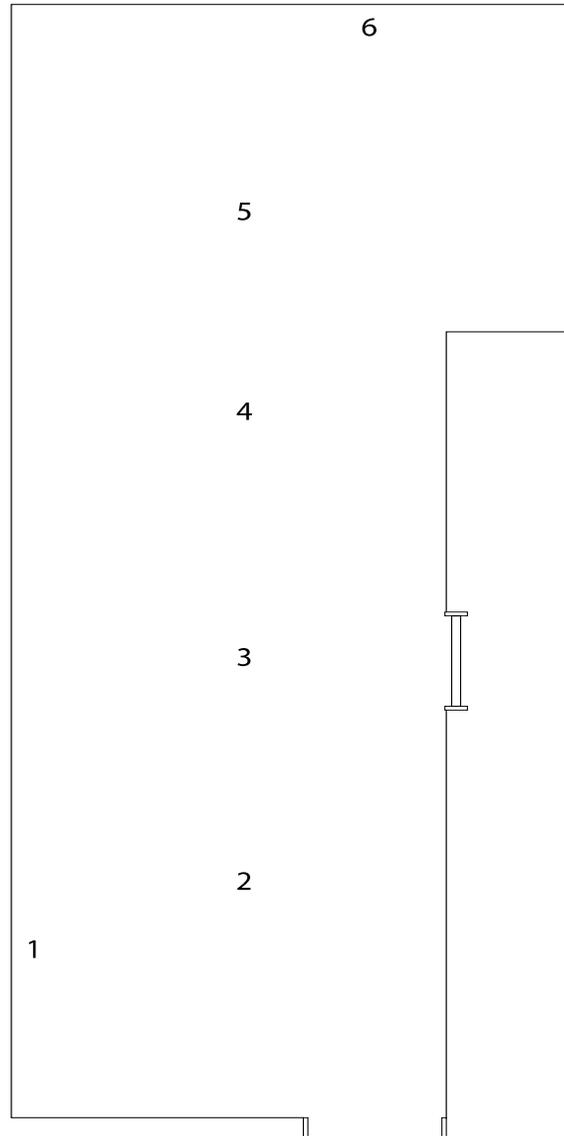
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Jaime Gili is renowned for his practice which is not limited to traditional painting, and occasionally expands even to the public realm. In his paintings, murals and public artworks, Gili seems to have a particular vision of mid C.XX modern art architecture and design, recuing some elements from there which try to overcome the abundance of postmodern interpretations. For that, on occasions he makes use of fiction imagining crosses and developments of ideas with dead ends. As he recently with the work of Armando Reverón, Carlos Scarpa, Gio Ponti or Max Bill. His work, sometimes presents an iconic power reminiscent of the modern abstraction, but stems like it from the studio practice as a laboratory where daily practice where the clash of possibilities of the modern spirit with the present is enacted daily.

Amongst his most recent exhibitions we find: *Selección = Relación*, Espacio Monitor, Caracas 2015; *Dirty Geometry*, Mana Contemporary, Jersey City 2015 and *Mana Contemporary*, Miami 2014; *Arte Emergente en Venezuela*, Sala TAC, Caracas 2014; *Impulse, Reason, Sense, Conflict. Abstract Art from the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection*, CIFO, Miami 2014; *Ornament and Barricade* (solo show), Alejandra von Hartz, Miami 2014; *Connecting Through Collecting: 20 Years of Art from Latin America at the University of Essex*, University of Essex, Colchester 2014; *Guarimba* (solo show), Kubik Gallery, Porto 2014; *Minimal Baroque: Post-Minimalism and Contemporary Art*, Rønnebæksholm, Næstved 2014; *Droits de Succession* (solo show), Oficina #1, Caracas 2014.



1. B39, 2015
2. Primer Derecho, 2015
3. Segundo Derecho, 2015
4. Tercer Derecho, 2015
5. Cuarto Derecho, 2015
6. B38, 2015