

the study of the evolution of forms be an activity specific to its own discipline, were called into question by a shift in linguistic theory which occurred hand in hand with Saussurean semiology, structuralism and hermeneutics, among other models of critical thinking oriented towards Marxist theory and psychoanalysis.

During the middle of the twentieth century formalism began to be challenged due to its apparent distance from social realities. What began as a dilemma in Hegelian philosophy that understood art as a sensitive manifestation of the spirit (concept) in counter-position to form, today is mistakenly understood as a negative or “superficial” position. With the arrival of post-conceptual art in the 1990’s, artistic methodologies multiplied, creating a chorus of heterogeneous voices whose global dissonance is informed by constructivism through minimalism; not unlike analytical conceptual art and many other forms of aesthetic politicization that developed after 1968. In this atmosphere of aesthetic theorization we have forgotten that other theories related to linguistic constructivism and the history of image production derive from formalism; which is why its initial impulse today is subsumed by the degree to which its autonomy is open to cultural production and visuality.

Departing from the problematics here evidenced, this exhibition questions the boundary between formalist and conceptualist movements with the question: what concept, imagery, or affect gives form its content? In this light the exhibition reviews a repertoire of aesthetic proposals to examine the relationship of forms with image, textuality, and social context, with the intention of reformulating the formalist constructivist legacy. It also proposes to consider how the notion of autonomy has been restructured as a result of new conceptual strategies that have disrupted the doctrines of formalist aesthetics in an age in which forms and their affects have as ground or concept the same economic, social, historic and institutional frameworks from which they emerge. ■

FORMASOBREFONDO

Curated by Willy Kautz
22.6.2017 – 2.9.2017

By Willy Kautz

The exhibition *FORMASOBREFONDO* proposes a review of contemporary formalist aesthetics. This group exhibition is grounded in the dissolution of the formalism/conceptualism dichotomy. The title is a play on the schematics of modernist visuality of figure and ground, in this sense it is a tautological text in that it illustrates the exhibition’s conceptual framework when the letters in the title organize themselves into “formas sobre fondo” [forms on a ground]. Through this wording, the exhibition reveals the thinness of distinction between forms and concepts—abstraction and syntax.

As much in philosophical currents as in artistic ones, formalism has been linked to romanticism, the aesthetics of idealism, and the dictum *l’art pour l’art* [art for art’s sake]—coined by Victor Cousin and Edgar Allan Poe—as well as diverse trends in geometric abstraction. At its beginning it was a movement that opposed realism—or the imitation of nature—to re-vindicate a model of aesthetics subject to the bourgeois revolution of the 19th century, and that with time would derive multiple variants of the Kantian maxim that would understand art as a selfless (reflexive) activity, an aim without end.

At the end of the 19th century, formalism established the footing for the advancement of scientific historiographical methodologies linked to the emergence of logical positivism. Situated within the context of the so called Vienna School, this model of theorization supposed the edification of an autonomous disciplinary field, or a historiography, that was not contingent upon politics, religion, or economics but, rather was of its own object or concept: the experience of the formal in artistic objects.¹ Developed by theorists such as Fiedler, Von Marées, Riegl, Hildebrand, and Wölfflin through Gombrich and the American Greenberg, the diverse aspects of formalism united in the staunch defense of the autonomy of art. During the 20th century the historiographical formalist principles, that suggested that

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1 → Pérez Carreño, F., “Formalismo y el desarrollo de la historia del arte”, in *Historia de las ideas estéticas y de las teorías artísticas contemporáneas*, vol. II, La balsa de la Medusa, Visor, Madrid, 1996, p. 256.

UPSTAIRS

- 1

Fred Sandback
Untitled, 1990
Red, yellow and blue acrylic yarn
228.6 x 27.9 x 27.9 cm
- 2

SANGREE
The Uninvited, 2016
Artificial and natural stones on brass
14 x 7 x 1 cm
- 3

SANGREE
Calli, 2016
Artificial and natural stones on brass
14 x 7 x 1 cm
- 4

SANGREE
A Wildfire, 2016
Artificial and natural stones on brass
14 x 7 x 1 cm
- 5

SANGREE
The Watcher, 2017
Artificial and natural stones on brass
14 x 7 x 1 cm
- 6

SANGREE
The Revenant, 2017
Artificial and natural stones on brass
14 x 7 x 1 cm
- 7

Gabriel de la Mora
CI / 1,245 I, 2017
Microscope glass coverslips
104 x 84 x 8 cm
- 8

Gabriel de la Mora
CI / 470 I (67, 66, 69, 68, 65, 66, 69)
P.o., 2016
Microscope glass slides
30 x 210 x 6 cm
- 9

Grabiel de la Mora
Cristales de inevidencia, 2014
Glass stereoscopic slides mounted in a cardboard box
10.9 x 10.9 x 4.4 cm
- 10

Ana Bidart
Tinta sobre papel, 2013
Inkwell, ink, wood, paper and light
Variable dimensions
- 11

Ignacio Uriarte
Dynamic diagonal grid, 2017
Paper installation
Variable dimensions
- 12

Helen Escobedo
Homenaje a octubre, 1978
Lacquered wood
53.5 x 90 x 45 cm
- 13

Sebastián Romo
Cuaderno de apuntes, 2013
Notebook and prisms
Variable dimensions
- 14

Sebastián Romo
Double Trouble, 2015
Oil on linen
29.5 x 21 cm (each)
- 15

Edgar Orlaineta
Socrates's Cup (Wood I), 2017
White cedar and walnut
21 x 42 x 33.5 cm
- 16

Edgar Orlaineta
After Socrates's Hat, 2017
Wood (cedar, walnut, amaranth, white cedar), books, China ink, wax and copper
38.5 x 233.9 x 93.5 cm
- 17

Edgar Orlaineta
Not a Cup (after Lina Bo Bardi), 2017
Steel and electromagnetic paint
64.5 x 79cm
- 18

Edgar Orlaineta
Socrates's Cup (Metal I), 2017
Copper-covered steel, spray paint, wood and electrostatic paint
38.2 x 78 x 8 cm
- 19

Edgar Orlaineta
Socrates's Cup (Metal I), 2017
Copper-covered steel, spray paint, wood and electrostatic paint
38.2 x 78 x 8 cm
- 20

Helen Escobedo
Infonavit, 1978
Collage and ink on paper
50.5 x 58 x 5 cm
- 21

Helen Escobedo
Serie urbe en el desierto, 1978
Collage, watercolor, color pencil and ink on paper
50.5 x 58 x 5.2 cm
- 22

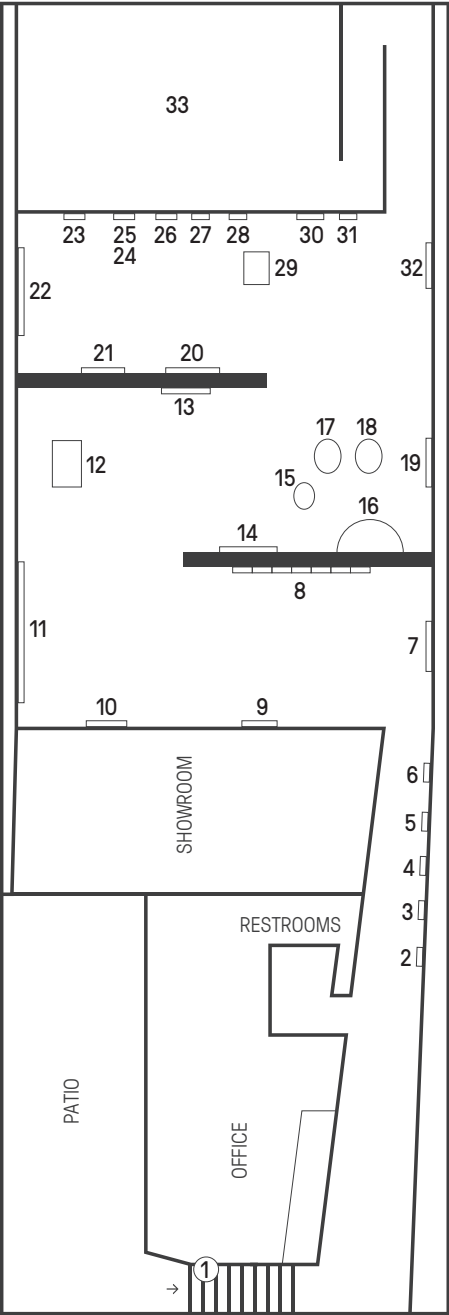
Mauro Piva
Relevo bidimensional, 2015
Polyptych of 9 gouache on paper
31 x 41 cm (each)
- 23

Paulo Monteiro
Distância, 2015
Oil on wood
1 x 1 x 7.5 cm
- 24

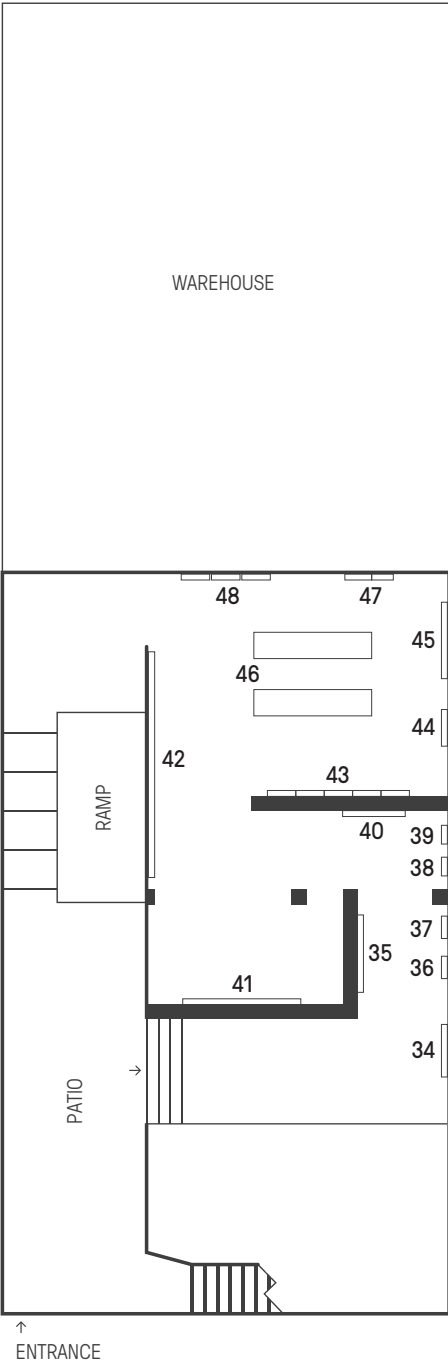
Paulo Monteiro
Untitled, 2012
Oil and linen on cardboard
27 x 35 cm
- 25

Paulo Monteiro
Untitled, 2015
Oil and linen on cardboard
25 x 20 cm

UPSTAIRS



DOWNSTAIRS



- 26

Paulo Monteiro
Untitled, 2015
Felt and steel nails
25 x 23 cm
- 27

Paulo Monteiro
Untitled, 2015
Oil and silver on canvas
12 x 9 cm
- 28

Paulo Monteiro
Untitled, 2013
Masking tape and paper
9 x 7 x 2 cm
- 29

Sergio Camargo
Untitled, 1973
Carrara marble
33 x 14 x 14 cm
- 30

Paulo Monteiro
Untitled, 2013
Oil on wood
2.5 x 1.5 x 15.5 cm
- 31

Paulo Monteiro
Untitled, 2015
Oil on linen
22.5 x 16.5 cm
- 32

Helen Escobedo
Untitled, 1977
Color pencil and graphite on paper
52 x 51 x 3.5 cm
- 33

José Luis Sánchez Rull
Talk to your daughter, 2015-2017
Polyptych of 26 mixed media drawings: ink, Faber Castell India ink, gold and silver tempera, imitation gold leaf, collage, burns
49.5 x 40.5 x 3.5 cm (each)
- 34

Leo Marz
Monolito, 2017
Acrylic on linen
100 x 100 cm
- 35

Leo Marz
Monolito, 2017
Acrylic on linen
100 x 115 cm
- 36

Leo Marz
Monolito, 2017
Acrylic on linen
60 x 48 cm
- 37

Leo Marz
Monolito, 2017
Acrylic on linen
60 x 45 cm
- 38

Leo Marz
Monolito, 2017
Acrylic on linen
60 x 70 cm
- 39

Leo Marz
Monolito, 2017
Acrylic on linen
60 x 70 cm
- 40

Leo Marz
Monolito, 2017
Acrylic on linen
120 x 100 cm
- 41

Ignacio Uriarte
Black and white square monochrome, 2006
PAL video, looped, 24"
Variable dimensions
- 42

Marco Treviño
27% (... de David Alfaro Siqueiros), 2017
Black tyvek on wall
Variable dimensions
- 43

Hanne Darboven
Untitled, 1972
Graphite on paper
66.8 x 122 x 4 cm
- 44

On Kawara
22 SET. 1968, from the series *I GOT UP*, 1968
Postcard
30.8 x 36 x 3.5 cm
- 45

Gabriel de la Mora
10 JUL 2014, 2014
Hand carved obsidian
15 x 95.6 x 4 cm
- 46

Verónica Gerber Bicecci
La significación del silencio, 2016
40 graphite and Chinese ink drawings on rag paper
Variable dimensions
- 47

Ulises Carrión
Poética de números primos, 1979
2 typed sheets
60.4 x 22.9 x 2.5 cm
- 48

Ulises Carrión
De la serie abecedario, 1979
9 typed sheets
88.5 x 72 x 2.5 cm

DOWNSTAIRS