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# ArtNexus



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examination of the role of chance, the ephemeral nature of things and non-authoritarian forms of collaboration, Neuenschwander offers a subjective portrait of her generation—the seventies in Brazil—based on their own memories turned into visual forms. In this manner, a green strip covered the left wall of the first exhibition room. In the corners, a pile of confetti looked similar to the leaves of a flamboyant plant, one of the world's most colorful plants growing in the coastal area of Brazil. The flamboyant allegory covered the floor along the wall. Higher, on the white part of the wall and at eye level, there was a small hole titled *M.F. (Road Trip)* that invited visitors to come closer and peek; to observe the smell of gasoline; trips to the beach during childhood. Then, there were two square paintings—each measuring 65 centimeters—that remembered two poems by Manuel Bandeira and Cecília Meireles, prominent Brazilian modernist poets. Both paintings contained a colorful composition of organic forms reminiscent of the landscapes by Burle Marx and, therefore, to the imaginary of the gardens in Brazil, but also to the literary tradition of the place. “Who will buy me a flower garden?” is the first line in the poem by Meireles quoted by Neuenschwander. It is a verse by the poet from Rio de Janeiro that was taught—and still is—in elementary schools so children could identify animals and plants from the perspective of poetry. Next is a piece that could be regarded as a collection of memories. Across from the wall with the flamboyant leaves Neuenschwander installed a fern, and next to it a series of six small paintings on wooden shelves. Entitled *J.N.M. (Chico Buarque)*, the group consists of reproductions of album covers from records by Chico Buarque, the Brazilian singer and composer whose ideology opposed that of the military regime and greatly influenced society during the years of the dictatorship (1964–1985). In this manner, Neuenschwander encourages viewers to reflect on the role of memory in today's society, where individual and collective identity require multiple and interconnected narrative structures. During the walk through the exhibition

**Rivane Neuenschwander.** *J.N.M. (Chico Buarque (Sinal Fechado; Chico Buarque Volume 3; A Arte Do Encontro; Quando o Carnaval Chegar; Meus Caros Amigos; Construção)*, 2015. Installation: 6 acrylic paintings on wooden panels, 2 wood shelves, fern plant. Variable dimensions. 12 1/4 x 12 1/4 in (31 x 31 cm) each panel; 1 3/8 x 51 1/4 x 3 1/8 in. (4.1 x 131.4 x 7.9 cm) each shelf. (TBG 16346). Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Photo: Brett Moen.



viewers encountered different objects and images that appeared, and pretended, not follow a linear chronology. There was not a before and an after, but a plural invitation in the path of visitors that could begin and end in each of the works again and again, something that is recurrent in the work of Neuenschwander.

Psychoanalysis also played an essential role in the exhibition. Questions like what is the most distant memory or where does the trauma occur in the reconstruction of memory are present in works like *Cobra-Cega / Blind Monsters (Blind-Goat/Blind Monsters)*, where the artist translated, via the blind drawing technique, the drawings created by a child. In parallel, in the work titled *Self-Misunderstanding*, displayed in the exhibition room located on the second-floor, the audience participation was part of the work. Human-size egg shaped forms invited viewers to reflect on distortion while alluding to the tradition of participatory art famously explored by Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Pape in Brazil. But Neuenschwander's egg representation added a cultural component beyond the local tradition: the concept of history, memory and childhood Benjamin. In *The Fever Benjamin* a memory of taking medicine as a child “I saw in my imagination the spoon whose edge was colonized by the prayers of my mother.” In addition to the eggs in *Self-Misunderstanding*, the artist exhibited *RN (The Egg and the Spoon)*, a metal spoon with an egg on it coming out of the wall. Could this be the same spoon that calms or motivates other prayers by other mothers, but this time through the recovery and reinterpretation of the egg in Brazil? Maybe, and if that were the case, Neuenschwander's proposal not only succeeds because of the reference to art history—which she uses often in her work—but also as result of the incorporation of other records that support the exploration of her childhood in Brazil. This exhibition is an insightful account of memory that never surrenders to the stereotypes associated with Brazil, something that has been said about Tropicalismo.

FLORENCIA SAN MARTÍN

## Jorge Tacla Cristin Tierney Gallery

“Beauty is truth” as Keats put it — but truth is often ugly. In an arena where aesthetics and morality actually align, the artwork created provides a diacritical form of resistance.

Jorge Tacla's recent paintings investigate the intersections of communal history and personal memory. Deep hues of charcoal and blue allude to the colors of the official story; newspapers, photographs, and the small televisions of the artist's childhood in a tumultuous Chile.

In Tacla's second show at Cristin Tierney Gallery, he continued with his sublime scenes of destruction. In pursuing ruptured landscapes, he investigates an entropic space that is social as well as physical.

In two large paintings in the front, Tacla depicted a bombed-out armaments factory from post Civil War Spain. Beginning with photos of the devastated remains, he translated the architecture and mechanical parts into a lyric vocabulary. Compositionally, the horizontals, verticals and diagonals set up a dynamic dialogue that's apparent throughout the show.

Done in nearly monochromatic palettes of navy and slate, Tacla added cold wax to the canvases. This slight skin is mixed with pigment and is smeared and scumbled into ragged, flickering rhythms, destabilizing the images.

In the foreground of *Identidad Oculta III*, soldiers survey what appears to be an imposing cannon barrel. Tacla is known for repetitive

mark-making and in this painting he left a couple of strips uncovered by later layers, allowing one to see a pentimento of his process. This is attractive and informative. It attests to Tacla's unique balance between representation and abstraction.

In the other large painting, *Identidad Oculita 112*, the artist exposed even more of his underpainting, revealing the initial sketch. Sinuous and interlocking, the lines suggest an animated shorthand or a pseudo-cuneiform that the artist has cultivated since he showed at Nohra Haime Gallery in the 90s.

In this painting, one peers into a cavernous, partly demolished structure that is open on the far side. Framed by receding walls on the sides and crossbeams above, the floor is an active field of contrasting marks and forms. The interplay between dark and light culminates in a sumptuous passage of pure abstraction.

The shapes represent rubble but remain obscure. The ambiguity is such that they could as easily portray an active throng of productive people — or more appropriately, their ghosts.

Most of the smaller works reflect the carnage of currently war-ravaged regions like Syria. Buildings, blown out and subsiding, their grids askew, speak to a collective failure — and possible mutual future. A few figures appear; a dejected man picks his way through debris; another is beaten.

In *Identidad Oculita 102*, the devastation has a Dickensian gloss. On the right and in the foreground we see ornate pillars and dark entrances. The surface ripples and refracts, creating a watery effect and threatening to disintegrate entirely. In the left background a series of calligraphic marks encapsulates a ravaged apartment. This section is recessed further by a faint white overpainting, suggesting society's disregard.

The transformation of utilized living spaces into a deserted wasteland is obviously disturbing subject matter. The skeletal buildings are gloomy relics. Yet the pairing of geometry and randomness provides an opportunity for formalist rigor that Tacla takes full advantage of with striking results.

Departing from urban ruins, Tacla focused on the leftist Marcia Merino, nicknamed *La Flaca Alejandra*. Following the coup in 1973 she was captured, tortured and sexually degraded, becoming an informant for the secret police. In a triptych, a central visage of Merino is flanked on the left by a rumpled bed. Blue striations dissect the room, simulating

**Jorge Tacla.** *Identidad Oculita 102*, 2015. Oil and cold wax on canvas, 12<sup>63/64</sup> x 15<sup>63/64</sup> in. (33 x 40.6 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York.



a surveillance camera's poor quality. In the right painting, faint bones lie submerged by a shoreline where bodies were dumped.

The crushing relationship between aggression and victimization is an undercurrent in all the works even as the oppressors, like the dispossessed, remain concealed. In probing the viability of our personal volition, Tacla also questions the sources of our collective and individual identities.

Subtle manipulation of the images adds to their impact. For instance, the smallest paintings are the same size as tv screens from Tacla's childhood. The lights were dimmed in the gallery, conjuring the uncanny sensation of being back home watching TV — as a child.

Ultimately, Tacla is simulating feelings. In the exchange between painting and viewer, his work considers the complexity of assigning guilt and addressing redemption. By bearing witness, he offers a way to find aspiration in expiration.

A selection of whimsical, somewhat minimalist pencil drawings provided a counterpoint to the highly worked paintings. Despite the difference, the two formats still shared a diagrammatic sensibility.

It is appropriate that this show paired blasted domiciles with ruined munitions plants. It's a reminder that humans do inhuman things — whether by design or by default. Jorge Tacla's haunting paintings recon-textualize violence, rendering it into a theoretical (and visual) sensation.

JEFFREY CYPHERS WRIGHT

## Yoan Capote JackShainman Gallery

Not only philosophers, theologians and psychoanalysts are fascinated by the relationship between universal concepts and particular traits and actions. "Collective Unconscious," the title of Yoan Capote's second solo New York exhibition—the last one came in 2010— is not only an obvious reference to the psychologist Carl Jung but a restatement of the artist's long-standing claim for the specifics of his work: his process and work are rooted in universal conditions of the human psyche. What exactly this means and where and how it is determined remains open for discussion but it is more-or-less of its time.

Remember that the 2013 Venice Biennale curator Massimiliano Gioni placed Jung's famous "Liber Novus" at the heart of the Central Pavilion as a unifying principle. Best known as "The Red Book" it was the visual product of what Jung called his "mythopoetic imagination," his personal visionary confrontation with the generalities of both his own unconscious and his cultural moment as the First World War began. In many ways this inscribes the quest and motives of the politically oriented Capote in relation to Cuba these past several years, an embodiment of what I called in 2010 his exploration of "the double-consciousness of Cuban island culture" with its impossibility of separating the socio-political from the personal.

Of the 20 works in Shainman's main gallery, the largest physical presence is the 10 foot high portrait of Fidel Castro created from welding used metal door hinges gathered from old regime buildings across Cuba with about eight full size, used, doors on the floor casually surrounding the sculpture ("Immanence," 2015).

English speakers often interpret the word "immanence" in its briefest and secular sense, as qualities held inherently within an object, situation or person, a concept often used to define modernism. We forget a fuller derivation is from its deistic sense, with references to both earthly and metaphysical manifestations attributed to the Godhead. Such has been Fidel's presence and now his behind-the-scenes absence. Here he