

The Shakiest of Things

Rodrigo Hernandez

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kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga

Curated by: Zane Onckule

ZO: For my own sports I am listing the channels of methods and forms you use: starting with your *thing* a piece of paper, caught in various situations – *mise-en-scenes* of one project following the next; then – a certain story, author, an article of historical reference (even though you say you don't focus on the characters and their identities); then a colour – the recurrent presence of yellow, blue, black and other deep hues that you use in quite a colour blocking way; then- perhaps a certain form of geometry with references spanning from ancient Aztec to Greek to cosmology to Russian constructivism...

RH: ...there would be parts of everything that you mentioned in my reaction to this list, but I would also say that there are a bit too many words. I would prefer a shorter answer and unfortunately I don't think I have it. I can say I like getting involved with many things around me and the way I do this is by making my own things, with my own hands. What I've made so far and what I am currently making are at the same time tools for this involvement but I can also see a conversation starting among them, and that me I'm sometimes just watching, articulating or moderating the conversation. I like this idea that I can be constantly getting in and out of that universe, free of myself in a way. That I am completely sunk in, but at the same time that it is but a simple game that I juggle between my hands. The first thing I thought of when reading this was the title of one of my favourite Microscripts: "The words I'd like to utter", but maybe that would be a bad answer.

ZO: No, it wouldn't be. Would you agree then that it is not so much the content as the form and material itself that interests you? You do seem enjoy reading these texts you reference, but it feels like they are not necessarily as related to the idea that you're about to bring to life. Instead, it's more the tactile feeling and the materiality of the paper – thinness or the way the ink, pen or pencil has left its marks on it that appeals to you.

RH: That's quite right, and it's a very important point for me when reflecting on my own practice. Totally important. Let's put it like this: paper is something easy to approach as both substance and body simultaneously, or as either one of them back and forth. It's something that gains and loses meaning all the time so it really has a tendency to stay in an ambiguous position. With paper you can't help but be a reader and a "toucher" at all times, or, -as you prefer to see it- be just one of the two and not the other at a given moment, even in spite of your will or of the circumstances.

- excerpt from conversation with Rodrigo Hernandez on the occasion of the exhibition

The title of the exhibition derives from the Swiss novelist's Robert Walser's work *Microscripts* (*Mikrogramme*, published posthumously in 1956). And while German philosopher Walter Benjamin has pointed out two of the characteristics of Robert Walser's microscripts: "a complete insignificance of content and the denial of style", Latvian Jānis Taurens notes, that (reading Walser), "You feel that something is amiss, it seems, he isn't writing *right*, as one should, and then, at this very moment, you catch yourself in that feeling, and it seduces you."

In preparation for the exhibition and all the while dimensionally approaching the limits of legibility of a condensed (writing) format, Rodrigo Hernandez has collected anonymous drawings-*scribbles* by children published on the Internet. Made into a small collection it became the basis of a new series of work combining materials of earlier use as well as new/unexpected ones aimed at creating new meanings. This seemingly humble archive of anonymous drawings appears liberating as it is used in the exact same way in which the artist might use his own personal theme and material repertoire – free to alter and transform without any particular piety, focus or an artistic *agenda*, directed by a specific message.

Also the installation time in Riga has a touch of experimental treatment of "studio work", that is, central exhibition work is created in-situ in the *kim?* exhibition rooms: a site-specific installation of *papier-*

mâché, that includes the architecture of the space, as well as engages the younger audience – children – in the making of the art work.

Working with paper pulp is time-consuming, which turns an exhibition into an event that unfolds in time; although marginal and elusive to the eyes, however, change occurs throughout – as the material is drying out completely. The process itself, again, is associated with Walser's *Microscripts* through its characteristic deficiencies and its "chaotic dispersal", which, in turn, confirms the artist's interest in themes such as perception, the message, imagination and uncertainty, all in its various forms of representation.

Rodrigo Hernández (Mexico City, 1983) studied visual arts in the la Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado, "La Esmeralda" in Mexico City and he completed his masters at the Akademie der bildenden Künste Karlsruhe, in Karlsruhe, Germany in the class of Silvia Bächli. In 2014 he concluded a postgraduate program in Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, The Netherlands. In 2015 he was fellow of the Laurenz-Haus Stiftung, in Basel, Switzerland. His work has been shown in Kunsthalle Basel; Kurimanzutto, Mexico City; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich; 5th Moscow Bienal, Museo del Chopo, Mexico City; Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht; Elizabeth Foundation of the Arts, New York; NuMU - Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Guatemala; David Roberts Art Foundation, London; Parallel, Oaxaca; FRAC Marseille; Kunsthalle Baden-Baden; Kunsthaus Baselland; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Kunstverein Freiburg and Museo de Arte Moderno Mexico City, amongst others.