

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Antonio Ballester Moreno
'ANOTHER DAY'

1 February – 12 March 2022

Preview: Saturday 29 January, 5–8pm

Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles is pleased to announce Antonio Ballester Moreno's 'ANOTHER DAY', a series of paintings that suggest a continuation of the artist's focus in an earlier presentation at Tanya Leighton, Berlin in 2021, entitled 'DAY'. As writer Rachel Rose Smith describes it, the "meditative calmness" of 'DAY' captures the "events which shape our days, the weights and pulleys through which time takes place". And certainly, the simple compositions of 'ANOTHER DAY' seem to reflect on existence's worldly machines, namely the orbit of the Earth around the Sun. But to rush to a figurative decoding of Ballester Moreno's imagery is to miss that his paintings not only flirt with modern abstraction generally but also the analytical, geometric variety specifically, a movement that prides itself for a zealous refusal of imitating the objective world to arrive at a deeper insight into reality and its apprehension.

From Suprematism's geometric feeling to Minimalism's primary structures, proponents of analytical abstraction champion art that explores its own synthetic world apart from reality, thereby bringing art to a so-called philosophical ground zero that would drain it of all the preoccupations that tie it to the tastes of an elite audience – e.g., figurative style, expressive gesture, or any other markers of the artist's hand. And like in previous works by Ballester Moreno, his geometric forms certainly continue to "feel" invested in pushing painting's philosophical horizon. Ballester Moreno's compositions are without a doubt severely restrained, distinctive for their arresting greens, whites, and yellows. At first glance, his sensibility resists the hallmarks of a possessive investment in self-expression. For instance, the series' repetition of circle and section is as mechanical in execution as its implied subject, the Earth's orbit. And yet, the exhibition's temporal arc creates an oddly amiable innocence that seems wholly inappropriate for the lofty aims of analytical abstraction.

By comparison, 'ANOTHER DAY' is animated by far more playful and outwardly focused interests than the kind that motivated synthetic abstraction's inwardly directed experiments. To put it differently, Ballester Moreno's work celebrates wonder, not analysis. And, in this sense, 'ANOTHER DAY' calls to mind the kind of jubilation that children express when they discover something new about the world, its shapes, patterns, physics, and structures. Therefore, the exhibition's innocent simplicity almost strikes one as a kind of nostalgia for comprehending the cosmos for the first time. And this interest in early discovery has long pervaded the artist's work; for example, his contribution to the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo, entitled 'Long Live the Free Fields' (2018), included a collaborative installation between the artist and local schoolchildren. The installation comprised of hundreds of hand-crafted clay mushrooms arranged in a mandala-like circle in the centre of the gallery and juxtaposed by educational exercises designed by Friedrich Froebel, the pioneer of early childhood education and inventor of what we now call kindergarten [children's garden].

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Froebel championed education as free play over rote memorization, seeing in a supposedly unproductive activity the wellspring of creative invention that gives rise to – and holds the potential to revolutionize – the pillars of knowledge: mathematics and the natural sciences. In other words, for Froebel, creative imagination is not opposed to analytical pursuits but rather is the soil out of which abstract thought and its empirical tools grow, hence the word *garden*. And by skirting the line between analysis and wonder, Ballester Moreno's art can certainly be understood as a call to keep this Froebelian spirit alive into adulthood. For instance, the repetition of circle and section in the series feels like experiments at spatial representation, attempts at mastering concepts of scale and horizon. Like the sense of iteration intimated by the exhibition's title, 'ANOTHER DAY', is a nod to the trial-and-error process of learning itself that relies on one's physical – that is to say non-cognitive – experience of the world.

For Ballester Moreno, Art is indeed about returning to a ground zero, but to say that such a foundation is rooted in geometric feeling or primary structures is to miss how his abstraction outstrips both. The series' outward focus emphasizes a broader fascination with the discovery of abstract systems, which each painting can only capture in part. 'ANOTHER DAY' is thus about ordinary things, things that we all see every day but to the child are sources of fantastic possibilities: the sun, the moon, the horizon, all in endless repetition. His paintings are not so much expressive as they are products of an exuberant process. Additionally, 'ANOTHER DAY' does not shun the objective world but rather turns to its most eternal repetitions as a basis for creative exploration. The manner in which cognition itself is rooted in nature's mechanistic rhythms and our biological relationship to them is thus the garden of thought in which Ballester Moreno undertakes his lifelong learning.

Ballester Moreno (born in 1977 in Madrid) curated part of the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo in 2019. Selected solo exhibitions include ARTIUM – Basque Museum of Contemporary Art, Vitoria; Tanya Leighton, Berlin; Zapoan Art Museum, Jalisco, Mexico; Joeng Song Art Center / RMK International Art, Seoul; MUSAC, León; and La Casa Encendida, Madrid, where his presentation was accompanied by his first comprehensive monograph '¡Vivan los campos libres de España!'

His works are part of numerous renowned public and private collections in Spain and Europe, including CIFO – Colección Ella Fontanals Cisneros, Miami; TBA21 – Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Madrid; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Helga de Alvear Collection, Cáceres;

Banco de España Collection, Madrid; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla, León; Olbricht Collection, Berlin; and CA2M – Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Móstoles. He lives and works in Madrid.

A forthcoming solo exhibition at Fundación Cerezales Antonino y Cinia, León, Spain, titled 'What Can Be Seen From Here', will open in April 2022.

The gallery is open Wednesday to Saturday, 11 am–6pm and by appointment.

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