

Press Release

Martín Soto Climént – The Phantom’s Shadow

Curated by Giorgia von Albertini

9 February – 19 March 2022

Opening Tuesday, 8 February 2022

Martín Soto Climént’s *Phantograms* are developed from his iconic *Tights on Canvas* and the closest the artist has ever come to painting. For his *Tights on Canvas*, a group of works begun in 2004, the artist arranges and stretches tights on canvas to create tableaux that emit palpable dynamism. Because these works are made with tights—a material with bodily connotations—and often entail a set of curved forms, they are simultaneously biomorphic, organic, and sensual.

Soto Climént’s *Phantograms* were inspired by the photogram, a camera-less photographic technique popularized by avant-garde artists in the 1920s: an object is placed directly on photosensitive paper and the arrangement is exposed to light. Where the object blocks the light, its shadow is recorded as a light area on the developed paper, and the uncovered areas register as dark. To make his *Phantograms*, Soto Climént uses tights as stencils and a self-made mixture of charcoal powder and egg tempera or acrylic as paint. He stretches the tights over the canvas, then applies the black pigment over the surface. As in a photogram, the canvas records a white, phantasmagoric shadow wherever the tights covered it (hence the title of the series), with the rest of the pictorial plane turning black. The white marks are at times clearly attributable to the patterning of the tights, but in other instances they are more abstract, or reminiscent of rivulets trickling down the canvas, such as in the *Llamas de lluvia* (Rain Flames, 2020) series. The *Phantograms* range from an intimate scale of one canvas to large formats involving up to forty different canvases that Soto Climént individually stencils, then combines in a meticulous grid whose constituent parts complement and strengthen one another, such as in *La noche del fuego en la lluvia* (The Night of Fire in the Rain, 2020).

Departing from the high-contrast *Phantograms*, Soto Climént began a series of works in which he softened the blacks by transferring the paint from one canvas to the other, or reversing the canvas to then continue to work on the B-side. Using graphite, the artist subsequently drew morphing organic shapes onto the previously painted or transferred grids, thus animating the geometric lower stratum with sensual elements. *Fluid Flesh* (2022) is a prime example for this most recent body of works.

Soto Climént came into prominence with his provisional manipulations of found objects and materials that are at once poetic and humorous. The paintings and drawings in this exhibition are firmly rooted in these earlier object-based works, but they are also a major development in the artist’s oeuvre: with these works, for the first time, the object or material is present only as memory.

The exhibition will open in conjunction with a book launch for the artist’s newest monograph edited by Giorgia von Albertini, and the first major assessment of Soto Climént’s rich and intriguingly complex practice. Spanning twenty years of work, it chronicles his exhibition history and provides documentation on his most important groups of works.

Soto Climént currently lives and works in Tepoztlán, Mexico. He studied Industrial Design, Visual Arts, and Photography at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico City. His work has been exhibited internationally, including solo and group exhibitions at Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City; Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; SculptureCenter, New York; MoMA PS1, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Cleveland Museum of Art; Kunsthalle Winterthur; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich; Kunstraum Innsbruck; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris.