

*flintlock*

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Antonio López at ECHO

Organized by Diez, Amsterdam

Text by Daisy Sánchez.

Within the Western imagination, Latin America is envisioned as a rural, impoverished caricature, existing outside the possibility of urbane civilization. Antonio López unsettles these expectations, both countering and extrapolating upon fictitious portrayals that legitimize and feed colonial perspectives. His often feral and barren imagery careens between toying with such ersatz depictions and rebuking the impulse to diminish the maligned Americas to entertain stereotypes of the West's invention. Operating within this logic of propagation, López employs strategies of obstruction and replication to confuse the ease of recognition and siphon action from the tension of inertia.

The switch to a fan preinstalled in the corner of the gallery is covered, locking it in continuous motion throughout the span of the exhibition. López's concealing gesture in *Drone* produces an invisible but not imperceptible sonic effect. The fan at once empties and fills the gallery. As the mechanical motor whirs, the fan extracts air from the space and permeates it with a pervasive droning. The brown noise envelopes the space in a calming hum whose prolonged monotony gives way to an ominousness that disrupts the otherwise openness of the window-lined storefront.

Light pours in. López's sculpture *Hydra (or Downtown)* casts long shadows like miniature skyscrapers of a diminutive city on a hill. The piece is composed of a poor, huddled mass of bottles that double as the inhabitants of such lofty buildings. The bottles' interiors remain hidden beneath goat skin sheaths, painted with shoe polish, that belie the possibility of their contents. Imperfect information obstructs perspective, but does not hinder potential.

A series of painted vignettes dot the walls of the gallery, each refusing to capitulate to the staid torpor of the 'still' life. Ten glass ashtrays, all oriented in the same direction, appear to float in a linear arrangement. These mass produced quotidian objects are nearly indistinguishable from one another, aside from shadows and glints of light that hint at differentiation. López delineates their contours with crude strokes which further muddy the viewer's ability to determine whether the identical ashtrays are

independent objects, or if the composition depicts several representations of a single ashtray. *Ashtray(s)*. Untangling the question of their autonomy is moot—each of these serialized containers already exists as a mirrored image of a mirrored image, the culmination of the continuity of industrial replication. The clustered boxes in *Untitled (blow up Stonehenge)* are assembled as obstacles to interpretation rather than show-and-tell marvels. Despite their apparent monumentality, the true scale and composition of the structures is obscured. The boxes resemble naturally occurring formations, like seaside cliffs viewed from scenic overlook, as if they were a standardized product of biomimicry. Like the ashtray(s), these vessels are sites of speculation that harnesses the potential of the medium to produce fiction between meaning.

For *Untitled (Carved)*, López constructs a diptych sutured together by staples. A sculpted figure, carved from an ambiguous material and crafted without a hallmark of provenance, painted on one cardboard panel, is flanked by a dial that lacks a hand to indicate time, on another. The 'how' of the sculpture is implicit, yet without the 'when' or the 'where', the unplaceable artifact is left in a state of disorientation—a relic lost to history.

A leather glove with a severed fingertip rests atop lumber, sandwiched between logs and an open cardboard box. The 'wooden' elements depicted in *flintlock* follow man-made transformations of the raw material. As with *Untitled (Carved)*, human absence is clear, but their touch is evident. A tree is cut into a log, the log is sawn into lumber, the lumber is eviscerated and pulped into cardboard, which is then folded into boxes or used, as López does, as a surface for painting. The different iterations—log, lumber, and cardboard—are all simulations and derivatives of the tree. Each retains a trace of their source, even as their semblance strays.

In López's painting *Untitled (green, black)*, the stage name of a revolutionary left wing Argentine folk singer, Atahualpa Yupanqui, a Quechua moniker which adopted the name of the last Incan emperor, is aligned along the left hand side of a black canvas in white serif lettering that emerges from a green mist. Antonio reduces the nuance of the singer's life into a formal exercise, creating a dissonance between the significance of the content and the aestheticized lettering that divides the painting's reception by demographic. The particularity of history 'Atahualpa Yupanqui' evokes the significance of the figure, whose name recognition comes instantly to those engaged with Latin American history, yet the stylized text in which it is rendered resembles a club poster or brand logo that appeals to those with a kind of cool sensibility to the new. The meaning is not lost in translation, but rather freed from the constraints of its association. Painting as a cipher with many keys.

1. *Hydra (or Downtown)*, 2023  
Aniline goatskin, glass, plastic, mint liquor,  
dispersion glue 20x30x30
2. *Untitled (green, black)*, 2023  
Oil on canvas. 135x110
3. *Untitled (blow up Stonehenge)*, 2023  
Oil on aluminum Dibond. 100x50
4. *Ashtray(s)*, 2023  
Oil and paper mounted on panel.  
70x50

5. *Drone*, 2023  
Actioned Aeros vent fan
6. *flintlock*, 2023  
Oil and staples on cardboard. 88x60
7. *Untitled (Carved)*, 2023.  
Oil and staples on cardboard  
60x50

