

HANNAH HOFFMAN

Joe Zorrilla

Timbre

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Henri Michaux once said that the mere ambition to write a poem is enough to kill it.

The paradox in this phrase probably implies that the writer is simply a vehicle through which some greater external force may manifest, therefore defining the poetic act as one of surrender. Or else, if the phrase implies that a true poem always knows more about itself than the writer ever intended, then the paradox puts a twist on the repeated act. Or perhaps ambition is understood here in its problematic intentionality, pointing away from desire and closer towards duty, profession or pretension.

In any case, I believe I understand what Michaux meant when I stand before Joe Zorrilla's work. It has always seemed to me to come from somewhere genuinely other than that mere ambition. The life of his works clearly begins with his own act of surrendering.

And while there is an undeniable aesthetic thread running through the work, it is certainly not one that makes it easy to predict what might come next. What we see running through Joe's work is a pattern of exceptions, if such a thing is conceivable. If something happens, when something goes right for him, this is not followed by an urge to hammer that same right many times over.

Joe is concerned with the it of the object, rather than seduced by the they: the singular as opposed to the plural....Allow me to explain: when he is attracted to a sheet of plywood, it is the very specificity of that exact object that he works with, even if the object may remain unaltered and identical to others of its kind. He does not pretend to understand plywood (or wire, or paper, or cones, or spirals) as a category, nor does he present the viewer with a sculpture as some sort of categorical trophy. The objects he chooses, forges, or alters in specific ways, bear the serenity of what has happened once and may not come around again.

His practice could not be any further from the Fordian notion of assembling in a line, or releasing multiple products from one matrix or idea. The pay off is therefore substantial and condensed, rather than fragmented. What is at stake is meaning rather than product or result.

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The pleasure of rhyme, association and dissonance that his different pieces play on each other is a thought-provoking dynamic that draws me in with a smile.

When it comes to Joe's presentations, it feels as if he is choosing to plant each piece rather than install an exhibition. He does this with a lightness of touch, acknowledging that in the care that planting requires, there is also an acceptance of autonomous and chaotic growth.

-Gabriel Kuri, CDMX, February 2025