

If a pessimist were to dismiss travel as pointless – that any journey entails consenting to the company of one’s self – then the sensually charged installations, material assemblages, drawings, photographs, and pictures of Diango Hernández sends the viewer on a journey that presents an inspired opportunity to be both simultaneously outside of one’s self and contained within it.

Diango Hernández’s artistic practice and pictorial constructions stand in direct relation to his biography, upbringing and socialization: born in 1970 in Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, Hernández lived in the Caribbean island nation until 2003. He maintains his Cuban citizenship and still regularly visits the country. From 1988 until 1993 he studied industrial design in Havana. For Cuba, the dissolution of communism in Eastern Europe meant an end to economic subsidies and trading partners, resulting in severe shortages of material and consumer goods. These events lead Diango Hernández to form the collaborative duo “Ordo Amoris Cabinet” in 1994. The duo collected broken everyday items and objects rendered useless, sampling, repurposing and transforming them into new objects and spatial installations. The results were improvised products, pseudo-functional, technical bricolages whose unique aesthetic qualities would prove formative for Hernández’s future artistic development. Since this time, found objects have formed a basis for his works, which are in turn frequently marked by the imaginary world of socialist ideology. Integrated in their individual working environments, the object’s original purposes are lost to the largest possible degree while the half-life of their ideological re-packaging remains intact.

Simultaneously real and ethereal, his work creates permanently ongoing stories and twists the boundary between functional design and fine art, between the social potential and promise of applied art and the free thought inherent in the perceptual experience of autonomous artworks. His works rotate in a spiritual cosmos, one frequently seen in authoritative systems where the sublime spectrum of individuality is persistently denied. Their rotational energy derives from disappointments and fears, but also from the hopes, fantasies, and visions that Diango Hernández – today living in Düsseldorf – associates with his home country Cuba. But possibly this notion of home is really only a fabrication of one’s own individual imagination – not influenced by logical thought, but, instead, something generated by a continuous influx of impressions and perceptions over time – intimate, ubiquitous, fictional, realistic, utopian and mundane – each simultaneously and individually perceptible. Hernández’s new installations for Münster shed light on these ideas.

Impressions of nature, models of play things and political ideology together offer a conceptual combination of familiar impressions and ambivalent, non-linear narratives which render the individual experience of reality both precarious and impossible. This sensually loaded, experimental design is devoid of clarity and encompasses no fixed standpoint. A neutral, non- perspective view is

assumed – similar to how East from one location may in fact be West from another. That a distorted mirror for one may appear normal to another can be seen as the mark of one Eugene von Gundlach: Ostensibly a travel photographer, Gundlach attempted to prove in the 1970s that even flora and fauna were registered and changed by the power of socialist utopias. Eponymous for the exhibition in Münster, the existence of this nomad remains ambiguous within the insecure spheres of meaning in these socialist countries. Is this the imaginary alter ego of the artist Diango Hernández or the opposite – a virtual figure that transgresses into the real world and appropriates itself as the avatar of a real artist? Somehow or other, what this reveals is an ecumenism of the incompatible and an equal juxtaposition of differences. It offers a fascinating invitation to overcome our aesthetic opinions and our orientation-based reasoning for particular moments.

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