

## La tempestad magazine

Oscar Benasini interviewed Allan Villavicencio about the exhibition *Un vacío edificado* (*A built void*) curated by Roselin Rodríguez Espinoza. (Gallery Luis Adelantado, Mexico City, July-September 2016)

From what you presented in Luis Adelantado (LA) gallery there is a commentary on the city, is that specific to Mexico City?

Not entirely. Although the larger part of the observation and the interventions occur in Mexico City, the work we presented in LA is thought of in parallel to the way in which the pictorial space of the piece is delineated in connection to strategies of demarcation and privatization of urban space. I think it's pertinent to speak from the point of an image archive that I've shaped, which is seen in room 4 and contains different visual records of the city and the history of art, where the visual block and the spatial tensions, the pictorial and the urban, are explicitly shown. There, the whole process of shaping the pieces and the exposition itself come together. It is the visual field in which the pieces were thought of and that normally in the white cube would be cancelled out. That cancelled visual field, for the piece, is also the city, where I made some parallel interventions, which highlighted some of the traffic strategies of spatial delimitation from minimal expressions, like to incorporate metaphorically or exchange parking separators with objects that I built, including paintings or pictorial sculptures, hang paintings in a construction, or generate compositions of flexible posts with colorful ropes stretching between them. The records of those actions are incorporated into the aforementioned room as part of the visuals (legend of Lefevbre). Mexico City is a site where this is especially evident: the parking separators are improvised artifacts which visually signal an emptiness which cannot be occupied; they are veiled in their construction and unveiled when they are ready, the city is constantly obstructed for repairs and private constructions. There are hanging visual signs that announce ownership of space all the time. These observations are part of the process of the pieces in LA in addition to some urban strategies of tension and demarcation shown in the interior of the room.

Your expo shows the possibilities or the sculptural potential of painting, what is the process like of moving from one dimension to the other?

In discussions with the curator of the exposition, Roselin Rodríguez, we dove into the difference between thinking of paint as an image and as material, object. The painting as an accumulation of material of pictorial gestures that build and shore up that which we see on the surface of the piece. The result of those conversations, as well as walking and venturing into the city, absorbing the city, led us to think of the painting as also an object, which implies seeing the frame, the fabric, the back-side of the painting, and moving it from a frontal position, which conditions its conventional visibility. If we think of a painting not only as the painting, but also as the accompanying device of the exhibition (the white cube, normally) then to think in other ways of seeing the painting implies removing yourself from that statute in order to be incorporated into a set of objects, an installation, and that was what we did in room 2. Here the piece appears in different positions, never hung on the same wall, never with a blank space for it to be contemplated as solely an image. This exercise is related to the suggestion by Ilya Kabakov to think of the installation as the fourth phase of the painting.

Overall, the exposition suggests the moment prior to the painting or to the act of painting, as if it were made of what has not yet been painted. Is that correct?

I hadn't thought of it that way, but it could be. In this case I thought of it more as an attempt to think of the outside of the frame, all of the visual field in which a painting is inscribed and that relates to how I build it inside. In that sense, I don't believe that there is an outside to a painting, but to see it, to come back and see it again, and again to note it from that estrangement and those elements that are found, in this case in the city, the metaphors are shaped in order to see the pieces and the exhibition space in which they are displayed. The exhibition shows various moments of this observation process, visual cancellation, and construction. In that sense, we can see various parts of the process that are left exposed as if they were treated like a painting in a constant state of construction.