

ARTFORUM

SUMMER 2015

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

MEDIA

\$10.00



VIGO, SPAIN

Gabriel Pericàs

PM8

Gabriel Pericàs was born in Palma de Mallorca in 1988 and, in spite of his youth, is widely regarded as one of the true talents of the Spanish art scene. He was already exhibiting widely even when he was still a student at the University of Barcelona, and his career seems only to have accelerated after his recent move to New York, thanks to a Fulbright grant. Throughout his career, he has manifested a strong interest in the field of design; a good part of his work has evolved around the alternative and often mordant readings of its modern and recent history that support the irrefutably post-Conceptual stance that has become his artistic signature.

Indeed, his work turns on citation and paradox. Early in his career, Pericàs took as points of reference certain works by Marcel Duchamp, Gerhard Richter, Bruce Nauman, and John Baldessari, among others, subverting their meaning by subjecting it to a further degree of irony. He then took up lectures as a medium, one in which he has produced



View of "Gabriel Pericàs," 2014-15. Photo: Mirari Echavarrí.

some of his finest achievements. In the wake of his distinguished mockery, his ruminations on such designers as Michael Thonet and Marcel Breuer merged with his own life stories, and many of these anecdotes flirted uninhibitedly with the banal.

Since the objects Pericàs employs in his performances can hardly be considered autonomous artworks, the concept of "exhibition," the presentation of static objects within a given space, became an issue to be dealt with. This show, "*Elastische Luftsäulen*" (Elastic Air Column), seemed to attest to the artist's determination to tackle this problem head-on. Although time still existed as a narrative thread, a sort of specificity was ultimately introduced in this exhibition, as the works included in it were now given a clear connection with the architecture of the gallery.

The space was populated with decontextualized objects, scattered around to form a complex landscape. Some were parts of electronic devices, while others were pieces of quotidian objects, typically furniture, that had been reworked and transformed. A ramp led the way into the gallery. To make *Untitled (Obstruction)*, 2014, Pericàs placed small magnets under the ramp, then released little balls that once belonged to a computer mouse. The balls ought to have rolled down the ramp but instead were tidily lined up, thanks to the hidden magnets. In this way, the spheres appeared to ignore the basic laws of gravity and inertia. Another ramp, *Ramp Becoming a Stage*, 2012-14, was an exact replica of Nauman's 1966 *Device to Stand In*. But by putting two small

steel legs beneath one side of the ramp, Pericàs has turned it into a horizontal plane and thus eliminated the absurd "functionality" of Nauman's object.

Displacements of meaning are always at stake in this artist's work. In *Efficiency & Abyss*, 2014, a set of small, slightly rotated photographs of stacks of chairs evokes the depth of a tunnel. As the title suggests, a sense of precision and dry functionality leads to a speculative void by way of an illusion. These two ideas—functionality and illusion—turn out to be the key subjects of Pericàs's recent work, as also becomes clear in *The invisible chair (Prototype #4)*, 2014, a work that evokes the trick in which a magician appears to sit floating in the air. Pericàs spoils the fancy (and all speculation) by rendering visible the apparatus that was supposed remain hidden.

—Javier Hontoria

DUBAI

Nadia Kaabi-Linke

LAWRIE SHARIBI

There is something unbearable about the lightness of Nadia Kaabi-Linke's work, articulated in the diversity of material and form she employs to suit concept and site. Take *Flying Carpet*, 2011, a suspended cage-like sculpture shaped from the measurements of carpets used by illegal street vendors on the Ponte del Sepolcro in Venice. Or "In confinement my desolate mind and desires," the artist's Discoveries Prize-winning presentation at Art Basel Hong Kong in 2014, courtesy of Kolkata gallery Experimenter: Its central work—standard measurements for prison cells around the world, outlined with metal strips on the booth floor—was titled *Modulor I* after Le Corbusier's universally applicable "range of harmonious measurements to suit the human scale."

Herein lies the cognitive dissonance: between Kaabi-Linke's treatment of weighty concerns with considered—and Minimalist—aesthetic balance. This compositional precision was employed to full effect in "Fahrenheit 311: Seven Legends of Machismo," an exhibition that traced a series of interconnected narratives. *A Short History of Salt and Sun*, 2013, for instance, is a wall print that records the natural erosion that has occurred at a railway stop inaugurated in 1872 in Tunis: Marsa Beach, a seaside resort through which a history of postcolonial Tunisia is mapped via the tourism trade that boomed after independence and has suffered a decline in recent years. The work is a treatment of surface as skin—as a body of historical and experiential evidence. The same is true of another wall impression, *Altarpiece*, 2015, a large triptych whose external shell is covered in gold leaf so that the work becomes a radiant monochrome when shut. On each canvas are displayed rubbings taken from a former World War II war bunker in Berlin. The building was constructed for the Deutsche Reichsbahn using forced labor; it later became a textile warehouse from 1950 to 1957, and is now home to the Sammlung Boros. The specificity of this timeline

Nadia Kaabi-Linke: *A Short History of Salt and Sun*, 2013, silk paper, wax, Chinese ink, and varnish on linen, 90 1/2 x 60 1/2".



makes the composition's statement clear enough: As nature inevitably erodes what is built, so humans gild painful histories.

According to this reasoning, art is a beautiful trap, which the artist capitalizes on for good reason. Consider *Impunities London Originals*, 2012: prints of scars taken from the bodies of women who endured sustained domestic violence, produced using black powder on transparent film. From afar, the works appear as wispy smudges. But as one comes closer, wounds are visible; we realize we have been party to the initial dismissal of such inflictions. Yet though *Impunities* refers most explicitly to the exhibition's packed title—a combination of the temperature at which testosterone melts with the seven deadly sins and the idea that our world is a patriarchal dystopia—women are not the only victims in this global tale. In *Tunisian Americans*, 2012, four hundred small bottles filled with Tunisian soil arranged in four type cases stand for US soldiers who died during the Tunisian Campaign between summer 1942 and winter 1943. In *Grindballs*, 2014, cement, lycopodium, and sand have been deposited in framed bubble wrap squares to produce circles. There is currently a rampant trade in these materials because of the construction booms taking place around the world, at great human and environmental cost.

Thinking about the exhibition title again, one realizes that Kaabi-Linke's observation is both concise (we are marching into the furnace of our own development) and sincere (progress is a collective thrust). Her severity is countered by the lightness with which she jumps from one issue to another so as to convey a broader, more complex world perspective that is so unsettling. Her works coax the gaze toward the sublime horror inscribed into collective existence.

—Stephanie Bailey

At about 8 1/4 by 8 1/2 feet, these are Woo's largest paintings to date. The increased scale seems to have inspired him to introduce flat painted lines that also create a greater sense of depth. While *Can You Hear Us?*, like another of the new paintings, 25, is close in spirit to Woo's works of the past few years, which use little or no drawing to create a claustrophobic atmosphere, three of the other new paintings use flat bold lines to delineate shape or demarcate space. They add another schema to Woo's improvisatory repertoire. Drawing is used to frustrate any sense of completion.

For example, *The Brain Is a Scroll* seems to consist of distinct, layered instances. A spidery web or starburst of lines occupies the background, partially obscured by two white rectangles on which floats an other oval with a few semicircular, toothlike black forms, among other gestural events. None of these quite coalesces into a specific image or establishes a commanding logic; they are more like thoughts passing in the mind, as if hazy memories were being glimpsed at the very moment they slipped away.

Nothing is fixed in these paintings, and that is Woo's point; as he says, "Composition is a search for system, a system of life inherent in every painting." In art as in life, we strive to forge order out of chaos, but usually through choices that could easily have been made differently.

—Sherman Sam



Ian Woo, *Can You Hear Us?*, 2015, acrylic on linen, 98 1/2 x 78 1/4".