

Galeria Estrany-de la Mota

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José Antonio Hernández-Díez. Chiviados

Opening: Friday, December 16th 2016, 19.00 p.m.

Exhibition: 16.12.2016 – 03.03.2017. Tuesday to Friday from 10.30 p.m. to 7.00 a.m. and Saturdays from 10.00 p.m. to 2.30 a.m.

The Galeria Estrany-de la Mota is pleased to present the fourth individual exhibition of José Antonio Hernández-Díez (Caracas, Venezuela, 1964) in the gallery.

The exhibition *Chiviados*¹ is a process of hybridization and appropriation of minimalist aesthetics as well as an ironic response to the readings that Latin American artists made of the hegemonic artistic currents from the North American and European context. A stake on a low-tech postminimalism, based on semantic displacements and with a high emotional load, humanizing it and allowing us to establish a greater complicity with the viewer.

In the mid-1960s, a new tendency, basically sculptural, came into sight in the United States, characterized by a simplicity of form and resources, a cold and industrial aspect and, consequently, an avoidance of any narrative intentions. It is what we now know as Minimalism, a term coined in 1965 by the English philosopher Richard Wollheim² in order to refer to the works of the American painter Ad Reinhardt. This new '-ism' meant, rather simplistically, the 'newness' of that style. It ended up being established and was used to designate the work of a group of artists such as Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Sol Lewitt or Robert Morris.

In the 1970s, the influence of this new artistic style came to Latin America, which was assimilated and combined with its own elements, creating, in this way, ramifications of that aesthetic. As the Cuban critic and curator Gerardo Mosquera points out, they are great masters of copying without feelings of guilt; however, Latin American culture and art have specialized in appropriating and re-framing the Euro-American cultural models, generally, in a radically transforming way³. A crossbreeding of the postcolonial process in which these influences of the 'international' language are mixed with those elements that allow them to reconstruct their own identity.

With this project, José Antonio Hernández-Díez wants to highlight the processes of hybridization and appropriation that respond to the post-colonial situation in Latin America. Recovers the electrical structure of the fluorescent tubes used by the minimalist artist Dan Flavin and replaces the tubes with other industrially manufactured objects: brooms and pliers. He makes an assemblage with serially manufactured objects, depriving them of their original function, and generating other hybrid objects, with a clear Pop aesthetic. The objects are dislocated from their common function, thus reconfigured to suffer a semantic shift as a result of these unexpected juxtapositions. A strategy that he had previously used in other works such as the series *Pensadores* [thinkers] (2000), in which he used the letters of sneakers' brands in order to compose the names of some philosophers. Although it is important to remember what the curator Ivo Mesquita once pointed out: that these are not *objets trouvés*, but rather well-planned constructions⁴. He establishes prosaic games with the objects, decontextualizing them from their domestic sphere, and with a fine irony or refined black humor, enhances the multiplicity of the meanings that these can have.

On the other hand, the artist rescues the human dimension of the culture treasured by the museums, thanks to the way in which the objects that he uses are part of the everyday life imaginary. The spectator is able to recognize them more easily and this relation of similarity, makes them lose the condition of untouchable objects. At the same time, these sculptures surpass the autoreferentiality, and the deformation of the original allowing to resignify the imposed dogmas⁵. With them, the artist refers to it in an anomalous way how in those European and/or American museums in which we can find the original compositions of Flavin, the cleaning staff, in most cases, will be Latin American. A discontinuity in the minimalist discourse, which has stopped responding to the formal maxim of Minimal Art, as proposed by Frank Stella ('What you see is what you see')⁶ to respond to marginal political and social position. In the same way in which the tables and the chairs of the series *Que te rinda el día* [have a productive day] (1996), with a clear reference to the sculptures-furniture of Richard Artschwager, had a mark of a denture: the artist's scar on the object.

This project is closely related to one of the most recent series by the artist, *Pisatario* (2015), but in this case he has chosen an approach with a more vernacular language: it is not a question of criticizing 'internationalization', but of pluralizing it beyond the hegemonic current. The artist is aware of the cultural stereotype originated by the effect of contemporary artistic globalization and generates a confrontation between the referents of the new international trends and the Latin American sociocultural reality.

¹Latin American term, concretely Colombian, that is used to refer to those objects that are a copy of something that is original. In the context of the exhibition he refers to the process of making "pirate" copies of the emblematic works of Dan Flavin, one of the pioneering artists of minimalist art. The use of this term to title the exhibition and the pieces of this series, is due to the artist's conception of the project when he visited a broom factory during a stay in the city of Medellín, Colombia.

²Richard Wollheim, "Minimal Art" in *Arts Magazine*, January 1965, pp. 26-32.

³Gerardo Mosquera, *No es sólo lo que ves: pervirtiendo el minimalismo*, Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte reina Sofía, 2000, p. 18.

⁴Ivo Mesquita, *José Antonio Hernández-Díez: algunas observaciones*, Santiago de Compostela: Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, 2000, p. 42.

⁵Nelly Richard, "Latinoamérica y la posmodernidad: la crítica de los originales y la revancha de la copia" in *La estratificación de los márgenes*, Santiago de Chile: Centro Cultural Palacio de la Moneda, 1989, p. 55.

⁶Bruce Glaser, "Questions to Stella and Judd", in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 158.

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