

ARTFORUM

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



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(including the acetate sheets, which Ghossein found in the army's archives) and made attempts at mapping the territory anew. These efforts, mounted on light boxes, are each titled *Draft Zero*, 2017. Were it not for the presence of Ghossein's elliptical and mesmerizing video, playing as it does with light and shadow, sight and blindness, observation and data, the *Draft Zero* pieces would have stolen the show.

Initially, Ghossein, who is known principally as a filmmaker, had planned to forgo film work altogether in this exhibition. He had intended to treat the show as an opportunity to make objects and experiment with their relationship in space. His tactile thinking about ownership of land (which under Ottoman law, for example, had to be worked) and how a figure locates him- or herself in the terrain yielded some compelling groupings: a corner filled with metal rods, the kinds used by French mandate authorities to measure the sea level in Lebanon, lodged in concrete for the installation *The Point or One of the Government's Secrets: Elevation*, 2017, and the documents and other materials related to the artist's attempt to assign ownership of an otherwise unclaimed plot of land in Southern Lebanon to the gallery's owner, Joumana Asseily, in the six-part installation *Obsession*, 2017.

As conceptual artists of a certain generation sometimes do, Ghossein throws a few too many things at one good idea, and his considerable humor is buried in the fine print of a couple of small booklets. One features a rueful essay on land ownership and liberation by the writer and curator Rasha Salti; another ostensibly lists the works on view. But the artist has peppered his descriptions with comical asides, sly observations of geopolitical affairs, and stories about his father's infatuation with Lenin. All this may add up to little more than armature for the film, but it shows an agile mind at work with new materials. That, as much as the last cartographer, may have given the show its energy of strange anticipation and promise.

—Kaelen Wilson-Goldie

IRAPUATO, MEXICO

Javier Barrios and Joaquín Segura FUNDACIÓN CALOSA

"*Tres Golpes*" (Three Blows) was a pertinent co-creation by two Mexican artists, Javier Barrios and Joaquín Segura, working together for the first time. Commissioned by Paulina Ascencio, the curatorial director of the recently inaugurated Fundación Calosa, their collaboration made for an inaugural exhibition that suggests the foundation has a solid, purposeful future. The founders of Calosa are to be applauded for this effort to bring contemporary art (with a program of discussions, workshops, residencies, and so on, as well as a library) to a public beyond Mexico City—in this case a medium-size municipality in the state of Guanajuato.

The eight works in the exhibition conversed in a sort of strident silence; each piece seemed to voicelessly shout out the urgency of its own denunciation of agrarian and industrial labor—as hopeless as it was atemporal. In drawings, video, readymades, sculpture, and architecture, the exhibition displayed a post-post-Marxist symbolic language that, after so much rhetoric and failure, might seem useless to reactivate thematically and conceptually; nevertheless, Barrios and Segura managed to find new life in it.

On the floor, a crop of hammers stood on their head—a precarious positioning reflected in the work's title, *Autosuficiencia: Ejercicios de balance* (Self-Sufficiency: Balance Exercises) (all works cited, 2017). All sprouted dry wheat and showed obvious traces of use. Installed horizontally on the wall behind were four old iron stakes—*Untitled*—imprinted with citations from former Mexican president Adolfo López



Mateos on the supposed benefits of the National Company of Popular Subsistence, also known as CONASUPO—a governmental organization created during his term (1958–64) to support farmers. The imprints evoked the branding of cattle and even of workers on colonial haciendas. Now it is the “bodies” of the stakes that are irreversibly marked, stripping of its emptiness the slogan “In work and harmony complying with the mandate of our history.”

A cubical *Fortaleza* (Fort), roofless, fabricated out of wooden sleepers taken from disused train tracks, conserves an iron anvil created by Spanish artist Santiago Sierra in its interior; the viewer could glimpse it through the apertures between the wooden railroad ties. A mocking trophy within a “habitable” space, it was exposed as overwhelmed, almost embarrassed, under a halo of questioned sociohistorical strife. To one side, the three-channel video installation that gave its name to the exhibition documented three other anvils—a historical symbol of manual labor and the relation between humans and animals—being flattened by an industrial steamroller. Defeated, they lay on the muddy ground like unusable remains, tarnished—metaphorically and materially.

On the roof, two long canvases of crude, thick linen, stained with mud, dust, and streaks of paraffin dyed in black and red (colors emblematic of CONASUPO), and exposed to the elements as an implication of the context of daily agricultural labor, recalled banners. Instead of the heraldic vigor one would expect, the stains evoked traces of violence and of the ill treatment summed up in the work's title, *Agotamiento, aislamiento y fatiga* (Exhaustion, Isolation, and Fatigue). But elsewhere, six graphite drawings on tracing paper, *Insignias posibles* (Possible Insignias), logos for an imaginary agrarian union, in their delicacy and fragility suggested the tenuousness of such audacious hopes.

—Marcela Quiroz

Translated from Spanish by Michele Faguet.

View of “Javier Barrios and Joaquín Segura,” 2017. Wall: *Untitled*, 2017. Floor: *Autosuficiencia: Ejercicios de balance* (Self-sufficiency: Balance Exercises), 2017. Photo: Joaquín Segura.

SÃO PAULO

Pedro Reyes GALERIA LUISA STRINA

Mexican artist Pedro Reyes's recent exhibition featured two distinct groups of medium-size sculptures, one figurative and the other geometric. While this juxtaposition might at first have appeared incongruous, it follows the practice of an artist who was trained as an architect and never cultivated one signature style or preferred medium. His passion is exploring the transformative power of activism, collaboration, and collective and individual participation in art.