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marcos ávila forero
desde las montañas
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03.05.2018—16.06.2018

Referring to the way in which Colombian guerrillas sign their statements not to be located, *Desde las montañas* deals with the questions of the war violence, but also of struggle and dignity, applied to different contexts generating approximations and revealing diverse readings. Marcos Ávila Forero takes his actions as ways of rethinking about specific political issues and social contexts, placing the human being at the center of his research and acting, at the same time, as activist.

In this exhibition, Marcos Ávila Forero locates, at the entrance of the gallery, a megaphone of great dimensions with a double and paradoxical function: an amplifier that is, at the same time, a boat capable of sailing in the sea and of circulating in the public space. Made of walnut wood, this sculpture becomes a tool of social demand devised to be activated and to question the conflicts in the Middle East. A mobile microphone, a floating, musical and sculptural object accompanied by texts on the Syrian conflict distributed all over the central wall. This piece, *Otra versión de "Los Persas" de Esquilo* (2017), recovers and reinterprets the Greek tragedy (*The Persians*) confronting it with the current Mediterranean issue. As a research tool, it immerses the ancient confrontation between Greeks and Persians in the current Syrian conflict, seeking a collective alternative of commitment. As noted by Yassin al-Haj Sale in *La Question Syrienne*, the distance between the public and the private, the general and the particular, has vanished. This way, the Syrian tragedy has become a public issue, whose protagonists, through their testimonials about the horrors experienced in this territory, claim to get their politics and their country back.

In the same vein, the artist reveals less evident processes of the social conflict in Colombia and seeks to sublimate the dignity of these societies whose political work becomes a matter of struggle in favor of popular empowerment. The Colombian artist focuses on a conflict that has lasted more than 60 years creating a deep abyss between urban and rural politics, and also on the resulting state of abandonment of this agrarian territory and its inhabitants by the government.

The series *Estibas* (2018) presents several pallets, supports designed to carry goods, with poetic images set on its surface. The figures, inspired by key episodes of the armed conflict in Colombia and engravings from the colonial era, inscribe a new memory to this prosaic, eminently commercial object, reconvertng what was a means of transport in the bearer of a very specific historical narrative, that of the plundering. The artist closes the cycle started by the great exploiting companies evoking the vacillating nature, between the industrial and the handcrafted, of these platforms endowing them with a new meaning. In front of each pallet, the sawdust product of its fretwork reproduces the same image that refers to this historical and political situation that has turned the peasants into guerrilla's members. These stylized and common representations show another version from the same story, fading away the image of violence and aggressiveness that this collective has and proposing alternative stories that are still to be written.

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Carlos Aires — Iván Argote — Marcos Ávila Forero — Virginie Barré — Abdelkader Benchamma — Tobias Bernstrup — Santiago Cirugeda — Jordi Colomer — Democracia — Igor Eškinja — Mounir Fatmi — Daniel & Geo Fuchs — Kendell Geers — Núria Güell — Margaret Harrison — Bouchra Khalili — Adrian Melis — Eugenio Merino — Carlos Pazos — Bruno Peinado — Federico Solmi

The series of photos entitled *Desde las montañas* (2017), are framed within this same circumstance that makes us travel to realities that often seem invisible and where the victims of violence and oppression of the government are found. In this project the artist depicts the phenomenon of contemporary *guerrillas* and reminds us, once again, the reality that many peasant communities are forced to live due to the government attacks, binding together strategies of resistance in armed struggles as a method of political action. In order to come back from the oblivion to which they have been subjected, the peasants resort to weapons as a form of revolutionary fight. From then on bullets become part of their lives. Marcos Ávila Forero endows his stories with a poetic dimension by reusing the gunpowder from the bullets, necessary for the armed confrontation until that moment, to enlighten the photographs and, therefore, to light up to those portrayed. The result is a sublime illumination of the images, uttering an exaltation of the figures that pose. By way of using portraiture, Marcos Ávila Forero gives a historical dimension and enhances the figures of these forgotten people and their repressed claims.

Marcos Ávila Forero manages to seize the space by presenting a series of works of different formats from which particular stories emerge, building bridges of memory by analyzing elements of the past and present. The artist accompanies with his work the fights of these communities, so often forgotten by history and politics, and shows his support by contrasting realities that highlight the meaning of their struggle and, especially, the dignity of their existence.

bio

/Marcos Ávila Forero, 1983

/ The works of the Colombian Marcos Ávila Forero submerge the audience in the complex situation of the social contexts that they present. Ávila Forero has presented his work at Center Georges Pompidou (Paris) and at Palais de Tokyo (Paris), as well as at the 43rd National Salon of Artists - Museum of Modern Art in Colombia. Other institutions like Pori Art Museum (Pori, Finland) and Le Grand Café (Saint-Nazaire, France) have host Avila Forero's solo shows. In 2017 he participated in the main exhibition of the 57th Venice Biennial, Viva Arte Viva, curated by Christine Macel. He has also received several awards, including the Découverte des Amis du Palais in Tokyo, and was the winner of the residency and production Hermès award. In 2014 he won the LOOP Art Fair award for the best video installation.

/His works can be found in numerous institutions and collections such as the Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain in Aquitaine (Bordeaux), the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès (Paris) and the BPS22, Musée d'Art de la Province de Hainaut in Charleroi (Belgique).

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