

accompanied it, or even the mood of the viewer. In other words, the artist's wide-ranging investigation of the subjectivity of images expands to include many media and many forms of interpretation, from photography to writing. In fact, in the "Scratch" series, his painting itself becomes calligraphic, either literally, as when he uses his fingers to directly remove paint from the surface of the image, or more figuratively, as when he deploys a sort of alphabet of gestural markings. Callegari's method may seem rational and programmatic, but his paintings also embrace the unforeseen; just as the works exhibit extreme control, they occasionally admit brilliant passages of aleatory marks.

—Marco Tagliaferro

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

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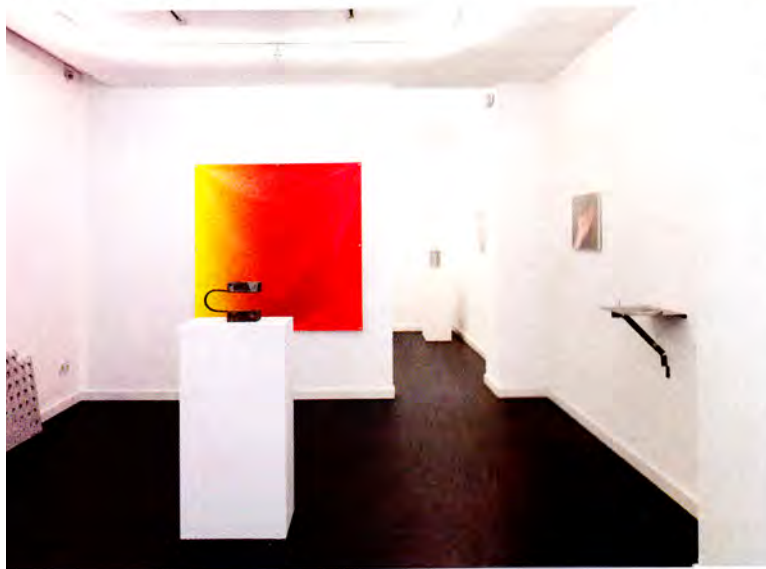
David Bestué

GARCÍA GALERÍA

Barcelona-based David Bestué first came to prominence as part of a duo with Marc Vives, with whom he had systematically and mockingly subverted the tropes of modern sculpture through performances that gained the pair international attention, for instance through their participation in Daniel Birnbaum's Venice Biennale in 2009. Working on his own since 2012, Bestué has relentlessly elaborated a critical slant on architecture. In carrying out this critique, he transcends artistic and aesthetic concerns, often sneaking into the realms of engineering and constructive techniques.

Bestué's first solo show in Madrid was titled "*La España moderna*," after a magazine popular in Spain at the turn of the twentieth century. Miserable and melancholic after the collapse of its empire, the country was worn down, and a good number of intellectuals sought to heal a

David Bestué, 2015.



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locations he visited.

The exhibition offered various ways to understand Spain's diversity but, as many will have guessed, it lacked the gravity and solemnity of the texts that inspired it. Bestué's stance is, to say the least, sardonic, as demonstrated by the trip he took to El Escorial, the late-sixteenth-century monument built under King Philip II to glorify his empire after a victory over the French. The building is a formidable reticular mass of granite that inevitably brings to mind Spain's imperial past and the sober gravity of its memory. Bestué's work consists of little granite fragments scraped off the structure's walls and placed in a curved resin tube whose lightness and shape evoke the opposite of the monument's bombastic aura. Similarly, *Filtro de luz* (Light Filter; all works cited, 2015) consists of filings from arrows and bullets that were used in legendary battles placed on a lightbulb that discreetly illuminated a wall, reducing any commemorative spell to a rather imperceptible stain.

A blend of the readymade and the playfully constructed artifact, Bestué's works share the unmistakable substance of poetry. The stone of an olive from the oldest olive tree in Spain is displayed in an eyebolt (*Oliva de la Farga de Arión*). In another work, *Dos luces* (Two Lights), an aged crystal lamp neighbors a halogen spotlight in a somewhat clumsy structure. The show was certainly full of odd encounters. The works' implausible formal syntax may derive not only from Bestué's skepticism toward the current sculptural trends but also from his fear that sculpture may shatter the full potential of poetry. His journey through Spain seems to have supplied him with a set of aesthetic coincidences that inspired him to let his work roam from the universal to the vernacular, from reminiscences of a magnificent past to the somewhat quaint domestic vulgarity of our own times, one that we seem unlikely to ever shake off.

—Javier Hontoria

GÖTEBORG, SWEDEN

Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art

VARIOUS VENUES

The eighth edition of the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, "A story within a story . . .," curated by Elvira Dyangani Ose, was by far the most pedagogically and conceptually consistent to date. Dyangani Ose was inspired by anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot's conjecture that history is written by many, and by Umberto Eco's idea of "the open work" (as espoused in his 1962 book of that name). The majority of the nearly forty works by thirty-three artists and collectives that were presented at Göteborgs Konsthall, the Hasselblad Center, Röda Sten Konsthall, and surrounding nonprofit spaces engage with real events from the past hundred years, a period of colonial and postcolonial modernity.

The biennial encompassed two distinct methods for handling what we might call the aesthetics of historical revision. Some of the works are like montaged documentary essays that reexamine a historical past,



Bouchra Khalili, *Foreign Office (detail)*, 2015, digital film, ink-jet prints, screen print, dimensions variable. Photo: the Göteborg International Biennial Contemporary Art.

while others engage in postcolonial institutional critique. Both methods critically question how history passed on. Bouchra Khalili's video and photo installation *Foreign Office*, 2015, represents the first method. In it, a man and a woman reflect on images of Algiers between 1962 and 1972. During this period, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, and other black leaders came to the city; as Amílcar Cabral put it at the time, "Christians go to the Vatican, Muslims to Mecca, and revolutionaries to Algiers." The work connects political optimism and solidarity among movements with what subsequently happened to these men; some became martyrs, others dictators, and one, Mandela, became a worldwide hero. Khalili's essayistic installation is superb in its subversive rewriting of history.

Exemplary of the second method is Meleko Mokgosi's *Modern Art: The Roots of African Savages, Addendum*, 2015. This work uses didactic panels from the 2012–13 exhibition "African Art, New York, and the Avant-Garde" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York as its point of departure. The panels were enlarged and printed on linen fabric with commentary on how they inscribe art into a colonial discourse. By blending matter-of-fact, poetic, comical, political registers, Mokgosi opens history to multiple possible readings rather than categorically executing (assassinating) the colonial gaze.

For the 2015 House of Words project, architect Santiago Cirugeda and artist Loulou Cherinet invited individuals and social groups to intimate roundtable discussions to debate terms that regulate daily politics. Concepts used by Swedish politicians today, such as *utanförskap* ("outsidership," or social exclusion), are subjected to critical deliberation in front of a slowly panning camera, changing the art discourse in real time. A few works deal directly with the history of Swedish modernity, such as Sara Jordenö's *The Diamond People Project*, 2005–15, about the intricate relation between a Swedish factory and South Africa, and Petra Bauer and Rebecka Thor's *And all is yet to be done*, 2015, based on a history of the early socialist-liberation movement in Sweden.

Alongside these subversive approaches were more modest interventions into the difficulties of writing history. In Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's new figurative oil paintings, characters carry unspoken histories that neatly weave together the significance of hidden things. Maryam Jafri's *Independence Day 1934–1975*, 2009–, presents fifty-two remarkable analog photographs taken during the first independence days of former colonies around the world. The visual uniformity of the celebratory rituals seems to suggest the survival of a latent, uncanny imperialism.

"A story within a story . . ." demonstrated a distinctive, somewhat detached way of showing how a biennial can be used to write history in different ways and for different reasons. One can even say that was trying to decolonize the gaze of the art institution while leaving the biennial format itself more or less intact. Perhaps the show's greatest achievement was to provide fresh answers to the difficult question: What would it mean, in the age of digital reproduction, to use an art exhibition to challenge both the form and the content of our historical consciousness?

—Fredrik Sven

VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

XII Baltic Triennial

CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE

Imagine a car after a Ballardian crash. Its internal mechanical guts are turned inside out while its wide interior is flattened into a narrow hallway. Its rear becomes its front, and its entry points are blocked, opening new ones on its surface. Now imagine this form as a modernist building. That's *Palace of Re-Invention*, 2015, the exhibition space invented by the artist/architect Andreas Angelidakis for the XII Baltic Triennial. Invited by this year's triennial curator Virginija Januškevičiūtė to reinvent the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Angelidakis transformed the building into a disorienting experience by employing materials left from previous exhibitions that he had found in storage at CAC.

The unhinged experience of the exhibition space embodied the premise of the triennial itself: to dismantle conventional understandings



of art under the motto "What is an artwork today can be something else entirely tomorrow," a thought Januškevičiūtė picked up from an interview she'd read with the artist David Bernstein. The majority of the projects, therefore, took one or more steps away from the field of art, and merged with science, ritual, pedagogy, and microbiology. In one case even employing Kickstarter crowd-funding resources. Art has shifted from a paradigm of representation to a paradigm of doing that was open to being used and misused and to using others, and called for a direct, transformative, and practical, rather than merely reflective engagement with the environment.