

Small acts, large questions

Liliana Porter and Gustavo Diaz

This year's Armory presentation juxtaposes the work of two unusual artists, both originally from Buenos Aires, Liliana Porter and Gustavo Diaz. While the practices of each artist represent distinct aesthetic trajectories and generations, they share several conceptual interests and strategies. Scale is important for both artists, specifically the use of small size compositions, which range from the miniature to the microscopic. This structuring intentionally creates intimate situations that draw the viewer into special acts of looking, which often result in the creation of moments of wonder, miraculous events appear to occur, or philosophical questions are generated. Time is an additional interest of both artists, particularly an understanding and articulation of non-linear time, often inspired by the writings of Jorge Luis Borges and his use of simultaneously occurring temporalities within his narratives, in order to articulate time as solely existing as metaphor, as non-linear and subjective in character.

Liliana Porter's extensive trajectory as an artist emerged from conceptual practices of the 1960s and 70s, specifically questions regarding representation and the desire to challenge presumed understandings of how images function. She is interested in how as time passes, the line between reality and imagination becomes increasingly blurred, as the current moment mixes with memories from the past, which often become exaggerated in scale or fragmented. She investigates how time becomes recorded not only in our memories but also in objects, images, and literature. She often presents symbols of linear time as broken, such as in her mini-installation *To Fix it (silver clock)*, which displays a small clock that has been crushed. It includes a tiny man shown working on top of the timepiece, attempting to repair it. Other temporal play is demonstrated in *Reconstruction (Girl with dark hat)*, which presents a photograph of a broken porcelain figure. Next to the image is placed the same figure physically, astonishingly displayed intact. It is as if time has been reversed and the "dead," broken figure brought back to "life." Other small vignettes include *Tejadora*, which includes a tiny female figure knitting a piece of thread into a proportionally gigantic mountain of patterned pink cloth. The impossible task of making such an object metaphorically evokes the human desire for the construction of meaning, for purpose. Porter's philosophical, narrative events are habitually staged against white grounds or on white bases, abstract settings that conjure internal mental spaces.

Gustavo Diaz's works address traditions of geometric abstraction, while being informed by personal studies of nature, mathematics, physics and philosophy. Seemingly miraculous in their microscopic scale and minute detail, the artist's works involve the act of burning paper, through the use of laser-cutting machines. Time enters significantly in his production, as it appears to extend beyond human capacity, as each drawing takes hundreds of hours to make. These dense compositions additionally evoke abstract notions of time, in their play to infinity, presenting formal systems that appear to reproduce themselves indefinitely.

Interests in uncertainty and contradiction within organizational systems are expressed through the artist's simultaneous display of conflicting patterns, each representing different notions of time. Often curving linear configurations that recall the slow formations of the natural world, such as in the rough bark of trees, or the soft lace of moss, are layered over more rapid architectonic and mathematically generated forms. Diaz's intellectual sources are referenced in many of his titles. The tall, vertical piece titled *La ventana de Deleuze* signals the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who developed *rhizomic* thinking, involving non-linear, tangential mapping of a central concept. *Zona Prigogine/Zadeh, Estructura Disipativa Borrosamente Coherente*, nods to both the chemist Ilya Prigogine and the mathematician Lotfi Zadeh. Prigogine developed the notion of "dissipative structures" occurring within chemical systems. Zadeh created the theory of "Fuzzy logic," used within artificial intelligence currently, which proposes ways to manage uncertainty and develop models capable of interpreting data that are imprecise and vague. The influence of these complex thinkers is visible within the white three-dimensional drawing in its repetition of capsule-shaped forms that seem to dissipate spatially, floating above an imprecise, circuit-like linear patterning.