

nected, yet feature several coincidences. With Van Halen's son "Jump" as a soundtrack, it reflects about time and the parallel possibilities of perception in everyday life.

The importance of art history in everyday life, as well as the fragmentation of reality by loss, failure, unfinished projects, and above all, a powerful nostalgia for the past, are recursive topics in this exhibition. García Torres continuously connects possible media, depending on the artist's resources based on different political and social situations, which are an important part of the divergent plots that can be appreciated in *La poética del regreso*.

ROCÍO CÁRDENAS PACHECO

NEW YORK / NY

José Dávila Sean Kelly Gallery

Jose Dávila's work to date can be partially characterized as a poetic and cerebral exploration of materiality. Stone, concrete, wood, glass, and metal are just some of the media he transforms into intriguing and elegant sculptures and installations that engage the phenomenology of space and the viewer's relationship to it. Even when Dávila works two-dimensionally, his imagery and mark-making is as much about the world beyond his art's formal parameters as it is an interrogation of its internal dynamics. But adding to Dávila's deft métier is a plethora of engaging subject matter too, which all exquisitely manifest together in his solo exhibition titled *The Circularity of Desire*.

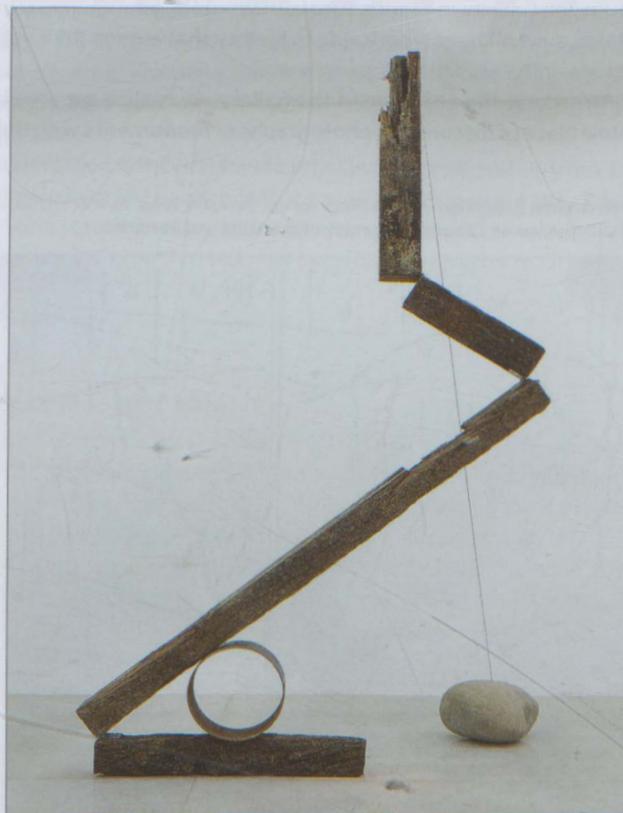
The exhibition is oriented around the iconography of the circle and, according to the artist, how it's been art historically explored in the last hundred years. Consisting of paintings, sculptures, prints, and cardboard silkscreens, the circularity thematic is further complicated by the qualifier of desire. Spread over three galleries, the first impression of the exhibition is that it is a group show. This observation is not a perception of it as lacking artistic coherence but rather exemplifies the ease by which Dávila can work in diverse formal registers. In fact, Dávila also operated somewhat as curator, for the installation design was authored by the artist himself.

Upon first entering *The Circularity of Desire*, one encounters *Untitled (the fable of the apple or an explanation waiting to happen)* (all works 2021). This sculptural installation consisting of a rock placed on the floor that connects to a cast-bronze apple via wire suspending the latter from the ceiling, is more than reference to the Surrealist René Magritte or Isaac Newton's famous apple that triggered his study of gravity. For one can see these as also respectively symbolizing dichotomies of irrational/rational and the subconscious/conscious mind. The broad purview of meaning inherent in this work paradoxically resides in a reductive aesthetic. Because as is often the case with Dávila's three-dimensional work, by paring it down almost as if it was a post-Minimalist strategy, he achieves maximum narrative possibilities. This is also evinced in other sculptures and installations in the main gallery as well. As one enters the larger, main exhibition space artworks tend to dialogue with each other in ways that would make any curator envious. To the immediate left is the totemic *The old tree is worth keeping after all*. Using wood, metal, wire, and a boulder, the title alludes to a phrase in an Aesop fable titled *The Peasant and the Apple Tree* in which the

tree is saved from being axed by the peasant because it's revealed to contain bees and copious amounts of honey. Like the fable, Dávila's wood is imbued with abundance albeit of a social variant rather than from nature; for it originally functioned as part of an old train track which brings to the sculpture its previous context making it more nuanced and polyvalent. Although the other sculptures in the exhibition share an aesthetic affinity that is stylistically Dávila, they have a formal and conceptual logic unto themselves. Ditto with Dávila's two-dimensional work.

In the larger gallery are also richly polychromatic large-scale paintings consisting of recognizable motifs from Sonia Delaunay, Frank Stella and other iconic modernist artists that are intermixed with passages from books regarding the perception of light. These lush and monumental canvases of imagery and texts are strong contrast to the sculptures' physicality and material presence. Citation of art history is also intrinsic to another gallery exhibiting a series of prints that reference Roy Lichtenstein's corpus of paintings that he made in 1965 titled *Brushstrokes*. But like the paintings and to a lesser degree the sculptures, Dávila's thematic associations to art history are less appropriation as they are re-contextualization of the past into a wholly different narrative dynamic. There is no doubt that Dávila's works are not visually dissimilar to Lichtenstein's; however, the former are prints, while the latter are paintings. Thus, there is an aspect of Walter Benjamin's mechanical reproduction thesis to the prints, but the laser-cuts are also not far off from Dávila's Mexican heritage and its highly recognizable folk tradition of *papel picado* or perforated paper. While the show in one sense is rife with cultural signifiers, that aspect of Davila's identity does make its way into the cardboard

José Dávila. *The old tree is worth keeping after all*, 2021. Wood, metal, boulder, and wire. 146 ⁷/₁₆ x 94 ⁷/₈ x 52 in. (371 x 241 x 132 cm). Photo: Agustin Arce. Courtesy: Sean Kelly Gallery



silkscreens. Here, the works are intimate in size but exponentially loom large in their formal and conceptual complexity. Consisting of torn cardboard from a myriad of packaging from Mexico and U.S.A., transnational politics are atomized in silkscreens of precise spherical designs in diverse colors articulating too the gist of the show: that the circle is the sine qua non of modernist art but also that it is endemic to human history when circularity is synonymously expanded to symbiosis and reciprocity.

RAÚL ZAMUDIO

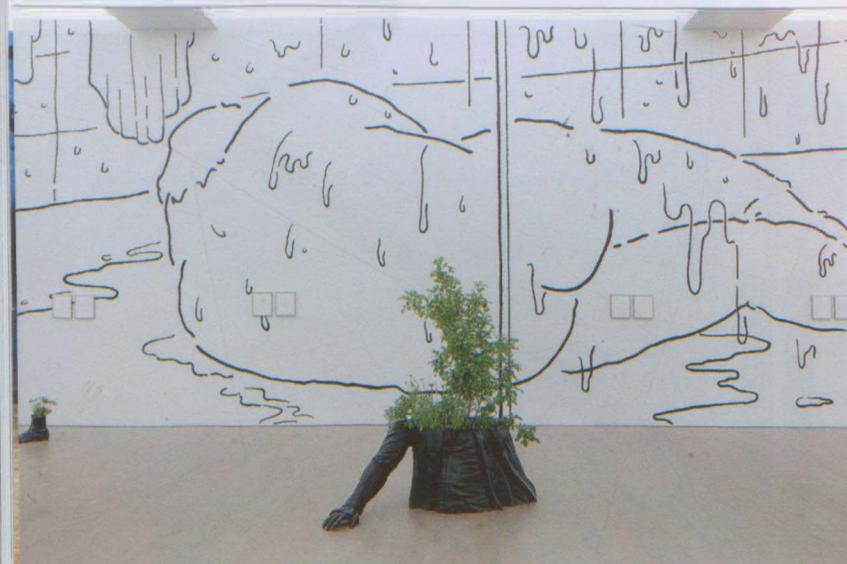
Iván Argote Perrotin

Monuments are these days at the center of academic, social and political debates across the world, as we no longer have of them the image that we had just a few years ago—in particular, that of the recognition given to a conqueror. As one enters Iván Argote's exhibition at Perrotin Gallery, located in a typical East Village building in New York City, its façade diagonally crisscrossed by fire escape ladders, it is good to keep this maxim in mind: monuments are not what they were. They were intended as timeless, infinite in time, as Barthes had it; that is why they were built and placed in memorable spots within a city. Nevertheless, we see that monuments may have endured and resisted all kinds of affronts from nature—rain, high temperatures, snow in some cases, the implacable noonday sun—but could not withstand the assessment of history, which is now getting its due. No sooner did we begin to revise history as a living domain that can be written and rewritten, whatever the era, than we were able to connect some monuments with human barbarity—with “the ends justify the means.”

From Sebastián de Belalcázar or Christopher Columbus in Colombia to Joseph Gallieni in France, through George Washington in the United States, they all have a dark side in history that erodes their validity as heroes and places them against a wall.

Already at the entrance to the gallery we realize we are stepping into a place of discomfort: photographs of monuments with their base

Iván Argote. Exhibition view, *A Place for Us*, Perrotin, New York, NY, USA, 2021.
Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin



untouched but supporting a sculpture that has been transformed into mirrors. We move on and discover fragments of a sculpture made into flowerpots, videos of a monument being lifted, monument bases and mirrors that return our gaze and force us into a posture, and one painting, for instance, depicting the erection, using large cranes, of ancient Egyptian obelisks (?) stolen in some old raid of conquest. In sum: several artworks resolved in a variety of techniques are part of this exhibition to make a common point, at any rate the purpose highlighted at the top of this review: contemporary questions about our past, present, and future history.

Let's begin with the monuments-mirror. The use of a number of bases in cities, and even some that have been brought into the space of the gallery, has shifted and they no longer support the “great” figures of history; they now support sculptures made with mirrors. All we see in them is our reflection and the reflection of our surroundings. Thus, their unidirectional nature as monuments fades away, and now, with the mirrors, we begin to realize that a monument is activated by the people who gaze upon it. It does not exist to be seen; it exists to reflect us. Assumed in this is an attitude of reciprocity similar to the one we expect in the case of the work of art: it is not what the artist says, but the communication that occurs between the image and the eye that perceives it. At this point, though, the issue of what happens to the figure originally atop the base once it has been replaced with mirrors. With an evidently iconoclastic spirit, Argote, “dethrones” the figure and leaves in its place geometric monoliths, obelisk, cube, vertical parallelepiped, made, as has been noted, with mirrors. We see some minimalistic figures, almost devoid of meaning, empty, that amble and occupy the place that before, and over decades or centuries, signaled and exalted an individual who unscrupulously wrote a chapter in history. There is nothing left other than revising and understanding that the history of the past is the same we are living through. The monument, whatever it is, ends up as a historical artifice that was built to tell a story no one believes in any longer.

Following that, we see fragments of a sculpture depicting one of the United States great national heroes, George Washington, a 1:1 copy of the monument located in Wall Street, New York. Argote insists on “dismantling” the monument, reducing it to planters, transforming it into landscape containers. One hand there, half a torso here, one shoe, perhaps a finger made into a flowerpot and carefully anchored to the wall; little by little, we are no longer talking about Washington, but about all the monuments of the world, filled with empty air, inflated for recognition and veneration. We are living through a historical moment when what is assumed as “reality” is understood as just that: an assumption. We haven't all lived through the same realities, nor do we all see ourselves reflected by the monuments that supposedly tell a story now obsolete in the tendentiousness of its meaning. Perhaps this is what Argote's New York exhibition, *A place for us*, most insists upon. It is not by chance that the *us* in the title points towards all who do not feel themselves part of those dark histories, and seek instead to unveil and critique them.

ANDRÉS GAITÁN

Cecilia Paredes Ruiz-Healy Gallery

The work of Cecilia Paredes, now on exhibit at the Ruiz-Healy Gallery in NYC, is a refreshing aesthetic incorporation of performance art and photography in cooperation with painting and textile manipulation.