

Nico Munuera EL ESPEJO DE CLAUDE

Opening, Saturday, April 6



Surely, each painting is a continuation of the previous one, but also part of the one that is yet to come.

Although painting is certainly a gestural process for Nico Munuera, it is mostly an analytical one. His whole practice is a response to the observation of his own actions and of the way in which the outcome of this process –when extended in time- is a body of work that has to be understood as a whole even if he only shows us its fragments. Somehow, his work is an ongoing essay on ways of seeing and, in that sense, it undergoes a constant transformation. That which is born as a pictorial and performative act –the act of painting- is later turned into an object of study: the artist distances himself from his work and re-organizes it through a conceptual exercise quite close to film editing. Of course, this re-organization affects each one of the works, but also the whole —which will only be interpretable considering the latest addition. Obviously, that reading may only be considered provisional too.

In his second solo exhibition at Proyecto Paralelo, Munuera references a device used by French landscape painter Claude Lorrain: a small, slightly curved mirror covered in dark ink. Painters, with the landscapes they wished to represent behind their backs, held the mirror in the palm of their hand and framed the view they wished to depict on the canvas. In conceptual terms, it is certainly a pre-photographic process that allows a fragment (landscape) to be isolated from its environment (nature). This reference is important for Munuera insofar as he presents his own painting as something which is already given (nature) and is then transformed into a landscape of sorts of his own practice through this revision, editing, and re-framing operation. In this process, several painting fragments are turned into indexes —into the traces of a pictorial act that is expanded in time and constitutes a larger ecosystem. The work by Nico Munuera appears as a vast territory that is displayed before us in cartographic fashion, as isolated fragments that already point at their possible connections and continuities.

The process itself lays an extremely interesting path for the practice of painting in a contemporary context: in the midst of the saturation of images and screens that surrounds us, Munuera offers a possibility for understanding painting as an *archive*, not only insofar as it is open to multiple interpretations, but mostly in the sense that it is no longer something finished and definitive, and is subject to a disintegration/reintegration process. In traditional notions of painting, the *canvas* has been considered as the unitary and indivisible element that contains “artisticity” in itself. With his practice, Nico Munuera poses the possibility of blurring the borders and of margins becoming as interesting as the center or even more.

For more information or images please contact the gallery.

ABOUT THE WORKS ON VIEW

RIBA [BANK]

In Spanish: From the Latin *ripa* 'bank'. 1. f. portion of land with an elevation and decline. 2. F. land close to rivers. Used in composition in *Ribagorza*, *Ribadavia*. 3. f. arch. Border and margins of sea or river.

The Riba series is based on a concrete circumstance that has been happening in my studio almost since the moment when I first started painting. The spawning of those cutouts left over from each canvas showed a load almost heavier than the one in the work I chose at the end of the process. They have often stayed lying around on the studio floor for years. I have lived along with them and they have always fascinated me. The question of how to take them out from there and exhibit them has always been in my mind. Yet, in time I have understood that most often things are interesting or they are what they are because of their relationship with the environment where they are placed. Extirpating isolated elements from their habitat causes the loss of all their meaning. When displayed, works often become deer heads on a wall.

VANO [VAIN]

In Spanish: unsubstantiated, illusory, unreal, inexistent, apparent, useless, sterile, ineffectual, barren, null, empty, insignificant, trivial, puerile, petty, superficial, ephemeral, hollow, window, arch, arcade, door, windowsill, hole, cavity, hollow

This work, which will certainly become a series, has its origins in the window of the main gallery and the narrow windows across the room, which allow for intermittent views of the exterior. These limits operate as photographs and to an extent also reflect something that is going on in the exhibition: there is a continuous framing, which we perceive automatically without acknowledging of the loss of overall connections. On the other hand, there is some sort of glazing done by covering almost the whole surface of the "window" with Japanese paper that still allows us to catch glimpses of what is going on behind. As a matter of fact, what is being covered is a set of paintings made years ago in a dialectical exercise that is reluctant to accept what happened yet never denies it.

LE TIR

The title of this series is a reference to Clément Chéroux's book devoted to the work by Cartier Bresson (*Cartier Bresson: Le tir photographique*). I consider these pieces as some sort of "photographs" of my own painting: they are framings, something cut out from what we have before us. They are always insufficient portions of something that is both larger and impossible to encompass, and when displayed individually act as representations of the whole. A painting is usually seen as the conclusion of previous hard work that concludes with the election of the pieces for the exhibition. I like considering painting as something more encompassing, as a narrative that develops in time where the idea of the finished work is just another stop in the way.

Nico Munuera (*1974, lives and works in Valencia, Spain) he moved from Lorca to Valencia in 1993 to study Fine Arts at the San Carlos University, a period when he received several honors. His work has been shown in several galleries and international art fairs since 1998. In 2003 he traveled to Paris with a grant from the Colegio de España to continue his exploration of color field painting, perception and pictorial processes. In 2004 he was chosen to collaborate and exhibit his work together with Joan Hernández Pijuan as part of the program *Relevos [Relays]* —a series of three exhibitions in institutions in Madrid, Barcelona and Murcia. In 2007 he traveled to New York with a Fundación Casa Pintada grant to work in a project on Washi paper exploring color, automatism and gestuality. Between 2008 and 2012 he moved to Berlin, where he explored ideas related to time, limits and uncertainty. In those years his work was part of the exhibitions *To paint or not to paint* at the Museo de Bellas Artes de Murcia (2009) and *Rational Abstraction. Aldrich/Loureiro/Munuera/Uslé* at the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporáneo in Santiago de Compostela (2011). His work has been exhibited in several institutions such as Villa Bernasconi, Geneva; the Modern Art Museum, Moscow or the Gabarrón Foundation-Carriage House Center for the Arts, New York. Some of his most relevant solo exhibitions include *Frame Time*, Sala Verónicas, Murcia (2014) and, more recently, *Praecisio* at the Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno (IVAM), Valencia (2017). His work is part of several public and private collections such as the Fundación AENA, the Fundación Barrié, the Fundación Belondrade, the Colección Banco de España, the Colección Fundación La Caixa, the Fundación Centenera, the Fundación Chirivella Soriano, the Fundación Coca-Cola España, the Copelouzos Family Art Museum, the Fundación DKV, Colección Entrecanales, the Colección FEVAL, the Colección Foster-Ochoa, the Colección Helga de Alvear, the Colección MACUF, the Colección Comunidad de Madrid, the Colección Ministerio de Cultura de España, the Colección Patio Herreriano, the Colección Pilar Citoler, the Colección Purificación García, and the Colección Banc Sabadell.