

TRAVESIA CUATRO

BREVE HISTORIA DEL TIEMPO

GONZALO LEBRIJA

18th of September, 2008 - 20th of October, 2008

TRAVESIA CUATRO presents the first solo exhibition in the gallery of the Mexican artist Gonzalo Lebrija (Mexico City, 1972), "Breve historia del tiempo".

Since the "Futurist Manifesto" (1909) expressed its admiration for the beauty of racing automobiles in opposition to the classic beauty of the Winged Victory of Samothrace, contemporary art has been fascinated by the Machine in general and motoring in particular. It has been said, that it was at the 1912 aerial locomotion saloon, where Marcel Duchamp accompanied by Fernand Léger and Constantin Brancusi, affirmed for the first time the death of painting. In spite of that, the manifesto determined the direction of Léger's future work, who started painting men-machines and humanized machines. Duchamp, following an automobile trip with Apollinaire and Francis Picabia in 1912, started painting his "single machines", which were just technical drawings from different motors. Despite criticising futurism as "the impressionism of the mechanical world", his work continued to be fascinated by the image of the mechanic, until the point of 1958, where he declared talking about The Large Glass, his most essential art work that it was nothing more than "the bonnet of the automobile, what covers the motor".

From there on contemporary art speeds up to replace the old art implements with the new technological and industrial instruments. The palette and the paintbrush were changed by the sports automobile and the bicycle.

Gonzalo Lebrija takes seriously the engineer and the machine, (mechanic and the motor) tradition from contemporary art to use cars and motorcycles as his palette and paintbrush. Between 1999 and 2001 he has used the polished and shiny surfaces from different automobiles to photograph reflected landscapes. In 2001 he used a motorbike to write a one line book along all its pages. In 2006 he put a Ferrari in the neoclassic chapel of Hospicio Cabañas, in Guadalajara (Jalisco) to photograph the reflections over it from the frescos painted on the cupules by the Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco. In the same year he made a motorcycle trip from Baja California to D. F., riding a R75/5 BMW, known as a "toaster" because of the shape of its chrome plated deposit, photographing the impeccable reflections of the likewise disturbing Californian desert landscape.

Gonzalo Lebrija takes once again the automobile to create not only reflections from the world around, but more an existential meditation about life's fleetingness. In Breve historia del tiempo (Brief Time's History) he builds up a whole device in which technology and mechanics burst through, under the shape of an automobile coming from high up, as if it were falling from the sky, into a peaceful image of an immaculate and calm nature. With that it seems as if God himself dropped the terrible domain of technique over the world, and with this gesture, he introduces Time.

This is why Gonzalo Lebrija deconstructs this scene with each still, reproducing the very instant of pure creation or, only pure creation. A new figure of creation that rather than appearing under the appearance of a man made from mud, will appear this time under the shape of an automobile falling from the sky. Like a new Capilla Sixtina, in which the hand of god getting closer to Adam's hand, will be replaced this time by the automobile diving into the water. In "Between life and death", the same image becomes with the appearance of a prodigious sculpture, an automobile, that stands up vertically over the water, like a halted instance, recalling prodigious moments too. "The earth was empty and chaotic- tells the Genesis book-, the darkness was over the face of the abyss and god's spirit was moving over the face of the waters". Gonzalo Lebrija takes this image as an instant "between life and death", explicitly playing with the limit of the automobile but stopping at the beautiful instance, bringing with it the Faustian pact ("Verweile doch, du bist so schön!") which condemns modernity.

Miguel Cereceda

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tel: +34 91 3100098

fax: +34 91 3199817

san mateo, 16, 28004 madrid

galeria@travesiacuatro.com

www.travesiacuatro.com