

kurimanzutto

presents

damián ortega



Opening saturday, april 9th from 11 am to 2 pm

abril 12 to may 14, 2011

tuesday to thursday from 11 am to 6 pm

friday and saturday from 11 am to 4 pm

kurimanzutto is proud to announce its first exhibition of Damián Ortega's work, opening on Saturday, April 9, and remaining on view until Saturday, May 14, 2011.

For the past six years, Damián Ortega has divided his time, work and perceptions between Mexico City and Berlin (where he currently lives). His regular travels back and forth have been a determining factor in a permanent state of disconcertion—in other words, a continual mode of discovery for the artist.

The Stranger, a film made expressly for this show, presents the allegorical tale of an alien being who happens to land in a small town in the state of Morelos, south of Mexico City. Prepared for all eventualities in his adventure, the character travels equipped with all sorts of tools and measuring instruments, certain that he will amass calculations and quantitative data over the course of his mission and thus be able to transpose his experience to his place of origin. Carnavalesque, erratic circumstances immerse and integrate this main character in a unique atmosphere, while he shares the screen with two musicians from the renowned Banda de Tlayacapan.

On various occasions, Ortega has expressed his interest in mechanics and engineering in their most elemental manifestations. His show “puts into operation” the recognition of ordinary forms and objects that are nonetheless obviously specific to a place and that originate in his constant travel between cities. These configurations stand out against the everyday and serve as a pretext for the artist to carry out sculptural and pictorial exercises that evince his hybrid systems of classification, in which a rock and a mechanical arm can appear homologous from a given point of view.

One of the gallery's walls displays a mural/drawing/sample collection, along with a worktable where a broad range of paintbrushes is perfectly laid out. *Sonido grafo* is a catalogue of graphic qualities, where the artist mechanically repeats a physical action (mark or calligraphy) that does not involve any expressivity or subjective gesture, but rather where he as its maker is just another component of the mechanism that raises the scissors/hand.

In 2005, Ortega made *Elote clasificado*, a corn cob where each kernel was painstakingly numbered: a rather ironic statement about the taxonomist's ordering, stabilizing aim in the face of a changing, living element. *Muro elote* evokes that piece and also modern scientific practice that made use of molds and castings, thanks to which it no longer mattered whether the “object of study” had disintegrated, as it was replaced by its representation: a stable and less temperamental object than the natural one. The irony is twofold in this piece where the sculptor emphasizes a kind of fractal composition, visible on the corn kernels and on the walls built with the traditional technique of adobe bricks—a sun-dried mixture of mud, hay and manure utilized in warm, dry climates also suited to corn cultivation—except that each element is unique and different.

The presence of modular elements—used in the construction of homes and housing complexes—and of structures affected by random conditions are constants in Ortega's work. *Asentamientos*, a sculpture that can be seen as a scale model or as a globe, suggests a diagram of the organic growth process of Mexico City's south end, with its profusion of makeshift dwellings fabricated with local materials easy to transport without resorting to heavy machinery and built upon lava fields zoned as a greenbelt.

Like living post-cards that describe and summarize a landscape, or like a topographical survey (a synecdoche of place), *Mutter erde / Vater land* features fragments excerpted and displaced from the city of Berlin, as if Ortega were attempting to transplant his habits and thus establish roots wherever he might be.

Composed of an array of extensions or displays of Damián Ortega's point of view, somewhere between nostalgia and perplexity, the show documents the artist's various strategies to bring back into focus a repetitive yet shifting reality that inevitably refashions itself.

Damián Ortega (Mexico City, 1967) .

His main solo exhibitions: *New Commission for The Curve*, Barbican Center, London (2010); *Damián Ortega: Do It Yourself*, ICA Boston (2009); *Damián Ortega*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2008); *Man is the Controller of the Universe*, DAAD Gallery, Berlin (2007); *Nine Types of Terrain*, White Cube, London (2007); *Damián Ortega: The beetle trilogy and other works*, REDCAT, Los Angeles (2005); *Damián Ortega*, Kunsthalle Basel (2004); *Moby Dick*, kurimanzutto, Mexico City (2004); *Spirit and Matter*, White Cube, London (2004); *Damián Ortega*, Galeria Fortes Vilaça (2003) and *Cosmic Thing*, ICA Philadelphia (2002). In 2006 he got the artist residency program DAAD en Berlín. In 2007, he was nominated to Preis Der Nationalgalerie für junge kunst. He lives and works in Berlin and Mexico City.