

Optimismo Radical, 2

January 12 – February 25, 2012

Ricardo Alcaide
Benjamin Appel
Johanna Calle
Alejandro Corujeira
Dario Escobar
Miguel Mitlag
Philomene Pirecki
Marco Rountree
Fidel Sclavo

Josée Bienvenu Gallery is pleased to present *Optimismo Radical, 2*. Bringing together nine international artists, the title assembles two words that don't fit well. As a result, a high indefiniteness that functions in a number of languages -Spanish, English, Portuguese, French- without being clearly understandable in any of them. Two redundant or contradictory words? Is radical optimism the opposite of moderate optimism? Or the opposite of conservative pessimism? The intention is to create a precise confusion, a label out of focus. In 2012, the gallery will inaugurate a series of individual project room exhibitions under the same title.

Ricardo Alcaide was born in 1967 in Caracas, Venezuela. He currently lives and works in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Hinged between the poetic and the political, his juxtapositions of images and objects question how people cope with economic and social exclusion in different environments. He has been interested in the Latin American Modernist Movement's often un-acknowledged debt to vernacular world architecture. His ongoing series of paintings "A Place to Hide", based on photographs of temporary structures built by homeless people, investigates the notion of shelter. Recent exhibitions include: *A Place To Hide*, Baró Galería, Sao Paulo (2011); *Horizonte Vasado*, *Artistas Latinoamericanos en el filo*, Instituto Cervantes, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2010).

Benjamin Appel was born in 1978 in Augsburg, Germany, he lives and works in Karlsruhe, Germany. He graduated from the Karlsruhe Art Academy where he studied under Gerd van Dülmen, Thomas Zipp and Daniel Roth. At the interface between painting, sculpture and everyday object while poking fun at them, Benjamin Appel is committed to the unspectacular and the fragile. Sculptural installation of art povera materials such as concrete, earth, soil and elements of furniture coexist with abstract compositions on canvas. Recent exhibitions include: *Das Zimmer des Eremiten*, NADA Miami, Weingruell gallery, *Die Schwelle des Hauses*, Studiokontrolle, Karlsruhe (2010); *Wie Der Vogel in seinem Nest*, Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany (2009).

Johanna Calle was born in Bogota, Colombia in 1965 where she lives and works. She received her MFA from the Chelsea College of Art at the London Institute, London UK in 1993. For the last ten years, she has been focusing exclusively on the medium of drawing. Her work consists of a non-narrative, critical and analytical approach to social and cultural issues in Colombia, specifically matters relating to women and children, social structures, urbanism and language. Her work was recently featured at the 12th Istanbul Biennial in Turkey, and is currently on view in *The Air We Breathe* at the San Francisco Museum of Art and in *Submergentes: a drawing approach on masculinities*, Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Long Beach, California. Since 2006 she has had several solo exhibitions with Galeria Casa Riegner in Bogota. She is now preparing for a solo show at Galeria Marilia Radzuk in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1961, **Alejandro Corujeira** moved to Madrid in 1991. His meditative paintings and drawings refer to American Minimalism from Agnes Martin to Brice Marden, and to the Latin American abstract geometric tradition. A past resident of the Josef and Annie Albers Foundation, he has exhibited extensively in Europe and South America with solo exhibitions at the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid and at the IVAM in Valencia. Recent and upcoming exhibitions include: Dan Galeria, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2012); *El Comienzo*, Marlborough gallery, Madrid, Spain; *Lo accesible, vestido de sales*, Marlborough Gallery, New York (2009).

Dario Escobar was born in Guatemala City in 1971 where he lives and works. He is known for his sculptural re-contextualization of everyday objects exploring concepts of sculptural, cultural, and historical hybridity. In 2009, he represented Guatemala at the 53rd Venice Biennale. Upcoming and recent exhibitions include: *Singular-Plural*, a traveling solo exhibition at Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Atlanta, GA (2012). *Selections from the Jumex collection*, at the Instituto Cultural Cabañas, Guadalajara, México (2011); *Video otra vez*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Fortaleza, Brazil (2011); *From the Recent Past: New Acquisitions*, The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles, CA (2011). His first monograph will be published by Harvard University Press this year.

Miguel Mitlag was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1969 and currently lives in Turin, Italy. He studied film making in Buenos Aires in the 1990's where he became a member of the experimental art group, 'Art Destroy'. *Minilab, Color Tests, Tropical Experiment*: Miguel Mitlag's photographs seem to document the lab of some mad scientist, they blur the boundaries between science and fiction. Ordinary and nearly abstract objects are carefully arranged in spaces filled with light and super bright colors in a '70's Povera' aesthetics that recalls Pedro Almodovar's early film sets. Recent exhibitions include: Malba, Buenos Aires, Argentina; *Como Hacer Un Experimento*, Galería Braga Menéndez, Buenos Aires, Argentina; *Anunciamos una repetición....Espacio Telefónica*, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Philomene Pirecki was born in the Channel Islands, UK in 1972, she lives and works in London. She received her MA from The Royal College of Art, London in 1996. At the core of her work is an ongoing enquiry into notions of definitive representations. Using a range of media from painting, photography, drawing and sculpture, Pirecki employs slight gestures to modify fixed points of experience in time, history and visual memory. Recent and upcoming exhibitions include: *Aukje Koks and Philomene Pirecki*, MOT International, Brussels, Belgium (2012); Clockwork Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2012); Laure Guenillard, London (2011) ; *Aftermath*, Chelsea space, London (2011). She also runs the project space *Occasionals* in London.

Marco Rountree was born in Mexico DF in 1982. He started his career as a graffiti artist in the streets of Mexico, where he still lives. Lately, he has been creating installations of altered books, questioning the access to knowledge in countries where the lower income population doesn't gain access to education. Recent exhibitions include: *Group Show*, Museo de arte Moderno, Mexico DF (2011); Art Positions, Art Basel Miami Beach, Travesía Cuatro, Madrid (2011); Commissioned project curated by Patrick Charpenel for the Coppel collection, Culiacan Sinaloa, Mexico (2011); *Nothingless and the being*, Coleccion Jumex, Mexico DF, Curated by Shamim Momin (2009).

Fidel Sclavo was born in 1960 in Uruguay. He lives and works in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. As an acclaimed graphic designer, he has published many illustrations and became reknown for his poster designs. His current work involves fragmenting language in many ways, creating abstract alphabets, micro-pop watercolors and minimal installations. Recent exhibitions include: *Cartas no leídas*, Tiempos Modernos, Madrid, Spain (2011); *Recent work*, Centro Cultural de España, Montevideo, Uruguay (2011); *Canvas and papers*, Galería Jorge Mara-La Ruche, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2010).