

Dario Escobar

The Blacksmith Project

May 30 – July 18, 2013

Opening reception: Thursday, May 30, from 6-8pm

Renowned for his sculptural re-contextualization of everyday objects, Dario Escobar's work explores concepts of cultural and historical hybridity ultimately attempting to reexamine Western art history from a Guatemalan perspective.

The Blacksmith Project is an exhibition based on two absences: the absence of the painted object and the absence of the subject who painted it. The show consists of 8 anonymous paintings by Dario Escobar. It is a new body of 'self-generated' or 'performative' paintings. The artist has explored similar removal processes in other work, such as his *Accidentees* - sculptures created by extracting bumpers from crashed trucks and re-chroming them as new. Or in his *used motor oil compositions* - done by placing a sheet of paper under a car and igniting the engine.

Here, the paintings document the back wall of a blacksmith workshop – still very common in Guatemala - where the production of metal objects is done on a small scale. Used as backdrops to spray paint doors, gates, grilles, railings, furniture, tools, religious figures, cooking utensils or windows - the workshop's walls accumulate layers and layers of paint residue. The walls become a document of the negative space surrounding the painted objects. A blank canvas is stapled to the wall and slowly collects residue from the spraying done at the shop, the artist comes in regularly to measure the evolution of the work and to determine the level of exposure by deciding when to remove the canvas. All other decisions - colors, shapes, textures, and density – are dictated by the day-to-day order of business at the shop.

The process is more akin to the photogram technique favored by the Surrealists than to any painting method. Like Man Ray's Rayographs, made without a camera by placing objects on a sheet of photosensitized paper and exposing it to light, Dario Escobar's paintings are made by blacksmith workers without the direct intervention of the artist's hand. However, the resulting body of work is a condensed and unexpected journey through the main painting movements of the last century - from 1960s color field painting, to Latin American geometric abstraction, to minimalism, pop, and street art.

In the project room Dario Escobar creates a sculptural space that is both rational and sensual. *Obverse and Reverse (cloud)* is made of white soccer balls that are deconstructed, re-sewn inside out and sewn together in cloud-like clusters. The interior becomes the exterior and the exposed balls reveal a new intimate perspective.

Dario Escobar lives and works in Guatemala City, his work has been exhibited extensively at biennials, museums and galleries internationally. His first monograph, *A Singular Plurality*, published by Harvard University Press was just released. He will be included in the *2013 California Pacific Triennial* at the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA (June – November 2013). Recent exhibitions include: *Dario Escobar*, Museo de arte Contemporáneo de Santiago (MAC), Santiago de Chile, Chile (2012); *Singular-Plural*, a one person exhibition at Savannah College of Art and Design, (traveled to SCAD Museum) Atlanta, GA (2012); *Play with me*, The Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA (2012); *New Acquisitions*, The Museum of Contemporary Art MOCA, Los Angeles, CA (2011); *Art, Talks and Sensations, The Island/A Game of Life*, Gallery 1, Manarat al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2012); *Efecto Drácula*, Museo Universitario del CHOPO, México (2010); *53rd Venice Biennale*, Mundus Novus - Arte contemporaneo de America Latina at the Artiglierie dell'Arsenale (2009); *Nada y el ser (The 7th interpretation of the Jumex Collection)*, La Colección Jumex, Mexico DF (2009).

For more information, please contact the gallery at +1.212.206.7990