

Mauricio Escobar - 'Dissolutions' 29-4-'19

Introduction:

At the age of twenty Mauricio left Colombia and went to France. In Paris he attended the *Ecole Supérieure des Beaux Arts* for four years, and the *Ecole Supérieure des Arts Decoratives* for two years. Thereafter he continued his own research and became a free artist.

Through friends in Lille he met people of *Galerie K.Art* and was asked by the Colombian Ambassador to make exhibitions. Many followed during the next decades: he came in contact with the organisers of the *MAC 2000* in the *Grand Palais Paris*. There he met the owners of *Galerie Arlette Gimaray* in Paris and Wim Fromans of *Vromans Galerie - Gebouw Atrium* in Amsterdam, by whom he was presented at *Kunst Rai Amsterdam 1999-2000-2001*.

I met Mauricio in 2015 when I curated a series of exhibitions for the *C-Lab de Vlucht* in Amsterdam. I asked him to participate in the 5th year anniversary *C-Lab expo*. Fifteen artists made a work about the postwar neighbourhood, at the west side of the city where *C-Lab* is located. In Mauricio's work the harbour and cranes are depicted by him using the technique of pigments on canvas.

Interview april 2019:

In this year march and april you had an exhibition in 'Dat Bolwerck' in Zutphen. How did this opportunity occur and how has your work been selected?

Again through friends I came in contact with Vincent Peppelenbosch, the initiator of the art centre *Dat Bolwerck*. Already In 2015 we made a first solo show with smaller paintings and the frames I constructed at the time. For the exhibition this year I started with a global idea, adapted to the location and of course the objects should fit the space. Everything is made according to my own ideas and plans, as developed in the last years.

How about the present exhibition in the *Culture Centre Waterkant* in Alkmaar?

Since 2017 I shared workspace with other artists in a former office complex in Alkmaar. My paintings, made at home in Amsterdam, are in storage there - as I have no atelier since 2016. For the exhibition in the *Cultural Centre Waterkant* I worked eight weeks on special objects, looking for coherence with the exhibition space.

... and the *Nassaukerk* in Amsterdam?

The object in that church is in fact by commission. I met people of the *Nassaukerk* at an exhibition in Bergen October 2018 where I participated in the *Kunst 10daagse in Frankenstate*. A group exhibition in a big hall with forty five pieces: paintings, objects and lamps. They loved the lamps. Consequently it became a challenge to develop that concept further. The result is a big centrepiece hanging from the ceiling of the church around a classic chandelier with modern led light. The object has the form of a boat. Quite large, 8m x 5m, at the centre of the nave of the church, especially made to fit. This piece of art was inaugurated at Easter and commemorates the resurrection. Inspired by the idea: 'new light new life'.

What makes these locations interesting? Is there great impact on your work - do you design and make installations especially for the occasion ?

Yes, sure in a lot of places. For example already twenty years ago in the *Atrium WTC* in Amsterdam I made tall works in the 26m high court. And shortly after that in an old granite fort in Bretagne a big lamp floating in water and other lamps suspended in trees. In that time there was a budget to do these special installations. And I had more financial freedom because I sold large paintings and some of my frames in that period.

Your work is very physical. Where do you work and can you tell more about the making of the large scale objects ?

Previously I had a large workspace in an industrial building at the Cruquiusweg in eastern Amsterdam – but the contract was not renewed because the owner could let for better prices after the last crises ended. I actually work at home in Amsterdam or at the workspace of friends in Alkmaar in a former business centre. Of course space and daylight is essential for me working on large scale and translucent objects

How about the character of your work – what are your roots, ideas and intentions ?

I was born in Bogota, a city 3000 m above sea level, in the middle of the impressive nature of South America. I became hypnotized - and strongly influenced - by soil, plants and animals, by colours and textures. I grew up with this passion and it is still driving me today: always concerned with figuration and materialisation.

In Colombia I was already fascinated by hard versus soft, liquids, natural pigments and the process of corrosion and dissolution. So I started to make collages, worked with rotten material and discovered oxidation - for example in Iron - which gives an impression of permanence. But I was not satisfied - could not get the process to rigid effect in the materials under control. I wanted stability and moreover: was looking for translucency. I found it in leaves of plants and natural fabrics, nice because it finally entails in flexibility. The ability to form and reform.

The objects in the cellar in the garden in Zutphen appear to be subject to changes during the exhibition – does this evolution change your attitude towards future projects ?

Yes, I think so. The works in the cave in Zutphen were subject to a humid atmosphere without heating and because I covered them with plastic, a certain rotting took place and even mushrooms grew inside, a process of organic transformation So in that case the title 'Dissolutions' of my work is right away visible. And sure I guess this process of transfor-

mation and the ephemerality will return in next projects.

For the opening of the exhibition in Zutphen you wrote a special poem. Is this a new way to express yourself - is it your intention to continue writing?

I have done it before in France. But then I recited myself. In Zutphen the poem was recited in French by a schoolteacher and simultaneously, verse by verse, in Dutch by the city poet. Finally the French teacher explained some of the French words emphasizing the meaning and melody of them. So the plasticity became extra clear.

Do you have plans for the near future - are you thinking of new subjects?

In the church, at the 20th of June, there will be a recital of a new poem by the same people who did so in Zutphen. And indeed, I suppose I will go on working with language in combination with new physical objects. It is evident that nature will remain my starting point. Of course in experiments concerning materialisation and location.

More info www.mauricioescobar.net

The *Nassaukerk* is open to the public
20 April - 30 June 2019

Mauricio is regularly in both Paris and Amsterdam.

Herbert van der Bruggen april 2019