

# JOSÉ ANTONIO SUÁREZ LONDOÑO

Drawings: 1998-2018

Art on Paper, Brussels 2018

"Suárez Londoño is a craftsman of the gaze, because his work combines the trade, the perseverance and vitality of his artistic work, and the indomitable invention of the meaning of acts, in drawings that seem to speak about remote times in which paper and images were treasures". (Sylvia Suárez, *Transpolítico: Arte en Colombia 1992-2012*).

José Antonio Suárez Londoño is one of the most outstanding contemporary draftsman of his generation. His artwork stands out for the refinements of its finishes, the constancy in dimensions that don't surpass the small format, but mainly for the rich imagery and skill to present in the same surface the most dissimilar things. His constant and daily work is an exceptional practice and a rich mix of an inventory of the world and an intimate diary.

The Colombian artist **José Antonio Suárez Londoño** (Medellín, 1955) has dedicated and structured more than forty years of his life out of his daily and disciplined practice drawing and engraving. His artistic research has marked his schedules, times, travels, readings and has become a container of it all, materialized in a body of work of unimaginable dimensions. For Suárez Londoño, to draw is comparable to breath and, although he adopted this practice with more determination after finishing his studies on fine arts in Switzerland, it has been present in his life since he was just a child.

His work consists of drawings and engravings exclusively of small formats, that recall an oneiric language where a dialogue of the most disparate elements occurs. There are recurrent elements such as hands, dogs, children, rabbits, faces, birds, plants or geometric figures, out of which he builds imageries that transversally cross all his artistic production. In many cases, these are elements that he adopts from important references of the history of art including **Dürer**, **Rembrandt**, **Klee**, **Goya** or **Hockney**. As the Colombian artist **Beatriz González** affirms, "Suárez admires the history of art, but reduces it to his notebooks, to his intimate diary." Thus, the art of the museums merges with his autobiography, the events, the dramas of his country, the banal and trivial. His work drinks from everything that is offered to his sensibility, including visual culture, literature, music, popular phrases or antique illustrations such as medieval miniatures.

The 36 drawings that are exhibited in **Art on Paper**, shapes three groups that embody the artistic work Suárez Londoño has developed throughout his career, pointing out the varied and, at the same time, familiar languages that constitutes his imageries.

A first body of drawings displays a selection of pieces that was chosen by the artist specially for Art on Paper. It is a group of drawings created between 1996 and 2011, where some of the most recurrent and representative elements of his artwork are present. We make reference to figures such as the rabbit (which quotes Dürer) or the Siamese twins separated only by the head (which alludes to Jacob and the Angel (J.A.), to duality and the internal struggle between the spiritual and the profane) which are images repeated, with slight variations, throughout his career. Also, this selection highlights common visual strategies in his work, as it is the gamble between the figurative and abstract languages, which frame many of his compositions.

A second group of artworks presents a series created between 2016 and 2018 from a revision and reflection on the work of the American artists **Francesca Woodman** (Denver, 1958 - New York, 1981). These drawings highlight fragments that called Suárez Londoño's attention within the images of this photographer who, from an early age, claimed for a conscious revision of the female body and the importance of its representation. His drawings are visual echoes of the mythical photos of Woodman, from which the gaze and the own imagery of the Colombian artist becomes visible.

Finally, it is exhibited one of his most recent works, produced between 2017 and 2018, which consists of a set of 20 drawings about balance and gravity. These pieces have been created with a synthetic language, using a fine brush and making small pencil interventions. In this case, Suárez Londoño reflects about balance, understood as a concept and as a challenge of the force of gravity over bodies. These are images that the artist constructed out of his mind, where figures and geometric elements enter into an interesting dynamic equilibrium. This exceptional suite is inspired on the historic video *The Way Things Go* by the Swiss artistic duo **Peter Fischli & David Weiss**, in which the artist unleashed a chain reaction with everyday objects, generating almost impossible movements and balances.

Each of Suárez Londoño's pieces has such richness that they resist a hasty look. And, in turn, all of them can be understood as a great work or a sort of infinite *codex* that is in permanent construction. His work reaffirms the discipline of drawing as a dynamic form of thinking that renders endless formal and conceptual possibilities. As the curator **Chris Sharp** points out, his drawings present a "testimony to existence, a way of negotiating that existence, and a creation of it and by extension, the world".

José Antonio Suárez Londoño (b. 1955, Medellín, Colombia) lives and works in Medellín - Colombia. He studied Biology at Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín, and holds a Postgraduate Degree in Fine Arts from Ecole Supérieure d'Art Visuel in Geneva, Switzerland (1978-1984). His life and work not only has inspired a younger generation of Colombian artists, but also have had a significant impact in the international contemporary art scene.

His work has been presented in numerous exhibitions abroad, including: *F[r]icciones* an exhibition dedicated to Latin-American art, presented in the **Museo Reina Sofía of Madrid** (2000). Also *The Modern Myth: Drawing Mythologies in Modern Times*, **MoMA**, New York (2011), *The Yearbooks*, **Drawing Center**, New York (2012), *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, **55ª Bienal de Venecia** (2013), *Muestrario*, **La Casa Encendida**, Madrid (2015), **32ª Bienal de São Paulo** (2016) and *Almanach*, **Museum Villa Stuck**, Munich (2018).

His drawings and etchings make part of the permanent collection of the **MoMA**. In 2009 the museum acquired some of his yearbooks, a selection of drawings and his complete collection of etchings.

Among the main collections where his work can be found, are: Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA; the Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA; Banco de la República, Colombia; Colección MOCA, Los Ángeles, USA; Blackburn Print Workshop, New York, USA; Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, Austria; Tamarind Institute, Albuquerque, USA; Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, USA y Colección Patricia Phels de Cisneros, Nueva York, USA.

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## Drawings: 1998-2018



José Antonio Suárez Londoño

*Untitled (1-4)*, 2017.

Brush and pencil on paper.  
10,5 x 16,5 cm each.

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