

BALANCE

Gravity in Contemporary Art



Bas Jan Ader

Study for Broken fall (geometric), Westkapelle, Holland, 1971.

Two vintage color photographic prints.

8,9 x 8,9 cm (each). Unique. Detail part 2 of 2.

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Balance: Gravity in Contemporary Art

Opening: Thursday, January 25th. 19.30h

Calle Sánchez Bustillo, 7.

(Museo Reina Sofía square). Madrid.

From 01.25.18 to 02.24.18

Hours M-F: 11h-14h / 16.30h-20.30h. S: 11h-14h.

Bernal Espacio is pleased to present the group exhibition Balance: Gravity in Contemporary Art, which brings together artworks of different artists in which the notions of balance and gravity are a common denominator. The exhibition explores different views about these concepts and their physical relationship with space and volume, as well as their participation in physical and political terms.

MARINA ABRAMOVIC / BAS JAN ADER/
FISCHLI AND WEISS / ALFREDO JAAR /
ROBERT KINMONT / CAROLINE KRYZECKI /
ÍÑIGO MANGLANO-OVALLE / VIRGINIA OVERTON /
JOSÉ ANTONIO SUÁREZ LONDOÑO /
FRANCESCA WOODMAN

The artwork of the artists included in the show, challenge the attraction of gravity, within an apparent state of immobility, but internally governed by a dynamic equilibrium. Different artistic disciplines, such as video, performance, photography, sculpture or drawing, explores in a poetic and conceptual way, how this idea of balance has been interpreted by contemporary artists.

The artwork presented create a game of suspensions, in which the material values, external and intrinsic to the components, gives place to oeuvres that involve complex internal interpretations.

"Gravity is the fundamental force that governs every aspect of our lives. It is the challenge we encounter once we take our first steps. And it pulls us down when our life journey comes to an end. Within gravity the artists used to feel the hand of God, or the organizing principle of the universe. While for others it represents the weight of life, or the nonsense of our existence".

Passage of the documentary *Here is Always Somewhere Else: Bas Jan Ader*, 2007.

The exhibition is composed of pieces that have diverse forms, creating a joint harmony in relation to the equilibrium point, understood in physical, social or political terms. As a counterpart of the instability, an organization prevails in the inner and thematic terms of the artworks included.

The work of the conceptual artist **Robert Kinmont** (Los Angeles, 1937) always has been linked to its connection with the Californian landscape, as well as the use of elements such as wood, cooper or water. His pieces explore the independence between man and nature. In the case of *8 Natural Handstands*, 1969-2009, we observe eight performances in which the artist's body appears on his hands. Throughout apparently simple movements Kinmont foretell power, as well as the success and failure of the physical action. The lightness of its movements contrasts strongly with the landscape that surrounds him, despite their complexity.

Under this perspective, **Íñigo Manglano-Ovalle** (Madrid, 1961) dares balance with his sculpture *Asteroid (Apophis)*, 2012, in an artistic practice linked to natural elements and phenomena. With this piece, the artist explores environmental fragility and the relations between nature and culture within the representation of his pieces. This sculpture is composed of an anodized aluminum mass that represents the physical form of the asteroid Apophis, and was created out of the information collected by scientists about it. Originally, its collision to the Earth was predicted for the year 2029. The work highlights the fragile physical and environmental equilibrium of our planet. With this piece, Manglano-Ovalle refers to the representation of nature in a less real way, but closer to illusion, as we can observe an active practice developed in contact with scientific research and in frequent collaboration with programmers, architects and engineer.

The pictures by **Francesca Woodman** (Denver, 1958 – New York, 1981) address the duality between presence and absence. The images of the artists settle on the verge of disappearance or fall, force the limits of the self-portrait and of its physical and mental balance, creating an imagery that refuses to remain immobile. The photographs belong to the artist's last period of production between 1976 and 1980, during her formative years at the Rhode Island School of Design, when Woodman moved to New York.

The exhibition includes the artwork of the German artist **Caroline Krycecki** (Wickede/Ruhr, Germany, 1979). Her drawing keeps remnants of analogical writing, resulting in a meticulous calligraphy developed with ballpoint pen, her essential element of work. She uses exclusively the four available colors: blue, black, red and green. The geometric constructions that compose her artwork, create systems of series that show the logic of the work in a structure of superposition. Each of the pieces is formed out of horizontal and vertical lines, in which small angles of deviation, displaced out of the origin, draw waves on the paper, arising the moiré effect. The obsessive repetition of the gesture reveals a landscape that arose an illusion of depth and balance. Within its subtleness, the complexity of a slow process is intuited. Krycecki understands the small imperfections of the line as part of their unity, characterizing the pieces with small and involuntary errors as part of her personal language.

A special view about the notion of balance is settled through the pieces of **José Antonio Suárez Londoño** (Medellín, Colombia, 1955). The artists prepared for the exhibition a series of meticulous drawing, in which personal experiences are combined with a precious world. In his work, it is common to find references to other artists, especially of the classical world, highlighted by the use of traditional means of drawing and engraving. It is striking the refinements of his work, the constancy of the dimensions that don't surpass the small format and the skill and inventiveness of the artists. Often, his main sources of inspiration have been his everyday environment, literature, and the history of art, in works that intersect with references to writers, artists, songs, news of popular phrases. The style of the artist surprises and reaffirms itself with each new series of work, with the richness of its solutions and the variety of its themes, and especially the essay essence of its proposal, that kind of language that fluctuates between image and text.

The photographic series of the artistic duo **Peter Fischli** (Zürich, Switzerland, 1952) y **David Weiss** (Zürich, Switzerland, 1946-2012) refers to the famous video *The Way Things Go*, where careful compositions are presented that work on symbolic production from everyday objects, in temporary suspension. In their line of work, where humor and irony become essential elements, the series takes as inspiration the games that we perform almost unconsciously in bars, where we try to balance objects within our reach. The video presents the sequence of a chain reaction of domestic objects, which show an unstable development of events and movements in an almost impossible relationship between equilibrium and collapse, cause and effect. In the words of the artists: "We discovered that we could leave all the formal decisions to equilibrium itself".

In a significantly conceptual and political context, **Alfredo Jaar** (Santiago de Chile, 1956) brings out his project *Out of balance*, 1989, where he carefully develops compositions that invites the viewer to a deep reflection on the meaning of scale and social class. The series is the result of extensive research, linking art, documentation and information. All his production is characterized by a permanent deliberation between the dual relationship of ethics and aesthetics, and by incorporating at the same time intellectual and emotional elements. The medium used is coherent to the conceptual sphere that the piece question. In this case, the photograph is shown in a light box, referring to the work of photojournalists. Architectural elements such as scale, composition or light also play a fundamental role. The series focuses on the social imbalance, in relation to a situation that is permanently relevant in California: the dependence of agricultural work on the work of illegal immigrants from Central America. The photograph presents the image of a Brazilian gold miner. Within this same project we can also find images of Mexican coyotes, or women and men who transport immigrants behind them along the Rio Grande. His work, placed in a wall at a height higher than usual, emphasizes the social order, remembering the spectator its advantageous social point.

The exhibition includes the project *Levitation of Saint Therese*, 2009, of the well-known artist **Marina Abramovic** (Belgrade, Serbia, 1946). This installation, developed in the abandoned kitchen of La Laboral in Gijón, reflects the mystical experience of the artists, inspired by the life of Saint Teresa of Avila, a project in which she united meditation and levitative experiences. The artist works for the piece in the recovery of historical memory and the meaning of nostalgia, within a domestic context linked to the personal experiences of her childhood and her grandmother. In the photograph *Floating*, 2013, we observe the artists floating in the Atlantic Ocean. The work belongs to the series *Places of power*, and explores the connections between art and spirituality through her trip to Brazil in 2012 and 2013. In this experience Abramovic studied crystals and precious stones, and their influence on the human body in a physical and psychological sense.

The American sculptor **Virginia Overton** (Nashville, USA, 1971) develops an artwork of a visible physical and material sensibility, making special reference to the understanding of the architectonic space. In her artwork, the materials swing in sculptures that remain suspended. The artists explore and exploits the potential of the supplies, which use to return to their original function. Her minimalist pieces combine everyday objects, created with ordinary materials, such as wooden planks, glass or marble, making forms that make reference to our common imageries, such as circles or squares. The final compositions of her sculptures create a complex relationship between familiar and strange ideas, at the same time.

The exhibition includes three videos that present performances of **Bas Jan Ader** (Winschoten, Holland, 1942-1975). In these pieces, we observe the figure of the artist swinging from a tree in *Broken Fall (organic)*, 1971 or swinging with the wind in *Broken Fall (geometric)*, 1971. Both actions are associated with the meanings that for the artist entails with failure and error, hidden as a backdrop, lead to an inevitable loss of control. In his work *Untitled. Tee Party*, 1972, Ader walks over a forest glade to sit under a cardboard box, held up with a stick, while sipping a cup of tea. The sequence shows the fall of the box, trapping the artist. Ader was last seen in 1975, when he set out on what he called "a great sailing trip" with the intention of crossing the Atlantic and which he planned as his greatest work of art. After him, Ader left behind multiple pieces that work with the balance of the human body and its dependence on terrestrial gravity, which ultimately fight against the fall, imminent action through all his work, and of full influence at the present.

The exhibition is carried out thanks to the collaboration of the galleries: Meliksetian | Briggs (Los Angeles), Thomas Schulte (Berlin), Sexauer Gallery (Berlin), Sprüth Magers (Berlin-London-Los Angeles) and White Cube (London), which have made it possible to join efforts to gather this group of relevant international artists.

