

Luis Molina-Pantin – English version

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Louis Molina-Pantin

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Villa Bardini Costa S. Giorgio, 2 e 6°

Free entrance Opening hours: June-August 8.15-19.30; September 8.15-18.30

(June-September until 10 p.m. access from Costa San Giorgio, 6a)

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For the first time in Florence, the photographs of the Venezuelan artist Luis Molina- Pantin are on exhibit. A selection of works, New landscapes, Chelsea Galleries and Informal study on hybrid architecture Vol.I. Narco-Architecture and its contributions to the community (Cali-Bogota, Colombia) 2004-2005 traces Pantin's research from the late '90s to today. The exploration that emerges from the works displayed refers to an idea of an imaginary, metaphysical landscape linked to memory, to the idea of souvenirs, confronting us with the presence of absence of a place, of an object of a terrible history of exploitation and the accumulation of wealth in a grotesque architectural allegory.

Pantin also leads us to reflect on disappearance or transmutation, beginning with the Hegelian theory of the overlapping between subject and object, passing through Deleuze and his reflections between difference and repetition, and finally coming to Bourriard and his esthetic of post-production. The disappearance or dissolving of the object, the work of art or the architecture as subjects and their new connotation are the basis of Pantin's photography and experimentation, along with the archivist spirit of the creator of samples that stand in for real experience, laying bare our human incapacity and immobility in the face of the seduction of the scenic illusion. New landscapes places us before a gamma of everyday objects decorated with reproductions of well-known and defined places, imaginary visions of adventurous or comforting landscapes.

The force of these ironically evocative images lies in the outsized, monumental, museum-style representation of banal objects that border on kitsch, letting the image linked to memory gain the upper hand over that of the object, which vanishes in the oversizing the artist has decided to give it. In this work, Pantin also presents us with a way for a contemporary artist to deal with the classical themes of art, such as landscape, portraiture and reality, proposing a personal, ironic and estranging perception of memory, of the souvenir, which persists through the possession and vision of an object. In Chelsea Galleries the artist shows interiors of the offices – stripped bare, perfectly organized, sometimes homologated, a determinant model of reference – of some of the most important and influential contemporary art galleries on the planet, all located in New York's Chelsea neighborhood.

Pantin is fascinated, but not charmed, but the austerity, the lucid, businesslike organization of places of creativity, intended also as places where the key words of order and progress reign. The rigorous lines, the serialization, the repetition of colors and modules of the archives and libraries containing the writings, thoughts and even the contracts of the most influential people in the contemporary art world seem to allude to the American's puritanical and ethical concept of work, and to the roots of that modernist culture, all rigor and progress.

The disappearance of the work of art and the appearance of a command bridge worthy of the headquarters of a multinational company allude strongly to the centrality of the gallery in today's mechanism of exchange and relationships between artist, gallery owner, institutions, collectors and the public, analytically recording a current state of things. This is in aesthetic and temperamental contraposition to the artist's natural inclination towards the tropical modernism of his roots, where instead the key words might be disorder and regression, intended as an element of decadence. Informal study on hybrid architecture Vol.I. Narco-Architecture and its contributions to the community (Cali-Bogota, Colombia)2004-2005 is a series of images that shifts us towards another of the artist's interests: cultural phenomena linked to architecture. The photos were taken between 2004 and 2005, in particular in the Parque Jaime Dunque near Bogotá, and in Cali, two places among those sadly known as the headquarters of important Colombian drug cartels.

This hybrid architecture, as Pantin defines it, shows a mix of local stylistic elements and occidental and oriental models, generating an architectural potpourri that once would have been defined as whimsy: it shows the obscene aesthetic taste of the Colombian drug lords of the 1990s. In those years, local schools of architecture were adulterated, victims of a civic variation due to the mad and heedless accumulation of wealth, combined with the arrogance and ignorance of the narcotics. There is no human presence in these images; the vanished inhabitants and the detached gaze of the artist who does not judge, comment or document, demonstrate the taxonomic vision of a folly. The artist creates a de facto museum of narco-architecture pervaded by an unadorned poetic of places that brings to mind De Chirico's Italian piazzas.

The vision of a Taj Mahal, or a sinister circular building surmounted by an enormous eagle, the Marroquin, impose an esthetic of kitsch that reappears in our country as well, in pop culture buildings, depressing outlet malls that have become formidable Sunday attractions. The narco-architectures have been converted into something else – an amusement park in the case of the Taj Mahal, a car dealership in that of the miniature Capitol, an amusement and party park for the Marroquin.

Luis Molina-Pantin, born in Geneva in 1969, lives in Caracas and is one of the most active young Venezuelan artists. His works, all photographic, have been presented in many countries in South America, Italy, Spain, Canada and the United States. Since 1992 he has been involved in intensive international exposition activities, documented in catalogues and monographs, and his works are found in private and museum collections.

He participated in the IV Bienal di Mercosur di Porto Alegre, in Brazil; the 25th Bienal de Sao Paulo; the 7th Bienal de La Habana, Mapas Abiertos Fotografia Latino Americana 1991-2002, Fundacion Telefonica. In Italy, he recently showed at the Federico Luger Gallery (April-May 2008) the series "Narco-Architecture and its contribution to society"; the entire exhibition will be shown at the Biennial of Gwangju 2008, South Korea, curated by Okwui Enwezor.

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