

Alberto Alejandro Rodriguez

Space: Past Present

February 1 – March 9, 2024

Chelsea, New York: 532 Gallery presents *Space: Past Present*, an exhibition of sculptures, assemblages, drawings, and artist books by Alberto Alejandro Rodríguez. *Space: Past and Present* will open on February 1 and run through March 3, 2024. This is Rodríguez's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

The works of Barcelona-based artist Alberto Alejandro Rodríguez are haunted by the specter of destruction. Using ruined architectures as a backdrop, he constructs liminal spaces suggestive of abandoned offices, squatted rooms, entrances leading nowhere. In an effort to articulate how the vestiges of human effort that earmark such spaces can align with polarizing feelings of rootlessness and nostalgia, Rodríguez underscores the political narratives that are encrusted onto the surfaces of these sites. These narratives are written in a cipher of wood and iron, swaths of torn-up wallpaper and protruding mounds of discarded documents. But it's only through the process of destruction, as it gradually reveals foundations which would normally be kept hidden, that the true cornerstones of our society can come to light.

Across the different bodies of work on view, Rodríguez shows how sites indigenous to his native Cuba might parallel others scattered throughout Western nations. His *Auriga* series, which borrows its name from Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*, refers to a mythical charioteer driving two winged horses: one representing all that is beautiful and good, while the other represents neither. Composed of plasterboard, wood, and paper fragments retrieved from an abandoned mansion in Havana, Rodríguez's *Auriga* works recreate what was once one of the most elegant buildings in Havana: a structure which, today, has all but fallen into ruin. While specialists have identified the cause of the building's destruction as being due to its proximity to the sea, Rodríguez sees in this a poetic testament to history's frailty in the teeth of geological time and ineluctable natural forces.

Underlying Rodríguez's sense of naturalism lies a fascination with the detritus of weathered artifacts: the bygone worlds they allude to, and the spatial possibilities they make room for. The series titled *Destruktion* consists of found pieces of wood, iron, and wall paper retrieved from a derelict building in Havana. Arranged to appear like miniature rooms, glimpsed through a portal, these works show how seemingly random and ephemeral surfaces can provide the foundation for entrenched architectural vistas. In a similar vein, Rodríguez's artist books are dynamic records of unique spatial interventions. Titled *Prolog*, the works included in this series anticipate design alternatives fostered by corrosion and decay, or spatially model the historical stages of a built structure from the date of its construction to the year of its demolition.

While many of the works featured in *Space: Past Present* allude to places eaten away by time, a complementary process of solidification is revealed through Rodríguez's use of documents. In a work like *Descriptive Memory*, which forms the centerpiece of the exhibition, the concepts "document" and "documentation" converge to map out a scale model of an abandoned building. Rodríguez's use of actual legal documents to reference the building's history not only thematizes its current state of decay, but points out the political responses that have cropped up around the site. In the face of neglect, these policies have only served to mummify decay: maintaining the superficies of the building, like a monument of destruction, against all hopes of ever salvaging it from ruin.

Alberto Alejandro Rodríguez (1995, Havana) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts "San Alejandro" and holds a Master's Degree in Artistic Production and Research from the University of Barcelona. He has participated in solo and group exhibitions at galleries and cultural centers across Cuba, USA, and Spain: among them, the Contemporary Art Center (Havana); 532 Gallery Thomas Jaeckel (NY); the Viladot Foundation (Barcelona); and Casal Solleric (Palma de Mallorca). His work can be found in the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection, and has been reviewed by *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Hypermedia Magazine*, and *CdeCuba*.

For further information or to schedule an interview with the artist, please contact info@532gallery.com