

IN SEARCH OF THE GREEN RAY

Opening on Thursday April 6th, 2019

6 - 9 pm

ALLAN VILLAVICENCIO

Curated by Anais Lepage

April 5th - May 25th, 2019

MAËLLE GALERIE

MEMBER OF THE CPGA AND THE GRAND BELLEVILLE

1-3 rue Ramponeau 75020 Paris

contact@maellegalerie.com

www.maellegalerie.com

+ 33[0] 6 14 80 42 00

A green ray, or flash, is an atmospheric phenomenon, an illusion produced by a variance in the perception of the horizon and the earth's curve. At dawn or dusk – and only when the weather is fine – a green ray forms above the upper rim of the solar disk as it rises or sets. Its causes – be they scientific, poetic or literary – and the rarity of its appearance make it a metaphor for the horizon as promise, continuation and construction.

In this exhibition, Allan Villavicencio assembles a new series of works, in a configuration especially designed for the gallery space and in affinity with this optical manifestation. Here, he continues his experimentation with painting as perception: visual perception, sensible or material perception, and physical perception. For him, painting is an accumulation of matter and sensations. His practice oscillates between a formal relation to a pictorial object, and a gestural and intuitive process that includes the traces and hazards of chance.

Taking inspiration from the spatial experimentation characteristic of Mexican muralism, from the sensations of navigation in 3D virtual landscapes, and from the energy of the urban environment, this exhibition is conceived of as a total landscape. It brings together three corpuses: a mural painting, encaustic paintings, and what Allan Villavicencio calls volume "projections" of paintings. The constant shifts between these different ensembles – between the narrative figuration of a deconstructed tropicity and the distance of abstract motifs – encourage layered readings and the ambiguity of relations. The mural section sketches a space in motion in which the notion of centre is evacuated, as is the possibility of omnisciently embracing the ensemble. The encaustic paintings, for their part, return to an ancient technique to depict fragments of visions. The volume projections constitute an array of ersatz and residues of the landscape in the space.

Devised through different procedures of excavation and aggregation, this « landscape-fragment » is infused with a tension between a sentiment of immersion and a fractured, piecemeal character whose coherence is broken in places. Based on a classical motif of art history, Villavicencio convokes a symbolic narrative of the occupation of space far from the so-called neutrality of perspective. Fictitiously prolonging Hito Steyerl's reflections on the horizon and falling¹, he brings together two systems of spatial construction: the plasticity of mural painting and the disorientation of virtual spaces. He draws on its refusal of a unified horizon, an often hallucinatory phantasmagory, a sensation of imbalance associated with a heightened and sped-up sensorial stimulation – and a political dimension of the composition.

Throughout, Allan Villavicencio thereby sows mental reminiscences of images and gestures. Here and there we can see echoes of the hitherto erased massive and interlaced sculptures of David Alfaro Siqueiros' mural, *America Tropical* (1932), or the Cubist accents of Diego Rivera's *Paysage Zapatista* (1915) in its organization of hollows and protrusions. These visual echoes act like layer "masks" superimposed on one another, both disjointed and connected together.

The memories of the body's movements in multiple directions invites a re-reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's final work, *L'Œil et l'Esprit* (*Eye and Mind*, 1964), written by the sea, in another light: "we must go back to the working, actual body — not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement"². Here we have a visibility experienced by the body as it paints, but also by the viewer contemplating the painting. It is all a matter of sensible focal distance, of the "seeing-seeable bod". It is up to us to ask ourselves what we have before our eyes and what its modes of existence are. Continuing in the words of the philosopher, these elements, "Light, lighting, shadows, reflections, color, all these objects of his quest are not altogether real objects ; like ghosts, they have only visual existence."³

"In Search of the Green Ray" thus unfolds in a combinatorial of colours and forms akin to camouflage, trompe-l'œil, and to mirage, in the image of the observation of the atmospheric phenomenon whose awaiting it describes. In a reflection on the in-progress and the completed, it may be perceived as its pictorial act and the quest for the Green Ray : that of a pretext to go searching for the visible and for disorientation, fragmentation, a time, perspectives. A deflection against the line.

Anais Lepage

¹ Hito Steyerl, In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective, eflux journal, 2011, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/24/67860/in-free-fall-a-thought-experiment-on-vertical-perspective/>

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'Esprit*, 1985 (first appearance in 1964), Gallimard, p.16

³ *Ibid* p.26

