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## Jorge Miño in Conversation with Sonia Becce\*

EVERYTHING THAT HAS EXISTED LINGERS IN ETERNITY—DOT FIFTYONE GALLERY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 2016

The following dialogue was the result of an intense exchange of emails between Sonia Becce and Jorge Miño. Little by little, the questions and answers were honed and polished until they reached the final version of a conversation that manages to render an account of the works that this photographer presents in this show, of his creative process, and of his journey as an artist.

Sonia Becce: Your work has persistently investigated the dematerialization of the form, the transparencies, the fantasies. Your recent works have progressed towards a gradual and methodical dilution of the image. However, in this new series of photographs, instead of insisting on carrying these features to an extreme, you take a sidestep. Instead of gray surfaces or simple shadowy spaces (possibly, the last stages of the sequence), new structures and, in a very moderate measure, color come forth. How was your trajectory in order to be able to arrive to these images? What facilitated this twist?

Jorge Miño: During the working process, I set out to travel a road that starts with a vague, although concrete, interest, and I keep on moving forward towards the image, beginning with discoveries that are, more often than not, serendipitous. Somehow, it is the image itself that calls forth its own strong points from which I may move forward. It is an elusive, unpredictable pursuit – a happening. It needs to be transformed all the time, and it redefines itself all the time. An image is the result of a process that does not have a rigid or predictable logic. I don't want it to have a destination either. What shapes the sequence is not the time factor, which is implicit in the process, or the search for a formal consistency but, rather, the point of view.

The works I'm showing in this exhibition open a gate through which several possibilities move forward simultaneously. Just as you put it, "taking a sidestep" allows me to kick off a new perspective in which these possibilities can be foreshadowed. It occurs to me to think of Cubism and the search for other different views in a single moment of representation on the plane, or of the sculpture made out of odds and ends, as opposed to starting from a single block in order to make space appear between surfaces, with the aim of building the volume from the relationship between mass and vacuum. I'm thinking of Kupka and his representations of space

by means of layers of color. Of Picabia and of Cézanne. Of Roger de la Fresnaye, who adopted the overlapping of planes, which had been proposed by Cubism, without getting to the point of doing away completely with figurativism or with the use of perspective. I am interested in inhabiting this idea and in pushing it forward, in revealing the eerie character of what is understood as a solid shape, and in giving body and presence to what is read as vacuum.

SB: What was it that gave rise to the appearance of color, to that jumble of ladders and structures that become entangled in the air?

JM: Color emerged as a sudden necessity for the appropriation of the image in its relation to painting and as another aspect of its reification. The same way the black-and-white images had an identifying relationship with drawing (the graphite powder, the pen, and the ink), in these new works the material aspect demanded to be more forceful. The color plane rushed in solid and concrete, as if in this instance the process demanded to be fleshed out.

At the same time, the idea of volume and of structure – which is manifested in the stairs, and which is added to the emergence of color in order to inhabit the space of the image – requires a counterpoint: Imagining the space (what there is, what it's full) also entails imagining the vacuum. I see this dynamic unfolding at the spatial origin. That is why, in my works, the spaces are empty; I try to make objects with a tendency towards abstraction, to finally reach such a subtle density that they may seem to become nothing once again – melting away. This could be an answer to your previous question.

SB: What is your interest in these anonymous, generic spaces? When did architecture come into your work?

JM: My interest in generic spaces is due to their character of universality and power. A space that has been built, albeit without specific references, is a platform that allows us to simultaneously address the relationship of a body with the concrete forms that surround (and contain) it on an ongoing basis, with the more abstract and elusive notion of the space. The anonymity contains the "real" experience, with which each and every one of us can identify, as well as the universality of the idea. Then, when I choose a (specific although unidentifiable) construction it is because it's the here and the nowhere and, upon dissolving its boundaries and its rational perception, the possibility of our own construction may emerge.

Therein lies a belief: For me, everything is possible, anything can be invented, the world is creating itself continuously. Architecture is the evident reference to that idea, and because of that, it is also and necessarily a reference at a symbolic level.

SB: Aren't you afraid of becoming "the photographer of stairs"?

JM: I don't see it that way, because photography and stairs are mediums through which we can symbolically work other meanings, other ways of picturing ideas. They are useful for my exploration of the notion of itineraries, of destinations. Photography is often associated with its specificity: To be a witness of what there is. However, my interest is, precisely, to submit the idea of how, starting from what already exists, there may be something else. I don't think of it as the record of a specific moment in time, but rather as a medium for the creation of an enhanced sense or emotion. For that reason I do not consider myself to be a photographer in the traditional sense of that word. In this show, for instance, there is a group of works set on vegetable paper, which demonstrates the extinction of photography as language: The foundational image is already not visible; I manipulated it to the extent that it has virtually disappeared. In other cases, I used photographs by other people, which I downloaded from the Internet, taking them from a small to a large format, with low resolution, running them once and again through design programs, moving away in this manner from what has been considered "technically correct" within the photographic tradition. What prevails, then, is not the technical aspect or the formal motifs; I do not look at the world in order to document it. The technique and the motifs are vehicles I use to make up what I would like to see. That's why stairs ("real" structures by way of which a body moves either ascending or descending) are, for me, in a more symbolic sense, shapes of possible paths to a destination – itineraries of their own history. It's a symbolism I have developed based on my own experience, obviously, and not the result of an intellectual education.

SB: Whenever the photograph is taken out of the technical limits, expanding the universe of its interest, it is possible to find enriched and healthy experiments. I think it is an important artistic decision to incorporate and preserve the mistakes. Have you ever found something by accident that proved to be more attractive to you than what you had originally intended to achieve?

JM: It happens to me all the time. I very often incorporate the "mistake" as a starting point: It is an impetus towards the next stretch in my search. As I mentioned before, the driving force of my work is not rational consistency: There is something mysterious that barges into a process that I think has more to do with inertia. For that reason a mistake is not a mistake at all but, rather, a lucky break!