

creating as he tells us: “A friction... a tension between materialities like the lightness of paper versus the heaviness of sculpture [in order to] destabilize the order of the exhibition.”

Thus, in “Mute Parade” operated that same instability or binary negation that exists in his work, where lights are also shadows, sound is also silence, and war (although masked) is also an invocation of memory, through the juxtaposition of celebratory and intimidating feelings that arise from military music. But it was a juxtaposition that, once again, occurred as ghostly silence, given that euphoria also intimidates others.

How to re-interpret the meanings of music, sound, noise or silence designed by the power structures? This is the question that also leads Navarro to resort to the onomatopoeic figure. The pieces titled *KNOC-KNOCKNOCK* (2016) and *KICKBACKICKBACKICKBACK* (2016) are examples of this. Two batteries measuring six feet (1.83 cm) in diameter composed of neon, LED lights, mirrors and electricity, and installed one behind the other in the gallery’s main exhibition room, projected circular texts that, like titled, were repeated to infinitum. According to Navarro, “The sculptures do not sound, but it is said that they sound like a knock [...] They are mute structures/instruments that try to communicate something beyond their assigned meaning.”

And, like metaphors that allow to reformulate the meaning of things and of the senses, in the exhibition room further in the back, four 6 by 6 feet (1.83 by 1.83 meters) structures where nothing more than portable cases used for transporting and protecting instruments. But, instead of being static objects, their interiors filled with mirrors projected neon-green sound waves to infinitum. Titled *Impenetrable Room* (2016), in this, and in every other work, the silence of the marches expands across the space without a purpose; an infinite that is imaginary and, therefore possible but impenetrable. Regardless, because of their scale, viewers wanted to get inside them with their bodies and senses. In “Mute Parade,” dystopia, as a form of beauty, became the possibility of interrupting unique and infinite sensation and meanings. In this manner, “ideal” silence as resting space or death was nothing but a multiple activation across the space, images, language and voice.

NOTE

1. For more information about this exhibition, see Florencia San Martín’s article “Iván Navarro, una guerra silenciosa e imposible: Centro de las Artes 660 [Iván Navarro, a Silent and Impossible War: Centro de las Artes 660],” *ArtNexus* No. 98, pp. 104-106

FLORENCIA SAN MARTIN

**Catalina Chervin.** *Untitled* (collage diptych), 2014 - 2016. Mixed media on paper mounted on canvas. 78 ¾ x 118 in. (200 x 300 cm). Photography: Arturo Sánchez.



**Catalina Chervin**  
Cecilia de Torres LTD.

2016 was a remarkable year for exhibitions of important women abstract artists in New York museums and galleries. Carmen Herrera’s retrospective was seen at the Whitney Museum, that of Agnes Martin was at the Guggenheim and the less well-known but no less significant African-American painter Alma Thomas’s work was on view at The Studio Museum in Harlem. To this list we should add *Catalina Chervin. Atmospheres and Entropy: Works on Paper* (curated by Susanna Temkin) at the Cecilia de Torres Fine Art Ltd. Gallery (November, 17, 2016 to February 4, 2017). This was a small but powerful retrospective of Chervin’s accomplishments during the past decade (although several pieces had been started as early as the later 1990s and reworked through the years – Chervin creates slowly and we feel as if she releases the products of her rich imagination into the world with great caution and even a certain reluctance). While she has not had a Manhattan gallery or museum show before, Chervin’s art nonetheless forms part of such distinguished permanent collections as The Metropolitan Museum and The Jewish Museum. This Argentine artist is originally from the northern city of Corrientes but for many years she has been based in Buenos Aires. Chervin works principally in ink and charcoal on paper although recently she had branched out into large-scale collage in pieces such as the 2014-16 *Untitled Diptych* (fig. 1) that suggest the proportions of a mural or palimpsest wall of an urban site covered with the detritus of advertising, graffiti and random markings to suggest the passage of time and in the inexorable anxiety of existence.

As someone who has been a long-time follower of Catalina Chervin’s art I have seen it evolve in surprising and gratifying ways since the early 1990s. In 2012 Marietta Mautner Markhof, curator at the Albertina Graphische Sammlung (Vienna) wrote that “Since [Chervin’s] emancipation from surrealist imagination [she] has worked steadfastly to clarify and deepen her abilities to transform a process of sensual experience into visual form.”<sup>1</sup> This writer refers to Chervin’s earlier engagement with tortured forms possibly suggested by the art of Northern Renaissance painters like Pieter Bruegel or Hieronymus Bosch. Chervin executed many masterful ink and charcoal drawings throughout the 1980s and 90s that evoked the body in pain, hinting at bones, sinews, fibers and vegetal forms of humanoid figures in evidently agonizing contortions. Intimations of the anxiety of the human condition, and harrowing events of much greater cataclysmic consequences like the Holocaust (the artist is descendant of Russian Jewish immigrants to Argentina) haunt her work of this period. I would not, however, connect her earlier art with any of the movements that developed throughout the Americas in the late 1930s and 40s that were directly connected to the peregrinations of the European Surrealists in the New World. Catalina Chervin’s imagination is far too independent to be subject to the sometimes-obvious directives of the Surrealist aesthetic. Instead, in her art from the pre-2000 era, Chervin fashioned a private language of trauma and unease that evokes long-forgotten distress of collective apprehension.

In the new work on view at Cecilia de Torres, Chervin concentrates much more than before on the possibilities of line and form. Although her art is virtually monochrome, she sometimes employs color in enigmatically subtle ways. In compositions dominated by twisting and turning black and white lines and shapes, she will occasionally introduce a small area of yellow wash, or, in other instances, a small drop of blood red. These color highlights do not carry with them any overt references to a topical event, nor do they proffer a message to the viewer. They are, in effect, subtle hints of rebellion from the dominant black and white – reminders that discordant notes may always invade the otherwise consistent tonalities of her drawings.

In some of Chervin's larger pieces the thickness of the rag paper is enhanced, or attention is called to the density of its texture, by the artist's scraping away sections of the surface with a razor. Within the framework of a mass of lines and intersecting forms she will create what appears to be breaks and rifts of the surface. This lends a quasi-geological impression to the work, as if it had been worn away with the relentless passage of time. This is very noticeable in the large untitled collage illustrated here in which a sculptural sensibility has been introduced with the many layers and collaged sections of the work. Her art is evidently headed in a direction of increased abstraction and experimentation with shapes and surfaces. The play of voids and solids constitute not so much a technique but an aesthetic strategy. Chervin is interested in establishing her own visual architecture and creating a landscape of light and shade in which her fertile imagination operates and into which she wishes to draw the attention of her viewers.

**NOTE**

1. In the exhibition catalogue *Catalina Chervin. As I Breathe* (Berlin: Lempertz, 2012), p. 5.

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**EDWARD J. SULLIVAN**

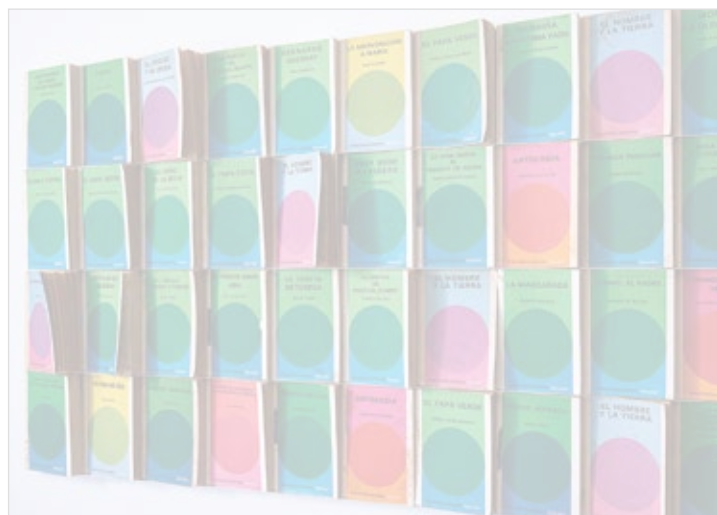
## Luis Molina-Pantin

### Henrique Faria

Luis Molina-Pantin first appeared on the NYC art scene with his photographs of the extravagant-kitsch homes of rich drug lords in Cali, Colombia, and the rather sterile back offices of leading NYC art galleries in 2013-14. A year earlier he was one of the 14 young photographers selected by Martin Paar for inclusion in the 2012 C Photo book "New Latin Look." Now he is back with his second one-person exhibition but this time with books...and books...and more books, which should be the name of the exhibition rather than the current generic "Works on Paper." However, the exhibition title does inadvertently raise the more interesting question of whose works are on paper, and why? Unfortunately the most interesting answers are only occasionally on display or accessible.

There are found books, created books, photographs of books, so-called "Kinetic" and "Coloured" books and even a photobook made to resemble a Microsoft Surface Pro. Somewhere the phrase "obsessive-compulsive" should appear, ignoring the fact that what many consider

**Luis Molina-Pantin.** *Contemporary Painting*, 2013 - 2016. Eighty books. Variable dimensions. Series of 3. Photography: Arturo Sánchez. Courtesy of the artist and Henrique Faria.



to be a mental disorder is actually a major tool and attribute for artists. The philosopher Jacques Derrida referred to it as "Archive Fever."

Not having read the books that Molina finds so fascinating this viewer is left to guess the content and speculate on the meaning of the works and the personal views of the artist based on what has been collected and an interesting if contradictory interview published on the gallery website.

Some seem obvious, as in the seven collected books by Marta Harnecker and Gabriela Uribe published in a numbered series by "Booklets for Popular Education" (*Cuaderno de Educación Popular*) with titles that need no translation; *Socialismo y Comunismo, Monopolios y Miseria, Imperialismo y Dependencia, Explotación Capitalista*.

Strangely the artist chose to title the grouping, now displayed together in a vitrine as are many of the collected and found books, "Abstract Reading" (*Lectura abstracta*) for what seems to be a very concrete and specific political orientation but one highly relevant in the USA at this moment in its political history, especially if you know what was behind these books but not made public.

The series was published in Chile during the Popular Unity government under Allende and it asks the same question we ask across the globe today. Why do so few have so much of the wealth? Of course the answer, then and now, goes back to Karl Marx's nineteenth-century characterizations of capitalism. (For those interested, an English language translation of the second booklet, "The Origins of Capitalist Exploitation" can be downloaded free on-line at <http://links.org.au/files/HarneckerCapitalist%20Exploitation.pdf>. This seems appropriate for a booklet series that was reprinted across many countries, complete with study questions.)

Similar to "Abstract Reading" are the eight editions of the same 1976 book, "Del buen salvaje al buen revolucionario," which can be translated as "From the Noble Savage to the Good Revolutionary," by the Venezuelan author, diplomat and television personality Carlos Rangel (1929-1988). But here the social and political relevance of Rangel's text is purposefully negated by what seems to be Molina's more overriding concern for formalism. Each edition has a differently colored title page, which are the subject of Molina's title, "Colour Bars."

How much more interesting it would be if the subtitle were included, "Myths and Realities of Latin America" (*Mitos y realidades de América Latina*), or a reference made to the later English title translation, "The Latin Americans: Their Love-Hate Relationship with the United States."

Similarly, the largest work in the gallery, 80 books mounted side-by-side on the wall under the title "Contemporary Painting," were chosen for the color patterns of their cover page. All are products of the most famous Spanish publishing company of the 1970s, the family-run multinational, Salvat España (1869-1988 when purchased by the French group Hachette). The publishing house is important to Molina and also the current subject of his photobook "Orange Monochrome" (*Monochromo Naranja*) of 2016. In Molina's interview he refers to the impact of the publisher and its democratization of literacy while the title is taken from the 1971 Salvat imprint of Julián Gállego's art history book.

Normally, these issues are merely accepted or ignored as the choice of the artist. But Molina's interview statements show he cannot decide which direction seems best, often confusing his own "flaneurship" with his preferred term for himself as an "urban archeologist." The New York Times critic Holland Carter observed of Molina's earlier and better known photographic work, that the artist has the ability to present work which "simultaneously project and undercut illusions of confident power." That is not much on display here but easily could be. I trust his vision will steady and clarify as he explores the potential of this new medium of books.

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**RICHARD LESLIE**