

# HUTCHINSON MODERN & CONTEMPORARY

## FOR NOTHING AT ALL

### ON THE OPEN AND THE CLOSED

Two distinct dimensions of time are at play in the drawings Beto De Volder is showing at Hutchinson Modern & Contemporary. One is tied to premeditation, where time ensues as a plan is executed. While chance with all its uncertainty is not unknown in this dimension, it is bound to a previous design that took shape in De Volder the subject. Time here is rigorously limited by how long it takes the artist to execute the design he has imagined. There may be a back and forth between intention and chance, but Beto never loses control of the concept and its modes of existence.

But another series of drawings indicates a temporality over which he seems to have next to no control. Here, the passage of time is at the mercy of the contact between his hand and the pencil and the white porcelain of the surface that holds the drawing. The artist himself, his subjectivity, does not mediate directly in this relationship between intention, design, and chance; instead, he watches over the flow of improvisation. Time here is expectant: we are eager to see what course will be taken by the line which is the intersection of endless tiny stimuli. In these drawings, time is an outgrowth of the agency of the elements at play, an agency in which the artist places all his trust and to which he commits as a collaborator. The secret groove that guides him, keeping him on course, is manifested in the lines that seem to attempt, futilely, to decode that groove's own turbulence, to render it coherent.

These, then, are the temporalities his work moves through. Though their expression is isomorphic, their task is to interrogate perception itself, and with it the edifice of phenomenology as it concerns aesthetic parameters: how is it possible that compositions and alignments so similar form part of temporal organizations so dissimilar? What connections can be made out within them? What affinities have they come to present?

## SCALES

Beto's art is vast and generous in that vastness because it reflects the ability to continue, to further—something we need to elaborate the notion of expiration. By expiration, I mean the finiteness of all things except for light. This work's vastness speaks of that, but just a little and in hushed tones; it occupies space gradually, indifferent to the confines of a support. Drawing conceived as extra, as surplus is what yields that occupation of space. Here, drawing is not only a stroke a plane. Drawing is the manifestation of the intersection of the white plane of the support and the vibrational plane that the artist intercepts when he tunes into a virtual geometry—he is its accomplice. His drawings, then, document the generosity implicit to generating a visual and conceptual language that holds us in time.

Programmatic, De Volder does not stumble on deviations and impurities by chance, but rather seeks out involuntary encounters. By means of slightly coded operations and interventions, jumbled circles, and material limits, each drawing, though singular and its own immanent operation, forms part of an always-dynamic whole. In other words, it is not after an encounter with anything in particular, but rather seeks to lose itself in the nothingness of time. That is how these non-encounters become a line with a responsibility to its code. In positing a future of regenerated grids (those encounters with tiny deviations that only the pencil perceives), De Volder drives an irregular dynamic that eschews the so-often repeated minimalist gesture. The inclusion of codelessness in the code is crucial to a policy of occupation of space akin to the Zen practice of dissolving expectations. The drawings and the work, then, encroach on the space in an immanent ethics that neither artist nor viewer is able to visualize, only sense.

It is thanks to the tensions between continuity and expiration that these operations render on drawing as interpreted by Beto that the viewer can engage in endless activations. On the one hand, our eye yearns to magnify the line and let itself be swept away by that imperfect gray crossing the surface. On the other, in following the line we are necessarily taken to the very edge of the support, to the visual end of the codification operation. But that edge, that limit, is opened up to the generosity that those geometries offer as they expand vision and the spirit, indicating the multiple modes of existence of any line that exceeds any support. I am speaking of how the programmatic De Volder translates, with the flaws translation entails, the minutiae of life into optical remnants. Those optical remnants are more than fitful ways to address the visual. On the contrary, they come together as complements by making

the visual a miniscule remnant through which to speak of life in almost metaphysical fashion—I almost left that out, ashamed to speak of these things while the planet is ablaze, though I insist on how much we need a metaphysical reflection in the midst so much destruction. Expiration and continuity thus understood constitute one another and lead to generosity. Hence, drawing.

## ECOLOGICAL POLICIES

An artist from the outskirts of Buenos Aires, De Volder gave himself over to the diaspora three years ago when he immigrated to New York City. For Beto, the move north was a catalyst for many changes. It altered the scale of his work, almost as a direct effect of the real estate market. The turn to a smaller scale ushered in a concentration of elements that unleashed a paradoxical shift: density became a form of lightening. At first sight, his drawings seem too simple to assimilate but, in its demand for close and careful attention, the maniacal detail offers us an extra, a surplus. Envisioning his work on the basis of these seemingly sensible lines—as if on the basis of an asymmetrical neo-materialist geometry that uncovers excess—delights me. It delights me deeply because it proposes an ethical and reciprocal relationship with the instant. It does not adhere to a symmetrically redundant geometry that drains from the object any possibility of relating. It pollutes, in almost brutal fashion, minimalist premises, taking them to the verge of *sudaca*<sup>1</sup> ruin. His work transposes codes. It turns the inert into agent. It individualizes and collectivizes at once. It leads instants to their maximum potential.

$1 + 1 = \infty$

Though complex and laden, these drawings are anything but baroque. But what separates them from the baroque insofar as index of the complexity of forms characteristic of the end of any era? Is it the irony of formulating a supposed morphological simplicity? The lines invite a two-way movement of approaching and distancing that eases the intensity of any aesthetic risk understood as vital ethical operation. With this mocking turn, the self-referential circuits that, when observed, are produced on the plane and in the mind urge uses of consciousness that open and expand by breaking habits of vision and patterns of reference. By confronting us with the lightness of nonsense, their pleasure is infectious.

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<sup>1</sup> A pejorative word used, largely in Spain, to refer to South and Central American immigrants.

Luckily, some of those who walk the face of this earth still foment the eroticism of forms that resist reduction. Indeed, they counter reduction with a syncopation that gives rise to fleeting arrhythmias and recalibrated lines. These affective pulses, these infinitesimal De Volder intensities bind one panel to another, overwhelming the surface-support and waging an all-out attack on any objectifying act of making. Something about how geometric abstraction is tentatively translated on the plane puts the viewer in an expectant state: the connections De Volder draws in the space will never be enough, nor will the universe be enough for the number of connections De Volder returns to it.

And so, pluriverse

Bibi Calderaro, Brooklyn 2021