

Pedro Reyes: *Statues*

28 May – 18 July, 2014

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A colloquium, meaning a discussion or a conference, is being held at Lisson Gallery in Milan, between five distinguished speakers from the early modern period of radical thought and revolutionary politics. Stone portrait busts, collectively part of a new *Statues* series, of Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, Vladimir Lenin, Frida Kahlo and David Alfaro Siqueiros are arranged within the space as if deep in conversation at a salon or *tertulia*, as it is known in Spanish. While this grouping never met together in one room (although Trotsky's final years in Mexico provide a starting point), they are linked by their shared Communist ideology, derived from Marxism and passed around a burgeoning international network of like-minded artists, philosophers and intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. Pedro Reyes specialises in creating such hypothetical situations and possibilities for parallel histories, through theatrical, experiential or, in this case, sculptural means.

Outside, in the courtyard, is a multi-partite, marble installation entitled *Colloquium (Ironism)*, a work that consists of interlocking forms in dialogue with one another, although their shapes – each a blank cartoon speech bubble of one variety or another – suggests that any communication between them exists without or beyond words. Reyes has long organised ad-hoc, mobile seminars – notably for his touring clinic *Sanatorium* (2011–13), which invited participants to undergo unexpected therapies based on sources ranging from psychodrama and hypnosis to shamanism and anger management, as well as for *The People's United Nations* (2013), which saw an alternative gathering of delegates of immigrant New Yorkers from every member or observer state represented in the real UN.

For his second solo exhibition with Lisson Gallery, Reyes's ongoing concerns with social or moral cohesion have been ossified into the static forms of sculpture, as if halted or frozen in the acts of exchange and discussion. The five historical figureheads, each carved from volcanic stone, recall the angular forms of famous artists such as Amedeo Modigliani, Constantin Brancusi or Umberto Boccioni, while the marble *Colloquium* is indebted to the interlocking sculpture and assemblage of Isamu Noguchi, influences that Reyes employs to position his characters and ideas within the heady milieu of Western Modernism. Reyes is also interested in how these ideas might still permeate contemporary thinking, as not only is each stylised bust titled individually – including, for instance *The Head of Karl Marx* (2014) – but they relate to another series of quasi-pedagogical puppetry films produced since 2008 under the banner of *Baby Marx*, which are being gathered together for 'The Permanent Revolution – An Ideological Screwball Comedy', concurrently on show at the Museo Jumex in Mexico, (15 May–15 June).

About the artist

Pedro Reyes has won international attention for large-scale projects that take existing social problems and imagine solutions for a happier world. His political stance, use of found materials and disavowal of the corporate mentality sets him in the wake of Arte Povera, most keenly so in his tackling of gun culture in Mexico. In *Palas por Pistolas* (2008), Reyes worked with local authorities in Culiacán, Mexico, to melt down guns into shovels, intended to plant trees in cities elsewhere in the world. 'I am on a crusade to come up with creative initiatives to disarm all these cities', Reyes says (2013). Similarly for *Disarm* (2013) the Mexican government passed over 6,700 confiscated firearms for Reyes to turn into mechanical musical instruments, which are automated to play a delightful, if surreal loop, retaining the raw emotion of their origination. Other works tackle first world problems through participatory techniques. *Sanatorium* (2011-13) invites visitors to sign up for a 'temporary clinic', with the mission of treating various kinds of urban malaise.

Pedro Reyes was born in Mexico City in 1972, where he lives and works. He studied architecture at the Ibero-American University in Mexico City. Solo exhibitions include Museo Jumex, Mexico City (2014); Queen's Museum, New York (2013); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2011), Guggenheim Museum, New York (2011), CCA Kitakyushu (2009), Bass Museum, Miami (2008) and San Francisco Art Institute (2008). Group exhibitions include Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2013); dOCUMENTA 13, Kassel; Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2013); CCA Wattis Museum, San Francisco (2012); Liverpool Biennial, (2012); Gwangju Biennial (2012); Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (2010); Lyon Biennale (2009); Yokohama Triennale (2008); Reykjavik Art Museum, (2008); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2007); Seattle Art Museum (2007) and the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, as well as those of significant British sculptors from Anish Kapoor and Tony Cragg to a younger generation, led by Ryan Gander and Haroon Mirza. Lisson Gallery represents 45 of the most innovative and exciting artists working globally today. The *Lisson Presents* programme also extends a legacy of curatorial innovation beyond the gallery spaces, working with institutions and artists to present new initiatives around the world.

Exhibition Facts

Opening Hours Mon-Fri 10am-6pm (closed 1-3pm) Sat by appointment

Location Via Zenale 3, 20123 Milan

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