

GET ME TO THE ROOF ON TIME

Victor Payares

9 March – 13 April 2019
House of Egorn

RUNNING LATE

a conversation between
Attilia Fattori Franchini and Victor Payares

Dear Victor,

I wonder if the text I have been invited to write about your upcoming show at House of Egorn, Berlin, could take a different form from a direct conversation.

I wonder if this could be more fragmented to replicate tropes present within your work. I also wonder if it can be freed from its own structure, like in a dream, where is difficult to understand what happens when.

Entangled memories of images.

So I am actively imagining an exchange, about memory and artistic discourse, taking place between two friends who haven't seen each other for a while. The excitement is so high that each friend jumps from one argument to another.

Maybe it should unfold in an inverted order.

Today, someone defined the experience of art making, its references and the many narratives filling it, as a complex interwoven textile. I shaped a funny image in mind, a second-hand traditional geometric tapestry, sitting in an eclectic interior.

Accidental histories merging.

Attilia

GET ME TO THE ROOF ON TIME

I'd be interested in starting from the title of your solo exhibition at House of Egorn – 'Get me to the roof on time'. Where does it come from?

The roof is a metaphor for scope, and if I don't take speedy action, I will lose it forever. I've always loved the power of the 'last chance'. 'Get me to the roof on time' implies immediately that I'm conscious about a hypothetical situation, and know that it can be rewarding. Inspired by both real-life as well as imagined stories, the exhibition's title also overtly pays homage to a place which has always been very special to me: the roof. Serving to shield against natural elements, roofs are also full of material experimentation and discovery, place where surprising colour combinations can be revealed, in many different cultures.

There is a temporal dimension loosely suggested, emphasising an event happening – personal, social, perhaps political. Time plays an important role within your work. Why so?

In Jorge Luis Borges' short story 'The Aleph', the narrator eventually discovers a place in his friend's residence, where historical accounts and autobiographical experiences are witnessed simultaneously. Time is flattened. Borges taught me to see the backbone of stories, in which abilities are in flux and double countries are enough to have. But this is just a marginal circumstance. Something akin to this could extend itself to the paintings shown in this exhibition.

Your Cuban cultural heritage, the experience of growing up in a communist dictatorship, through migration, along Cuban architecture and Caribbean chromatic palettes, resonate formally throughout your work. Especially with your paintings, all of this creates a feeling of layered schizophrenia between various contrasting elements. Can you say more about this?

Looking at the paintings in this exhibition: evaluation is done by a sea seemingly paved with aluminium, yet this large-scale mangled polarized lens, unlike a short story, has texture – and also electric cables which don't appear in paintings that often. On second thought, however, it could also be 'nice goodies on top'. The rivalry between counterfeit jewellery, amongst other found objects, combined to create the aerobatics for a diary of my daily journey through the city – be it Havana, London, Miami, or Berlin. These everyday objects, bound to each other, immersed in layers of paint, reference a form of histories and cultures that summons to mind the sediment of a riverbed. We are required to look at how the movement of isolated articles occurs when paleontology fails.

A CORNER OF VEDADO, HAVANA, CUBA

*THE ROOF, THE ROOF,
THE ROOF IS ON FIRE*

The eight abstract yet material paintings in the show at House of Egorn draw their inspiration from Vedado, your childhood neighbourhood in Havana. Vedado is also the centre of commercial transactions in Cuba, a strong site of contrast between modernism and colonisation. I am curious about the connection between such a specific architectural, urban, social, personal reference and the paintings themselves. Can you tell me more?

In Vedado, you can't choose yourself, or clean up your Mozilla. No registration is necessary. After the grind has been submitted, densely coloured forms intersect, rest upon, and bend into one another, producing an organic and whispering choreography, so that many different layers of clothes flutter. I remember the Art Nouveau windows in my grandparents' house – like my paintings, they are composed of motifs made to look like they were outlined in torn tape. I opted for a simple blue, having masses of air moving at different speeds in an atmosphere where process is constantly occurring, bearing resemblance to collage. All at once, I pulled maps and forecasts together, depicting coastlines with varying surfaces, which anyone can decipher without registration.

Upon entering the space, viewers are confronted with a large-scale installation of a roof, almost appearing to be emerging directly from the floor. This structure, a theatrical stage or podium, suggests the possibility of action, transforming viewers into active performers, complicit in the act of unpicking references and relating them to their own subjectivity.

I am thinking of the roof as open space, a gathering location for a speech (in a country still without total freedom of speech), but also an elevated place from which to observe the surrounding. How have you conceived it?

You realise that you need a mountain or a bougainvillea petal to gain perspective? With a shingle in the shape of a planchette and a good listener, as well as a stage to hand, there is much more to a roof than mere refuge; traditional acts of protection can appear to be condescending, and 'safety' becomes a highly relative concept. In the exhilarating act of being on a roof, and using guilty conscience to sustain such conduct, the petrified perimeters of this structure become the subject of its own performativity.

*SOCIALISM IS A POLITICAL DOCTRINE THAT
BELIEVES IN THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVITY*

A red carpet fills the space, a spatial chromatic background pasting together all the diverse elements presented. This feature suggests many possible historical connotations: red as a colour for love and danger; red carpet laid for ceremonial occasions; but also, red as the symbol of the socialist doctrine. Yet it can also stand as a theatrical gesture, towards collectivity, immersing the viewers into a highly staged environment. What is its function in the show?

Beneath the red ochre, much like the Lascaux cave paintings, red recalls aged mechanics: a prehistoric form of collectivity. Rhizomatic, in the same way as sand that has no beginning nor end, these excavations invite the viewer to inspect from above: from the roof. In fact, the trail was perfectly blocked by earthfall; we were obliged to turn back. Nonetheless, we've gone beyond and witnessed more than any before us.

ATTILIA FATTORI FRANCHINI
(b. 1983, Pesaro, Italy)
based in London and Milan

Attilia Fattori Franchini is an independent curator and writer based in London and Milan. She is cofounder of the nonprofit platforms *bubblebyte.org* and *Opening Times* and contributes essays and reviews to international publications such as Mousse, CURA, and Flash Art International.

She is the curator of: BMW Open Work by Frieze; Curva Blu, a residency project in Favignana, Sicily; the Emergent section of miart, Milan; and the latest edition of the Termoli Art Prize, Italy. Recent projects include *Could you visit me in dreams?* as part of curated_by 2018, Vienna; *Red Lake* at Point Centre for Contemporary Art, Nicosia (2018); and *ARS17+* at Kiasma Museum, Helsinki (2017).

Past projects include *Meshes of the Afternoon*, Roman Road, London (2017); *Céu Torto*, Boatos Fine Arts, São Paulo (2017); *Dawning*, Capitán Gallo, Mexico City (2017); *Morning uber, evening oscillators*, Seventeen, London (2016); *Europa and the Bull* at LambdaLambda Lambda, Pristina, Kosovo (2016).

<http://attiliaff.com>

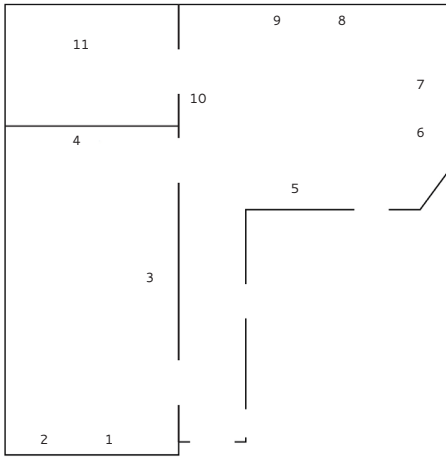
VICTOR PAYARES
(b. 1985, Havana, Cuba)
lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Payares' work explores ways of simulating recollection and visual discourse through the dissemination of painting and sculpture. His work is often bright coloured, picturing a surrealistic world built up by parts from a story that has been broken into different pieces. As if to portray a memory or a dream, he uses layers of different material, found objects, integrates sand and electrical cables. Architecture, observation, mapping and cartography are reappearing references in his work.

He emigrated with his family to the United States in 1995 to escape the 'Special Period' in Cuba, and was awarded a full scholarship to attend the Art Institute at Miami International University of Art and Design, where he received a BFA in 2007. In 2017, he graduated from the Royal College of Art in London with an MFA (with distinction), and is currently one of the artists selected for the Berlin Programme for Artists (BPA) 2019 cycle.

His recent exhibitions include: *Get some Headspace*, Ralph's, Köln, DE, 2019 (group), *Ring Bell*, Aqbar the Space, London, UK, 2018 (solo), *Into the Woods*, HE.RO Gallery, Amsterdam, 2018 (group), *ESOL Parcheesi*, Roman Road, London, UK, 2017 (solo), *Searching for Magic and The Distorted Image Falling from Your iCloud*, The Dot Project, London, UK, 2017 (group), *Mi Toronja*, Lychee One, London, UK, 2016 (solo), *Three Works, Three Works*, Weymouth, UK, 2016 (group), *STORM*, AMO Studios, NY, NY, 2014 (group), *UNREAL ESTATE*, Vita Rosen, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2013 (solo).

<http://victorpayares.net>



1 *Ala de Tocooro (trogon bird wing)*, acrylic, modelling paste, sand, found objects on canvas, framed, 172 x 125 cm, 2019

2 *Steal against Shadow*, acrylic, modelling paste, sand, found objects on canvas, 167 x 121cm, 2019

3 *Conducta (conduct)*, acrylic, modelling paste, sand, found objects on linen, 167 x 121 cm, 2019

4 *Lanternband*, acrylic, modelling paste, sand, and found objects on linen, 204 x 154 cm, 2019

5 *Nestwalker*, acrylic, modelling paste, sand, and found objects on linen, 204 x 154 cm, 2019

6 *Untitled*, acrylic, modeling paste and sand on linen, 35 x 25 cm, framed, 2019

7 *Untitled*, acrylic, modeling paste and sand on linen, 35 x 25 cm, framed, 2019

8 *Dawnbringer*, acrylic, modelling paste, sand, and found objects on linen, 204 x 154 cm, 2019

9 *Chasm Restored*, acrylic, modelling paste, sand, and found objects on linen, 204 x 154 cm, 2018

10 *Roof IV (Me 101)*, wood, paint, dimensions variable, 2019

11 *Roof V (Delta Hi-Fi)*, wood, paint, dimensions variable, 2019