

Jose Dávila – *Memory of a Telluric Movement*

June 2 – Sep 11, 2022

MEDIA ORIENTATION
May 31, 2022, 11 am

OPENING DAY
June 2, 2022, 11 am to 8 pm

curated by Sabine Schaschl

Museum Haus Konstruktiv is dedicating a comprehensive solo exhibition to Mexican artist Jose Dávila (b. 1974 in Guadalajara, Mexico, where he lives and works). Alongside selected new paintings, a multitude of sculptural works are presented, which Dávila combines to produce surprising ensembles of works while conscientiously engaging with the museum's architectural givens.

Jose Dávila is interested in space and mass, in mathematical laws and physical phenomena. Thus, his oeuvre characteristically plays with gravity and apparent weightlessness, with statics and dynamics, forces of tension and compression, and those precarious moments before something collapses. In addition, he incorporates natural and industrially manufactured materials; from this juxtaposition, he creates poetic works that are sensorially captivating and structurally articulated.

The exhibition begins on the first floor with an expansive installation titled *The Act of Being Together*, which was conceived specially for Museum Haus Konstruktiv: Twenty-one prefabricated steel girders, measuring up to four meters high, each stand opposite equally heavy boulders sourced from the region. The pairings are each connected by a steel cable, which is suspended by a hook hanging from the ceiling. Every pair of objects performs an exchange of magnitudes, leveling weight in a delicate balancing act. The tense situations that arise through these constellations are further enhanced by the artist's choice of materials. Here, Dávila combines natural stones with industrial materials, thematizing the dichotomy between nature and culture, which is currently being renegotiated in the context of climate change. Moreover, the artist's minimalist-looking constructions in steel and stone also suggest a social undertone: the relational implications of 'togetherness'. Dávila sees this piece in the following context: "It thus becomes an allegory that summarizes the last two years in the world, the social fabric, the city as container, the metropolis skyline. It is also a work that can be related to monolithic objects or Neolithic 'monuments' that we can only interpret but we'll never be sure exactly what they were made for, what their exact meaning or intention is, we just contemplate their presence, they usually transmit or portray a profound moment that becomes personal but untraceable to its original intention."

On the second floor, two works from 2020 that involve multiple components are brought together. First, visitors encounter an installation arranged on a pedestal: *Will has moved*

mountains, whose title refers to the biblical verse stating the famous lithic metaphor (New Testament 1 Cor. 13:2). A tilted concrete cube positioned on top of a stone, two wooden beams stacked on each other and four large-format reflective panels leaning precariously, each supported by a metal pipe, a steel girder, a branch or a stone, are lashed together with tension belts to produce a spectacular spatial sculpture. The sculpture's fragile stability is the result of a precisely balanced correspondence between all the objects' forces, supports and angles. The slightest displacement of any of the individual elements would cause the entire system to shatter. The suspenseful effect conveyed to the observer is appealing and threatening in equal measure, similar to philosophical understanding of the sublime through contemplation of a natural disaster. Vastness, beauty and destruction flow in equal measure.

The painting *Memory of a Telluric Movement* hangs on the wall behind the installation. Five portrait-format canvases in red can be seen, arranged alongside each other, whereby the fourth canvas, slightly shifted downward, breaks the pattern. This irregularity is further emphasized by a differently colored square shape, the top-right corner of which extends into the fifth canvas. The slanted square has the same angle of inclination as the tilted concrete cube in the installation *Will has moved mountains*, causing the two works to enter into dialog; both vividly represent the phenomenon of gravity – one in a physically tangible manner in the space, and the other within the two-dimensional canvas.

Memory of a Telluric Movement is also the title of this exhibition at Museum Haus Konstruktiv. Jose Dávila's thoughtful calibration of mass and lightness, volume and transparency, geometric and organic forms, natural and industrial materials characterizes his distinctive objects, installations and paintings. At the same time, the exhibition at Haus Konstruktiv constitutes a reminder that any (telluric) movement, no matter how slight, can cause a static well-balanced structure to collapse. In this sense, the solo show also refers to the current global situation, which can quickly be thrown off track by sociopolitical, ecological or economic developments.

In the columned hall, Dávila presents a wide range of objects. Many of these are presented individually, such as *Our similarities bring us to a common ground* (2021), *The exception that proves the rule* (2021), *The Act of Perseverance* (2022), *Collaborating together despite our differences* (2022) and *Fundamental Concern* (2022) – whereas others accumulate, giving shape to the tension-filled group *Singularity has something of the unreal* (2022). They all create a sculptural landscape, a route rich in material diversity. The space as a whole is dynamized by means of a careful tuning of proportions, perspectives, reflections, and displacement possibilities. The pieces shown here are the result of combinations or variations of previous works. For some of his works, the artist makes paper sketches – for others, he tries out various experimental compositions involving found objects and crafted materials in the studio. Dávila himself speaks of an “ecosystem of objects”.

Dávila's exhibitions and artistic projects reveal multiple links to 20th-century art history, especially to constructivist-concrete art, minimal art, arte povera and conceptual art. For example, with *Objet du Voyageur (The traveler's item)*, a bicycle wheel on a stacked tower of metal, concrete, and brick, Dávila alludes to Marcel Duchamp's 1913 ready-made *Roue de Bicyclette*. Echoes of Duchamp's *Bottle Rack* (1914) resonate in *Acapulco chair stack* (2021), an artistically poetic interpretation of a furniture-design classic from Mexico. The large-format paintings presented in the columned hall also have a quotation-like nature. During the corona pandemic, Dávila intensively addressed the iconography of the circle in 20th-century art history. As a symbol, the circle represents, among other things, unity, the absolute, completeness, the divine, infinity or (in the form of the ouroboros snake biting its own tail) recurrence. Dávila's new paintings are also about recurring geometries: In these, he has referenced circle paintings by artists such as Hilma af Klint, Frank Stella and Willys de Castro, dissecting, duplicating and reassembling parts of them. The title of these works, *The fact of constantly returning to the same point or situation*, is borrowed from an entry in the Cambridge Dictionary on the term 'circularity'. Dávila's newly developed narratives, with which he stimulatingly recontextualizes historical

positions, show that (art) history does not just go round in circles, but is always moving forward.

MEDIATION PROGRAM

June 11, 11.30 am

ARTIST TALK (in the context of ZÜRICH ART WEEKEND), in English
Sabine Schaschl in conversation with Jose Dávila. Limited number of seats,
registration required via info@hauskonstruktiv.ch

July 6, 6.15 pm

CURATOR'S TOUR

Guided tour (in German) of the current exhibitions with Evelyne Bucher.

August 24, 6.15 pm

CURATOR'S TOUR

Guided tour (in German) of the current exhibitions with Eliza Lips.

PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS take place on Wednesdays at 6.15 pm and on Sundays at 11.45 am. Information on further events and on our digital mediation program can be found at hauskonstruktiv.ch.

We appreciate your interest and your visit!

We would like to thank our patron partners and the foundations that wish to remain anonymous for their generous support of this exhibition.

Further thanks go to the galleries that contributed significantly to the realization of this exhibition: Sean Kelly Gallery, König Galerie, Galería OMR, Travesía Cuatro and Galeri Nicolai Wallner.

PRESS CONTACT

Ladina Hurst, +41 (0)44 217 70 98, l.hurst@hauskonstruktiv.ch