

Abraham Cruzvillegas

October 23 - November 20, 2010

This project focuses on an in-between, liminal or interstitial space. It mostly involves speaking of a difference and the difficulty of describing it. It's the result of Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas' subjective take on Paris, where he lived for three and a half years. For him, this experience is "something definitively unfinished, something that is building itself forever: fragmentary, contradictory, weak, unstable, dark, transparent, warm, stupid, delirious, chaotic, crippled. It's movement and life, it's love, it's sex, it's me."

After living in Paris, the artist had a lot of questions about the city, but mainly about himself, his own identity in Paris. It took him a while to understand his – supposedly – personal background. He was neither aware of nor willing to look at it. He merely lived in Paris; his strolls were more like wandering. When he left Paris, the artist still had many questions about the city, questions that arise again, in a vague way, when he's walking around. Whenever he recalls his "Paris experience", he formulates new questions about the food, about everyday life, the city and its inhabitants, its tourists, museums, monuments and everything that's supposed to be associated with Paris. He especially recollects the essential elements of what Parisian identity means for him. Even the most in-depth guidebooks don't always cover these items: Tecktonik dance, Slam poetry, the suburbs, fashion, the pieds-noirs, demonstrations or student and worker strikes, the homeless, Daft Punk and Justice, the unemployed or the royalists... Taking an a priori raw and empirical approach, his perspective is not that of an anthropologist or an initiate. It definitely isn't a touristic approach. Abraham Cruzvillegas seeks more personal or local initiatives, which nonetheless construct a person's identity.

In the recent years, Cruzvillegas has been working on a series of projects entitled *Autoconstrucción* - self-construction - and comprised of exhibitions, books, music, a film and a play. The work mainly deals with the question of identity as an indefinite, unstable construction undergoing transformation. The environment and the surrounding area of Ajusco, Mexico, where the artist was born and raised, is made up of houses, which the inhabitants built gradually over time, without a budget and with recycled materials. Helping each other out, everyone works with the materials at hand. Additions are made when needed and when materials are available.

Impulse drives and is the leitmotif of his entire practice. In Paris, he tries to gather fragments of his own identity, approaching time and space from his lived experience as both an immigrant and a protagonist: Paris.

Within the gallery, the artist is creating a sculptural arrangement, whose formal references are inspired by "la petite ceinture" train tracks circling the perimeter of Paris, the "cité de la Muette" housing project in Drancy (one of the first major ones), the infamous zone, the beltway and the old fortifications of Paris. Made of scrap wood and salvaged materials, this hybrid structure is not figurative, though. It surrounds everything and everyone: structures, sculptural objects and the visitors. In order to develop and diversify his subject, Abraham Cruzvillegas met people with special skills for knitting, singing, acrobatics, gardening, music, skateboarding, dance, drawing, hairstyling to discuss these subjects... Reflecting a variety of viewpoints on contemporary Paris, these interviews, accompanied by images they inspired, are collected in a booklet. This work, which records the process of creating the project, is made available to visitors in the exhibition space. Organic elements and activity developing on and around the structure make it possible to observe – – the experience of self-construction and an interstitial space: silently, slowly but also crudely and directly.

Galerie
Chantal Crousel