

P. Barateiro and Q. Latimer

REDCAT, Los Angeles

Pedro Barateiro's *Dancing in the Studio (Protest)* (all works 2016) comprises seven little billboards — freestanding MDF constructions, the front side of each covered with a print. Per the series title — or rather its abrupt parenthetical conclusion — they may be intended to evoke demonstration placards. The black-and-white images that these signboards display document the aftermath of Barateiro dancing in a puddle of paint on the floor of his Lisbon studio. The sound track to his dance party, we are told, was a passing anti-austerity protest.

The sound track to the billboards is the voice of Quinn Latimer, issuing from speakers here and there around the REDCAT gallery. Her poetic recitations frame Barateiro's installation like smoke rings: a succession of brief intentions. It all cumulates into a thematic haze (a *précis* of which appears in an accompanying text) around the central question of whether art can offer resistance to power, to the forces of capital. Or, really, whether protest can.

Embodiment appears repeatedly as a rhetorical or figural polarity to the abstraction of capital: the enlarged bootprints of *Dancing in the Studio* that careen into wild gestural marks and then into streaky post-painterly passages.

Amid the billboards and speakers sit two cement benches (*Rumour Bench I* and *II*). Long and curving, they seem to form parentheses, recalling the "protest" in parentheses above. Of course, for a thought to be bracketed is not the same as it being inconsequential. Just contained, perhaps. There is about it all a bit of what Wendy Brown has called "left melancholy," but Barateiro and Latimer pose a question of fundamental importance at a time when the role of art can look like nothing more than a symptom of the violence and inequality of neoliberalism, while the real challenges to globalization and free trade apparently come only from a populist, racist new right.

by Eli Diner

Barry Johnston

Overduin & Co., Los Angeles

Situated throughout "Our Fertile Hand," Barry Johnston's loaded and compelling second solo at Overduin & Co., are stacks of colored printouts in a DIY aesthetic most commonly associated with scrappy punk bands promoting upcoming gigs. Though in the guise of a lo-fi mode of advertising, these fliers — each adorned with the moniker "Festive Publications" — provide little "useful" information; rather, they contain poems that serve as tangential portals through the show. They pull the visitor through the space, beckoning their collection and prompting one to consider how they fit within the exhibition as a whole. While alluding frequently to a "we," the fliers are almost entirely devoid of the words "I" and "me," suggesting — along with the show's title itself — a disposal of the individual in favor of collective activity, a persistent theme throughout the installation.

Upon entering the space, one immediately confronts a gigantic, black, hanging sculpture in rope and acrylic on wood in the form of the letter *I* (*I*, 2016). But when the viewer passes into the second gallery space, the subjecthood assumed in that large first-person-singular pronoun is destabilized by *I*'s companion piece, *II*. Here Johnston leads us down a path only to suddenly reverse position, boomeranging the viewer's understanding of what was seen moments before — the kind of performative subversion of semantic experience that has been a constant in Johnson's work.

In this latest outing, Johnson investigates the undermining of language and meaning most overtly in a series of framed book pages from which the majority of words have been excised, forming a jovially loose patchwork of meaning. While many of the questions "Our Fertile Hand" poses remain in the realm of speculation, the reward of the experience is gently pulling at the strings of suggestion.

by Thomas Duncan

Projeto Piauí

PIVÔ, São Paulo

Pivô's new group show results from an expedition through Brazil's northeast state of Piauí, conducted by Alexandre Canonico, Bruno Dunley, Isabel Diegues, Luis Barbieri, Marina Rheingantz, Mauro Restiffe and Paloma Bosquê. Each artist shared very personal and evocative impressions of this journey in works made during and afterward, using a range of media such as photography, sculpture, painting and sound.

One could almost immediately make a connection between this experience and the expeditions undertaken by artists who documented Brazil between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g. Albert Eckhout, Johann Moritz Rugendas and Jean-Baptiste Debret). But instead, what is revealed is more like a road trip from the countryside to the sea. Along this path, diverse situations were confronted: from prehistoric cave paintings at the heritage site of Serra da Capivara to the local cultures of small communities. This now-arid landscape — part of Brazil's colonial history — evokes a strange memory of what was once a land of abundant vegetation, indicating somehow a clash between nature and culture that gives the project its overall tone.

Supposedly not a premeditated conclusion to the expedition (as they did not foresee any outcome), the show presents individual experiences in a collective format. But, besides the high quality of the works involved, it seems that only a vague discourse unites the whole. Would the inclusion of non-art approaches and perspectives — say, a geologist, journalist or anthropologist — have added other layers of meaning to this intense experience translated into an art show? The publication *Diário de uma digressão (Uma viagem ao sertão do Piauí da Serra das Confusões até o mar)* [Diary of an expedition (A trip to the backlands of Piauí from the Serra das Confusões to the sea)] by cinema writer Isabel Diegues could have worked in this sense, offering a narrative dimension conducive to this visually diverse result.

by Beto Shwafaty



From top:
Pedro Barateiro and Quinn Latimer
"Live from the West," installation view at REDCAT, Los Angeles (2016)
Courtesy of the Artists and REDCAT, Los Angeles
Photography by Brica Wiltor

Barry Johnston
"Our Fertile Hand," installation view at Overduin & Co, Los Angeles (2016)
Courtesy of the Artist and Overduin & Co, Los Angeles
Photography by Brian Forrest

"Projeto Piauí," installation view at Pivô, São Paulo
Courtesy of Pivô, São Paulo
Photography by Everton Ballardín