

GREEN . ART . GALLERY

Instrumentalized

20 January - 7 March 2018

This text is a tool, but we should never focus on its role as a tool. That would make it too obvious, even for a press release.

Here comes the spin phrase, for pride and continuity: Green Art Gallery is proud to announce its second solo show of Venezuelan-Italian-Lebanese-artist **Alessandro Balteo-Yazbeck** in Dubai. You'll need to know that he is based in Berlin, commandeering a career: it amplifies the international dimension of his opportunistically framed multi-cultural identity.

This text has a voice beyond the gallery. It is a higher voice, one of greater authority. It does not matter that the gallery commissioned an equally multi-cultural, globetrotting polyglot writer to craft the text. When it is activated, uploaded, printed, distributed, a weighty power grips it. You, the reader, will look to it for explanation, for enlightenment. This text unlocks the artwork's meaning, even if you never make it to the inner sanctum of the gallery's white cube.

That meaning goes something like this:

[Editors, start copy/pasting here.]

The show is titled *Instrumentalized*. It brings together two bodies of work that confront the "propagandization" of human rights since the early days of their institutionalization, within the current climate in which human tragedy is used as a tool by governments, artists, NGOs and other public bodies to advance specific ideological agendas.

[End copy/pasting.]

The gallery's endgame, through this text, is to create value for the work it will display. After all, it needs to sell. Words are carefully chosen to prompt images of arduous process, creative vision and finely groomed artistic intent. Balteo-Yazbeck, known for his strategies of appropriation¹, presents the latest² in his on-going series, *Chronoscope 1952-53* (2017). Craftily edited broadcast footage from CBS's Longines-sponsored public affairs show from the early years of television covers issues such as the Korean War, the intensifying Israeli-Palestinian crisis and the draft of the *United Nations Human Rights Charter*.

So why is the artist so riled up? Well, he wants to highlight the prevalence of propaganda in furthering a capitalist-pseudo-democratic ideology. Isn't that enough?

The *Instrumentalized* series (2017) is suspiciously made of used clothing that behaves like paintings and sculptures. Unlike the *Chronoscope* series, with its barefaced political narrative, *Instrumentalized* retreats into itself.

You will look for answers here in vain. What is behind the shirt? Where did these trousers come from? This text might even try to legitimize it through the obvious art historical references, like Arte Povera. But is that really it? Who wore these clothes before? Why are they covering canvases, or wrapping around plinths? This text refuses to say any more: to provide a narrative for these objects is to slip into the same demagoguery the work tears into. Its sarcasm would be defanged.

¹ A peppering of artspeak lends credibility.

² A never-before-seen angle intensifies appeal.

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It's really very simple: Balteo-Yazbeck's practice is all about raising awareness of ideological dynamics through subtle, devilishly intelligent work. His art doesn't resolve anything. But it asks lots of unsettling questions.

Like, how was this text a tool?

Kevin Jones

Artists Biography

Alessandro Balteo-Yazbeck **Alessandro Balteo Yazbeck** (b. 1972) graduated in Fine Arts from his native city of Caracas, Venezuela, where he has exhibited his work extensively. He moved his practice to New York from 2000 to 2010, and is now based in Berlin.

Solo exhibitions include *Autocratic Nostalgia: Venezuelan Contemporary Landscapes*, Faria Fine Art, New York, USA (2017); *Electoral Autocracy (Venezuelan Case)*, Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna, Austria (2016); *Diplomatic Entanglements* at Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN (2015); *Modern Entanglements* at Green Art Gallery, Dubai, UAE (2015); *Cultural Diplomacy: An Art We Neglect* at Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna, Austria (2013); *Corrupted Files* at Galeria Luisa Strina, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2012); *Cultural Diplomacy: An Art We Neglect* at Henrique Faria Fine Art, New York, NY (2010), *A little bit of heaven* at Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2008).

Balteo Yazbeck's work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including most recently, in 2017: *Parapolitics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany; *4.543 billion. The matter of matter*, CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France; *Colourless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously*, curated by David Upton, Project Arts Centre, Dublin, Republic of Ireland; *Weapon of Choice*, Shiva Art Gallery, New York, NY; *Acordo de Confiança*, Biblioteca Mário de Andrade, São Paulo, Brazil; in 2016: *La Democrazia in America*, XVI Quadriennale D'Arte Di Roma, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, Italy; in 2014: *New Territories*, Museum of Art and Design, New York; *Beyond the Supersquare*, Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York; 12 Cuenca Biennale, Cuenca, Ecuador; in 2013: *Liquid Assets: In the Aftermath of the Transformation of Money*, Steirischer Herbst, Graz, Austria; *Order, Chaos, and the Space between: Contemporary Latin American Art from the Diane and Bruce Halle Collection*, Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix; in 2012: *When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes*, CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco; *Artist on the News*, Creative Time, New York; in 2011: *Liberalis*, Lütze-Museum and Galerie der Stadt Sindelfingen; 12th International Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul (2011); *Then & Now: Abstraction in Latin American art, 1950 to Present*, Deutsche Bank, New York (2010); *Panorama*, Museu de Arte Moderna de Sao Paulo (2009).

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