

“Practical Acts of Perception” at grayDUCK Gallery

Cande Aguilar, Jorge Purón, and Mauricio Sáenz challenge what we see through shifts in scale and proportion

REVIEWED BY MELANY JEAN, FRI., JAN. 12, 2018



Descuadrado #1 by Jorge Purón

Image search "IFRAO Standard Scale" and you will see a rectangle carefully split into colored blocks: black, white, and gray, and then blue, green, yellow, red. Better, go to grayDUCK Gallery while they are still showing "Practical Acts of Perception." The scale is on the exhibition postcard. The tool, used for color optimization and dimensional reference in photos cataloging artifacts, is a reference to keep in mind throughout the show, mainly because it served as a prompt for the show's three artists. Cande Aguilar, Jorge Purón, and Mauricio Sáenz, all born just this side or the other of the Mexico-U.S. border, were familiar with one another's work when they came together for an exhibition engaging ideas of scale and proportion.

Purón's work pulls most literally from the scale, using the geometry and colors as a starting point before refracting its shapes and hues. At the beginning of the exhibition, there are bold black-and-white geometric paintings in the shape of squares and triangles. A step further, a piece adds a sliver of blue to the palette, a sliver that splices a would-be-square canvas into a broken-square canvas (Paralelo or "Parallel"); another painting supplements yellow and red; and finally there's an irregular-shaped painting composed of punchy pink and lime triangles (Descuadrado or "Unbalanced").

Cande Aguilar brings his signature style of "barrioPOP," described as an exploration of border town life through multimedia amalgams, to play in the form of variously sized paintings. More abstract than Aguilar's previous works, the paintings here feature fewer pop-culture references and have swaths and scribbles of paint in built-up layers of expressive, colorful strokes and hodgepodge transferred images. Given the intention to challenge perception, these works do so effectively within this space, a gallery on East Cesar Chavez, a street some might consider their barrio and home to many of the visual markers in the paintings. Perception is shifted by a means of scaling down, here the composition is intentional and the vibe of a border town is, within the gallery, compressed, approachable for outsiders.

Scale is inherently comparative. You measure something against provided dimensions, another object, yourself, something. The easiest way to play with scale is not to change the subject at hand, but rather an adjustment of reference, first necessitating an acknowledgment of that reference, something often taken for granted. Visiting a childhood park to find what was once a towering kiddie land is now a lawn of mini-thrills has nothing to do with the park's size and everything to do with your own growth.

Sáenz weaponizes the concept of scale in his pieces, taking an iconoclastic stance in his sculptures and video work. Figure ____ follows a camera through an austere, all-white museum, panning Hellenistic sculptures and pyramids of label-less cans. Provocative statements appear between shots: "ISIS please destroy art." The imagery echoes in his sculptures. Rows of cans are arranged in a precariously tilted acrylic shelf structure, and a black classical bust is trapped within a box. Suddenly, the scale changes: It is global, canonical, and futile.

“Practical Acts of Perceptions”

grayDUCK Gallery, 2213 E. Cesar Chavez, 512/826-5334

www.grayduckgallery.com

Through Jan. 14