

Alejandro Almanza Pereda

Magnan Projects/ Magnan Emrich Contemporary
New York

The Fan and the Shit is Alejandro Almanza Pereda's second solo exhibition, was recently on view at Magnan Projects and Magnan Emrich Contemporary in Chelsea.

The Mexican artist modified the meaning of each of the different objects he worked with by altering their original function and assigning them a new one, playing with the mechanical and physical characteristics of each object. Thus, he diverted the fragility of some objects, or their solidity by, for example, placing a huge brick on top of a series of light bulbs, or scales on eggs, or even inviting the spectators to play basketball with a neon basket glued onto a mirror.

By means of these devices he invited the viewer to re-think, re-consider the ordinary, everyday object, its condition of being, of existing, as well as its function, which are, in fact, closely interrelated. He generated in the viewer a feeling of danger by establishing improbable associations of objects. In many cases, he led the spectators to project themselves in time and imagine a catastrophe. Sometimes his installations turned out to be a sort of "arrêt sur image", an image frozen a fraction of a second before an accident, thus creating a frozen time, a time in suspense.

Apparently challenging the law of gravitation, Almanza seeks and achieves in his devices a delicate balance of forces that sometimes hangs by a thread, as in the case of *Out to lunch (closed for the day)* (2008), a huge ball made of steel chains knotted together and suspended from the ceiling rafters of Magnan Projects. The Damoclean object thus installed and suspended poses the certain threat that it may break from its own weight and fall at any moment.

Certain combinations of objects, however familiar, tend towards the fantastic, the unreal; towards associations that often go far beyond comprehension. Suffice it to observe *Untitled* (2008): on a 3.8 meter-high structure, Almanza has mounted an aquarium in which an array of Christmas balls and a hammer float in total harmony.

In his earlier works, the notion of risk was explicit; in the works exhibited in *The Fan and the Shit*, Almanza created, in general, less risky, more contained situations. He seems to have adopted a more contemplative approach, to be oriented in a new direction contributing precision to his language. Which has not prevented him, however, from creating grotesque situations, such as in *It is for our own safety* (2008), where he hung a chandelier from the ceiling, protecting it by means of the traditional velvet ropes and bars to control the crowd reproduced in large scale, in such a way that the spectator had to walk under it without realizing he/she was ignoring a trespass prohibition. Thus the artist disrupted safety measures and codes.

The spectators wondered, finally, if *The Fan and the Shit* was not also, in its improbable combination of elements, an implicit and critical reference to the well-known popular phrase (the shit hits the fan), in the turbulent times of global financial crisis we are living.



It is for our own safety, 2008
Chandelier, velvet rope and crowd control poles.
Dimensions variable
Araña, cuerda de terciopelo y vallas de contención.
Dimensiones variables
Courtesy / Cortesía:
Magnan Projects

su condición de ser, de existir, así como su función, que están, de facto, estrechamente ligados el uno a la otra. Genera en el espectador una sensación de peligro estableciendo improbables asociaciones de objetos. En muchos de los casos, lleva al público a proyectarse en el tiempo e imaginarse una catástrofe. A veces sus instalaciones resultan ser una suerte de "arrêt sur image" una fracción de segundo antes del accidente, logrando de este modo un tiempo congelado, un tiempo en suspensión.

Desafiando aparentemente las leyes de la gravedad, Almanza busca y logra en sus dispositivos un delicado equilibrio de fuerzas, que a veces pende de un hilo, como en *Out to lunch (closed for the day)* (2008), enorme bola de acero anudadas colgada al techo de Magnan Projects. El damocliano objeto, así instalado, pende con la certera amenaza de caer, con todo su peso, en cualquier momento.

Ciertas combinaciones de objetos, aunque sean familiares, tienden a lo fantástico, a lo irreal, asociaciones que muchas veces van más allá del entendimiento. Basta observar *Untitled* (2008): Almanza ha montado sobre una estructura de acero, de 3,80 metros de altura, un acuario donde flotan en total armonía un racimo de bolas de navidad y un martillo.

En sus trabajos anteriores, la noción de riesgo era explícita, ahora, en las obras expuestas en *The Fan and the Shit*, en general, crea situaciones menos arriesgadas, más contenidas. Pareciera que ahora Almanza tuviera una aproximación más contemplativa, se orientara en una nueva dirección, aportando precisiones a su lenguaje. Lo que, sin embargo, no le impide crear situaciones grotescas, como en *It is for our own safety* (2008), donde cuelga un candelabro del techo, protegiéndolo con las tradicionales cuerdas de terciopelo y barras de control de la muchedumbre reproducidas a gran escala, de manera que el espectador tiene que pasar por debajo sin darse cuenta de que está incursionando en lo prohibido. El artista desbarata así las medidas y códigos de seguridad. Nos preguntamos por último si *The Fan and the Shit* no será, también en su improbable combinación de elementos, una implícita y crítica referencia a la conocida fraseología popular (tirar mierda con ventilador), en los turbulentos tiempos de crisis financiera global que vivimos.

Claire Luna

