



DIEGO FERNANDO ÁLVAREZ AND MARÍA PAULA ÁLVAREZ - MANGLE

Magnan Metz, New York

by Claire Breukel

The exhibition Sinergia/Synergy at Magnan Metz Gallery, New York features a selection of hyper-real sculptural objects crafted by Colombian artists Diego Fernando Álvarez and Maria Paula Álvarez collectively known as Mangle. As a reference to the mangrove plant, the name Mangle aptly conveys the organic curving forms of many of the duo's wooden sculptural designs.

Sinergia/Synergy comprises individual sculptures that transition from naturalistic furniture to modeled technological objects. Although their real-life functions vary, these objects are brought together as a cohesive installation by their common materiality and wood-aesthetic. This provides insight into Mangle's creative practice that purposefully traverses the spaces between concepts of nature and advancement, fine art and design, carpentry and sculpture with an almost surrealist precision. *Conexión 3* (2013) and *Lámpara 2*, (2013), are accurate fabrications of a power cable and a lamp placed as one might find them in a home or a studio. Yet, these ordinarily functional objects are rendered useless in their current state as wooden renditions. A bench, *Caleidoscopio*, (2010), is situated in the gallery as one might find seating in a museum; however its undulating shape and clean lines defy the ordinary, making it appear too precious to sit on. *Sledgehammer* (2013), gives the impression of a conventional hammer balancing on its metal top, until one's eye follows its cedar-wood handle when midway it begins to split, forming a fan of wood splayed like a dried dying branch.

Although their creations are meticulous, Mangle do not aspire to create exact assimilations of these objects—a knotted hammer, a wood-colored plug— which offer a subtle departure from everyday life that situates the viewer within their constructed environment. This is aided by the consistent use of raw brown wood that unites the functionless and the functional as a synergistic installation. Wood carries with it a history—once a living tree— and is a reminder that each object is part of a grander cycle of life.

The precise, clean forms of Sinergia/Synergy are refreshingly unencumbered and unpretentious, allowing the objects to be appreciated as beautiful. Through subtle mimicry and materiality, Mangle also ensures their exhibition is both witty and seductive.