

# Abstraction

PRESS

**December 11th 2015 – March 12th 2016**

**Xippas Arte Contemporáneo, Montevideo, Bartolomé Mitre 1395.**

Xippas Arte Contemporáneo is pleased to announce *Abstraction*, a group show of contemporary abstract painting by artists from Germany, Spain, USA, England, Argentina and Uruguay.

*Abstraction* refers to the most essential art characters, its chromatic, formal and structural aspects. Using materials like acrylic, pigment, graphite, paper, resin or aluminum, the works exhibited establish a particular type of relationship between the artwork and the viewer. Some artists go after invariable rules and systems, while others discover inherent laws through creative experiences.

*We no longer believe that abstraction at least as envisioned by the purists of the twentieth century, is possible today. Who would, like Mondrian or Malevich, seriously think that a painting can change the world? Even the historicist conception no longer applies: no one would dare isolate a mainstream and declare the rest of contemporary production irrelevant or marginal. At the turn of the 1980s, this impasse had led one to believe that the only solution for artists interested in abstraction was re-making and de-constructing a preexisting vocabulary with a critical intent. Even that option has shown its limits. So, what do we do when confronted with a picture made of nothing but a few colored lines or shapes, with no recognizable image or even an obvious quotation on view? Do we simply enjoy it? Or do we consider that it is motivated by something else? A desire maybe, tinged with the knowledge that utopias are out of date in art, to resume a path long since closed –to unwind an already trodden path and slightly alter it along the way. Éric de Chasse, *Continuous Abstraction**

Exhibited artists are: José Manuel Broto, Peter Halley, Herbert Hamak, Ian Davenport, Fernando López Lage, Michael Scott, James Siena, Eduardo Stupía, Dan Walsh.

## **José Manuel Broto** (1949, Spain)

The painting of José Manuel Broto is used in all its oppositions, by mixing the rigor and the freedom, the fluidity, the transparency of the manual movement and the opacity of a digital impression. The artist works the contradictions of the material, the color, and the form to unite them with possibility of new dimensions. The geometrical forms of the bottom are challenged by the organicity of outlines, while in its most raw state, the colors mixture affects a life on a preestablished plan. Broto invents an infinity space inside the defined surface painting, by letting see the antagonism and the celebration of his mental landscape. In that work, the contradiction is transformed into harmony.

## **Peter Halley** (1953, USA)

Peter Halley, one of the most emblematic artists of his generation, is recognized in the history of contemporary painting as the legitimate heir of American abstraction. He first became known in the New York art scene in the mid-1980s, before reaching international fame more than 25 years ago as a major figure of geometric abstraction. The use of industrial materials, synthetic mortar, Day-Glo, Roll-a-Text, and fluorescent acrylic paint, as well as recurrent patterns of circuits and cells, create Peter Halley's signature of instantaneous visual impact. For the artist, geometry is a metaphor for contemporary society. His iconography unfolds in a series of abstract forms that reference everything from architecture to societal organizations. Peter Halley's critical approach is not only expressed in his paintings, but also in his articles and essays on post-structuralism, post-modernism, and the 1980s digital revolution.

**Herbert Hamak** (1952, Germany)

Herbert Hamak's method for creating these forms results from his expertise in mixing pigments with resin and wax. This liquid substance is molded on a conventionally constructed canvas, which provides structure for it. Even though his method mandates the perfect mastering of the medium, the artist allows serendipity every opportunity to intervene: chance causes bubbles and distortions during the drying process and the exterior conditions alter the pigment colors. Thus, nothing is ever entirely controlled in Hamak's work; repeating the same actions would produce different results. Starting with the 300 or so pigments present in nature, Hamak plays with both the physical properties that allow color to appear to the eye and also with the diverse aesthetic mediums that enable color to attract our eyes. Since color results from a complex chemical process, Hamak's works focus on color as both a physical material and as a property that reflects light. Because the color is imprisoned in a translucent material, it can interact with the surrounding light. Surfaces of paintings normally reflect light, but Hamak's paintings allow light to penetrate them. Light passes through the paintings, endowing them with a vaporous aspect that belies the true weight and mass of the object.

**Ian Davenport** (1966, UK)

The creative process of Ian Davenport has two aspects: the act of painting and the performance. He starts by spreading the lacquer onto medium density fireboard or aluminium panels that are then flipped or tipped to move paint across and off the surface. Some of his works are made by pouring the paint onto a tilted surface and then by letting gravity work and spread the paint on the surface. The brilliance of the painting enables the viewer to see his own reflection. These clearly attractive works may seem simple, but they are much more complex than this explanation suggests. The most intense moment comes when the situation is out of control: when colours come into contact. These works have a presence, a power to transform the surface they occupy, changing the perception of space around them.

**Fernando López Lage** (1964, Uruguay)

He is a multifaceted personality and nowadays an essential reference in the Uruguayan art scene in several aspects; he is established as an artist, works as a teacher, heads a cultural center, and organizes different exhibitions. During the eighties he belonged to a group of artists which boldly and easily began to show atypical ways of expressions in the local environment. He participated in group exhibitions, in performances, and in installation art. His development as an artist ventured into the ready made, the Process Art, and the architectural intervention. Early in the new century and the new millennium, Lopez Lage begins to venture in painting-painting with geometric features, carried away by the pleasure of painting in large format with an intense chromaticism. In a series of abstract canvases, he freely glosses successful movements rescued from the history of modern painting, pays tribute to the qualities of the profession, and demonstrates the soundness of that creative expression.

**Michael Scott** (1958, USA)

Reknown painter of the New York contemporary art scene, Michael Scott realizes, since 1989 paintings that are visual experiences pushed to the extreme. He juxtaposes narrow vertical lines in different colours on aluminium plates, usually square-shaped and of various sizes. His artworks bring the optical impact to such a level that it makes them almost impossible to look at. This disruptive experience underlines the artist's extreme point of view on art. Putting aside subjectivity, he adopts a systematic and mechanical approach. In his last paintings, randomness is more present. Whereas in the 90's, his paintings were more programmatic, in the sense that they were calculated very precisely, his more recent works integrate a more intuitive artistic approach which generates hesitations, changes and accidents inherent to this process.

**James Siena** (1957, USA)

James Siena is a pivotal artist in the New York art scene, particularly known for his creative process based on self-imposed parameters that he terms visual algorithms. By establishing a base unit that he infinitely and obsessively repeats, Siena takes possession of the surface plane in order to focus on complex geometric and abstract forms. James Siena's work explores numerous mediums, including lithography, engraves, drawing, and paintings of enamel on aluminum, a technique that characterizes his work since the 1990s. The rigorous mathematical process adopted by James Siena and the industrial technique of enamel on aluminum obscures neither the artist's presence of hand nor the fragility of his lightest touch, which he applies and endlessly repeats. The motion Siena creates, at once rational and poetic, confront us with an optical riddle that mixes chance and order, where the leitmotiv distinguishes itself in a group that at first glance appeared uniform. The little spaces, similar to fetishes, totems, or icons, concentrate a unique and hypnotic energy that invites the onlooker to choose his own path between the lines and to give himself over to the metaphysical experience.

**Eduardo Stupía** (1951, Argentina)

Eduardo Stupía's drawings reflect the complex expression of visual arts at a poetic, linguistic and symbolic level. His works speak of the passage of the line, expanding simultaneously in space and time. Stupía almost exclusively works in black and white and draws on a diverse range of tools and techniques, which then coexist on the same canvas. The artist is partial to many media, including pencil, charcoal, acrylics, graphite, watercolors, and ink. By combining these media in a seemingly random manner, he creates a composition that is both chaotic and harmonious. These canvases are structured around miniscule drawings, which evoke forms that appear to be abstract from a certain distance. However, when the spectator approaches them, he is able to distinguish tiny people, monsters, castles, landscapes, and much more. Oscillating between figuration and abstraction, the artist gradually creates his own universe.

**Dan Walsh** (1960, USA)

Since the early 1990s, Dan Walsh has developed painted artworks that etch the fragility of movement in a modernist and geometric vein. His compositions are free hand paintings that transgress the objective purity of minimalism. His paintings forms, colors, and even the manner they're hung, are often atmospheric in nature. Situated behind an arrangement of colored stones forming curved lines and round angles, his paintings produce a sensation of floating and a strange delicateness. Through the abstraction and the simplification of forms, each painting corresponds to a certain resonance or a table of potential elements, similar to the Tibetan Mandalas: this allows the painting to snatch the spectator's attention and influence his reflection. For Dan Walsh, painting is a pertinent medium, "as long as it is a means for an individual to make sense of the world, and the commitment it requires is shared with the public." Therefore the painting is not simply a critical tool. Above all else, it symbolizes the place where we can explore and question mechanisms of perception.