

MAISTERRAVALBUENA

DOUBLE SKIN. DANIEL JACOBY – DARÍO VILLALBA

30 APRIL – 19 JUNE 2021

‘Doble piel’ (Double skin) is the first exhibition held by the gallery since *Encuentro*, the exhibition cycle that displayed the work of 30 artists in 10 exhibitions over a nine-month period. Stripped of external elements such as openings and press releases, the aim of the exhibitions was to offer a livelier, more personal experience of art.

Now that we have returned to our regular programming, our memory of the cycle continues to shape our activities, leading us away from an amnesic exhibition model that equates novelty with quality and feeds the myth of the self-sufficient artist.

One of the purposes of this exhibition is to highlight the generational links between artists in a natural manner, especially those that develop almost unconsciously outside the pigeon-hole of direct references. Like pollen, these linkages germinate as if out of nowhere and without prior warning, shaking up the predominant narrative in tiny increments. It is in these terms that we approach this exhibition of new works by Daniel Jacoby, displayed alongside works by Darío Villalba from 50 years ago.

In 1973, Darío Villalba was awarded the International Painting Prize at the 12th São Paulo Biennial for his encapsulated portraits of people on the margins of a consumer-oriented society. The artist depicts this new group of stateless people in suspension, alone, like specimens from a society under observation.

That same year, Pablo Guerrero, a 20-year-old Peruvian who had recently arrived in Lima, opened a small cotton clothing shop in the district of Gamarra. His business quickly took off and, after a trip to Australia, where he was struck by the country’s public spirit and modernity, he named all his shops *Sidney* in a tribute to the idealised society that he wished his native Peru could resemble.

The story of a self-made man who came out of nowhere to become a media symbol of aspiration for the underprivileged was the starting point for ‘*Sidney y la guerra de Guerrero*’, a series of sculptures that Daniel Jacoby began to make in 2015 and has continued to work on alongside his audiovisual work ever since. Made from metal, the Sidneys fill the space like sharp-edged, angular Meccano, their extremities encased in underwear, which is twisted and stretched to fit the flat surface, detracting from their anatomical quality.

This deformation of clothing was a common practice in markets, where clothes were stretched and pinned onto shop walls to show the quality of the cotton. Rather than the idealised image of the self projected by mannequins in shop windows, shoppers in Gamarra were looking to clothe themselves as cheaply as possible rather than seeking an identity and group belonging through fashion.

A year before his great international success, Villalba, like many other young artists, sought to overcome a rather academic informalism rooted in an autonomy of the gesture that was unable to reflect the social changes occurring in the 1960s. Cities are peopled with new images and signs encouraging new codes of representation able to absorb a reality filled with shop windows and advertisements emitting messages in constant transit and transformation. A new understanding of movement and colour will be the key to drawing the artist's gaze out of the confines of the studio.

The new generation of artists, who draw on resources such as breaking with pictorial framing, repeating images or fragmenting figures sequentially, will dissect movement rather than activating it by means of the pictorial gesture. Colour will be freed from the material quality and existential sobriety underpinning informalism, becoming flatter and merging into the background to emulate the mechanical, artificial tone of the images used in the media and in advertising.

The encapsulated paintings displayed in this exhibition position Villalba within this new creative paradigm with echoes of British Pop Art. Through these methacrylate bubbles, we see ordinary people in a society whose urban centres are expanding: shoeshiners, photographers, office workers and rugby players. Bands of electric colours cross their bodies, torn from the pictorial plane, while the figure in the background, dyed fluorescent fuchsia, has disappeared to leave only the silhouette of its shadow.

Fifty years separate Darío Villalba and Daniel Jacoby's work. No more than an instant beneath the double skin.