

By Antonio Echeverría

I woke up today searching for a word. Some note that might be enough to take me back to that summer. I went through some boxes in storage, and there I came across a notebook from that time. More than anything, I remember how hot those months were. It was a fathomless heat, one I had never felt before. I remember the tallies of people infected on TV, the drip of the air conditioner and walks around the city. *Buenos Aires* seemed different than how I had seen it all my life. It was exhausted, with an imminent sense that something was about to lay waste to it all. It was *that* summer when, in the storerooms of a museum, I first encountered works by Max Gómez Canle.

This notebook, dedicated to entries on artists to investigate, opens in the following manner: with the story of a conversation with a taxi driver. I write; *as we begin to take 9 de julio Avenue, I see the first incinerated car, off to one side of the street. We keep on going, and there at the end of the Avenue, I see another one, on the opposite side. I ask the taxi driver why there are so many burned cars. He answers with the obvious. He doesn't know, but says that maybe it has something to do with the heat.* The rest of the page is blank. The pages that follow are dedicated to MGC's paintings. I ask myself if the subject who observes his landscapes—which is not the same one who observes his paintings—is able to escape from the sun, from the shadows, in the case of being invaded, or if, in fact, he or she will know what empty spaces look like. His landscapes are loaded with tracks, continual premises of some presence lost. The residue of an overall despair. Of a horizon for pessimists.

It wasn't until weeks later that I returned to 9 de julio Avenue. I walked to the spot where I had first seen that burned car, and there I found its mark. The remains of the car were no longer there, but there was a dark stain on the ground. It was intense, with blurred edges, the memory of an absence. I asked myself: *Can it be that ruins are able to begin something?* In that city, it seemed like something was taking place. As if one era were coming to an end, and a new one about to begin, still in no hurry to do so.

MGC insists on landscape in such a way that what appears in those valleys, lagoons, cliffs and woods is the greatest desire to rid himself of romanticism, whose load he bears. Because no landscape comes without a horizon, no horizon

without perspective, and no perspective without reality. What underlies those traces of his landscape, and ours, is no more than a mirage of an ideology. First of all, the *nave hornero* (ovenbird vessel) is a face. It is a landscape that no longer desires to be landscape, one that longs to become a body. We know its plains, its twilights and its climate. Whoever observes the paintings is just as much landscape as landscape is subject. The reason why we incessantly seek out their horizons is the same reason that we never come to know them completely; we do not know how much power we lose facing them.

A valley fringed by mounds that rise up, a face converted into a folded-up promise, a frame that is multiplied, an infinite shadow and a mark left by extinguished flames on the asphalt. Max Gómez Canle's gestures bring us right back to the beginning. What will the landscape we have yet to know look like?



Max Gómez Canle  
 NAVE HORNERO  
 07.12.2024 / 08.01.2025  
 w-naturae  
 Pueblo Garzón, Uruguay  
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### *Introduction to Nave hornero (Ovenbird Vessel)*

By Max Gómez Canle

*Nave Hornero* (Ovenbird Vessel) is my first solo show at W. A show conceived especially for W—naturae and its surroundings in Pueblo Garzón, Uruguay, it consists primarily of oil paintings on different supports, representing landscapes contemplated from a bird's eye view, specifically, in this case, that of an ovenbird. I imagine an ovenbird whose nest is situated somewhere between Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil, taking imaginary flight throughout these territories, lacing together different landscapes by way of a common thread, tierra colorada (red earth, that is, earth that is simultaneously a color—iron oxide, which is one of the first pigments humanity utilized—and a place, which in this case is one of the show's underlying themes). I am thinking of the Paraná river basin, the zone encompassing the Guaraní aquifer, as an area of influence, and a context for my most recent investigations. This bird's imagined visions are portrayed in these landscapes, and much like automatism serving as a creative generator for the whole surrealist movement, I utilize perspective as a creative tool in them, putting myself in the bird's point of view. These panoramas are, in turn, mainly bird's eye view perspectives, but they are also descriptions, conceived on the basis of what a bird might see or might find. I invent this bird vision. And the makeup of these visions involves, above all, a dialog between flora, fauna and particular rational, geometric elements which typically appear in my work and can be traced back in a cross-lineage between utopian rationalist movements from the '50s, such as Madi or Perceptivism, pre-Columbian indigenous peoples' geometric designs and the straight lines of first-generation video games. From these dialogs and the pictorial tradition's capacity for cohesion, my aim is to shape a landscape. What elements constitute a landscape, our landscape?

The exhibition is also designed especially for this space, primarily in terms of the passing of time and changes in light at different times of day. It is conceived to show these paintings in their condition as objects, conceived as paintings shown as if they were sculptures. The works float, and also fly like birds, receiving light from different angles, continually changing and interacting. For this very reason, gold is included in many cases, its gleam accentuating the interaction. There are big, large format paintings, done on raffia, which is a rough,

rustic fabric, and smaller, more delicate paintings on precious hardwood panels, and others on stone, granite or cobblestones. In this presentation, the paintings all look in different directions; I don't use any of the walls in the space. They interact all the time with light and with all the different perspectives that one can establish. The viewer is obliged to take a course that somewhat emulates what might be that of a bird in flight.

To conclude, then, or actually, to begin, because this is an introduction to the show, there is one work, outside the exhibition space, that is a sculpture, thought of as a link with the surrounding environment. It is a birdbath, which is also a granite monolith containing the keys of how the show has been put together, or my way of thinking about painting and how I use it as a tool to come to know the place that I inhabit. This monolithic sculpture is actually made of two kinds of stone, a top done in red granite, which is the most typical granite in the southern part of the Americas, and side pieces made of Italian Rosso Laguna marble. So, then, there is a sort of syncretism between two materials with very distant origins, analogous to the syncretism I work with in my paintings, where painting in the European tradition at the same time portrays the space of the Americas. This object also has a utilitarian function, which is to provide water for birds to drink. I say that the birdbath functions as a link with the surroundings because just as the show is conceived from a fictional bird's point of view, it is also conceived to be transited by birds, to be used. In this case, the piece is both an offering for and an interaction with birds, while its function is to connect the show with the environment, working with an idea about where works begin and end, where fiction and narrative begin and end, and whether all of these might well be possible perspectives for us to learn how to relate to whatever surroundings we are in, and to be part of them, establishing new relationships.



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