

Francisco-Fernando Granados:
who claims abstraction?

Support Material

UNTIL FEB 10, 2024

TECK GALLERY

Exhibition Text

Francisco-Fernando Granados' gestural practice queries the many ways in which spatial histories can be embodied. Teck Gallery, a space familiar to the artist during his time as a newcomer and student in Vancouver, is transformed through his installation of diptych murals positioned parenthetically around the iconic waterfront view near the working Port of Vancouver. Granados' background in performance and media art has evolved to include a daily drawing practice. This foundational generator of line-work and chromatic relationships extends to comprise an installation of digital prints on vinyl, at a scale that becomes immersive.

Granados' deliberate intersection with Modernist archetypes explores the questionable and pleasurable legacies of abstraction; his work reaches across these canonical boundaries and implied limits, interrogating art historical pursuits claiming sovereignty for line, colour, and form. In a responsive critique of the fantasy of monastic non-representational approaches to composition, Granados avoids illusions of absolute autonomy in order to imagine the blurred, open potentialities of aesthetic pluralities.

Introducing the artwork with a primary and open-ended question, *who claims abstraction?*, the artist's compositions draw upon iconic Modernist optical strategies such as colour-vibrators¹, strong vertical patterning, and graphic line tracings. Granados described that colour bands extending from the diagrammatic line forms at the centre of the composition, have a relationship to both the inside and outside of that form: "hues and lines are not static — the red lines had to expand outwards and the colour gradations begin to converge, so that the colours give the ambiguity of movement." Granados' use of tonal fades, complimentary visual permutations, and intersecting line work opens up non-figurative visual languages by rubbing them against one another. These include the particular inverted wood grain and nail marking impressions

found in Modernist architectural concrete-casting techniques, and expansive, repetitive graphic linear patterns that produce illusory dimensionality.

Granados positions his work as in dialogue with but not defined by the tenets of Modernist abstract art. He has developed the idea of minor abstraction as a way to guide, in his words, “untranslatable compositional impulses” away from Modernist claims of autonomy. “Forms of minor abstraction emphasize ephemeral materials, site-specific approaches, and non-art contexts,” the artist suggests. “They seek to infuse geometric visual vocabularies with an open-ended politics.” By exempting his practice from any restrictive double-bind of Modernism and its successive Post-Modernism, Granados articulates a distinct path from historically false aspirations of purity, positing these parallel murals as decidedly inclusive of the ever-changing landscapes, parameters, and variables located within a site such as Teck Gallery. This inclusivity creates other possibilities of encounter, resulting in a vibrant, enveloping, panoramic experience for the viewer.

In addition to the digital murals at Teck Gallery, Francisco-Fernando Granados’ inquiry and research into Modernist abstraction extends into a parallel exhibition of works from the SFU Art Collection, at SFU Gallery, Burnaby (JAN 20 – MAY 13, 2023), and Belzberg Library, Vancouver (JUN 8 – MAY 4, 2023), which features notable Modernist works in conversation with feminist and queer artists. These “echoes” aim to open possibilities for exploring and interrogating the potentialities of abstraction today.

Curated by Kimberly Phillips and Kristy Trinier

Notes

¹ The twentieth-century Swiss colour theorist and painter Johannes Itten described colour vibrations as follows: “The colour agent is the physically or chemically definable and analyzable pigment, the colourant. It acquires human meaning and content by optic and cerebral perception. The eye and the mind achieve distinct perception through comparison and contrast. [...] Colour agent and colour effect coincide only in the case of harmonious polytones. In all other cases, the agency of colour is simultaneously transmuted into a new effect. [...] When agent and effect do not coincide, we have a discordant, dynamic, unreal, and fugitive expression. It is this power of material and chromatic realities to generate unreal vibrations that affords the artist [their] opportunity to express the ineffable.” Johannes Itten, “Colour Agents and Colour Effects,” *The Elements of Colour*. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1970), 17–18: <https://monoskop.org/images/4/46/Itten_Johannes_The_Elements_of_Color.pdf>.

Related Event

Book Launch: *who claims abstraction (with a difference)?*

THU JUL 20 / 6 - 8PM

Teck Gallery

who claims abstraction (with a difference)? is a Publication Studio and SFU Galleries co-production edited by Kristy Trinier, Kimberly Phillips, and Francisco-Fernando Granados. The book includes contributions by Kristina Lee Podesva, Margaret Dragu, an interview with Jonathan VanDyck and Francisco-Fernando Granados, and reproduced process images by Granados.

Biography

Francisco-Fernando Granados (he/him) was born in Guatemala and lives in Toronto, the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat Peoples. Since 2005, his practice has traced his movement from Convention Refugee to critical citizen, using abstraction performatively, site-specifically, and relationally, to create projects that challenge the stability of practices of recognition. His work has developed from the intersection of formal painterly training at Langara College, working in performance through artist-run spaces, studies in queer and feminist theory at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, and early activism as a peer support worker with immigrant and refugee communities in Vancouver, New Westminster, and Surrey on unceded Coast Salish territories. This layering of experiences has trained his intuitions to seek site-responsive approaches, alternative forms of distribution, and the weaving of lyrical and critical propositions.

Recent projects include *foreward* (2021-23), a solo exhibition consisting of site specific installations in dialogue with the permanent collection at The MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie; *refugee reconnaissance* (2021), a bilingual compilation of performance scores spanning 2005–2013 published by *AXENÉO7*; *duet* (2019-20) a traveling two-person exhibition alongside Canadian modernist painter Jack Bush in collaboration with the Art Gallery of Peterborough and The Robert McLaughlin Gallery; and *co-respond-dance Version II* (2020), an artist book published in collaboration with Centre des arts actuels Skol in Montreal. Other exhibition highlights include a performance installation in partnership with Third Space Gallery and the YMCA Newcomer Connections Centre

in St. John New Brunswick, public art installations for Mercer Union and Nuit Blanche in Toronto, and participation in international group shows on contemporary queer aesthetics at the Hessel Museum and Ramapo College in the United States and Malmö Konstmuseum in Sweden.

His writing has been published in books including *Other Places: Reflections on Media Arts in Canada*, as well as exhibition catalogues, magazines, and art journals like *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, *Canadian Theatre Review*, *FUSE*, and *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*. Awards and honours include grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Toronto and Ontario Arts Councils, and the Governor General's Silver Medal for academic achievement upon graduating from Emily Carr University of Art + Design in 2010. He completed a Masters of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto in 2012 and has taught art and theory in various capacities at OCAD University and University of Toronto Scarborough. In 2022, Granados began a PhD in Media & Design Innovation at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Image credit

who claims abstraction?

Francisco-Fernando Granados

Installation, digital image printed
on vinyl 2023. Courtesy the artist.

Bibliography

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John Paul Ricco, *The Decision Between Us: Art and Ethics in the Time of Scenes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014)

Bridget Riley (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2019) *Sappho, If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, Anne Carson trans. (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002)

Situated in Vancouver and Burnaby, SFU Galleries occupies the unceded territories of x̣ṃəθkẉəỵəm, Skwxwú7mesh, Səlilwətał, and ḳ'iḳẉəχ̣əm Nations. Acknowledging that the activities of SFU Galleries unfold on colonized Indigenous territories is both a recognition that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure and a commitment to support the capacity of art to unsettle these conditions.

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