

Painting Zero Degree

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Independent Curators International, New York

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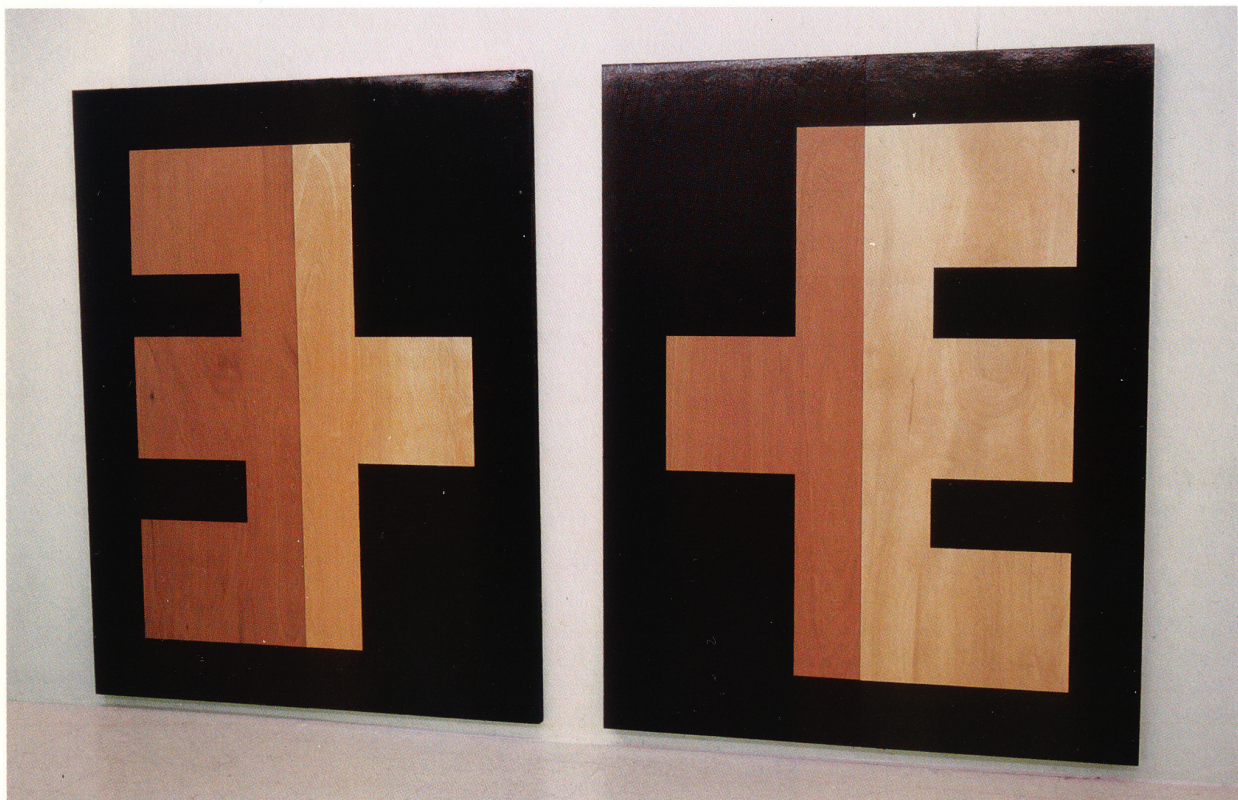
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Object and Authorship: Pictorial Practice in the 1990s

Ellen Tepfer

The art world of the 1980s, particularly in the United States, was characterized by an insistent assertion of individual subjectivity, evident both in the triumphant, romantic style of Neo-Expressionism and, in much different ways, in the emphasis on biography, psychology, and politics in art associated with so-called identity politics. Within these contexts, critical avant-garde practices of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Minimalism and Conceptual art, were regularly viewed as hermetic, formalist, or simply boring. The 1990s have seen a complex series of returns to the restraint and anonymity fundamental to these earlier practices as a number of artists once again take a critical stance against individual subjective expression and notions of psychological interiority.

The work of Chilean artist Felipe Mujica also draws on high art traditions of abstract painting combined with humorous references to pop culture and video games. Issues of industrial production and architectural installation, which draw on the history of Constructivism, particularly as it developed through South American concrete art of the 1940s and 1950s, are also relevant. Like Stingel, Mujica starts with a "ready-made" structure, in the form of actual door panels, and an industrially manufactured material, Formica, which provide an externally imposed regularity and impersonality. In *Bird with Two Heads*, 1998 (plates 14a and b, and plate 15), Mujica displays eight panels with



Plates 14a (above) and 14b (opposite page, left)
Felipe Mujica, *Bird with Two Heads*, 1999
Varnish and enamel on 8 wooden doors with hardware, each door: 78 3/4 x 31 1/2 x 2 inches

bold, rectangular designs, four mounted on the wall and four on the floor. Each installer determines the arrangement of the panels and alters them throughout the exhibition. Within prescribed limits, various configurations are possible, suggesting game boards or video games with their sense of play within a preprogrammed set of rules. As with Smallhorn's work, the use of both floor and wall as the site of display underscores the inseparability of the investigation of painting and object in his work; here, though, the panels are all the same. Four of them hung on the walls as paintings, while the other four are arranged as standing sculptures.

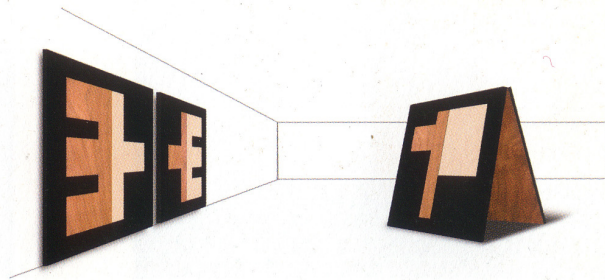


Plate 15
Felipe Mujica, sketch for *Bird with Two Heads*, 1999

Felipe Mujica was born in 1974 in Santiago, Chile, where he currently lives and works. Since receiving a fine-arts degree from the School of Arts of the Catholic University in Chile in 1996, he has exhibited in Chile, at Galería Enrico Bucci (1995), Galería Gabriela Mistral (1997), and Galería Posada del Corregidor (1998). His international exhibitions include a one person show at Galerie Christian Nagel in Cologne (1997) and participation in the first *Bienal de Artes Visuales del Mercosur* in Porto Alegre, Brazil (1997). In 1995, Mujica and Diego Fernandez founded TAZOS, an artists group focusing on sound and improvisation. Mujica was also instrumental in founding Galería Chilena in 1997, an artist-run organization that produces exhibitions and art events at different locations throughout Santiago and beyond.

Gladys Nistor was born in Rosario, Argentina, in 1960 and currently resides in Paris. After studying philosophy at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, she obtained her M.F.A. at the University of Paris (Paris VIII) in 1994. In 1990, she received a grant from the French government, and in 1992, she was awarded the Prix Concours Sculpture en Ville in Voiron (Isère). Since 1986, Nistor has participated in many group exhibitions, including *5 Jovenes Rosarinos* at Galeria Ruth Benzacar in Buenos Aires (1987), *Interior en Interiores* at the Instituto de Cooperacion Iberoamericana in Buenos Aires (1988), *TRANSFERTS* at the Maison de l'Amérique Latine, Paris (1995), and *Concrete Dreams* at Biblioteca Luis Arango, Bogota, Colombia (1997).