

ALEXANDER APÓSTOL

Sala Mendoza – Caracas.



Caracas is not a modern city; it is rather a side-effect of modernity, symptomatic of modernity's potential for malfunction or dysfunction. Its uncontrolled and vertiginous growth was the result of the oil boom and the sudden modernization of this fundamentally rural and almost feudal country. Alexander Apóstol's "Caracas Suite" evokes the idea of utopias gone awry and gives us a portrait of the darker sides of progress in several residual instantes of the city's modernity.

A group of photographs titled "Residente Pulido" presents an uncanny and foreboding image of the city's inexorable path to decay. In "Fontainebleau" photographs, Apóstol magnifies the water jets of the fountain built in 1950s Caracas, while in the "Caracas Suite" videos, water from a miniature fountain erodes photographs of the city's emblematic ruins of modernity, including the as yet unfinished Helicoide, once heralded as Latin America's largest shopping center. In the video "Them as a Fountain",

inhabitants of the shantytowns pose as human fountain with water spurting from their mouths, or simply holding the miniature fountain from "Caracas Suite".

The show ends, appropriately, outside the exhibition space in the residential area of Campo Alegre, one of the bastions of Venezuela architectural modernism between the late '30s and early '50s, and where a number of architectural landmarks have since been demolished to give way to cheaply built but very expensive "luxury" mid-rises of dubious architectural value. There, Apóstol illuminated one of the ruins – the first modernist house in the city, designed by architect Manuel Mujica Millán – and placed an audio installation of a conversation between squatters and another audio piece with a conversation between architects and engineer figuring out how to make bad construction look expensive. "Campo Alegre Moving" was the title of this work, and the artist invited the public to stroll for two hours on a Sunday afternoon in Caracas and, in walking through the now "unwalkable" city, to witness the full extent of the failure of our modernity.

Julieta González

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Reviews.