

GALERIE MARIA BERNHEIM

Juan Antonio Olivares

Self- portrait

February 3 - April 2, 2022

The work of Juan Antonio Olivares sensualizes a search for the sublime. He gleans the micro and macro as equal elements of the everyday. The depths of the universe and the minuscule on earth are grounded, colliding with the personal and historical across fresh technologies and the registration of a draftsman. Where paradox should exist he gently suggests an existential equatable through moments of connection and a lucidity reached through ecstatic intoxication. In his new body of work, Olivares' reduced formal elements focus on his own body in a collection of self portraits that speak to biological and cultural desire and truth. Recording and discovery are intertwined as he charts an interiority; physically and emotionally in the microscopic, the rendered and the quotidian selfie.

Olivares' self portraits, visualized and abetted with Scanning Electron Microscope, 3D scanning software and ubiquitous iPhone, mark, in closeup and crop, his body and its substances. Whether executed in graphite powder on aluminum panel or holographic animation, each forges a new complexity while entering into a history of portraiture always anchored by composition. Like Courbet, his body is a formal excuse with all the requisite eroticism and narcissism. Every level of discovery opens up to the broadest forms of art: beyond the figurative towards abstraction and landscape. The works picturing the zoom-ins of the minute (hair, sperm, skin) become textures of pattern and decoration, the building blocks of both life and art. The recognizable crops of his exterior (neck, ear, cock) are made organic architectures of intimacy. Even if that intimacy is as mundane as a dick pic, they hold monumentality alongside the private. The digital animations, which hover like magic in holographic blurs, capture internal feelings made visual and suggest lived experiences away from Olivares' own body. One may now reanimate the current him, long after his youthful appearance fades. They are worlds as an analysis of self; delineated by the technologies that mediate their visualization and move beyond their content towards an anachronistic present.

In his creation of self portraiture, Olivares enters into and constructs contradictions that inform every aspect of the work. A shallow narcissism bends to vulnerability as he presents his work, but also the intimate him, for public review. Within this self objectification, he gestures towards the position of the artist as one who markets their talent as much as themselves in a current art system obsessed with reductions of identity. Yet, within the carnality rendered in the works is also a questioning of banality and its relation to awe. The pieces reflect the artist but also, in sweeping generalities, most viewers. As Olivares makes specific portraits of himself he opens himself up as a canvas and a mirror onto which to

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place and reflect all ideas of our own selves. It's personal, yet also a sociable act, to decide where reality really lies.

Juan Antonio Olivares was born in Born 1988, Bayamón, Puerto Rico. He lives and works in New York, USA. Recent exhibitions include Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York; ChertLüdde, Berlin; Off Vendome, New York and M/L Artspace, Venice.

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