

SEANKELLY

"Im Interview Leandro Erlich ," *Photography Playground*, May 2014.



IM INTERVIEW LEANDRO ERLICH



YOU ARE A MASTER OF ILLUSION. WHEN DID YOU FIRST COME UP WITH TURNING THINGS AROUND?

I became interested in perception as a way to question our sense of reality. I am not so much interested in illusion per se, in the sense of tricking or fooling peoples' perception, but I'm rather interested in illusion as a way of questioning reality.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Daily life inspires me a lot. Architecture also. The way we construct our comfort zone. The way we try to understand and to control our universe. I like the idea of creating spaces that seem familiar but propose something else. It's a way to see those things that we think we actually know, they can be something else, they can be different.

You always have the reproduction of a building of the city where you are when you do a façade artwork. It's kind of an unreal setting, but since you use a façade of an original berlin town there's a link to the reality. What is your intention with this link?

For those cities that have been produced, I was interested in bringing something that would be familiar to the public and to the viewer. I am very much interested in daily life, ordinary things. It's in those places where I like to create something, that becomes something, that eventually becomes extraordinary.



WAS IT DIFFICULT TO BUILD BERLIN FAÇADE?

It was a challenge to get the reversion of an existing building. The façade itself comes from a real building in the neighbourhood and it is larger than the one we have produced. So we had to rescale and adapt this

version of the building. I think that it was a great production team working on the construction of the piece and there were many people involved which have done a great job.

WHEN PEOPLE LOOK AT THE INSTALLATION, WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO SEE?

I want them to see themselves in a situation which is not common. But most importantly, I like the idea that people are able to recognize how this is happening. How the trick has been made and produced. I believe that this is a major aspect of the work. The idea that people are able to trace and recognize how things are made. Beyond the production, it's a very simple idea and a very simple effect.

MANY PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO LOOSE GRIP AND IN YOUR WORK YOU FORCE THEM TO DO SO. ARE YOU CREATING A KIND OF NEW WORLD OR IS IT REALITY?

Everything that deals with illusion and perception gives us a sense of another reality and I think that there is a lot of playfulness in the world which people enjoy. I don't know if I am creating a new world. If I am, it is in the same way that other artists do. We are bringing our questions and obsessions and by the time we manufacture, produce and physically bring into the world our works, we are creating something.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A REALIST?

Not really, but I do think that my work is very close to hyperrealism. It's important for us to recognize the elements as real as possible in the sense that it is important for us to be able to understand something as not real but very close to reality. For this we have to be able to recognize the elements as real as possible.

So I don't consider myself a realist. I don't label very much what I do. I think that this is a conceptual work that takes shape in different ways. For the façade, it is something very particular, but it really depends of the work.

WHAT DOES SPACE MEAN TO YOU?

Well, I think that the space is one of the axes in which we are moving. Space and time are both lines in which our existence takes place and I think that we can speak about space in many ways. To me, the space I am interested in, is the space that we build. That's why I am interested in architecture, because I think it's the space we construct and later somehow we are not longer reflecting very much about these spaces. We live in them, it gives us something. Not just buildings, but cities! It gives us a sense of given thing, but actually, we are the ones who build it. So in this sense, daily life space could be understood as the stage for our life.

HOW IMPORTANT IS PHOTOGRAPHY IN RELATION TO YOUR WORK?

Many of my works and installations are very photogenic and they become somehow photosets for people. Specially because today, everybody is wearing a camera in their pockets. If it is not a camera, it is going to be a cellular phone with a camera. And the media allows you to share instantaneously these images. It was not happening this way ten years ago. So it brings a new dimension to how we experience art and how we share our life experiences.

THERE'S A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR WORK BEING EMPTY AND WITH YOUR WORK WITH PEOPLE IN IT. WHAT IS MORE INTERESTING FOR YOU?

I think that my work is not complete until the moment where the viewers are participating in the work. Every artist will say the same. A painter will say that his painting is not complete until the time the viewer is there to see it. But here it is not the same. My work really needs the viewer inside, because from the very beginning of the work, the viewer has a role and a position. And once the viewer is in the work, the work brings it's own sense.

WHEN YOU STARTED THINKING ABOUT BERLIN. WAS THE FAÇADE YOUR FIRST IDEA OR DID YOU HAVE ANY OTHER IDEAS?

Doing a façade was part of the original idea and also part of the creative briefing for the Olympus Photography Playground Berlin. Not all of my work has the same type of participation and interaction and I think that this particular work plays very well with the possibility of people creating their own images.

DID YOU LOOK YOURSELF FOR THE ORIGINAL BUILDING IN BERLIN?

No, the production team send me references and I choose this one.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS ONE? WAS IT AN AESTHETIC OR HISTORICAL REASON?

Aesthetically, it is of course not a new building. It's not build 5 years ago. And there are some constraints in terms of the project, because we need a building that has to have certain proportions.

YOU ALWAYS HAVE OLDER BUILDINGS IN YOUR FAÇADE PROJECTS. IS THERE SOME CRITIC POINT OF VIEW?

Some type of architecture has a sense of archetype. And I think that new buildings, new architecture propose things that are not necessary now, which are not ordinary. Some of the new buildings already look like mirrors. When you are a child and you learn to draw a house, what do you do? You do a roof with a chimney, windows and a door. It's a very archetype synthesis of our idea of a house.

Leandro Erlich, thank you very much.

Pictures: Miguel Martinez

