

SEAN KELLY

“Jose Dávila: The Stranger, The Stranger, and The Stranger,” *Nowness*, May 19, 2014.

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The Mexican artist reimagines one of cinema’s most memorable standoffs



“I was very pleasantly surprised when I realized the tension of the scene was intact, even though you can’t see expression on the characters’ faces,” says Guadalajara-based artist Jose Dávila of his first foray into film, commissioned exclusively for NOWNESS. A fast-rising, multi-disciplinary name on the international arts scene, Dávila’s cinematic debut sees him apply his signature cutout method to the final scene of director Sergio Leone’s 1966 spaghetti western masterpiece, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. With a background in both architecture and fine arts, Dávila often exhibits sculptural, installation-based work, but he is best known for his stark, photographic cut-outs. Appropriating recognizable imagery, Dávila unabashedly deletes the central subject—the cowboys in Richard Prince’s western landscapes, for example, or countless architectural wonders from historical stills—to arresting effect. Erasing Hollywood greats Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef, and Eli Wallach from the footage for today’s film, Dávila left only their void silhouettes and Ennio Morricone’s fervid score behind, transforming this legendary three-way standoff into a rather poetic conversation about the power of negative space. “Our brain is this library of images that stay with us throughout our lifetime. When we see an image whose subject has been erased, we do a natural exercise of going back to the pictures we have stored in our head and filling in the blank; it’s really this idea of seeing something, even though it’s not there,” says Dávila, “The image that will come to mind for me, will be different from the one you recall—there is a gap in our visual experience, which is what makes this really interesting.”

Jose Dávila’s work will be featured in the group show The World as a Stage, Tamayo Museum, Mexico City through September 28. Thanks to Max Wigram Gallery.