Daniel Ray Martinez

Performative practices and digital mediation surrounded by blue feelings

1960s Conceptualism was one of the most influential artistic movements of the twentieth century. Its strategies thread through various contemporary works, even among young artists, such as Daniel Ray Martinez, working with more recent technologies. The body’s literal insertion into an artwork, as in a number of 1960s conceptual performances, explores the relationship within the artist and the space, architecture or landscape. Films and photography have been the principal media used to document ephemeral interventions or performances. Conceptualist artists from the 70s, such as Chris Burden or Vito Acconci, explored such unique possibility to preserve and extend such inter-physical relationships.

Daniel Ray Martinez performs for the camera yet within his own intimate artistic process. Through basic movements of the artist’s body, he emphasizes the act of drawing and sculpting, or even existing as a raw material, character, or simply a compositional element.

His videos are exercises in contemplation and obsessive repetition, as if a mantra. His is an elegant simplicity that provokes hypnotic effects. Martinez’ works attempt to break the barriers within each spectator. He proposes the composite frame as a window into his studio, linking the spectator with a silent, simple, and private environment.

Landscape plays a special role in the construction of his installation environments. The relationship between the landscape and Martinez’ exercise to draw on it, connects to another 1960s conceptual movement: land art. But in Martinez’ works, the projection of a digital record substitutes for nature. this fucking landscape is beautiful illustrates the impossibility of capturing the landscape in its totality. The recreation is effective as an illusion. Drawing over nature involves new possibilities of reenacting the natural through digital technologies. In the new digital world, things exist in several different levels of reality.

In recent explorations, Martinez explores the color blue as an intimately meditative essay. Questions float, each concerning the artist’s personal definition of blue in relation to space, blue sky, childhood memories, and the Dallas landscape, perceived by the artist as a city made blue through the atmosphere.

This too refers to aesthetic movements of the past. Blue has a long tradition in modern art, from the powerful contrasts of Matisse’s fauvism and Picasso’s blue period, to Miró’s contemplatively minimal surrealism. Blue’s history as a spiritual color (for example, in iconographies of the Virgin Mary) was worked and reinvented in Yves Klein’s International Klein Blue, becoming a performative and impulsive painting process.

Martinez’ The History of Blue reconstructs these movements through contemporary media, focusing on the mediated sensation provoked by screens and projectors, which use the blue screen as a stand by interstice. This data turns into landscape through digital projection; the artist’s body is living matter mediating in and between the falsity of illusionistic representation and the live act of performing over the media surface.

Isaac Torres, Artist, Director of El Asunto Urbano

Untitled (blue drawing #2)
Pastel on paper, plastiglas, polar wood
18 x 24 in