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## **Eduardo Basualdo** **Free Will**

9 June – 1 August 2020

Opening: Saturday, 6 June 2020, 12 – 18 hrs

PSM is pleased to announce the exhibition *Free Will*, the third show devoted to the Argentinian artist Eduardo Basualdo in its Gallery space. The exhibition's title takes its inspiration from the kinetic installation *Voluntad* (Span.: 'will'), which was displayed in 2019 in Les Abattoirs, Musée - Frac Occitanie Toulouse (France) and can now be seen and experienced for the first time in Germany. PSM has further commissioned an installation from the year 2013 to be re-produced for the Gallery's window space; and, in addition, a small selection of Basualdo's existing works has been made to interrelate with the two major works on show.

The title *Free Will* also pays due tribute to the fact that both Gallery and artist are staging an exhibition although, owing to the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus crisis, the habitual requirements for a solo exhibition – the presentation of new, exhibition-specific works and the presence of the artist in person – cannot be met. In these especial circumstances, it is a matter of pressing concern to take human will or free will as the exhibition's overriding theme. At the same time, however, we do not need a pandemic to place a question mark over 'free will', which is often unreflectingly taken for granted.

The very moment visitors enter the Gallery they are confronted with the central installation in Eduardo Basualdo's exhibition: his work *Voluntad* is a solid-metal paled gateway, which slowly moves back and forth on a diagonal path leading from the entrance across the first exhibition room. With its sheer size and its mode of construction in dark-painted metal it recalls entrance gateways such as tend to be found for security purposes at the entrances to commercial or state-institutional property. Transported from the external space of such contexts into the internal space of an art gallery, the gateway seems out of place – and yet no less intimidating. At the same time, the effect is one of internal and external space being interchanged. The demarcation set up between the two exhibition rooms does, however, not form a complete barrier, because the moving gate always opens up half of the boundary or border that it delineates. What we are faced with is a mobile, porous boundary, which is thus not without a certain absurdity. Though not averse to the absurd, Basualdo's concern, however, is to instil a consciousness for the porosity of borders and boundaries – a phenomenon of which world events, both past and present, offer sufficient examples. His work alludes also, however, to the opening, shutting, and shifting of borders on the level of subjective experience, of interhuman relationships and hence of social and, in the final analysis, political processes. His works make us aware that beyond and apart from binary schemes of exclusion and inclusion nothing remains as it is.

The very term *voluntad* inherently implies the concept of 'freedom' and Basualdo's installation makes reference both to outer, physical freedom and to its constant close relation, the inner freedom of the individual. By means of its investigation into the porous nature of boundaries Basualdo's works, however, also raise the vexed question as to the freedom of the will and thus to its boundaries and limits as being in a dynamic state of constant shift and permeability. This leads on, in a further step, to the dual issue of power and control – a matter explicitly

posed by the very title of the first exhibition in which *Voluntad* featured, namely *Capital*. Writing on that exhibition at the time, Marisol Rodriguez argued:

The word 'capital' comes from the Latin *caput*, meaning 'head', the top part of an animate body. As the heads of countries, state capitals struggle today to connect with their bodies, with obsolete structures cutting between parts, threatening instead of protecting experience. Acknowledging that such control is senseless in an era of extreme porosity, Eduardo Basualdo invites the viewer to grasp the excitement and disorientation that surfaces when such limits are abolished. ("Eduardo Basualdo, *Capital*", exhibition at VNH Gallery, Paris, 2016)

Like *Voluntad*, so also the installation *Eyelids* operates in a manifoldly performative way. In three of the windows in the two exhibition rooms, the beholder's gaze is dimmed or clouded by semi-transparent curtains hung on the inside of the windows and is opened up and liberated by the curtains hung outside the windows only when the latter move and billow in the wind. Viewed from outside, the *Eyelids* are first and foremost an intervention in the building's architecture, and as with *Voluntad* so here too an absurdly comic interchange between inside and outside is enacted. In point of fact, however, these double eyelids can be viewed from several perspectives: if one understands the exhibition room physically as a head or as our inner life – in which the limits of, for example, our will are in constant flux – one can consider the inner curtains to be the membrane of our self-perception, be it in a state of immersion or blindness, of being-reposed-in-oneself or of being fully exposed to the whims of the outside world (not only of the weather). Conversely, the *Eyelids* also thematize the gaze from outside to within – the gaze of another person and what he or she sees in us, what we show or allow to be seen, to what extent we open ourselves to the world or shut ourselves off from it.

Thanks to the *Eyelids* the focus of the *Free Will* exhibition is somewhat more on the interior, on the condition of internal boundaries and borders and their impact on the individual's mental and moral disposition with regard to his or her potential to achieve freedom by an act of volition. Literally enclosing *Voluntad*, the *Eyelids* inside and outside the gallery-space create an ambience of contemplation, if not introspection. Can this be a coincidence in times of collective, involuntary lockdowns?