

Ricardo Rendón

Mexico City, 1970. Lives and works in Mexico City.

Around 500 years ago artists like Leonardo da Vinci defended the differentiation between the work of the artisan and that of the artist. That of the artist, claimed the renaissance emancipators, resulted in *cosa mentale*, something that included an intellectual aspect beyond manual craft. Since then, the object of art has been dematerializing until in the late 1960s Sol Lewitt's "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" argued that "the concept is the most important aspect of the work (...) and the execution is a perfunctory affair. (...) The steps that show the thought process of the artist are sometimes more interesting than the final product."

In his works, Ricardo Rendón proposes a renaissance in reverse, that emphasizes manual work, and exposes the worker face of conceptual art, that which values the process, the singularity of each gesture, which, as we learned with Sisyphus, is a redeeming attitude. Rendón, therefore, joins a school of Latin American artists like Hélio Oiticica who practiced a "cordial conceptualism", in Marcelo Campos' apt expression; *cosa mentale*, no doubt, but smoothed by the appreciation of banal materials.

The obsessive works in which Rendón pierces a felt, card or plaster surface are based on an idea of repetitive procedure that is no stranger to conceptual art. But it is not enough for this Mexican artist to offer the script, the algorithm that defines the repetitions to be executed; it's necessary to present the object, to scatter on the floor the remains of the repetitive process of piercing the industrial felt, thus exhibiting a dimension of the object called time, even if what remains of the work is more of a void than actually matter; a void that points to the idea of corrosion, wear and tear, disappearing, dematerialization through division into small parts.

The conceptual heritage of this dematerialization full of traces is explicit in the era of Rendón's production, like Robert Morris' works of the 1970s, also made with scraps of industrial felt. One of Morris' works is the wooden box which hides a tape recorder inside playing the sound of a box being made, and which beautifully speaks to the cardboard boxes battered away by the obsessive piercing work of this Mexican Sisyphus. In Rendón, pleasure through manufacture and craftwork is imposed over the coldness of industrial automation, as if each little disc of card or



felt fallen to the ground were a record of the times past, and of "everything that remaining object has gone through". Each little disc is a minute.

Paula Braga, 2013

