

TONY LEWIS  
CAMPO DE JUEGO  
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An exhibition of four to five different drawing projects from Lewis' studio that are conceptually linked through material, personal history, labor, and more specifically Richard Serra's Verb List as a linguistic muse. Some of the drawing practices refer directly to verbs from the list, while others are physical manifestations of such actions. Composed of intimate sketches, pencil works on paper, large scale site-specific installations, and ageing drawings with an ongoing lifespan (drawings that continue to be made through frequent travel, constant re-shaping, and it's history of exhibitions), *Campo De Juego* highlights the efficacy of self-imposed guidelines to create a conceptual and physical field of play, wherein the creators are able to grasp the boundaries of their body.

The following is an interview between Tony Lewis and Javier Aparicio about Lewis's exhibition at Art Projects Ibiza, "Campo de Juego".

Javier Aparicio: Your practice investigates the relationship between drawing and language, both understood as actions in time; how did moving your studio to the island affect the way you understand that relationship, did you encounter new limits to work with?

Tony Lewis: I think moving the studio... Whenever the work moves from one place to the other or whenever the energy sort of goes from one place to another it always affects time, it affects space and it always affects the way the work is read or understood. I think specifically for this exhibition, for this residency, it is very important to think about the schedule on which we work, and the way in which we work; how much time throughout the day we spend working, because it is very, very tedious, very, very slow, methodical and meditative. Labor that is in relationship with the concept of the work and the concept of the drawings is actually much faster, much quicker because of the nature of the language- which in this case is shorthand. Gregg shorthand stenography is something that is written and designed to be quick, something that you can do very quickly that sort of records speech at the rate of speech. So, for me one of the great things is to have that conceptual snapshot of the drawing and then put it through this process that is slow, methodical, rhythmic and really more rooted in your body, in how you breathe and how you not necessarily pay attention or look at what you're doing but you kind of have a secondary recognition for what is going on in front of you; it does something to the way you perceive time, slows things a lot and all of that is within just how the installation or the labor or the work relates to the language. Does that answer the question a little bit?

JA: Yes

TL: Ok, cool

JA: I am going to skip next question because you already spoke about how the venue changes and affects the works...

TL: I can actually speak to that a little bit more specifically. We did a few preliminary visits via the Internet, I wasn't able to come out but all the information I had before I came into the spaces was very different than walking into the space in person. I think the way that I dealt with these spaces is the same way I deal with most installations or most exhibitions – spaces are always a new thing deal with and I'm always open to change, so when I walked into Art Projects Ibiza and saw how grand and large and how beautiful the spaces are with this natural light –is tremendous– it immediately dictates the labor that I was just describing and it immediately dictates, I think, the work. The quickness of the work, the decision to make a drawing this particular size or this particular height or that particular width, is very immediate. So, it is a quick relationship to the space, is a very quick read which is something I think is inherent to site-specific work, but also it is the nature of the work itself.

JA: Speaking about that, and this is something that I have been thinking, the site-specific installations and also the floor drawings, they disappear, they're gone once show is over and I was wondering if there is any relation you find with performance art

TL: Yeah. The answer is yes but I don't really think of it in terms of that context. I've got a very specific context in the way I think about drawing, I think of that question in relationship to exhibitions exclusively. I can have a conversation around performance art but that does not mean it's on display to be seen in the same context in which performance art is seen. I do have a relationship to performance art because I have relationship to a certain type of action –the show itself is very action-oriented in its making and its subject; I am talking about the performance of the body to a certain degree and that to me is very, very performative in nature, so it does have a conceptual relationship, but, I don't think the work is performance art to say that I don't think that action is on display in the same context as the wall drawings or as the pre-existing drawings. Now, the one exception would be the floor drawings because I think they are so malleable and because of the way they absorb time very differently than other drawings. The installation of the works is a little bit more on display and I think the evidence of a sort of improvised action is a little bit more imbued on the object. It is something that changes over time, so the change is clear, the action or my influence physically on it is clear so I think because of that it becomes a little bit more keen to something like performance art. But is not on that context because I tend to think of performance as something -and I could be wrong here- that really uses the body to express a certain type of language or a certain type of emotion relating to the body. Or as these are objects that are made for that type of action, but they are representative of the action without using the body. And maybe that's wrong, because you can think of performance in a lot of different ways. Generally,

I'm into drawings, all the action of the body or all the action whatsoever and the language, is in service to making the drawing, that is the end goal but there is a lot of stuff in between, including performance. Does that make sense?

JA: Yes, the performance is more related to the action than to the object itself. Can you tell us more about the three bodies of work that we are showing and what is the most recent?

TL: I guess we are showing three bodies of work... Technically there are four (laughs) to say that I brought four different types of drawings, but I think our focus is on three to bodies of work. One is the work that was made in Chicago that is two-dimensional and they're on the wall in Lune Rouge. The second body of work is the site-specific drawings of which there are four in API –can I call it API, is that Ok?

JA: Yes

TL: And the third body of work is the floor drawings which are from everywhere to a certain degree, and they were made in lots of different places; they are a sort of travelling Bluegrass band to say that they move around a lot and they kind of have their own lives. So those 3 bodies of work are very, very separate but they all come from the same type of studio. What I love most about this exhibition is the opportunity to show all three together but even beyond all three, being able to intersperse floor drawings with site-specific and floor drawings with some of the larger –I guess smaller– shorthand drawings which are framed with wood. All of the work is centered on a certain type of action and a certain type of linguistic, that is the sort of foundation of it; the floor drawings are a physical embodiment of an action, the site-specific text drawings are verbs that refer to action that is performed in the floor drawing, and the preexisting drawings made in Chicago that were framed, are kind of the foundation for being able to make the exhibition. I needed to make those drawings first before I knew what the other two things involved in the show were. I think the most recent work is the site-specific to say that is literally the work that is being made and exists here and did not before. It doesn't have a history in terms of have being manifested before this exhibition anywhere else other than my brain. So that's the most recent work and after that the framed works on wood are the second, and the floor drawings have been around for 7 or 8 years slowly gathering exhibitions and slowly deteriorating one show to the next

JA: Personally, I am very excited and grateful that we are going to have a new one...

TL: Oh, that's right! You know what? I forgot! (laughs). Along with the floor drawings, along with the site-specific works... I guess that is probably the most recent work, because what is interesting about the floor drawing that we're making here is that this drawing is going to live on and exist, hopefully, if I'm lucky enough to have the opportunity for another exhibition, that floor will be there and then it'll go from there into another space and into another space. I am looking at a drawing right now that was made in Florence two years ago and after that exhibition it was put into a box and shipped back to Chicago, hung out on the floor for a while, and then we had an opportunity for a show here and we used it for a chance to ship this and open it back up to see what it looks like; we just opened it two days ago and is the exact floor plan of a crypt which is in the basement of a museum in the middle of Florence and having that opened up and be able to remember what was where, remember the sort of site specificity of that drawing or to remember that labor, that work, remember the people that were there is all a part of that work so what I love most about those floor drawings, is I get to do that again here and they carry that history, and carry that work, they kind of end up being this really very large beautiful commemorations of a certain type of collective labor that I really enjoy. They are actually much more emotional than I would like them to be, because of the people involved in making them. From an objective point they're actually just graphite monochromes, very large monochrome drawings which is to say it is the sort of objective, they're almost formal in the way which they are understood but in the making of it all the action, all that performance becomes a little more personal; the memories connected to gallery spaces are always a surprise, usually you have warm or cold memories, it's a treat.

JA: Finally, what can you say about the Ibiza experience so far?

TL: Oh Gosh! I think there is a lot I have to learn about Ibiza, there's a lot I have learnt. But there is so much history and there's so much culture that I haven't even tapped into yet. When I first travel to a place, one of the first things that I try to get a handle on, really just for survival, is the language. And I think one of the ways of which I can understand a place better or understand the place where work is better, is through language; that is one of the ways of which the work can appropriate or understand itself in relationship to where it is at, the work is using the language of the land and for me that's kind of the first step to understanding what's going on here. And for me, that is one of the most beautiful ways to understand space between two people –language– and I think art has a very similar position. So, for me it's like I'm coming from a place like Chicago to a place like Ibiza, the weather is very different, but also the truth is the warmth of the people is very much the same which is a great, great relief (laughs). There is a lot more that I can say but I think this is a good place to start because I have only been here for a week, I got some time...

JA: Yeah...

TL: We have work to do but we got some other things we need to take care of, you and I (laughs)