

1.- Tully, cuéntanos un poco sobre la búsqueda detrás de tu trabajo, en el pasado, entre otros recursos visuales has usado el retrato, las banderas, colores, y ahora un Atlas, cómo se conectan conceptualmente estos elementos?

1.- Tully, tell us a little bit about the search behind your work. In the past, in between other visual resources, you've used portraits, flags, colors and now an "Atlas", how do you think these elements are conceptually connected?

That's a big question to answer, mostly because it's something that I often ask myself. How are these different elements connected? I think the most obvious answer would be to say they are connected through their construction—or reconstruction. I struggle with language to describe my work, as I am sure many artists do. You hit a wall at some point when using one language to talk about another. This was an experience I had when I was learning Spanish after I moved to Chile. For a while, I tried to justify everything in English, my native language, but I had to surrender entirely to Spanish in order to survive and fully grasp the meaning.

But, I digress.

So, how do we apply words to a language that is so abstract in comparison? There are a few words I like to use that seem to convey what I feel is being communicated through my work. I often address my work as a 'system' as it is a formalist structure—the way every piece is similarly constructed—which drives my work, leaving infinite possibilities. My choice to incorporate portraits came pretty late in my college career and really bloomed whilst in-residence at the Royal Academy of Arts in London. I spent a lot of time in the Royal Academy's historic life-drawing room and being surrounded so much by the study of the human form led to an immediate response in my work. In this way, it starts to become apparent how heavily influenced my work is by place.

Growing up in the United States, I was constantly surrounded by U.S. flags. The States are often critiqued for having a flag-obsessed culture and it was not until I became an expat that I saw what everyone was talking about. I think my interest in flags really made sense when I saw what Jasper Johns did with his painting 'Flag' made sometime around 1954 when my father was born. This painting showed the U.S. flag (and many flags, really) for what it really is: an abstract image. But flags exist somewhere in between images and objects, which is a concept I am constantly in-touch with in my own work. So, for me, using flags in my work makes a lot of sense because it starts to play with dual relationships, which is an over-arching theme that has interested me for some time. A lot of my paintings deal with the marriage of contradiction: the vertical and horizontal forming the grid, hard-edge abstraction made with soft material, the overlay of a physical plane (weaving) against a pictorial plane (portraits.)

Actually, I have trouble with the word 'painting,' but 'painting object' seems to fit very well. Most of my work is created in conversation with painting, but they feel more like objects than pictures to me. Again, I refer to contradiction...or to opposites. My last series with the atlas was made from paper, so it was easier to call them collage, but here we go again with the problem of language, because they feel very much like objects to me.

I have a series of (mostly) smaller works in which I just use flat color. I call these color studies, but really they are meant to be fully-realized paintings. These started with a conversation I had with artist Anne Harris in Chicago. I met Anne at the Art Institute of Chicago, where I did my undergraduate and where she is a professor. Anne is a phenomenal painter with a very experienced understanding of color. Honestly, I was color blind before I met Anne. She called me out during a critique at school when I said I was using color and she politely (albeit, firmly) pointed out that indeed I was not using color, but rather color codes. I struggled with her comments for some time. In fact, Anne and I met several times that year in which she patiently explained how painting is about edges, colors meeting each other to create each other and so on. In other words: color is context. She introduced me to Josef Albers' 'Interaction of Color,' from his famous color class at Yale. I cannot tell you how much time I have spent with Albers' screenprints from his Yale class. It was not until about halfway through my residency at the Royal Academy that everything Anne told me even started to make sense in my work.

So, you see, there is a lot going on and much of it remains elusive to me and I love that. I love the questions. If you have all the answers, well, that sounds kind of boring.

It's true that I have been exploring this concept since late 2007, so we're approaching the eighth year, but I still feel like I am in the infancy of my work. I am beating an idea to death and it could take my whole life.

2.- De qué forma crees que el tiempo que has estado en Chile ha influenciado tu trabajo como artista?

2.- *How do you think the time that you've spent in Chile has influenced your work as an artist?*

So, I just told you how I have a problem with language, but I think the experience of learning a second language has made a big impact on my work as an artist. Learning Spanish was a very enlightening and humbling experience. Before I moved to Chile, I did not speak Spanish, so on top of adjusting to a foreign culture, I also had to learn a new language. I had no idea how difficult and frustrating it would actually be. I have a whole new appreciation for foreigners abroad.

The process of learning Spanish felt so radical. I couldn't *google* or download it. There wasn't a button I could press for the answers or an app I could open on my smartphone. This is so contrary to how my generation has grown up. We are the *google generation*. My generation is so used to having everything so quickly because of the internet. In a way, it has also ruined us. We expect to have things so quickly...to make paint dry faster, to get signed to a gallery right out of school, to have an impressive bill of shows before we turn thirty. I am not sure if any of this is really a good thing. It's never been done like that before. It's like we're all in a rush to die because the thought of taking a moment to live feels too much like a waste of time anymore.

So, having lived as a native speaker in English-speaking countries, I was so used to being able to fill in gaps of silence with thoughtless words, to be half-attentive to a conversation whilst scrolling through my phone, to not pay any mind to the thousands of words I came across in advertisements every day throughout the city. I could not do this in Spanish because I needed much more brainpower to survive even the simplest interaction. So, learning Spanish forced me to slow down, to really observe and to choose carefully. I have started to apply these same tactics in my studio. I do, after all, make handmade things and that choice already feels avant-garde in an era flooded with technology. The tech industry is training us to think in the context of upgrades and speed. We are losing touch with our own feet on the ground as we skyrocket beyond our own biology. Nothing can replace the invaluable experience of giving time, time (*tiempo al tiempo*) and this could not be more important to an artist. Spanish brought me back to primal patience.

Anyways, I still very much feel like I am in the 'sponge' phase of my time in Chile—absorbing—and I am not quite ready to wring it out, but language has had a big impact on me.

3.- En tu trabajo se puede ver mucho el tema de la fragmentación, la descomposición, qué hay detrás de esto para ti?

3.- *In your work we can see a lot of "fragmenting" and "decomposition", what's behind this for you?*

You know, it's kind of funny, but I spend a lot of time on things that end up getting covered up as I weave or layer the strips choosing what will come forward or shift. The result is an effect of fragmentation: heads breaking apart, flat skin where eyes should be, repetition of parts of the body throughout the entire work. The images and colors become pixelated by the torn edges and the way in which the strips are organized. For me, there is a movement in this fragmentation, which I am still working with and learning about. But, my work does not feel static as a result. It feels much more like an animation.

4.- Hablemos un poco de tu serie ATLAS. Qué te motivó a tomar este objeto y trabajar con él?

4.- *Let's talk about your ATLAS series. What was the motivation to choose this object and work with it?*

Well, a little background: halfway into my first year in Chile I wanted to import a bunch of material from New York, which isn't cheap. I had had some success with a small crowdfunding campaign a couple years ago where I basically published an idea on Facebook and Twitter and a bunch of people came together to finance it. So, I thought I'd give it a try on a larger scale. In exchange for backing my project, folks could select from a number of rewards, which were made in my studio. I wanted to offer something that was also tied to Chile, since that's what the project was really about (being in Chile.) I was hearing from people from all over the world: within South America, North America, Europe, Australia, Japan...tying everyone together felt appropriate. I spent one morning in Persa Bio Bío looking through old books and came across this beautiful atlas from 1970. With that I made twenty-four collages, most of which were sold through the crowdfunding campaign to import material for my studio in Santiago, but I kept a few.

5.- Sabemos que has podido compartir con otros artistas chilenos en tu tiempo acá. Cómo ves el panorama en Chile para el arte local?

5.- We know you've been able to meet some Chilean artists in the time you've been here. What's your impression of the scenario in Chile for the local art?

It's hard for me to speak to the country as a whole because I have not been out of Santiago that much. I did have a chance to branch out a little this past year, visiting Francisca Sutil in her studio outside the city, but most of my time has been within the Santiago art scene. Actually, there is a lot going on here and it feels like a city that's just beginning to make a name for itself internationally...not just from artists that have gone abroad, but from the artists that have been living and working here most of their lives. The latter are actually who excite me the most...artists like Mónica Bengoa, Hugo Rivera-Scott and Benjamín Lira, to name a few. The community in Santiago is definitely tight-knit and I still feel like the new kid on the block.

6.- Qué te motiva a seguir en Chile, porqué te quedaste?

6.- What's your actual motivation to be in Chile, why did you stay?

I am always asked why I came to Chile, but never asked why I stayed, so I am glad you asked because I want to change the narrative: it is not important why I came; it is important why I stayed.

There was a moment at the beginning of my first summer in Chile when I thought about leaving (for my friends up North, that would be around December 2013.) I did not have a lot of friends here, I was only just starting to learn Spanish and I had no idea what my timeline in the country was going to be. It was not important what I chose, just that whatever choice I made, I made it the right one. So, I stayed. I mentioned before how my work is heavily influenced by place. I have witnessed this in response to my own culture growing up in the United States, but also from the influence my work had when I was living in London, which was a much more rapid period of growth and change for me. I feel like, in many ways, my work is a personal culture and is defined and understood through repetition whilst constantly introducing new players.

This was around the time when I created the yellow-haired king, a sort of alter ego that was more of a psychological construct to maintain my sanity through adjusting to a completely foreign environment—something I had never really experienced before. The yellow-haired king has already appeared in my work. He has become a part of my culture.

So, I landed in Chile, far away from everything and everyone I knew and I thought, well, what can happen? How will my work change? How will I change? I already mentioned how language has changed the way I work and I think it is too early to tell how else I am changing right now, but I know that I am not who I was when I arrived. Chile changed me.

7.- Cuéntanos qué planes tienes a futuro en nuestro país. Qué se viene?

7.- Tell us about your future plans here. What's coming?

Well, after two attempts at a separate studio space, I finally decided to move my work into my house and am currently living in my studio, which is also my apartment in Plaza Italia. So, yes, here are my paintings and here is my bed. That's what I find myself telling visitors these days. It used to be one or the other, now they get a double feature. This is actually the first time I have lived with my work. So, everything I am making now is made out of my apartment. Actually, I love it. It's a whole new level of intimacy with my work and now the relationship is much more constant.

I will be headed to Argentina in January where I am participating in a residency at La Ira de Dios in Buenos Aires with a group of ten other artists from around the world. So, I will be back in Santiago in February and hopefully you will be seeing a lot more of me and my work around town.