

Press release

January 2012

Oscar Tuazon, Manual Labor

January 13 to February 18, 2012

Opening, Thursday, January 12, 6 to 8 pm

6.30 pm, Oscar Tuazon talks to Giovanni Carmine

7.15 pm, reading by American poet Cedar Sigó

The opening event will include a presentation of Oscar Tuazon's artist's book «WORKING DRAWING» (an edition by Centre d'édition contemporaine, Geneva, 2012)

«I don't have ideas, I just go to work.» (Oscar Tuazon)

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present new work by Paris-based American artist Oscar Tuazon in a show entitled Manual Labor.

In recent years, Oscar Tuazon's works, notably constructions in wood and concrete, have been shown in many exhibitions worldwide, including the 2011 Venice Biennial. His approach, working with and against the entropic qualities of natural materials, achieves fascinating results. In formal terms, Tuazon's work displays loose links with the development of minimal and land art by artists such as Sol LeWitt or Michael Heizer. Tuazon's hybrid sculptures, which are formed by and bear the traces of physical labor, are situated between architecture and performance.

Inspired by the tradition of do-it-yourself or survivalist architecture, adopted less in terms of form and more as a kind of strategy, Tuazon's early works in particular have often been discussed within a social frame of reference. In 2009, he made a work with the programmatic title «A Thing», considered as a turning point in his artistic praxis: small in comparison to his room-filling sculptures, the man-sized wooden construction with two lamps attached questions its supposed functionality while using the language of architecture in an entirely abstract way. As a seemingly useful object, it suggests a purpose, but it is of no real use as a lamp on account of its overly bright light. «At the same time», the artist explains, «the lamp somehow prevents the viewer from perceiving the work as an artwork, so that finally it is just a thing». In line with this logic, Tuazon's works have a tendency to abstraction, understood as abstraction in relation to a function. Thus the equipment and furniture integrated into his recent sculptures, for example, suggest use values contrary to the objects' status as sculptures. Rather than an either/or dichotomy, however, these objects seem to embody a «neither/both» ambiguity.

In this spirit, «I put food on the table» (included in the exhibition), is a partial staircase leading nowhere. The staircase as an integral, connecting part of a building becomes a displaced sculpture, or perhaps a full-scale architectural model, thus acquiring a flexibility and playfulness that characterizes Tuazon's work in general. A stovetop becomes a plinth for an abstract sculpture. A column oscillates between «column» and «thing». These acts of modification reflect the artist's interest in the rejection, redirection, or alteration of the purpose of various functional objects and spaces.

Oscar Tuazon's first solo show at Galerie Eva Presenhuber follows the logic of a house, with works ranging in size and function from chair to kitchen, window to wall, door to floor. Conceived and built as pieces of a larger structure, the works, disassembled and displaced from the artist's studio, are displayed in the gallery as fragments of a restless process of building and rebuilding, tearing down and repairing. Overall, the works reflect on the working process alluded to in the show's title, the hard physical work of making art.

Since 2007, Oscar Tuazon (born 1975, Tacoma, Washington) has been living and working in Paris where he co-founded the collective-run artists' gallery castillo/corrales. He studied at the Cooper Union School of Art and attended the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York. In 2011, he designed one of the four para-pavilions at the 54th Venice Biennial. Parallel to the exhibition at Galerie Eva Presenhuber, works by the artist are featured in «The Language of Less (Then and Now)» at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. Selected solo shows: The Power Station, Dallas (2011); ICA, London (2010); Kunsthalle Bern (2010); Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (2010); Seattle Art Museum (2008); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007). Selected group shows: Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich (2011); Wiels Center for Contemporary Art, Brussels (2010); Musée d'Arco de Vigo (Marco), Vigo (2009).

