

G A S W O R K S

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: *God's Reptilian Finger* 25 Nov 2015 – 7 Feb 2016

Gasworks presents *God's Reptilian Finger*, the first UK solo exhibition by Guatemalan artist Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa.

Ramírez-Figueroa's practice is rooted in folklore and dreams, conspiracy theories, ancient mythologies and magic. The Guatemalan civil war of 1960–96 is a recurring subject in his work, softened only by the at times absurd or humorous approach that colours many of his sculptures, performances and works on paper.

Past works by the artist include the video *A Brief History of Architecture in Guatemala* (2010–13), which shows three amateur dancers (including the artist himself) shuffling about to a traditional marimba melody in costumes that represent different Guatemalan architectural styles. As the work progresses their outfits gradually fall apart to reveal their bare bodies in a pointed, if tongue-in-cheek, criticism of Guatemala's policies of urban renewal. In the theatrical installation *Props for Eréndira* (2014), on the other hand, Ramírez-Figueroa excavates Gabriel García Márquez's 1972 novella *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and her Souless Grandmother* about a girl forced into prostitution by her grandmother after accidentally burning down the family home. As if setting the stage for a drama about to unfold, vividly painted polystyrene sculptures of key objects from the life of the protagonist are set against pink-smoke wallpaper.

Using similar methods, the two newly commissioned sculptural installations that comprise *God's Reptilian Finger* focus on the amateur archaeology practiced by Mormon missionaries in Guatemala since 1947 and current followers of contemporary British conspiracy theorist David Icke.

In the first gallery, four gold geometric shapes made of polystyrene and resin shield nesting swarms of swelling jelly worms. Titled 'Babylonian Fantasy', these works are inspired by Icke's view that the global ruling classes are the descendants of the 'Babylonian Brotherhood' – the name he gives to an ancient extra-terrestrial reptilian race, originating in the Middle East.

In the second installation, *God's Reptilian Finger*, a giant, glowing replica of God's finger hovers in mid-air in a black-lit gallery. Surrounded and illuminated by floating stones painted in phosphorescent colours, this work appropriates the unsanctioned mythology of Mormon missionaries in Guatemala who sought to conjure up evidence of Western influence upon pre-Columbian civilisations.

Turning such delirious theories on their head, the exhibition offers up a vision of a critical, hybrid mythology that blurs the boundaries between religion and speculation, evangelism and imperialism.

For more information about the artist please visit www.gasworks.org.uk.

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