

ISSUES AND TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY ART ROME

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Maquette For Landscape
by Ishmael Randall Weeks
Federica Schiavo Gallery

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www.federicaschiavo.com

by Clara Giannini

Ishmael Randall Weeks is an international artist born in Cuzco, Peru in 1976 working between New York City and Lima.

Maquette For Landscape is his first solo exhibition in Europe, taking place in Federica Schiavo Gallery in Rome. Walking through the three gallery rooms, the visitor has the



possibility to enter the artist's own world and in its tangible representation.

Throughout it, it is possible to see how Weeks alters, often *in loco*, recycled materials and environmental debris, and creates something new and no more ascribable to their original functions and shapes. The works show how objects can be deeply tran-

sformed and form a new identity, a new object that embodies and examines issues regarding urbanization, development, mobility, travel and exchange in a globalized world. His sculptures often take the form of transport vehicles such as cranes, carriages, chariots, modified maps and precarious structures that allude to the artist's own migrations. In this way Weeks guides the viewer towards notions of labor and utility.

Ishmael Randall Weeks's philosophy is enclosed within *Maquette For Landscape*, where site-specific installations divide the space with photo-transfers and natural elements. Each single work of the show encloses the artist's studies before the creation itself (there is no improvisation in his

art), as it is embodied by *Brasilia Table*, (installation now absent from the show but that well represents the artist's way of working), and it can be led to a major idea that guides the entire exhibition: the mixture of architecture and nature, artificial and natural. The man is seen here not only as an individual involved in nature, but also as *dues ex machina*, as a person with an active role in the surrounding environment.

Beginning with *Landscape Intersection*, the visitor can see immediately the way in which Weeks works. Created through stacks of carved books, it gives the impression of a real in-scale-representation of an eroding mountain scenery. It is very interesting to notice how the different colors of the pages seem to create the several strata of the mountains. Here Weeks's study and way of working is well expressed: the use of recycled materials (books), the attention to details, and the study of a natural landscape (slope of the peaks which ends in plains).

The exhibition continues in the following two rooms in which photos and photo-transfers on aluminum are the main elements. They capture images of natural environment modified through the hand of the human being, but with them Weeks does not give any kind of judgment, he limits



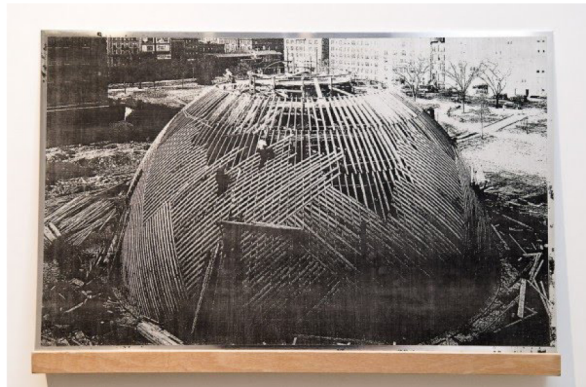
himself in representing reality how it appears in front of everyone's eyes: a living being in continuous transformation, because of itself or because of external elements. In this photos the man's work is always protagonist, sometimes absolute (as in *Candela (Labor Factoria)* or *Frei Otto (Montreal*



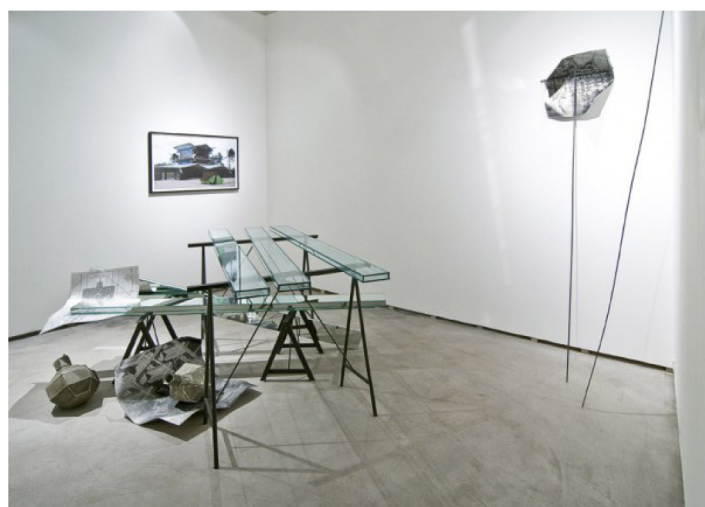
1967)), sometimes accompanied by natural components (as in *Anton Tedesko (Hayden Planetarium)*, where the planetarium under construction was shot immersed in its surrounding environment). These photos have been taken from different perspectives, giving the impression of being looking from dif-

ferent points of view as if the visitor has casually met these sceneries while walking.

However, the natural element is not only suggested by Weeks. In fact, he inserts real plants in the last room of the show. This space is probably the most interesting because in it the spectator can see a direct connection among the



components of the works. With the four installations that fill the space, it seems the artist wants to represent one event, a story that is taking place in the exact moment the viewer enters the room. This impression is given by the leading thread that joins the works: the wind. Experiencing the



room, the spectator feels himself as if in a building site where maps are stopped by metal boards that do not allow them to fly with the wind, and the plants in the surroundings bend following the force of the current of air. The final result, which is Weeks's main aim, is the representation of the

coexistence of artificial and natural, and it is resumed in the work *Cuba*, a digital print on sommerset watercolor paper that shows a tent and a dilapidated cement building on a beach in the foreground, and the sea and some palms lashed by the wind in the background.

Although at the moment some works are no more visible for their moving in other places (including *Maquette For Landscape*, work that gives the name to the show), this does not prevent visitors from following the exhibition and understanding Ishmael Randall Weeks's purpose: representing the integration between architecture and nature using recycled materials. From this exhibition, visitors can see the artist's reflections on natural and artificial world, and on how they interact one with the other. The final result is an analysis on space made and expressed inside a physical space. Thought and reality, intangible and concrete form a complete whole that mirrors what is, at the end, the actual reality.