



DIEGO DELAS

“On Distraction - An appreciation”

Opening: May 23rd, 2015

Until July 24th, 2015

‘Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars.’

Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 1928

‘–Say it, no ideas but in things–
nothing but the blank faces of the houses
and cylindrical trees
bent, forked by preconception and accident –
split, furrowed, creased, mottled, stained –
secret – into the body of the light!’

William Carlos Williams, from *Paterson: Book I*, 1946

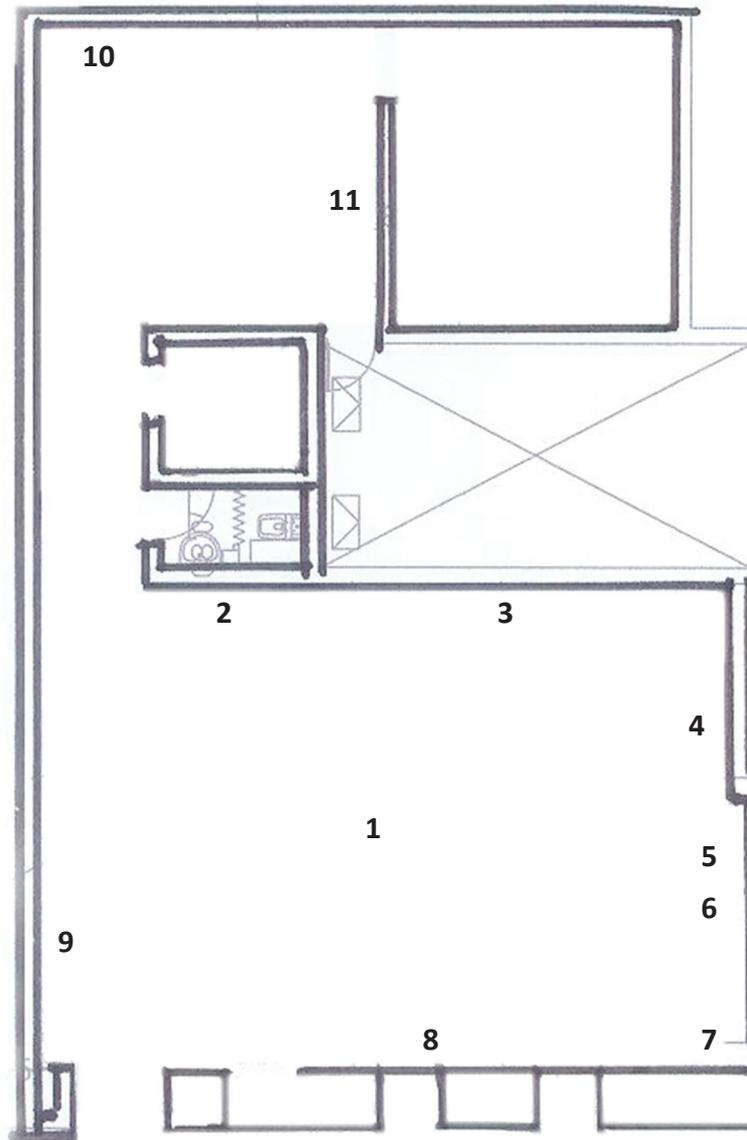
Most, if not all, of our skills and aptitudes for making and apprehending objects (and here we have art no less) are, as Benjamin writes, ‘mastered gradually by habit’ through repetition and during moments when we are doing something else entirely. Distraction is perhaps the fundamental precondition to the possibility of learning. I have a feeling, if not indeed a jittery hope, that this was always the case. It better be so now, located as we are in a moment of culture and economy where attention is configured by Bps (Bytes per second) and the cruelly enforced hiatus of a buffering image to arrive on screen.

I am distracted by the speed, or better tempo embedded in the art of Diego Delas. This holds me there and before, with and in it; I enjoy the heightened pleasures of an active apprehension offered by and in a state of distraction by Diego’s art. I am tempted to think that speed, or time – making time, reading time, reception time – is its essential make up and materiality. Painting, it may surprise some to hear, is wholly a time-based medium and activity. Painting shares equal space with distraction as a mode of recognition and remembrance. Reception in a state of distraction: this is how I most often encounter painting, against the grain so-to-speak. Why? Because a clichéd mode of reception of art, and here painting is still in a regressive vanguard, is that of contemplation – a slow activity, and labored with an end-to exhaust and file away a work through its understanding.

To be productively and positively distracted means we might bring a different quality of attention to the world and our activities. This could be a mode of apprehension–over and above understanding–structured not by inattention on one hand, or passive absorption on the other. Nor would it be timed or instrumentalized and carry the heavy weight of a desired aim. To drift. Something of the promise bound up in *dérive*: an unplanned journey through a landscape of material and visual culture that conjures up a sudden shift in ambiance and an abundance of experience not structured by either work or leisure. A walk.

I have been fortunate to witness some of these works come together as constellations in Diego Delas’s studio, to see their magic and wisdom begin to unfold as objects that inhabit space and make manifest thinking. Delas’s practice is writerly in measures only a reader will appreciate. His art builds from an economy where latent and residual value is preserved and then redeemed in the fragment found and bound to another. The model is as important to painting as to architecture, if not perhaps more so. Architecture is the art form best apprehended in a state of distraction, where we appropriate its charms by use and perception, or rather by touch and site. Diego Delas’s art asks us to engage it with the unconscious competences with which we encounter the everyday in the built world, or home, the street and cultural memory. If we do so, we may find the magic therein.

John Slyce



- 1.- FIRE PLACE, 2015.
- 2.- PROGRESSION, 2015.
- 3.- ESTADOS INTERMEDIOS, 2015.
- 4.- A DRAFT (STUDIO VARIATIONS) 1, 2015.
- 5.- A DRAFT (STUDIO VARIATIONS) 2, 2015.
- 6.- A DRAFT (STUDIO VARIATIONS) 3, 2015.
- 7.- DRAFT FOR A CATHEDRAL, 2014.
- 8.- TWO READERS ENCOUNTER, 2015.
- 9.- UNA IMPOSTURA (B), 2015.
- 10.- ASHES FOR THE BANDIT, 2014.
- 11.- UNA IMPOSTURA (A), 2015.