

Sacha Craddock: One of the most fascinating things about Dr Atl is the number of methods he used to express his relation to the world. He was very politically involved and used a range of form and media to mark his relation to, and even effect on, fundamental social change. You have said that your interest in Atl lies in his use of media, the public, organisation, verbal presence and lack of hierarchy in terms of artistic production. He wrote a novel, for instance, can you give other examples of what fascinates you? Can you also reveal something about your own working practice in terms of the range of media, the public and private?

Stefan Brüggemann: One of the things that fascinates me about Dr Atl is that he is very contradictory and he shifts from one end of the spectrum to the other. You can see that in his political activity - he started being left wing and ended up being right wing. But the most important thing to me about Atl was his freedom to experiment. He was not a typical easel painter. He expanded his work to literature, politics and science and I have that same impulse to expand the discourse to different areas and present myself with new problems. I've been involved in creating an art institution in Mexico (Programa Art Center), developing a hotel as an art work and am starting to do a feature film, but all these mediums I see as equal, they all form part of my body of work and they are interconnected.

Graham Gussin: Can you say something about how the idea for your Bloomberg SPACE exhibition first formed? Were the Atl paintings informing your practice long before you came up with the idea to show them alongside each other? Did the *Obliteration Paintings* come about as a result of thinking about Atl and his work or was the connection made afterwards?

SB: I think the connection was unconscious. I started doing the *Obliteration Paintings* in 2006. I took existing works of mine that had already been exhibited and I obliterated the work with aluminium paint. In these works I am interested in the idea of negation, contradiction, how you can still modify the past and how the works are in constant movement. Since an early stage in my art practice I was interested in Dr Atl's works. Actually when I started painting at the age of fourteen I used to buy oil paint from a brand named Atl and I used to paint a lot with a colour that he invented - the Blue Atl. I have always been fascinated by the work of Atl how he painted the volcanoes and the force they reflect in a very beautiful way. When I show the *Obliteration Paintings* they are always made in situ, I never do them in a studio and they always respond to the context of the show. I see them as an installation.

SC: Your *Obliteration Paintings* take away and give at the same time, covering what was already carrying some notion of expression in order to produce nonetheless, a presence. Your exhibition at Bloomberg SPACE will consist of a large number of paintings executed quickly. It is important that the paintings act together as a presence rather than as autonomous elements hung separately. Do you see a connection between the time it takes to make something and the effect it may have? Is there a fundamental difference between the way Atl's paintings were expected to work and your own?

SB: This question is very interesting because the relation I see here is about speed, acceleration and site. I always like to paint the work in situ (in the exhibition space) in a very quick way and orchestrate how I am installing the work. Dr Atl also painted his erupting volcanoes in situ. This relationship to landscape was very interesting for Atl and very physical. For me it is very mental.

GG: What is being obliterated in these new works? Is there an image beneath that we cannot see or is this now taken to a different stage?

SB: Yes there are images beneath, they are digital prints on canvas. The images come from my series of work called *Notes*. They are A4 sheets of paper that I blow up onto the canvas and then obliterate them.

GG: There is a subtle relationship between Dr Atl's works, your paintings and the video work of The Fall performing. There seems to be a space that you are trying to open up between these elements, one which discusses areas between what is seen and what is hidden in a work. This is clear in the mute video work of The Fall playing a song called *Blindness* and the idea that the paintings obscure or smother our vision. Can you talk more about this set of relations?

SB: In the way you obliterate something or negate it, something new comes out of it. I am interested in the concept of 'worn out' and how you can force it to the impossible point of nothingness by repetition. I am also interested in how the work creates tension between the notion of conceptual and expression, physical and immaterial, narrative and non-narrative, political and apolitical, performative and static, landscape and existentialism. There is a quote by Theodor W. Adorno along the lines of '*Nature can be seen only blindly*' that makes me think of this relation to seeing and how to force the act of seeing to a degree zero.

GG: Do you mean the 'worn out' like Warhol intended, that through repeating something you empty it and at that point you are free to start again, from this degree zero you mention? These are quite formal issues, the amount of something, the repetition of an act and the polarities that you point out. I can see that you want to situate the viewer amongst these variations, is this where the political / apolitical lies?

SB: mmmmm...Yes, No, Maybe...

GG: What about the expressionist aspect here, the gestural nature of the paintings? You use the word existentialism next to landscape but is it not more like abstract expressionism, will people think you are an 'old school' painter?

SB: The work is about creating a contradiction. The work looks like painting but is about negating communication and expression. The work is always in crisis, shifting at an accelerated speed the work is blind and lucid. I see my work as a strobe light.

SC: It seems that as years progress the art market will, in a way, make a play at the colonisation of an area, country, or place in a desire to contain, and re-possess. Thank goodness the world is running out of space and place to easily assimilate. Contemporary Mexican art gained a great deal of attention a number of years ago, the spotlight stopped there for a short time, but now that

has passed and individual voices emerge from behind the fictional overview of national identity. Stefan, do you consider yourself a Mexican artist? Does the idea of National Art have any use? You bring elements of National Heritage over in the form of paintings by Atl, as well as showing film of The Fall, a British national institution, and yet I believe you intuitively fight against this in terms of your own work. Am I right?

SB: Yes you are right and in this fight a twist appears and I am interested in that - in how the misunderstandings of identities creates a new one. I consider myself an artist and I see Dr Atl and The Fall as artists. I also believe I am a hyper modernist artist whose reality is flexible and in constant movement.