

Joseph Hu and Mauro Zamora: Forest Reverie at Vox

By Jennifer Zarro | May 20, 2009

Joseph Hu and Mauro Zamora team up this month at Vox Populi to present an installation that suggests the possibilities and limits of daydreaming in nature.

Hundreds of Hu's hand-cut, hand-painted leaves are piled on the gallery floor as though a gust of wind brought them here. On the wall above are the naked, cardboard branches of trees from which these leaves have fallen. As with all of Hu's recent sculptural works, there is the sense of wonder about the careful and time-consuming creation of these items. While it must be crazy-making at times to cut all these leaves, the abundant and beautiful, great pile of them suggests a committed kind of love and quiet meditation. They do propose a reverie, as the title to this exhibition suggests, and I can imagine the forest walk that would result in this scene. They also suggest



Joseph Hu and Mauro Zamora at Vox Populi, installation view



Joseph Hu, Forest Reverie, 2009, hand-cut, hand-painted leaves, detail

animation because leaves can so easily be carried by the wind, and so they could also end up stuck in the corners and edges of the chain link fence that make up Zamora's painting/installation on the adjacent wall.

Titled "Restricted," this work by Zamora is a continuation of both his wall paintings and his use of a fence as subject matter. It's more unclear in this example if the fence is meant to keep us out or in. The fence is doubled here because it's painted on the wall but it is also projected as part of a projected landscape setting that seems to be behind the fence, but could also be in front. Standing close to the work, backlit by the projected light, the viewer's silhouette is part of the scene; silhouettes, of course, being a touchstone in Zamora's work. We're making a Mauro Zamora painting while we look at this.

But we also can't escape the larger installation because Zamora's soundtrack fills the gallery with the sounds of traffic, wind, street noise, and rustling leaves. We're in the urban landscape, perhaps trapped here, longing for the wilderness that's on the other side of the fence, and all those leaves on the floor could be aloft any minute. It's not dissimilar to the landscape immediately outside of Vox's building, actually.



Mauro Zamora, Restricted, 2009, video and latex

This is a quiet, small installation. It requires some time spent with it, and the willingness to dream about it, to engage in the reverie. The title of the show is taken from Edgar Allen Poe's poem "Forest Reverie," which is so ambiguous that it's hard to tell if it is about the destruction of nature, the delights of nature, or both. This is a good metaphor for these works because they could be read both ways, too. Hu's leaves are glowing with gorgeous fall colors, but leaves decay. Zamora's fence suggests limits and exclusion but could also offer protection.

The two paintings by Zamora included here are less ambiguous. As is typical of his work, we see a natural setting – trees and hills – interrupted forcefully by human-made architectural elements, in this case pipes, some of which leak brown fluid onto the ground. There is no getting around it, these are political works that show us how thoughtless and dangerous our intrusions in nature can be. The thin line that we walk is made obvious: we can't deny our Romantic desire for landscape and nature, but this desire seems too often to hit up against the ubiquitous fences that we've erected. This is a great



Mauro Zamora, Like the Glaciers..., 2009, acrylic, latex, ink on canvas



Mauro Zamora, Reformer, 2009, acrylic and latex on canvas

month to visit Vox. Stefan Abrams, Charles Hobbs, the great Roxana Perez-Mendez, and Dana Levy are also showing work. All this will be on view through May 31.