



## ***The Void***

Featuring works by Jose Bento, Arturo Berned, Waltercio Caldas, Amilcar de Castro, Edgar Negret, Ernesto Neto, Alejandro Otero, Jesús Rafael Soto, Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar

Leon Tovar is pleased to announce the *The Void*, the Gallery's latest exhibition available exclusively online starting September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020. In bringing together a selection of artists who conceive of space as a mutable, plastic material, the exhibition creates an international and intergenerational dialogue that features artists working in diverse realms, from Kinetic art to Neo-Concretism. Seemingly illusive and difficult to make perceptible, these artists conceive of negative space not as something inherently empty, but as a formal and experiential component to their sculptures. The Venezuelan artist Alejandro Otero describes the intangibility and uncertainty of space when he writes: “. . . I have no idea at all of what space is, at least in scientific terms. They say it is the part of the universe that is between—and probably beyond—celestial bodies.”<sup>1</sup> In keeping with this idea of space as un beholden to distinct magnitudes of scale, *The Void* will feature monumental outdoor artworks and large-scale sculptures alongside intimately sized models.

Featured in the exhibition is an edition of Otero's ***Delta Solar*** (2017), currently installed at the National Air and Space Museum, Washington, DC. Like its monumental counterpart, this small-scale sculpture is composed of lattices populated by metallic sails. As the sails reflect light and move with the wind, the sculpture turns into a device that renders visible environmental conditions that might otherwise be outside the realm of visual perception. This manifestation of space as something dense and full of energy is equally explored in the work of his compatriot Jesús Rafael Soto, who is represented in the exhibition by ***Cubo y extensión*** (1971) as well as two editions. Presented at the 2016 exhibition *The Illusive Eye* at El Museo del Barrio, New York, *Cubo y extensión* circumscribes an intangible volume out of nothing but vertically oriented white rods. As viewers navigate the space around the piece, the repetition of the rods conjures a powerful optical pulse that reminds us of the energy that courses throughout the universe below the level of perception.

The work of the Colombian sculptor Edgar Negret, with its delicately curled and folded aluminum ribbons, moves dynamically through space, or captures it in swirls of baroque movement as in ***Dinamismo*** (1984). This work provides a strong aesthetic counterpoint to the Constructivist rigor and geometry present in the sculptures of Arturo Berned and Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar.

Amilcar de Castro, one of the signatories of the Neo-Concrete manifesto in 1959, is most recognized today for the “cut-and-fold” technique he deployed in creating his delicate sculptures. In works like ***Untitled (CDR-19)*** (1990), a circular plane is transformed into a three-dimensional composition that twists into space. Both Waltercio Caldas and Ernesto Neto belong to a younger generation of artists who nevertheless built upon the achievements of their Neo-Concrete forebears. In enigmatic works like ***O Mar*** (2005), Caldas asks the viewer to engage with reflective surfaces and the negative spaces in between the components of his sculptures. While physically occupying space, Caldas invites us to consider what we cannot see: “I think negative space is the biggest space. What we don’t see is a great material. A big material.”<sup>2</sup> For Neto, whose sensuous sculptures carry on the phenomenological preoccupations of Neo-Concretism, works like ***Bo Gen Landy Scap Egg, Dayli*** (2009) evoke not only the organic sensuousness of bodily forms, but the materiality of space. As the artist described to curator Ralph Rugoff, “. . . all [the sculptures’] transparent layers of fabric also represent the idea that you’re always immersed in something, because in reality there’s no emptiness in space. Space is full of air, of atmosphere, and so there’s always something between us.”<sup>3</sup>

What these artists propose is an alternative understanding of the void, defining it not as absence, but as a collaborator. Whether attempting to give this invisible and ethereal negative space a material presence, or enlisting it as a mutually constructive aspect of their sculptures, in the hands of these artists the void becomes full.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted taken from José Balza, *Alejandro Otero* (Milan: Olivetti, 1977), 126.

<sup>2</sup> Katie Geha, “Interview with Waltercio Caldas,” *Glasstire*, May 12, 2012, accessed, July 20, 2020. Online.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Rugoff. “An interview with Ernesto Neto,” in *Ernesto Neto: The Edges of the World*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 2010), 20.