

## DISCOVER THE LATEST WORK OF ALEJANDRO CARDENAS, THIS TIME AT ALMINE RECH, NY

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Photo credit: Matt Kroening. Courtesy of the artist and Almine Rech

Currently featured at Almine Rech, New York, and returning to Art of Choice is ALEJANDRO CARDENAS with his latest body of work, ALEXANDRIA. The Chilean artist attracts once more the viewer through his ever elongated figures and fascinating surroundings. Only this time, the surroundings are enclosed spaces of large monochromatic tiles. Cardenas introduces an entirely new retrospective of what the past year was during the waves of mass lockdown. Showing through February 23, the artist's latest work takes on the gallery space and directs the attention of the viewer to the self contemplation, empathy, and companionship that have risen in a time of such "ongoing health and economic crises, and social injustice".

Based in LA, the artist underwent California's twofold crisis of Covid-19 cases going out of control, as well as the wildfires. The product, a body of work that asks the relationship between humans and humanity, and what our link is to nature and our environment. For instance, If anything could be learned (seen above), suggests a dialogue between one of the artist's characteristic humanoid figures, and a vine that reaches out from the ground and bends into a second anthropomorphic figure. Other than the chairs where they sit, the subjects appear entirely isolated in the space. Therefore the viewer is left only to imagine this conversation between the ageless vegetation vine, and the human personification. We are brought to wonder all that could be learned from an exchange with such a creature.

## ALMINE RECH

Composed in meticulous compositions, Cardenas has accomplished to portray the complicated relationship we as humans have with nature. We become so entrained in our lives within walls to the point where the interior becomes our entire life. 2020 was a year where major cities worldwide were led to lockdowns for months on end, and as a result, that separation grew further apart. Our thoughts seemed constrained to the few walls where our lives were being carried out. The tail of *If*, seen above, throws the viewer into this occurrence. The subject sits on an architectural armchair, and stares straight ahead through a hallway of consecutive rooms, all which contain the same monotony in color and material as the rest of the paintings. It presents an undeniable sense of repetition and maddening constraint where the possibilities of "if" are hindered in the boundaries of a gridded interior.

Throughout the exhibition, the spectator walks around the sculptures that mirror and complement the hung canvaes, and is therefore immersed fully in the world of ALEXANDRIA, a tongue-in-cheek reference to the artist himself. We are placed in the universe generated by Cardenas, and are left to explore how the meaning of the exhibition is reflected in us. The artist's immaculate work on canvas as well as on aluminum sculptures allows the viewer to step away from any form of characteristic independence, and is instead moved by the universal resemblance between the stiff, anonymous humanoids, and themselves. We are pressed to wonder the words coming from the mouths, wherever they may be, of the contrived subjects, and in so doing, we wonder just what the artist is expecting to communicate.

All this, without taking away from the artist's familiar style. Cardenas incorporates a side of mysticism and symbolism in his work, this time centered in winding elements like the snake. A deeply historical and symbolic element in ancient greek, old testament, and a myriad of other socio historical instances, the presence of the snake in select paintings and sculptures throughout the exhibition, opens the door to a new level of analysis. We come to wonder the presence of the snake, winding through the artist's own designs of furniture. Some cultures see a snake conversing in such a manner and they take it to be a negative sign; an astral warning to something that's yet to occur. Others may perceive its presence as something that points to the very mysticism of the humanoid figures. In *Continuous Sentry and Sea Krait*, the subject holds a snake to eye-level, and seems to engage in dialogue with it. Something that indicates an elevated level of understanding with nature, an ancient and lost art of understanding nature through telepathy or a form of it. The viewer is then placed within these realities but in some ways is extracted from them as the possibility of misunderstanding increases. Regardless, we are left to wonder how much of our comprehension of nature has been lost due to our fascination with the grid and internationalization.

Almine Rech has done a fantastic job in bringing all these topics to light. The paintings and sculptures converse among each other and with the viewer in an endless layering of questions that remain. The artist's continuous generation of such imagery is brought to our attention, and we are left to introspect in the consequence of our actions as human beings, through a thrilling incorporation of historical inspiration and characteristic style. If you're able, be sure to make your appointment and visit ALEXANDRIA, at ALMINE RECH, NEW YORK.