

Iván ARGOTE

*Stir World,*

*Ivan Argote anchors a visual conversation on the public spaces*

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## Iván Argote anchors a visual conversation on the public spaces

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To find the fragments of urban architecture populated by flora and fauna inside the room of an art gallery at the first glance seem misplaced. The out-of-place response opened the ground of contemplation in the solo exhibition *Prémonitions*, by the artist Iván Argote at errotin in Paris. The fresh body of paintings and sculpture, carrying the slivers of the built environment, hinted at the acute attention Argote lays on the environment around him. The ‘radical twist’ in the hands of Argote to the perceived notion of architecture has earned him a nomination for the 22<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Marcel Duchamp Prize. As a part of his nomination, the installation artist presents *Air de jeu* at the Centre Pompidou in conjunction with *Prémonitions*. Olivia Anani writes in the press release, "In a game of self-reference where even accidents can seem pre-meditated, these two exhibitions and the places, films, paintings, sculptures and installations they present feed back into each other, one prefiguring the contours of the other in an endless spiral."



Closer view of *Fallen*, 2022, Oil on canvas Image: Claire Dorn; ©Argote, ADAGP, Paris 2022. Courtesy of Iván Argote and Perrotin

Touted as a 'sensitive artist', the Colombian artist and film director based in Paris, Argote plays with surrealism and illusion to critique the invincible power of the empires and monuments. The heroism that punctuates the national narrative and edifices has been the relentless subject of his artistic practice. In an interview with STIR, Argote talks about the relationship with public space, the city, and its symbols, "Our cities are characterised by a

will to control; we want to control the masses, to control the symbols, and also to control nature. In that sense, I have worked more and more in the last years including vegetation in my installations to talk about a loss of control of our human perspective, and also to suggest perspectives of a future where our symbols and architectures are reappropriated by life.” In doing so, the artist questions about how we conceive “otherness”.



*Fallen*, 2022, Oil on canvas Image: Claire Dorn; ©Argote, ADAGP, Paris 2022. Courtesy of Iván Argote and Perrotin

The array of fragments of obelisks, empty pedestals and amputated monuments bathed in swatches of pastel tones: grey, yellow and even millennial pink. The dilapidated monuments metamorphosis into fountains: an indicator of the overflowing life. The branches sprout out of the concrete to reinforce the nature that breathes against all odds. What caught the attention of the viewer was a subtle narration on the unfinished. The jest of life finds a source to live from the moment of near collapse. The visual art installation carried a tension between the fragility of what lives on the surface of the earth and what lies beneath, they looked at the duality needed to balance life. In the exhibition, the installations for instance, *Patience*, where vegetation appropriates a ruin of a statue. We also got to see a series of paintings with architectural landscapes, fallen obelisks, and broken pedestals where nature emerges from the centre outward through the rigid architectural forms with organic fluidity. After a hiatus, Argote returns to the medium of painting with the *Fallen* series where he expands the boundaries of the material concrete.



*Fallen*, 2022, Oil on canvas Image: Claire Dorn; ©Argote, ADAGP, Paris 2022. Courtesy of Iván Argote and Perrotin

Argote refrains from a didactic approach, but like an “experienced director of our psychological spaces,” he retreats to satirical humour to talk about the mobility and immutability of sculptures and monuments in the public space. In the video *Post Human*, produced in a studio decorated with sets painted by the artist, the viewers walk through the origins of the obelisk as an architectural form. It presented a world where pigeons try

to remember what a human was. Like the pigeons, which occupy famous places, the tourists throng the places of historical importance. The miniature-sized souvenirs encapsulate the history of the monuments, to extend the meaning of both “reverence and popularisation”.



*Fallen*, 2022, Oil on canvas Image: Claire Dorn; ©Argote, ADAGP, Paris 2022 Courtesy of Iván Argote and Perrotin

The film *Post Human* presented to us a world where pigeons try to remember what a human was. Argote conceived this as a distant fiction, millions of years in the future, where our great constructions are now a soft and tender landscape of silent memories, and we humans, the blurred and funny memory in the memory of a pigeon. "Taking this slightly dystopian but also the calm and humorous distance is a strategy that can perhaps free us from contemporary burdens that prevent us from thinking about these issues related to monuments, and above all that allows us to think of ourselves with less vanity, knowing that we are ephemeral and fragile," elucidates the artist.



Views of Iván Argote's exhibition *Prémonitions* at Perrotin, Paris, 2022 Image: Claire Dorn; ©Argote, ADAGP, Paris 2022. Courtesy of Iván Argote and Perrotin

The intervention in the public space made by Argote activates the relationship between history, artefacts and citizens – otherwise conceived as a dormant terrain. For instance, the simulation of the removal of a statue in honour of Marshal Joseph Gallieni in Paris, the relocation of a sculpture dedicated to Christopher Columbus in Madrid and a Levitation of the Flaminio obelisk in the Piazza del Popolo in Rome. The performative installations evoke a fictional narrative as well as a lived reality. "Like children unable to symbolically cut the umbilical cord, we want to continue to believe in our heroes, in their discoveries and their virtuous triumphs, which are as factual as Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales," states the press release.



Iván Argote Image: Claire Dorn; Courtesy of Perrotin

Not sci-fi in its true definition, yet Argote likes the feeling of entering a parallel space, a future projection, and a trip to another time. At the same time, the idea is to generate questions about our political and ideological confrontations, using fiction and some absurdity to awaken an empathy that can overcome our differences. The visual artist underlines towards the end of the interview that the takeaway after watching his works is

“to become aware of our fragility, to understand that our empires, nations and cities are a small moment and that we must concentrate on taking care of ourselves now in the present.”



Watch Video At: [https://youtu.be/oh4-Mn4\\_EcI](https://youtu.be/oh4-Mn4_EcI)

Ivan Argote, *Premonitions*, at Perrotin, Paris Video: Courtesy of Perrotin

*The exhibition 'Premonitions' by Iván Argote was on view at Perrotin, Paris, until December 17, 2022.*