

ART PROBE

ISSUE #19

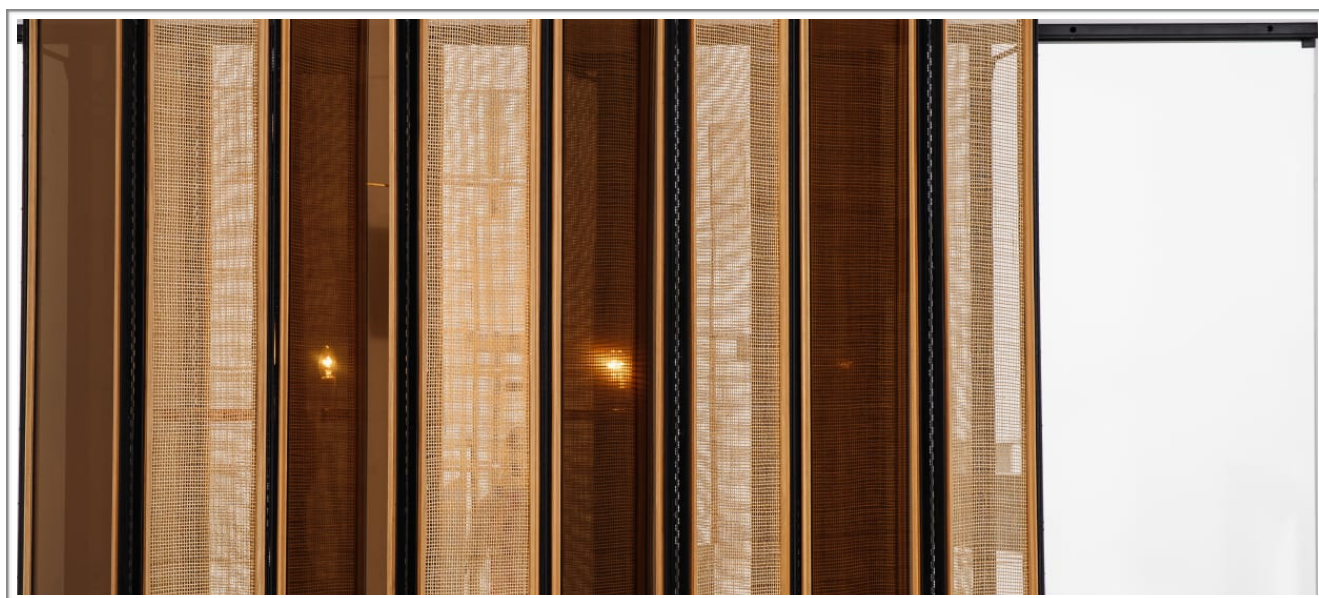
- Shristi Sainani

Exhibition : *Boundary Space*

Artist : *Ishmael Randall Weeks*

Venue : *Lawrie Shabibi (Dubai, UAE)*

Dates : *22nd March – 27th May 2021*



Two-way Mirror, Biombo/Mashrabiya (detail, 2020)

Source : Lawrie Shabibi

Running from the 22nd March to 27th May 2021, *Gallery Lawrie Shabibi* (Dubai, UAE) assembles a stunning solo show of work by Lima-based sculptor, *Ishmael Randall Weeks* introducing him to the Middle-East. *Randall Weeks* is a Peruvian artist, born in Cusco (1976, Peru). He completed his Bachelors from *Bard College* (2000, New York) and then, went on to attend *Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture* (2007, Maine).

The exhibition at *Gallery Lawrie Shabibi* is titled '*Boundary Space*'. Works presented as a part of the show speak an architectural language, drawing influence from *Russian Constructivism*, *Suprematism* (*Vladimir Tatlin* and *Kasimir Malevich*), *Neo-Concrete artists of Brazil* (*Hélio Oiticica* and *Lygia Clark*) and the *Mexican Modernism movement* (*Matías Goeritz* and *Luis Barragan*). *Randall Weeks* showcases work diverse in materiality, scale and form. As a part of '*Boundary Space*' one sees fabrications in materials such as adobe, mineral substrates, rattan screens, mud, glass and metal. There are wall-based, suspended and floor sculptures, reflecting the calibre of the artist in focus.

Favourites from the show 'Boundary Space' are:

1) Código Atemporal #44, 2020



Source : Lawrie Shabibi

Barragán Barragán Barragán!¹

That's the first thought that strikes one's mind while examining *Randall Weeks*'s, 'Código Atemporal #44 (2020)'. The colour palette on this sculpture draws the viewer back to the case study of Casa Luis Barragán, which is nothing less than a sacred space of Mexican Modernism. The sculpture measures 40 x 32 x 10 cm and is constructed using cement, grout 700, adobe, brick dust, soils, additives, wood and aluminium. The title translates to 'Timeless Code #44'.

Considering the title, this piece along with the others in the same series seem to be a celebration of the history of Mexican Modernism. Applauding the calibre of the movement, *Randall Weeks* announces the tributing piece as as a cipher of 'classic' architecture. When scrutinised formally, the central cut-out from the black cast, frames a range of four-sided geometries, all differing in size and finish. One can see hints of greys, beige, browns and pinks; some of which are heavily textured while others modestly showcase their dexterity.

¹ Born in Guadalajara in 1902, Luis Ramiro Barragán Morfín is regarded as the most prominent figure in modern Mexican architecture. By the time of his death in 1988, his persona and way of working had attained almost mythical status, and the interest in his oeuvre has increased ever since.

2) Código Atemporal #48, 2020



Source : Lawrie Shabibi

Another piece which made the cut from the same series is '*Código Atemporal #48 (2020)*'. This sculpture is also one to be constructed using cement, grout 700, adobe, brick dust, soils, additives, wood and aluminium. It measures 40 x 32 x 10 cm.

With regard to the series, *Randall Weeks* says, "*The Codigos function like time capsules, each layer signifies a place and brings it to life. It's my way of documenting the days and paths I take. I collect soil and materials from all over, then I record their date and time, take them back to the studio and transform them into Codigos Atemporales.* "

One can't help but wonder if this again alludes to *Barragán's Casa Gilardi* or perhaps, *Lydia Clark's Unidade (1959)*. The references are picked due to right aligned lineal operation injected into the sculpture. It reminds one of *Clark's* division between the ivory and noir, *Casa Gilardi's* roof slit above the swimming pool. Moreover, the chromatic symphony placed on the top left are markings of memories — personal and geographical, allowing the piece to function as a memento of the artist himself.

3) I-Beam I, 2020



Source : Lawrie Shabibi

Anyone who has ever come across a construction site is familiar with an I-Beam. Architects admire this humble, metal unit for its resilience and resistance. They act as supporting members to the primary framework as they can handle immense amounts of load, from a variety of directions.

Randall Weeks reconstructs the quintessential suspended beam with clay, producing three sculptures for 'Boundary Space'. The one that stood out in the show was the first piece called '*I-Beam I (2020)*', measuring $160 \times 16 \times 14$ cm. Weighing 35 kg, it hangs forged in the most gorgeous undertones of earth. The hues are warm, they sit in formations with boundaries until the rust coloured slip breaks its austerity.

Does it get better than this? '*I-Beam I (2020)*' is a defiance to the myth of the superiority of contemporary construction materials. It is an homage to traditional forms of building, calling out to the sustainable technique of ramming earth i.e a historical (Peruvian) methodology of building. Furthermore, formally the sculpture is admirable. It holds a minimalistic character, taking an utilitarian element and transforming it to an aesthetic entity. It is wonderful to realise the extent to which *Randall Weeks*' work is scholarly; rooted in the history of architecture.

4) Celosía Peruana V, 2020



Source : Lawrie Shabibi

Made using brass, cement, rattan, wooden frames and steel mesh, *Randall Weeks* fabricates '*Celosía Peruana V* (2020)'. The title translates to Peruvian Lattice V² and the work weighs 10kgs as it sits mounted on the wall.

When looked at closely, one can see three panels juxtaposed to form an asymmetrical composition, mounted on the wall using coeval, sleek-looking metal brackets. What is spectacular about this piece is its contemporaneity married to traditional materiality. On the left-most panel, historic rattan sits beside cement congruously. Whereas on the panel peeking from behind the prior, one sees a steel mesh drowning in the similar ivory affix. The modern and mute cement repeats itself in the third panel while contrasting what seems to be a woodcut of jute rope. Visually the actual mass of the sculpture is lost, since it exudes gracious weightlessness. One can easily spot references to the work of Suprematist *Kasimir Malevich* — dense rectangular geometry held together by rigid, but delicate linearity.

² Lattice is a framework of crossed wood or metal; a prominent feature of vernacular Peruvian architecture. It is found especially in the balconies, accompanied by stills and balusters.

REFERENCES

Boundary Space | 22 March - 27 May 2021 - Overview, 2020 :

Lawrie Shabibi. 2020. *Boundary Space | 22 March - 27 May 2021 - Overview*.

Available at: <<https://www.lawrieshabibi.com/exhibitions/114-boundary-space-ishmael-randall-weeks/overview/>> [Accessed 12 April 2021].