

*Estridentopolis* by Damián Ortega  
Adrian Rosenfeld Gallery, in collaboration with kurimanzutto, Mexico City  
November 16, 2019-February 1, 2020

Adrian Rosenfeld is pleased to announce the next exhibition at his gallery in San Francisco, *Estridentopolis*, a presentation of new works by Damián Ortega organized with kurimanzutto, Mexico City. The show's title takes its cue from Estridentismo, a vanguard movement of the 1920s led by artists and poets who sought to inscribe Mexico in a cosmopolitan network of likeminded progressive thinkers and thus revolutionize its cultural and political outlook. With this nod to the past, the works on view also speak to Ortega's own wide-ranging interests: from construction, engineering, and systems of distribution to Mexican folk art; from economics and ecosystems of labor to the successes and failures of international modernism. Together, these works offer a new lens for considering the social and political significance of architectural monuments and artworks hailed as masterpieces of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. In taking into account the realities of contemporary globalized culture, they call into question the utopian visions that emboldened so many radical artists of the past.

Seven large sculptures form the core of *Estridentopolis*. Building on Mexico's historical custom of creating papier-mâché effigies ("Judas" figures) to mimic religious figures and political personalities, the works are composed from paper bags used to package and ship powdery cement mix. They take the shape of well known skyscrapers from around the world—the Marina Towers in Chicago, Habitat 67 in Montreal, and Taipei 101, to name a few—and are topped with animal heads. Ortega's zoomorphic interventions breathe a sense of primal energy and animalistic spirit into structures best known as triumphs of rational design and engineering. The sculptures' paper exteriors add texture and visual rhythm, with colorful company logos cut, pasted, and shaped into intricate patterns. The utilitarian bags also hint at the complex networks of commodity exchange that fuel large-scale construction as goods and resources traverse the globe in the name of rapid growth. Materially delicate and rich with animism, Ortega's skyscrapers shine a light on the unfettered ambition at the heart of so much monumental architecture. As the artist puts it, "Paper buildings speak of the fragility of the great projects in life. The material opposes the infinite ambition of reaching new cosmic, celestial, megalomaniac heights."

Several smaller works, composed from the same bags, compliment the sculptures and reveal their own allusions to past art. A paper suit complete with overalls, a jacket, shoes, and gloves references the makeshift protective gear employees at large construction sites in Mexico in the 1960s fashioned from materials on the worksite. It also hints at Joseph Beuys's famous *Felt Suit* from 1970, offering a new take on wearable art in accordance with the German artist's assertion that art can serve a practical function and be made by common workers. Weavings by Ortega exploit the bags' texture and color to evoke textiles. Several collages recuperate the modernist medium of *papier collé*, popular throughout the western hemisphere in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They bring to mind bold experiments with typography and design by the Russian Constructivists, artists at the Bauhaus, and those affiliated with Estridentismo. In Ortega's hands, the utopian visions espoused by so many progressive modernists are updated, forced to rub up against the uncomfortable consequences of unregulated capitalist growth in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

A major figure in the international art world, Ortega has had exhibitions at the ICA Boston, the Centre Pompidou, and White Cube Bermondsey, among other prestigious venues. Witty and deeply thought provoking, *Estridentopolis* marks his first solo exhibition in San Francisco. For images or more information, please contact the gallery at [info@adrianrosenfeld.com](mailto:info@adrianrosenfeld.com) or (415) 285-2841. The gallery is open Tuesday-Friday 10AM-6PM and Saturday 11AM-5PM. The exhibition will be on view from Friday, November 16 - Saturday, January 25, 2020.