

EDGAR ORLAINETA



*Mexican artist Edgar Orlaineta's first solo exhibition at Dubai's Carbon 12 gallery, **What We See of Things is the Things**, delves into the essence of objects. Inspired by Fernando Pessoa's **Poemas de Alberto Caeiro**, Orlaineta challenges traditional views on art by stripping objects of function, leaving only their pure "thingness." His work questions how objects interact with their surroundings, and at what point they transform into something meaningful. Through organic, geometric forms and careful material manipulation, Orlaineta invites audiences to perceive objects beyond function, as simple, immediate presences, allowing fresh interpretation of their essence.*

Our Lifestyle Director, José Berrocoso, sits down with Edgar Orlaineta to delve into his career and upcoming projects.

Talent Radar

Words: JOSÉ BERROCOSO



Your new exhibition, "What We See of Things is the Things," explores the essence of objects. Could you elaborate on how you define the difference between an "object" and a "thing" in your work?

Edgar Orlaineta: Philosophically, they are defined differently and have distinct specificities. A "thing" has an open relationship to the world, while an "object" has a defined function. To me, an object is created, in contrast to natural things. For example, a stone has no project, but if it is sharp and strong, it could become a spear (an object). That said, there is an ambiguity in this distinction, as they also share the condition of "thingness" at some point—at least for me.

In your pieces, you challenge the functionality of objects, stripping them down to their purest form. What draws you to decontextualize everyday objects, and how do you select the materials you work with?

I am drawn to the ambiguous state of my work; they all suggest some kind of function, yet they do not fulfill it, or if they do, it's ambiguous or eccentric. I aim to unveil their objecthood, which helps me explore all their possible ways of existing, very much in a phenomenological way. When you strip the function from an object, as Duchamp did, you offer it new possibilities of existence. I've done something similar in much of my work. The difference in this series is that I fabricate the objects instead of selecting them, although in other cases, I have intervened in or modified existing objects.

I like the idea of "use" in my work. I sometimes say that I make things rather than art. I'm not trying to create fictions, or metaphors, or suggestive objects, but rather a thing that occupies a place in reality—something that could have a use. If it later becomes art or people interpret it differently, well, that is another matter.

Your work engages heavily with both organic and geometric forms. How do you see the interaction between these forms, and how do they shape the dialogue between the artwork and its environment?

Organic forms in my work serve as archetypes. I try not to get too close to figurative work; they represent specific concepts, like a Venus, a man from the South, or a fish, but they function as symbols rather than part of a narrative—at least for me. Geometry provides order to my ideas. It aligns with Joaquín Torres-García's concept of Universal Constructivism, which involves a structure (geometry), the symbol (the thing), and the spirit.

The concept of "thingness" seems central to your philosophy. At what point during your creative process do you feel an object transitions into a "thing"?

I appreciate the ambiguous in-between state of the thing-object, much like the stone I mentioned earlier. If something transforms during my process, I am often unaware of it, which is why I find these transformative processes surprising and intriguing—even within myself, mind and body.



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You've cited Fernando Pessoa's "Poemas de Alberto Caeiro" as a reference for this body of work. How does Pessoa's exploration of perception and essence influence your artistic practice?

I refer particularly to one of his heteronyms, Alberto Caeiro, who described himself as a "materialistic poet." He emphasized that things should simply be themselves, without attributing to them sentiments or meanings that are not inherent.

Your process appears to focus on the transformative nature of materials. Could you describe how your interaction with materials shapes the final outcome of your pieces?

It's not a formula, but I generate a dialogue with the raw materials, such as wood, which I later manipulate in various ways. It's only when I start working that I sense a direction, and this direction is constantly redefined as I progress; the material and its characteristics



guide me. Sometimes, I have specific ideas I develop to completion; other times, I have to change them or start again from the beginning.

You often use painted depictions of objects, rather than the objects themselves. What significance does this hold in your exploration of "aura" and the separation from reality?

I think of my figures almost as ideograms, allowing their shape to be perceived as a three-dimensional object or reduced to a graphic symbol. This versatility mirrors reality and language, where you have the thing and also its symbol.

Aristotle's idea of art as the realization of a true idea is mentioned in relation to your work. How do you view your pieces in the context of this philosophy, and what role does imitation play in your practice?



I often reflect on this definition because it resonates with my experience. Each time I work, something that did not exist suddenly comes into being, which never ceases to amaze me.

In your works, you seem to invite the audience to contemplate the raw reality of objects. What do you hope viewers take away from this encounter with "things" in your installations?

I don't think about the audience in those terms; I cannot control or predict what they will derive from my work. However, by creating "things" that they recognize or can relate to, I open a point of contact. Sometimes, I make objects that resemble tools or toys, and I may add actual books; this familiarity can create connections that generate curiosity or interest.

My practice is about de-alienation. I improve technically with each work I create, learning and developing new skills, which I believe allows us to remain in dialogue with reality. When you work directly with materials,

it's impossible not to remain humble; matter has its own will, and sometimes it won't behave as you expect. This dynamic is integral to my work, and I hope people can see it, though I cannot know for certain if they do or if they agree. Perhaps that understanding is something I want to share.

You mention your childhood memories and your grandmother's home as an influence. Could you share how these personal experiences have shaped your perception of objects and how they resonate in your work today?

Childhood is an important period for shaping our perception and understanding of the world. I believe I live and perceive the world much like a child, always curious and willing to take risks. I am nostalgic for certain materials and designs, and my ideas about art can be anachronistic, but I don't discredit or oppose other approaches. I believe there should be all kinds of artists.