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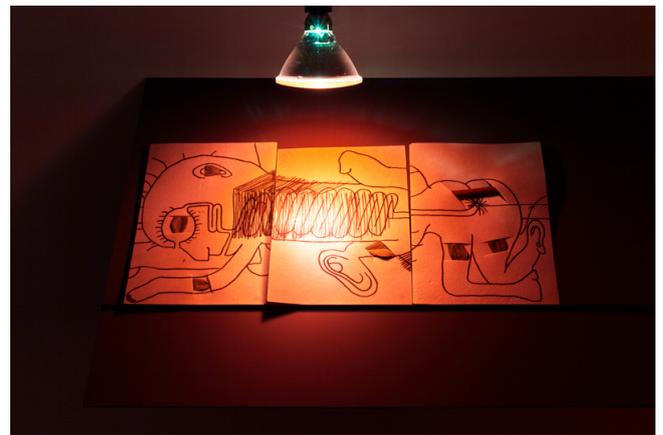
May 1st, 2018

## EDUARDO NAVARRO: *Into Ourselves*

by Osman Can Yerebakan

THE DRAWING CENTER | APRIL 6 – 22, 2018

‘Delicious’ rarely defines a work of art. Out of the five senses, tasting is a relatively new tool for experiencing art; an inclusive spectacle employed by contemporary artists for social engagement. *Into Ourselves*, Eduardo Navarro’s humbly-scaled exhibition at The Lab at the Drawing Center, posits tasting as a faculty on a par with seeing for complete apprehension of the artist’s robust and candidly eccentric drawings. Heated by lamps projecting bright red light, sixteen edible drawings are installed in the museum’s basement floor like recently discovered specimens in a science experiment, literally transforming the exhibition space into a quirky laboratory. The bold red hue illuminating each illustration enshrouds Navarro’s comical figures with enigmatic charm and scientific aura.



Installation view of *Eduardo Navarro: Into Ourselves*. The Drawing Center, New York, 2018. Photo: Martin Parsekian.

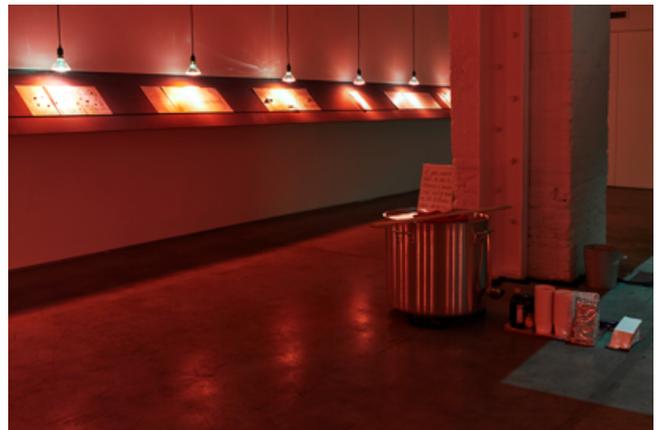
During each performance, Navarro selects drawings from the display and adds them to a vegetable soup simmering inside a hefty metal pot in the middle of the gallery, letting them dissolve into the hearty broth. The audience consumes the soup, letting the art permeate their systems as well as their senses. Drawn with edible ink onto thick rice paper, Navarro’s illustrations are as whimsical and radiant as they are anatomical and corporal. They resemble, at the same time, cave drawings and proposals for a new life form in a distant future. In one drawing, a hand-like figure bears smiling faces on each finger; another one shows a stretched

human head overtaken by ears, which replace the mouth and eyes. A remarkable illustration zooms us inside a mouth where each tooth has its own set of teeth, while three extraterrestrials (or perhaps locals in this particular universe) linger inside the anthropomorphic landscape. Their disproportioned bodies are mostly noses and eyes; their oversized lungs and intestines are exposed, too. Navarro's bizarre world is also inhabited by earthy and aromatic crops such as cinnamon sticks and bay leaves, which add flavor to the soup as well as Navarro's uncluttered sketches.

Navarro, a multimedia artist with an unending appetite for consistently defying the body's limits, does not shower his audience with anatomical quirkiness and guts-out biological symbolism for nothing. The abundance of the mouth motif is also intentional. He aims beyond the eye's domain, inciting a bodily and internal method of absorbing art where images penetrate the viewer's body. Sensual, anatomical, and infiltrating, the ritual concludes when the viewer digests the soup, taking in the work of art in its most literal sense. "What if the stomach had dreams?" the artist asked over the phone...I tried the envision how our internal system observes the outside world."

Navarro's use of food as an artistic medium might recall Rirkrit Tiravanija's participatory meals, in which the audience feasts on pad thai or curry inside galleries and institutions, or the artist-run SoHo restaurant FOOD, which operated as an artistic and gastronomical experiment in the early '70s. The social aspect of gathering people around food, however, is not Navarro's object, nor is pushing the limits of the white cube. Food for him is a tool, not a purpose. Unlike Tiravanija, who investigates social and political aspects of communally consuming culturally-coded dishes,

or FOOD, where artists presented cooking as a bohemian performance, the work here is rarely about the meal per se. "I am interested in literally having the food inside of the audience," the Buenos Aires-based artist explains, "by the end of the exhibition, they will have metabolized the art." In this sense, *Into Ourselves* resonates more with the outlandish, logic-defying happenings of Dada. Duchamp or Breton certainly would have given it two thumbs up.



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