

Press release

Eugenio Espinoza Unlocking something

Opening: Thursday 12 October 2017 from 7pm to 10pm

Duration: until 22 December 2017

Exhibition space: Galleria Umberto Di Marino - Via Alabardieri 1, 80121, Napoli

Opening hours: Monday - Saturday 3 pm / 8 pm – by appointment in the morning

Galleria Umberto Di Marino is pleased to present the first Italian solo show by Eugenio Espinoza, entitled *Unlocking something* on Thursday 12 October 2017.

As a key figure in the Venezuelan art scene for the development of the international debate and the critique of Modernism, the artist has continued to modify a corpus of works created during the 1970s up to the present day: it is the development of a perspective that is consistent with his own research, marked by a vigilant and critical look at the art system.

The *readymade* of himself is the result of constant reflection on the way an art work is appreciated and the various semantic variants that can be superimposed by applying different approaches to the display of art works. The public's point of view therefore provides the trigger that enables the artistic process to be completed, subverting its own initial premises.

Starting out from his familiarity with the organic *Reticuláreas* of Gego and the monochrome figures of Gerd Leufert, followed by his study of an institutional critique, culminating with the lesson of Piero Manzoni and Lucio Fontana's revolutionary sense of space, Eugenio Espinoza has collected all the ingredients for expressing his dismay at the prevalent Modernist paradigm in Latin America.

The unmasking of the social construction imposed by the bourgeoisie is clearly revealed through the adoption of a black grid, the absolute synthesis of every possible representation of reality. By drawing on the most radical ideas of Abstract art, from the historic avant-gardes to Kinetic art in Europe and conceptual and minimalist art in New York, the artist overcomes all forms of rigidity to give his gesture the effect of manipulation, continuously deforming, tearing up, extending, weighing down and dislocating its support.

His historic installation *Impenetrable* was presented for the first time at the University of Caracas in 1972. The work is a painted grid on a gigantic unprepared canvas suspended from the ceiling that covers the entire display surface of the room in order to impede the movement of visitors. While many critics interpreted it as an ironic reference to the *Penetrable* of Jesús-Rafael Soto and Hélio Oiticica, it was, above all, the first step in an artistic practice that embraced the unexpectedness of everyday life, as happened the following year at the Conkright Gallery. In this case, the public was encouraged to cut the canvas into pieces to do whatever they liked with it, so that the grid could be worn on several occasions during his performances.

Subsequently he began to reflect on the urban context, beginning with his work *Participaciones* in 1976 when four performers mutually negotiated their own collective movement in the space, enveloped in a map. In this case, bodies determine the grid in relation to its social function, in an action that regards mapping as a dynamic process enacted by a physical body.

The representative synthesis therefore breaks through institutional places to emerge into the real world, underlining the shortsightedness and social ignorance of an economic and political class which has continued to demonstrate its limitations. Eugenio Espinoza grasps the crucial point of the issue, the critical point between a system worked out at a theoretical level and its encounter with the complexity and violence of the social body which, even today in the digital era, is in search of new grammars and new instruments of cohesion.

The display design will therefore take account of the various lines of research pursued by the artist over the years in order to provide an initial insight into his history, simultaneously breathing fresh life into the entire artistic process.

Eugenio Espinoza was born in 1950, in San Juan de los Morros, Venezuela. From 1966 to 1974, he studied at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas Cristóbal Rojas and the Instituto de Diseño Neumann-Ince in Caracas. From 1977 to 1981, he lived in New York where he studied at Pratt Institute, New York University and the School of Visual Arts. In 1972 exhibited at the Museo de Bellas Artes and "Impenetrable" at Ateneo de Caracas. His later conceptual works include found objects and photography. In 1985, he represented Venezuela at the Bienal de Sao Paulo. His work is in the permanent collections of Tate Modern, London, U.K.; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; the Fine Arts Museum of Houston, TX; the Perez Art Museum Miami, FL; Museum of Latin American Art, Long Beach, CA; Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas; Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas; and Museo Alejandro Otero, Caracas; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Sao Paulo; Museo de Arte Moderna, in Rio de Janeiro; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Bogota; Fundación Gego, Caracas; The Cisneros Collection, New York; the Cisneros-Fontanel's Art Foundation, Miami, FL; and several other prestigious private and corporate collections. In 2017 is the winner of the J.S.Guggenheim Memorial Foundation award.