



View of “Carlos Bunga,” 2015. On floor: *Construcción Constructiva* (Constructive Construction), 2015. On wall: *Construcción Pictórica #16* (Pictorial Construction #16), 2015. Photo: Stefan Altenburger.

“I Am a Nomad,” the first exhibition in Switzerland by the Barcelona-based Portuguese artist Carlos Bunga, was articulated by its curator, Sabine Schaschl, in two distinct parts. The first was an installation of recent large-scale works that sit at the cusp of painting, sculpture, and architecture; the second was a selection of small-scale, model-like constructions and works on paper. The installation, on the museum’s fifth floor, was bookended by monitors showing early video works—one of them, *Pintura* (Painting), 2000, dates back to the artist’s student days (he graduated from ESAD.CR, the Escola Superior de Artes e Design de Caldas da Rainha, Portugal, in 2003). In *Pintura*, we see Bunga in his studio with his back to the camera, facing off against several of his own paintings that hang on the wall or lean against it. Pacing back and forth, he seems to observe his works warily, like David sizing up Goliath, before he bashes them with a stick, kicks them, and generally wreaks havoc. A later video, *Más espacio para otras construcciones* (More Space for Other Constructions), 2007–2008, essays a gentler form of obliteration: In a sequence of shots, we see architectural drawings being energetically erased, in close-up. In a way, these videos are misleading. In general, Bunga’s art is not about destruction or effacement but about construction, and whatever aggressive impulses they may contain have been well sublimated. If anything, they seem to evoke a hopeful willingness to start over, to make do with limited resources, and to find beauty in ordinary things. For the exhibition’s larger-scale works, Bunga’s predominant materials—aside from paint—are heavy-duty cardboard and packing tape. From these, he built two series: “*Construcción Pictórica*” (Pictorial Construction), 2015, which includes works that approach the condition of painting, and “*Construcción Constructiva*” (Constructive Construction), 2015, whose pieces are more resonant with architecture. In the latter series, walls of cardboard taped to the floor were arrayed in pairs throughout several rooms, enclosing the space of each like parentheses; one side of each structure features a roughly painted coat of white, and the other is bare. In a couple of cases, the walls had been

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cut down nearly to the floor, leaving just the traces of their footprints. Each wall seems to have a front and a back—that is, one might read the painted side as a kind of facade that is meant to be seen, while the unpainted side appears to be secondary (one might say the leftover part of the work). Yet it is this untouched side that, facing its twin, constructs an interior for the viewer to enter—a room within a room. This space has a muted, expectant atmosphere.

The painting-like works are also composed mainly of cardboard slathered haphazardly with paint—monochromatic blue, salmon, light turquoise, mustard. Resembling a lid for a large carton, thanks to the four-inch lip around its edges, each work has evidently been pieced together in a makeshift fashion. A single horizontal cardboard strip divides each into upper and lower zones, breaking up the color field and introducing the changing dynamic of shadow. Like paint trays, these structures seem to be only temporary holders for color.

In a departure from the installation's minimalism, the smaller sculptures, shown with a multitude of drawings on the museum's fourth floor, employ a wide range of quotidian materials and forms. Architecture was clearly on the artist's mind as he was making these pieces—but as with the palimpsest of drawings in *Más espacio para otras construcciones*, the process of building is less important than its image. Although these sculptures look like models, it seems that Bunga made them in response to his installation rather than as preparatory works; they are notes for further development, or ways to keep things unfinished—permanently impermanent.

—Barry Schwabsky