

## ALEJANDRO CAMPINS

*Miedo a la muerte es miedo a la verdad*

November 2nd – through January 5th, 2019

**Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam**

San Ignacio y Empedrado, Habana Vieja

Tuesday to Saturday, from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm

The Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam closes its 2018 annual programme with the exhibition “Miedo a la muerte es miedo a la verdad” (Fear of Death is Fear of Truth), which comprises *Letargo* (Lethargy), one of the most compelling series produced to date by Alejandro Campins. Through the paintings, drawings and photos that make up the series, the artist invites us to dwell on the concepts of loss and transformation linked with death, and he does so starting from bunkers, those strange buildings that distress the landscape of many countries. The curiosity they usually arouse in people is likely to swell when it becomes clear that there are a great number and variety of bunkers in different areas of the world, a fact the artist realised when he decided to explore them personally, making him wonder why they exist, and leading him to try and change their fate through their representation.

The bunkers were built for defensive purposes by countries involved in (possible) war conflicts and, according to the artist, they express the fear of both loss and disaster. At personal, family and even national level, defence and protection systems are being created not only for fear of loss, but also of change. Campins believes that constant change, or impermanence, is what scares us. We continually build mental and physical systems of protection from change in every respect. Many bunkers were erected in historical periods overshadowed by threats of war, the quest for power or other events, and their ominous presence makes us wonder if the reasons for which they were built will one day become reality, and if it will at least be possible to cohabit. But the function and identity of these fortified enclosures is not always clear. Hence, bunkers are often associated with hidden, sometimes anonymous powers, and are thought to be pervaded with tension. No doubt they are places that carry a great emotional charge and speak for themselves. For Campins, they are a pretext to talk about the great themes that govern life.

With a view to enhancing their identity as remnants of war or ghosts of the past, but above all to convey the feeling that they are hibernating, Campins depicts some bunkers with a somewhat blurred appearance, while others are clear and deceptively peaceful, but from a centrality and/or dimensions that are threatening.

All the paintings were inspired by “real” bunkers, but none of their identification cards reveal any data pertaining to the referent, like the country where they are located or the date of their construction, preventing the exhibition from taking on a didactic character. This does not mean that the artist ignores these facts. As part of his research, Campins visited many of the bunkers built in Europe and some of those located in Albania, the United States and Cuba. He personally saw all those shown in in this exhibition; his photographic records are on show in a separate room.

The decision to eliminate all references and make the semblance of the bunkers almost reach abstraction, thereby reinforcing their anonymity, intends, among other purposes, to give prominence to space. The artist approaches the landscape for its essence as a stage, its theatricality, its ability to tell us stories on its own, and to move us, whether or not it has the mark of man, even though he prefers uninhabited places.

Campins seeks to draw attention from the landscape, his interest lies in enhancing its narrative force with all the positive or negative aspects it may offer. He is aware that he can transform the disastrous fate of bunkers by painting them, that he can transmute their hidden and destructive power by elevating them to the category of art. Through his representations, he knows he can make us think, because his bunkers, like all his paintings, are metaphors of the transcendental problems of existence that he perceives in landscapes.

Margarita Sánchez Prieto