

# On the Work of Michel Pérez Pollo

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Two years ago, Turner Editorial House published a book comprising Michel Pérez Pollo pictorial work in the period from 2008 to 2014. Two brief texts, but very accurate, and fragments of the correspondence the artist maintained with the authors (Julia Cooke and Enrique Guitart) point to some essential keys for the understanding of his work. The rest of the pages are images of his artistic production that take as a point of departure the year after his graduation in the High Institute of Arts (ISA), a date in which the essence of his aesthetic concerns was already noticed. When flipping through the book, however, there are no doubts on how his painting has evolved. It is the same, but at the same time different. It is the product of a long and continuous process of inquiry and exploration of the possibilities the pictorial medium offers and, also, the conceptual and thematic search.

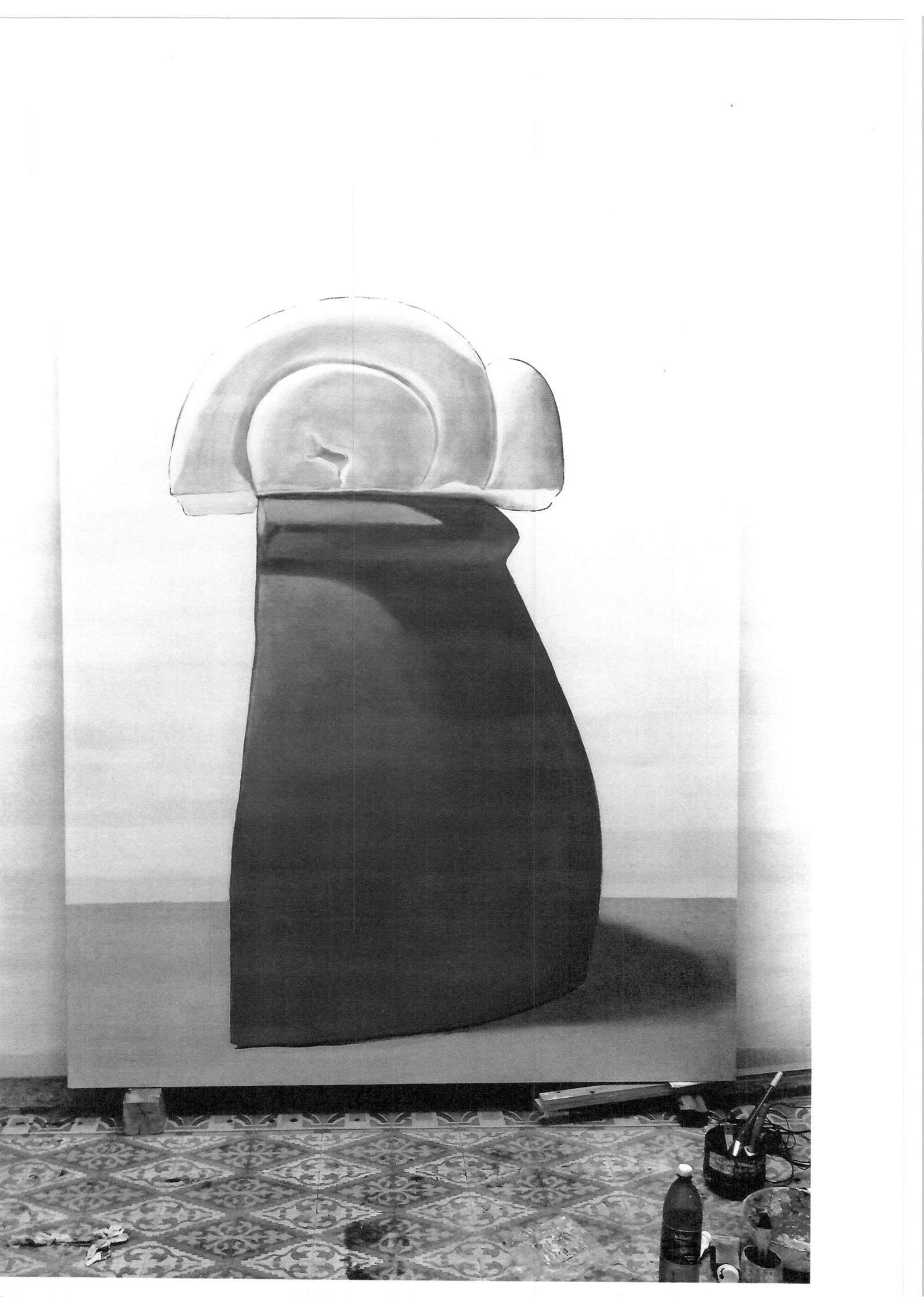
Someone commented on a given occasion that great artists pursue an obsession. In his case it becomes increasingly conscious. It reveals through a symbolic universe of its own that distinguishes him, a way of doing and of interpreting the reality that may change, but the path will always be the same. When you know his painting it is difficult not to identify some of his pictures. He has already delimited his obsession, on which he will once and again return.

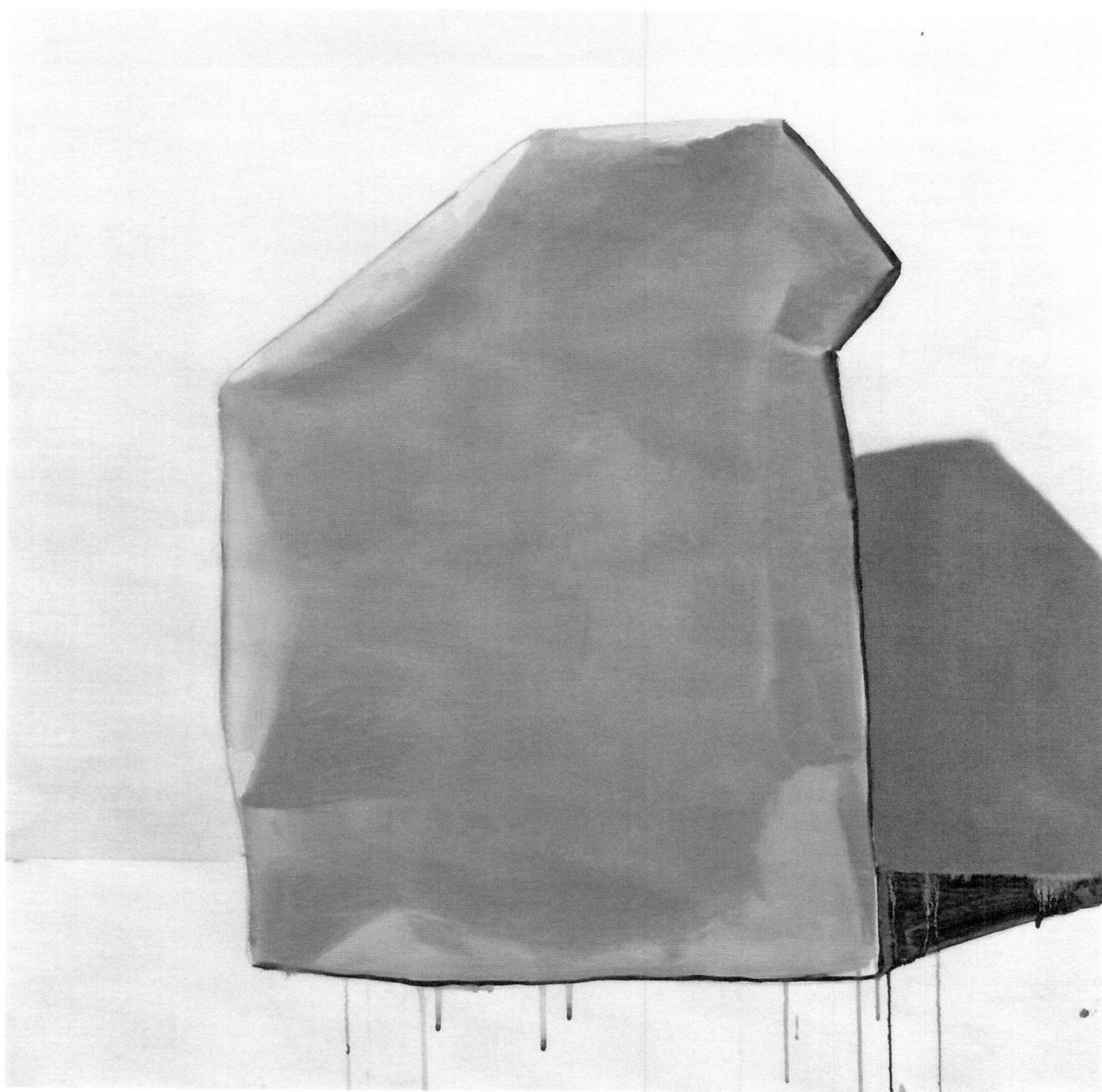
At the beginning, the wish to explore the imagined inner life of daily objects or others taken from the environment, as the toys that marked his generation, becomes visible. These initial pieces, more anecdotic, bring about a given sensation of strangeness when placing us before ambiguous images that, at times, insinuate a possible dialogue or relationship among beings or objects that apparently do not keep any link at all. With that, he achieves an extremely poetic image, full of sensitivity and lyricism.

As time passes, the links with physical reality begin to get blurred and the forms acquire a more imaginative and symbolic aspect. The narrative character begins to give way to a much deeper speech and mutual understanding with the very act of painting. Indeed, Pollo's present painting is a shot to the intellect. He increasingly liberates himself from the descriptive sense to turn it into an intellectual exercise; he becomes more subtle appealing to the synthesis of the idea and, the more he simplifies, the more he communicates; it becomes more intimate, more mysterious.

In my opinion, his work is a sort of tribute to the Avant-garde since he assimilates, from an entirely contemporary perspective, the great contributions of modern art. With a new visualization, he does not forget to remind us about Picasso, Giorgio de Chirico, Magritte, or whom the artist himself acknowledges as his main influence: Giorgio Morandi. The debt with metaphysical painting, the one that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century settled the bases for the ulterior development of the surrealist movement, is undeniable. The artist tries to penetrate the inner world of that apparent inanimate world. His works are wrapped in a halo of mystery which makes us question ourselves about the existence of those forms and the way in which they reached their present state; their existence seems possible to us, although reason indicates us it is not so. The bodies begin to take their physiognomy through the appendixes, as if it were in our reach to be able to decompose them by parts and assemble them again. Spheres, squares, rectangles with diverse sizes which never can be perfect seem to be the point of departure for the figures populating his symbolic universe.

**Cucho**, 2015 (Studio view)  
Oil on canvas  
98 1/2 x 78 3/4 inches  
Courtesy the artist

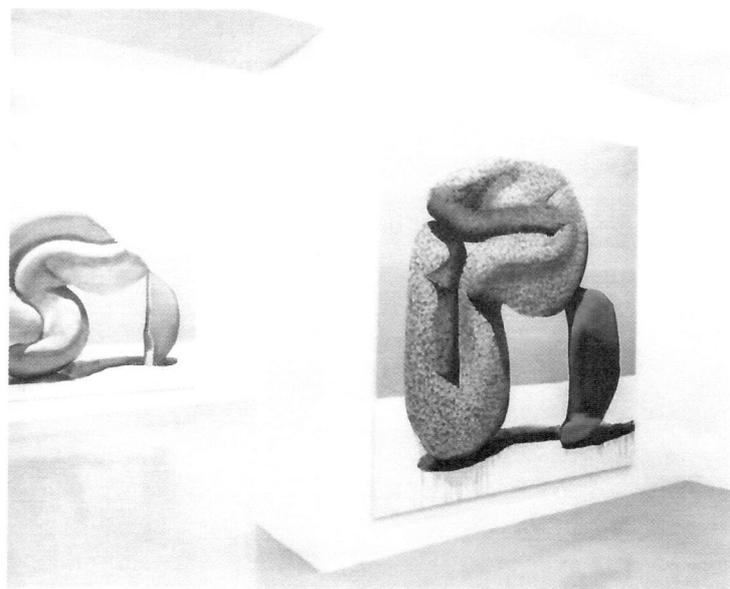




We cannot remain indifferent before the figures and forms inhabiting his paintings: we know they are not real, not are believable... Although they usually suffer from some imperfections or show themselves in their more primitive form, without an accurate mold, they seem unperturbed, aware of their own existence.

**Siete días de suerte**, 2016  
Oil on canvas / Seven pieces (Detail)  
29 1/2 x 29 1/2 inches  
Courtesy the artist

**Recent Work**  
Mai 36 Galerie, Zurich  
Installation views  
Courtesy Mai 36 Galerie



In the same way, his painting privileges the gesture with an expressionist content. We cannot remain indifferent before the figures and forms inhabiting his paintings; we know they are not real, but are believable. It seems that they feel, endure, breathe. Although they usually suffer from some imperfection or show themselves in their more primitive form, without an accurate mold, they seem unperturbed, aware of themselves. They are capable of transmitting us their state of mind, emotions and feelings transiting through nostalgia, sadness, peace, harmony.

I think that is one of the great values of Pollo's painting: the way he has known how to articulate a speech transcending the limits of what is local to connect with a universal language, without getting rid of it.

One of the keys to understand his work is perhaps found in a phrase by the artist which appears in the book as a confession: "I am interested on a primitive form of conceiving the world rubbing against the simplicity of caves." What is primitive could be associated with the meaning of what is rustic, the imperfect, unfinished forms, with the origin of things, in a stage in which humanity lacks much to go through. Also, at times those images cause a different sensation on me. They suggest me that those characters have lived much; they have something to tell us, they bear the weight of history and are there to tell it. That is why they are there, immerse in their loneliness and their silence, undaunted before the viewer contemplating them and trying to understand them.

In the last years, Michel Pérez Pollo has made emphasis on the importance acquired by the work process, the way in which those forms are able to take their definitive appearance. In him, sculpture and photography precede the pictorial act, since the artist builds models or mock-ups, with Plasticine, stones or other materials he later photographs to translate them from there to the canvas. These are processes complementing each other, although it is in painting where everything becomes more definite. On a later phase, as part of the search and inquiry, he has disregarded those two initial phases to paint directly from a mental construction, with which the link with reality becomes detached.

Lastly, as to the process, he has more recently experienced with the construction of forms based on certain guidelines the climate draws for him in a given moment. Figures derived from temperature, relative humidity or atmospheric pressure, among others, become patterns for the creative act of setting the lengths on each stretch which will give form to a figure. In this case, an interesting piece of information is that of using other material during the work phase: heavy paper, which contributes to generate a given ambiguity on the image which, although feigning another tactile quality, different from the former pieces, coincides with the nature of what is compact, solid and consistent, leaving clear its presence in the space through the shadows being projected.

If we are talking about Cuban contemporary art, there are no doubts that Michel Pérez's work is one of those which detach more strength and energy. The maturity he has reached as an artist confirms us that he still has much to say, while we anxiously wait to find ourselves before some new and disturbing character in the midst of the immensity of the painting. ◀