

PABLO SIQUIER | STRUCTURE

Sicardi Gallery Exhibition

May 30 - July 27, 2013

"Somehow, by breaking with harmonious and balanced equilibrium,
I wanted to express or shed light on a certain strangeness, a certain surprise."

The legacy of post-war abstraction in Buenos Aires casts a long shadow over many artists of Pablo Siquier's generation; critics and writers regularly invoke it to discuss their work. However, during Siquier's early years as an artist, there were no exhibitions of concrete art in the country, a result of the Argentine military government's censorship. While Argentine abstraction provided an important historical backdrop, it was one that few artists in Siquier's community actively explored. Many made works, instead, which looked inward, to a personal and private affective world. Others, including Siquier, looked outward. The Argentine Jorge de la Vega (1930-1971) is an artist Siquier deeply admires, and he cites the Spanish artist Antoni Tàpies (1923-2012) and the French painter Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) as important influences for how he thinks about art. Fittingly, with his structure *1308*, Siquier uses carbon steel to break from clean histories of abstraction, emphasizing instead the materiality of the abstract; he imagines a dialogue between his drawings and the architectural fancies of Giovanni Piranesi, the 18th century Italian artist and architect. For Siquier, *1308* subtly evokes a prison—or, more precisely, the romantic idea of a prison (something that also preoccupied Piranesi).

In the early 1980s, Siquier worked at the *talleres* of Pablo Bobbio and Mireya Baglietto, and he studied for three years at the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes Prilidiano Pueyrredón. His real education, though, came from his broad study of literature, film, and music. Poring over art books, many of which were in languages he did not read, Siquier looked at the images for affinities and ideas that would later develop in his own work. Studying images of Joseph Beuys' work in a German catalogue, he notes, allowed him a freedom to misunderstand the works, and to understand them differently. He read French literature in translation, fascinated by the miscommunication that happens between languages, the tension between the original form and its imprecise rendering. The idea of tension between two forms—one clean and precise, the other subjective, intimate, and incomplete—is one that Siquier has pursued throughout his career, and it is one that continues to perplex and fascinate him. This tension exists between *1308* and the charcoal wall drawing installed across from it. Not intended to be a schematic for the structure, the drawing still bears a relationship to the object. Together, the two pieces function within a similar tonal range. Both works are intentionally imprecise versions of the computer design Siquier used to develop the form.

Several writers have described Siquier's work in distinct phases: from 1985-1989, the artist used vibrant colors to make paintings with dynamic relationships between an object in the foreground and the background plane or horizon line. From 1989-1993, he began to restrict his palette, and he developed geometricized shapes inspired by architectural motifs and ornaments. In 1993, he abandoned color and began a series of paintings in black and white, making compositions that veer away from architectural referents and suggest spatial ambiguity. Since 2005, Siquier has been working on the walls of galleries and museums, making drawings and installations that explore visual illusions through intricate lines and subtle asymmetries. In each of these stylistic changes, however, Siquier finds the same tension. Today, he no longer thinks of his work as part of a progression. Instead, he sees his various projects as part of a larger circle with a shared central point. It is, he says, something of an existential problem.

Other writers consider Siquier's work in light of his native city of Buenos Aires; his murals at the Los Molinos Building at Puerto Madero and the Carlos Pellegrini subway station are part of the urban landscape of the city. And yet, in their complexity and absence of figuration, Siquier's images are simultaneously placeless—they inhabit a kind of heterotopia, or a space that is neither here nor there, that is at once physical and mental. Siquier notes that viewers often find the city in his work, but he does not see it there. The works, he says, remain silent. Titled with numbers and insistently non-representational, they allow a diversity of interpretations, and the artist is remarkably accepting of these wide-ranging interpretations. For him, though, Buenos Aires exists in the work in a different way. His work is influenced by its development from within the historic middle-class that exists in that city—a class which is attuned to literature, music, and film. Raised within this middle-class, Siquier finds inspiration from books and films, and from listening to music with his family. As a result, he is interested in the many quotidian uses of high modernism; he listens to John Cage and Steve Reich, finding resonances between his ongoing projects and their use of the music to explore the imperfect sounds of daily life. In his work, Siquier celebrates the messiness of interpretive relationships.

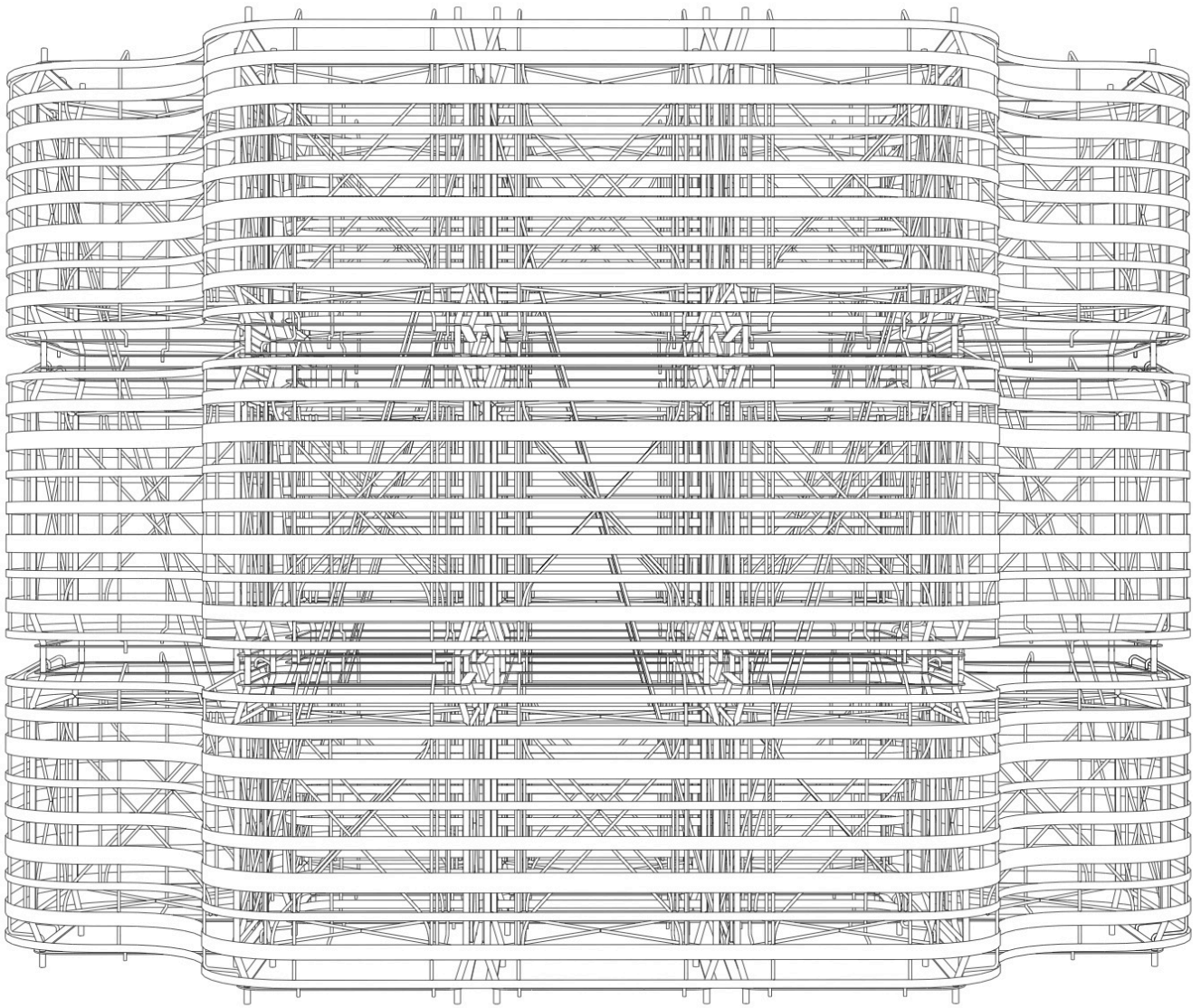
In the late 1980s, Siquier co-founded the Grupo de la X, a small and informal collective connected to the Madí artist Enio Iommi and his students.¹ With members of this group, he began showing his paintings, drawings, and sculptures regularly in exhibitions such as *Las Voces Emergentes* at the Centro Cultural Recoleta (1990), *Los '80 en el MAM* at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires (MAMBA, 1991), and in several exhibitions at the Galería Ruth Benzacar, one of the preeminent galleries in Buenos Aires. By 1997, Siquier had a solo exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, and in 2004, he was the Argentine representative at the São Paulo Biennial. His solo exhibition at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid opened in 2005. He lives and works in Buenos Aires.

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Research & Communications

¹ For more about Grupo de la X, see Jorge López Anaya, *Historia del arte argentino* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1997): 390.

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Pablo Siquier, *1301*, 2013. Charcoal wall drawing, dimensions variable.