

MOMENTUM, ALEJANDRO GUIJARRO

Momentum:

1. The impetus, either of a body in motion, or of an idea or course of events (i.e. a moment).
2. Physics (of a body in motion): the product of its mass and velocity.

Momentum is a 3-year project in which Alejandro Guijarro travelled to the great Quantum Mechanics institutions of the world. Using a large-format camera he photographed the blackboards as he found them. This series display them life size.

Before he walks into a lecture hall Guijarro has no idea what he will find. He begins by recording the blackboard with the minimum of interference. No detail of the lecture hall is included, the blackboard frame is removed and we are left with a surface charged with abstract equations. At this stage they are documents. However, once removed from their institutional beginnings the meaning evolves. The viewer begins to appreciate the equations for their line and form. Colour comes into play and the waves created by the blackboard eraser suggest a vast landscape or galactic setting. The formulas appear to illustrate the worlds of Quantum Mechanics. What began as a precise lecture, a description of the physicist's thought process, is transformed into a canvas open to any number of possibilities.

Momentum is a glimpse into the mysterious world of Quantum Mechanics, a branch of Physics that provides the only understanding we have of the world of the very small. Without these equations, physicists would be unable to design nuclear power stations, build lasers, or explain how the sun stays hot. Without Quantum Mechanics, Chemistry would still be in the Dark Ages, and there would be no science of Molecular Biology, no understanding of DNA, no genetic engineering at all. In his quest Guijarro has travelled to the very best departments of Quantum Mechanics, including Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, UC Berkeley, Stanford and SLAC (The National Accelerator Laboratory) in America, CERN in Switzerland and the Instituto de Física Corpuscular in Valencia.

These are not works that pretend to hold any kind of objective truth. Stripped of their wrapping they are photographs of large drawings! Yet the process of finding, documenting and collecting them has a transmutational effect. The colourful equations remind us of Basquiat's formulaic language and the white chalk evokes Cy Twombly's later canvases. Each line and smudge has its own history and meaning, produced by a scientist unaware of their artistic merit. Momentum can be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between science and art and is an exciting development in Contemporary Photography.