

## MONSTROUS MOONSHINE

Magdalena Atria

February 13 – April 3- 2010

Alejandra Von Hartz Gallery, Miami, USA

**Magdalena Atria's** first solo exhibition in Miami presents us with a well balanced display of her most recent works. Living and working in Santiago de Chile, Atria has developed a significant local and international career, with multiple solo exhibitions and participation in important international exhibitions at venues such as The Museum of Contemporary Art, MOCA (Los Angeles), The Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art (Austin), Chateau de Tours (Tours, France), Bienal de Mercosul (Porto Alegre, Brasil), among others. She also participated recently in the public art exhibition *The Sky Within my House*, curated by Gerardo Mosquera in Córdoba, Spain.

Atria's work connects with the modernist tradition of geometric abstraction, but with the express intent to relate it to specific visual situations encountered in the world. Abstraction within the modernist tradition searched for the absolute, for a disembodied realm of pure relations and correspondences, while Atria's interest focuses not on the possibility of approaching pure relations but rather on its impossibility. The images, objects and materials she uses either already have or actually acquire in her work this double condition of actuality and ideality, and they manifest the tension which keeps us permanently bound to one and desiring the other.

Some constants within Atria's work are the tension between the rational and the emotional, the collective and the personal, the real and the ideal, and between the formal and the symbolic: these notions are explored in different media, always with a particular emphasis on materials and processes.

All this can be seen in the different pieces that compose the present exhibition, "*Monstrous Moonshine*", at Alejandra Von Hartz Gallery. The main piece, which gives its name to the show, is a large scale painting made with plasticine (non-hardening modeling clay) directly attached to the wall of the gallery. Plasticine, a kind of modeling clay commonly used by children at a very young age for making small figures or similar crafts, is a material Atria has been working with for some time now, creating paintings with intricate surfaces composed of highly detailed and precise abstract images. The tension between this "silly", childish material and a controlled geometric order is one important aspect of the work, another one being the vulnerability of a material that never hardens and therefore stays always in a state of indeterminacy.

In other pieces in the show, everyday objects such as books are transformed by applying to them the geometry of paper ornaments and minimalist sculpture (*Minimal Bibliography*), and photographed window fences with geometric designs are isolated from their functional environment by cutting the prints and flattening the illusionistic space of the photograph, thus relating those specific daily life situations with the idealistic language of modernist geometric abstraction (*Popular Geometry*).

*Sidereus Nuncius*, a series of drawings on silver foil, reproduce the five drawings made by Galileo after his first observations of the moon through a telescope. These images showed for the first time the real aspect of the moon as opposed to the ideal image of white perfection believed about it for centuries, becoming in this way for Atria a symbol of the tension between ideality and actuality.

In mathematics 'monstrous moonshine' is a term devised by John H. Conway and Simon P. Norton in 1979, used to describe the (then totally unexpected) connection between the monster group  $M$  and modular functions. The term 'monstrous moonshine' was picked to convey the feelings from the bizarre relations

between seemingly unrelated structures. The same spirit of connecting apparently unrelated situations, at times revealing deeper links and at times constructing them, permeates through Atria's work in this exhibition.