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Press release

11 october 2022

IVÁN NAVARRO

CELESTIALAND

November 3 – December 24, 2022

Opening: Thursday November 3, 6 – 8 pm



Nebula VI, Nebula VI, 2022
LED, wood, one-way mirror and electricity,
66 × 66 × 13 cm

In November, Chilean artist Iván Navarro returns to his New York base after five years of profound exploration, worldwide exhibition and pandemic seclusion, to unveil a new, contemplative but passionate body of work for TEMPLON New York's second exhibition. In Celestialand, Navarro turns his attention to the cosmic world. He celebrates the unfathomable magnificence of the universe with his dazzling, galactic skylscapes, while quietly observing the perpetual human impulse to conquer and control, in heaven as it is on earth. In this sense, these new works can be seen as the natural evolution of Navarro's earlier works that revolved around questions of power, using electrical energy as both metaphor and material. In Celestialand, Navarro witnesses the universe, in all its infinite mystery, also as ethereal "land" claimed by earthly nations as they assign their names, as symbolic flag posts, to even the remotest of stars.

The constellation and nebulae series were born during the depths of the pandemic, when Navarro, like the rest of the world, was forced into isolation. He began to make all his work alone and by hand, engraving on mirror in painstaking repetitive gestures and then turning to the use of paint as a hitherto unexplored

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medium in his work. For the first time, Iván Navarro, whose practice has thoroughly explored the boundaries between design, architecture and sculpture, began to incorporate material experiments involving mystery and chance, by combining pouring techniques with targeted brushwork on the slick surfaces he had previously treated with objective control. These new, highly expressive and sensorial paintings are the direct result of the heightened emotionality and existential inquiry provoked by the pandemic experience.

In Celestialand, Iván Navarro melds the cool of the mirror, the icy LED and neon lights with the warm eruptions of color to replicate the chimerical, abstract formations of celestial phenomena. In the same way, he mixes the industrially made with the handmade, language with matter, to expose the never-ending drive of humankind to dominate each other and nature. Silently inscribing the names of the stars in modern typeface over the cosmic wilderness of the paintings, Navarro contrasts the human territorial approach to the universe with the unmitigated apprehension of the sublime.

Alongside his painted works, Navarro shows a pair of new neon sculptures, composed of the interconnecting names of the earth's continents and the constellations of the Zodiac. The works reveal the inherent absurdity of the pursuit of control or possession, whether real or symbolic. As the artist explains: "These astral wonders are an integral part of all civilizations. From time immemorial, humans have wanted to domesticate or label what does not belong to them: the stars and planets are the most obvious example."

The basement room, plunged into almost total darkness, houses a large floor installation. "Flat Lands" is another abstract representation of the world. It is an exact mathematical calculation between a simple map and a cube: everything fits perfectly into a three-dimensional grid. This is an image of an ideal technology that could control and reorganize territory (like most representations of territory).

The final piece is dedicated to a poignant video by the artist, entitled UFO. It features a mysterious flying object wandering the sky of the Atacama Desert in search of a promised land.

Born in 1972 in Santiago, Chile, Iván Navarro grew up under the regime of Pinochet before moving to New York in 1997. Engaging the language of American minimalism, he established his artistic identity building electric sculptures charged with political critique, using light as his primary medium. He uses illuminations, optical illusions and wordplay as tools to transform space, shift perceptions and explore questions of power and control. Over the years, he has created pieces that, behind their enticing appearance as light installations, evoke the darkest themes of our time: torture, imprisonment, domination, north-south inequalities and political propaganda.

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Iván Navarro lives and works in New York. In 2009, he represented Chile at the 53rd Venice Biennale. In recent years he has exhibited worldwide: Bifocal, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Buenos Aires (2019), This Land is Your Land, Momentary at Crystal Bridges Museum, USA (2019), This Land is Your Land, solo, Busan Museum, Korea; Age of Terror, Imperial War Museum, London (2018); Light and Space, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain (2017); Art Basel Parcours, Switzerland; Yinchuan Biennial, China (2016); Under the Same Sun, South London Gallery (2016) and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2014); Storylines, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015); Light Show, Hayward Gallery, London, and Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE (2013 - 2016). His work can be found in numerous international collections including at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York), The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, D.C.) and the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (Paris). He has been represented by Templon since 2005. His work The Ladder was selected for a permanent installation in San Francisco in spring 2020. In 2021, his work was the subject of a retrospective at Le Centquatre and a new installation was unveiled in Miami's Design District during the annual Art Basel Miami Beach fair. His installation This Land Is Your Land has been on display since June 2022 in the Art Omi Sculpture Park (Ghent, New York State). In February 2023, two of Ivan's installations, including Traffic, will be exhibited in the city of Bergamo (Italy) as part of a journey to promote contemporary art in collaboration with Kitonb Project. A new art book, Land Mark, has been published in 2022 by Kodoji Press in collaboration with Archivorum x M. It will be distributed in the US through the publisher Printed Matters (official presentation at the NY Book Art Fair on October 15, 2022).