

“Welcome to the Empty Gallery That Speaks Volumes”

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Mike Zahn

Todo y Nada, 2020

Shrine Gallery, New York

September 2020

<https://www.shrine.nyc/todo-y-nada>



Mike Zahn

Todo y Nada (Detail), 2020

Portable Network Graphics Image (PNG)

434 KB 864 x 607 RGB

Years ago when I was teaching art survey courses in Los Angeles, I would say to my

students: “Just be *here*, now.” I was requesting their presence, in all its valences and pockets: emotional, intellectual, aspirational, sensual, attentional, etc. Being somewhere can be an intentional act — if you decide to show up.

Mike Zahn’s *Today Nada*, an online exhibition via Shrine, demonstrates the brick wall impediment to this key act of will: Because of the strictures put in place to suppress our global pandemic, we can’t show up. We aren’t allowed to be present where our colleagues, mentors, and friends are. We are in front of a screen, peering at our collective shadowed selves.

Zahn offers images of Shrine’s empty gallery projected in the empty space — what I might have just walked by in another time. The show is both meta and melancholy. I *could* be there. And so sadly looking at the life I might have, someone could ask me what’s wrong. “Nothing,” I would say, reflexively, to stave off my own grief. Zahn projects these images to outsource his own desolation. “No. I’m not crying,” he seems to say. “You’re crying.”