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GROUNDZERO

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FIRST FRIDAY

Stellar Lux show by Nancy Friedemann-Sanchez
among this weekend's visual art offerings. **G8-9**

'30 Rock's' Dot Com wants
birthday cake in Lincoln. **G3**

Pared-down 'Purple' brings
Tony winner to Lied. **G7**

Sultan's Kite sizzles at
second location. **G12**

CLEAR BEAUTY, DEEP

Friedemann-Sanchez's 'Casta Paintings' at the Lux

Casta paintings were, in 18th century colonial New Spain (Mexico), depictions of the racial mixtures of Latin America, taking as their subject matter examples of the complex hierarchy of race classification developed by Hispanic elites — basically, the whiter and more Spanish, the better.

The "Casta Paintings" of Nancy Friedemann-Sanchez, on view at the Lux Center for the Arts, turn that old concept upside-down, looking at the classifications through a lens informed by feminism and migration, contemporary issues and the artist's own life.



L. KENT WOLGAMOTT

The latter is reflected in the smallest piece in the show, a 16-by-24-inch ink-on-Tyvek depiction of a bowl of blueberries titled "Plato con Moras." The blueberries take Friedemann-Sanchez back to her home in Bogota, Colombia, where her family gathered the fruit from trees on their property.

That personal connection continues in two of the five "Casta Paintings," that give the exhibition its title. They're large works of ink on Tyvek that show layered female bodies with hands up onto which a mask is affixed.

Atop the masks, taken from indigenous Latin American sources, are Spanish combs, two of which belonged to Friedemann-Sanchez's mother.

Worn to balls and other formal events, the combs are, in the mixed-media pieces, claims to Spanish identity. Placed on the masks, they represent the hybridization of European and indigenous culture that led to the classifications — some of which continue in vocabulary, if not hierarchy today.

"Coyote," for example, is the label given to those who surreptitiously move people across borders. That is one of the five classifications that are depicted in the exhibition, along with

IF YOU GO

- **What:** "Casta Paintings" by Nancy Friedemann-Sanchez
- **Where:** Lux Center for the Arts, 2601 N. 48th St.
- **When:** through May 5
- **Hours:** 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday
- **First Friday:** Reception 5-8 p.m.

"Sambiga," "India Gentil" (which has a gourd-like mask from the Amazon) "Parda" and "Castiza" (which has a garish mask of a white person, likely created by a Mexican person of color).

The models for the paintings are all Latina women, who posed for Friedemann-Sanchez, allowing her to trace their outlines on the Tyvek.

Those bodies are positioned via the multiple layered images to drive home the artist's observation of migration and international movement — their hands above their heads and "moving" as they go through TSA screening at airports.

Across the gallery are three pieces all titled "Vase." Designed to mirror the figures, the vases are really landscapes — or more accurately floodscapes — as outlines of buildings and the water's edge can be faintly seen behind the dominant pots and flowers.

The flowers are modeled from lace — which Friedemann-Sanchez has used in earlier work — a material that is rarely shown in museums that hold historical examples or given much attention in the world, its female association putting it very low in material ranking.

In fact, "Casta Paintings" is, in its entirety, an exploration of what history deemed the lowest of the low — from its materials and techniques to its subject matter.

The still life, which is the center for the "Vase" paintings, represents what is classically considered the bottom genre of painting, below history painting, portraiture, genre painting and landscape.



"Plato con Moras" is a depiction of a bowl of blueberries like those that Nancy Friedemann-Sanchez used to pick at her family's Bogota, Colombia home.



Friedemann-Sanchez models the pattern in the still life from lace.

Visual art guide

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Friedemann-Sanchez works in ink but she applies it like watercolor, and — you got it — watercolor is seen as the lowest type of painting.

Even the treatment of the Tyvek incorporates the "lowest of the low" theme.

Folding the large sheets of black, paper-like material, Friedemann-Sanchez alters the Tyvek's physicality, shifting it from a sleek minimalist expanse to a quiltlike structure with rectangular folds visible across the surface.

Quilts, long associated with female makers, have also been at the bottom of the art hierarchy — seen more as craft than art and until recently given little respect. And women have, Friedemann-Sanchez's work implies, been subjugated as well in terms of power.

The final piece — and at 6.5-by-13 feet, the largest in the show — is "Cornucopia."

Another vase-based piece, it's a dense, complicated work that incorporates flora and fauna based in Amazonian bark paintings, a variety of animals and men with guns amidst the stalks, leaves and flowers ascending



Friedemann-Sanchez's technique of applying ink like watercolor can be seen in this detail from one of her "Vase" paintings.

from its vase.

The armed men and a drone that's tucked near a corner give the painting a narrative of conflict and destruction, be it between people or the destruction of the environment. The latter is a subtle commentary on the Trump administration dismantling the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Given all the cultural and political weight, and the art-historical references that pervade the show, "Casta Paintings" could — without viewing the work — read like a heavy exhibition, accessible only to those who have

pre-existing knowledge.

But that's not the case. Beauty in Friedemann-Sanchez's work is derived from her painting and subject matter that and universally accessible elements that tumble across to unify the exhibition in view. "Casta Paintings" reveals a better-phrased, deconstructive, during which reveal Friedemann-Sanchez's looseness of technique, lace-rooted florals, as with tiny elements (like Ama

MEANING

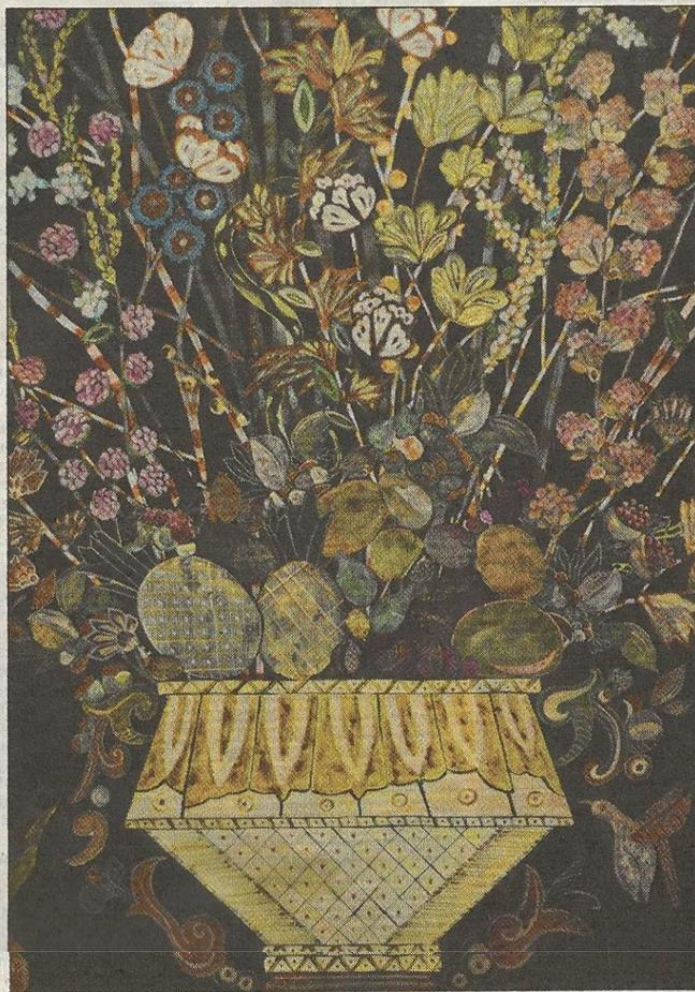
worth a look by any viewer



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seen in



Courtesy photos

Above: A snake can be seen curling through flowers in this detail from "Cornucopia," the largest piece in Friedemann-Sanchez's "Casta Paintings" exhibition. Left: "Sam-biga" uses mixed media — masks, hair combs and ink painting — to explore the old racial classification system in Latin America through a contemporary, feminist lens.

There's a Sanchez's work style, palette attractive, with flowers and snakes. Birds — per- hands — close eye will Sanchez's delicate est seen in the ll as find the onian wildlife

and a snake in "Cornucopia") that give the paintings their cultural/political heft. Those multiple layers of reading and approach make "Casta Paintings" a remarkable body of work, with deep meaning and cultural understanding. After seeing five, the promise of

11 more "Casta" figures intrigues as a possibility for a larger, equally powerful show from one of Lincoln's most thoughtful and challenging artists.

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