

hang. The titular flower is associated with abundance and fertility by the etymology of its name and suggests a warm welcome to whoever enters the home, a space in turn often figured as the domain of women. Penalva's series of compositions formed by the union of different crochet covers for gas drums, water bottles, blenders, and mixers also dialog with the idea of the feminine, as do his bags for bags and his toilet-paper carrier. Arranged along a wall in compositions that bring to mind women in silhouette, with an airy and light-weighted texture, they all have the same title: *Bailarina* (Ballerina, 2019). Here, the status of this kind of artisanal item, made mostly by women to decorate the not-always-beautiful items associated with household labor, is elevated and brought center stage. Employing the new meaning assigned to these covers, the figure of the homemaker, whose work is invisible and undervalued, is transformed poetically into that of the ballerina, an object of admiration and applause. Disturbing the apparent stability of the system, situated at floor level, *Colônia* (Colony) brings together butter dishes and small plates cut in half and arranged horizontally along the walls, like an out-of-control proliferation of "nuclear" mushrooms.

Some of Penalva's works comment on Brazil's social and historical stratification through the allusion to architectural elements that signal the chasm between the upper classes and the workers. Wealthy homes in the colonial era had, under their tile roofs, a corrugated extension with three levels, called *eira*, *beira*, and *tribeira*. The poor could only afford one of these levels, the *tribeira*, and in that way, social differences were made visible in the public space. The series *Ventana* (Window), from 2019, deals with such subtle differentia-

tions between lords and servants. *Beiral* (Eaves) is a composition with lattice, glass beads, and chassis that integrates the whole set clearly, without hiding its condition as support. Paradoxically, its position on the wall obstructs the visibility-granting function of an actual window. Analogously, *Tribeira* explores the contrast between a luxurious, wood-framed, richly decorated straw divider and the pieces of glass placed on the back of the structure, which signifies danger and demarcates a private space.

The house exhibited by Penalva is examined from a variety of angles, from the idea of homebound well-being to the social barriers separating the have-nots from the haves. Objects acquire multiple voices that bring to the fore individualities in their many ways of being in the world.

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Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez Utah Museum of Contemporary Art - UMOCA

Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez was awarded this year with the Doctorow Prize for Contemporary Painting, given by the Jarvis and Constance Doctorow Family Foundation, in collaboration with the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art. As a winner, she was invited to present an exhibition, which opened in September and will remain open to the public until January 2020.

The exhibition is based on a body of work she began in 2011. According to the artist, it is a visual novel that started as a result of her move from New York to Lincoln, Nebraska. At that time, she wondered if she were a writer how would she build her new house and, more importantly, her life. She devoted a lot of time to reading, and she even took a class of Chicano and Latin literature at the university, which inspired her to get out of the codes she had previously managed as a visual artist.

The exhibition includes two chapters of that "novel." The first one is represented by a large still life on a black background, entitled *Cornucopia* (2016), based on the research the artist carried out on "Pasto varnish." This technique, native to southern Colombia, her native country, has been used by generations of artisans to decorate wooden objects with the resin obtained from the wild plant known as Mopa-mopa. The delicate designs she discovered in the workshop of a restaurateur in Bogotá lead her to question the origins of this hybrid artistic expression, and, above all, to ask to what extent this popular craft reflects the oppression and resistance of the indigenous culture. Mopa-mopa designs and their symbology work perfectly within the framework of her pictorial work, in which patterns of delicate lace, embroidered ornaments, colonial portraits, and botanical drawings, give rise to the exploration of notions of identity, memory, hybridization, and appropriation.

Like her previous series, this work has a feminist background. The still life's flowers have a very particular iconography closely linked to classification and hierarchy. By representing them in monumental canvases, the artist enlarges and exalts the manual work related to feminine and household tasks. There are many narratives in the symbols depicted in *Cornucopia*. All the flowers represented are inspired by designs taken from Mopa-mopa pieces, which the artist documents in an iconographic archive. Tiny little men with weapons and drones,



Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez. *Morisca*, 2019. Ink on Tyvek, mask, and comb. 80 x 40 in. (203.2 x 101.6 cm). Photo: Larry Gawel

camouflaged among the flowers, symbolize not only the technology used at war but also the fact that we are being observed or permanently monitored by the advances of digital technology.

The second chapter of the “novel” deals with topics such as memory, migration, and the search for the American dream, and is inspired by “Casta” paintings made in the 18th century. As part of the Bourbon Reforms, the Spaniards classified the racial composition of the American population according to the different “racial crossings.” From the three original groups—Spanish, Indian, and black—different mixtures emerged and were documented by artists of the time, mainly in the viceroyalty of New Spain and Peru.

Friedemann-Sánchez uses this cultural framework and the conventions of “Casta paintings” to make sixteen canvases, through which she makes a critical commentary about racism, social classification, and even xenophobia, situations that are more valid than ever, especially concerning migration, marginalization and displacement.

The exhibition presents nine of the eighteen paintings of the series. To create them, the artist invited different women of Latin origin to pose for her. She asked them to raise their arms as if they were going through airport security’s checkpoints or as if they were in danger and were shouting, “do not shoot!” The figures, suspended at that specific moment, were painted on black backgrounds and decorated with meticulous designs made in ink and carefully drawn flowers. Also, each painting was adorned with a carved and painted mask decorated with a Spanish comb, representing a characteristic related to the mixed breed or classification that inspired the title of the work.

For Friedemann-Sánchez, these images symbolize the obsession that exists with social status, the complexity that results from the mixture of multiple ethnicities and cultures, and the power relations that they generate. Similarly, the exhibition constitutes a critique of the historical legacy and the modern continuation of racial hierarchies and classifications according to the physical appearance of individuals, a practice that unfortunately remains in force and affects social, cultural, economic, and political relations at the level world.

The exhibition will be presented at The Columbus Museum, Georgia, in 2020.

FRANCINE BIRBRAGHER-ROZENCWAIG PHD

SALVADOR DE BAHIA / BRAZIL

Ana Elisa Egreja

Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia

Fabulações (Fabulations), Ana Elisa Egreja’s solo exhibition at the Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia, marks a return of the young São Paulo artist to the institution where she received her first great push forward. In 2008, Egreja participated in the 5th Bahia Salon and won a prize with *Natureza morta com três patos sobre tartan verde* (Still Life with Three Ducks on Green Tartan). At the time, her production focused on scenes with animals and the appropriation of printed images of various origins in somewhat surreal compositions, perhaps dominated by a universe uninhabited by humans, or one where humans, defeated by nature, had been expelled from the cities they built. In *Fabulações*, meanwhile, animals reappear only at specific points, at times in representations clearly derived from stylized drawings.

Painting continues to be the principal terrain of Egreja’s explorations, now with decorative elements and the architecture of living spaces as newfound protagonists.

Appropriation is a rather common strategy in contemporary art, as is the reproduction of images previously reproduced on a large scale in other media. Ana Lisa Egreja’s operation, however, does not position itself as a discourse about the transposition of images or their effect. In some of her canvases, there is something of a critical narrative, for example, in *Vista para o Rio Negro* (View for the Negro River). Still, most of them work as a celebration of the act of seeing and its prompting by the perplexity caused by the bizarre scene. Egreja’s painterly exercise establishes a dialog with universal references from the history of Western art, such as the painting of interior spaces and the still life genre, canonized mainly by the European pictorial tradition. Yet, and against the grain of that tradition, what Egreja’s recent production prioritizes are not the figures, be it people, animals, or fruits. Instead, her subject is what would traditionally have functioned as a background, minimizing or even excluding the presence of animated beings. It is precisely this choice that imbues her paintings with an element of desolation, an atmosphere of abandonment, as the evidence of human absence vibrates forcefully: fruit fallen on the floor inside a room in *Quarto Livia* (*Casa Campo Verde/Rino Levi*), (Livia Room [Campo Verde House / Rino Levi], 20180; the surface of a table in a dining room in *Copa* (*Natureza morta*) (Glass [Still life], 2017); a bathroom with various personal hygiene supplies, the sink occupied by little chickens, in *Banheiro Amarelo* (*Casa Campo Verde/Rino Levi*) [Yellow Bathroom (Campo Verde House / Rino Levi), 2018]. One is left with the impression of a recent flight, so many traces of human occupation having been left behind. On that basis, these spaces are defined by architectural elements or by objects of everyday use, household utensils seen

Ana Elisa Egreja. *Banheiro Amarelo* (*Casa Campo Verde/Rino Levi*) (Yellow Bathroom [Campo Verde House / Rino Levi]), 2018. Oil on canvas. 62 63/64 x 51 3/16 in. (160 x 130 cm). Photo: Filipe Berndt

