



NINO MIER
GALLERY

JOSÉ LERMA

Ut Queant Laxis

AUGUST 14 - SEPTEMBER 18, 2021

NINO MIER GALLERY
GALLERY 2
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LOS ANGELES, CA
INFO@MIERGALLERY.COM



José Lerma

Ut Queant Laxis

August 14 – September 18, 2021

Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to announce *Ut Queant Laxis*, José Lerma's first solo show with the gallery. The exhibition, comprised of twelve abstract portraits made in acrylic paint on burlap, will run from August 14 to September 18, 2021.

Based in San Juan, Puerto Rico and Chicago, José Lerma is a multimedia artist who works primarily in portraiture. Until recently, Lerma's work was most responsive to not only the social and material conditions of the cities he inhabited, but also to the works of art put on display by their institutions. He described his practice as akin to that of a landscape painter, turning his eye into a sieve able to distill and record telling details about worlds physically proximate to him. Of particular interest to Lerma is how artistic representation produces social and political power. But quarantine and his resultant move to San Juan stripped him of his ability to frequent and fraternize in public spaces. The paintings in *Ut Queant Laxis* are therefore a product of isolation, wherein his erstwhile site-specificity has been replaced with an invigorated exploration of medium-specificity.

Ut Queant Laxis, the medieval Gregorian chant to St. John that lends this show its title, ascends a musical hexachord using words that we now employ for a major scale: Ut, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La. This hymn helped define and formalize the relationship between words and intervals in contemporary musical vernacular, thus laying the groundwork for how we understand the basic structure of music. Lerma's suite of 2021 paintings offers a similar pursuit of the fundamental elements of figural painting. These canvases are composed of monochromatic, textured backgrounds upon which thick, striated layers of fleshy, color-blocked acrylic paint stretch and coagulate harmoniously. Each color section appears as though it were applied in one or two strokes and remains sharply delineated from the others. Tere (2021), for instance, represents a long-haired figure in five color blocks, while Full Ana (2021) does so in eight. Typically, when artists use such a method of reduction, they do so to signify visual obstruction, as when a person is represented as far in the background of a painted scene, covered by a haze, or in motion. Lerma's current work, however, centers such normally peripheral figures, and thus also the formal technique used to represent them.

The distillation of form to the basic elements of texture, color, and line open Lerma's portraits to a fascinating investigation of medium, and specifically of how painting can disorient a viewer's sense of scale. The figures in *Ut Queant Laxis*, stripped of a broader context or situation, become more landscape than individual, an effect that deepens the longer one looks at them. We understand the yellow mass of paint in Clara (2021) to be a woman's hair in a bun, but it is also a series of parallel, curved lines, whose peaks lift prominently off the canvas like mountain ridges. In moments like this one, the viewer is made to feel shrunken before an intricate geography. Take a step back and reorient to regard the figure in full, and one confronts what seems to be a small, impressionistic section of a larger painting blown out of proportion. Lerma's choice to

paint on burlap emphasizes this play with scale, as we see the texture and detail of the painted surface with unusual clarity. What might first seem like an aesthetic of the elemental, then, here becomes an aesthetic of scalar complexity.

Lerma's compositions also engage the viewer's body through their material excess. The three-dimensional buildup of paint in and around the stroke marks seems bloated and corpulent, forming bulges, bumps, and fine lines that are so textural they almost beckon to be touched. The thick, heavy impasto of his color blocking has the same sense of gooey moldability that makes Play-Doh such a satisfying childhood craft. Painting – especially portraiture – is commonly described as 'visually delectable'. For Lerma, though, it is also seductively haptic.

The pleasures of Lerma's recent portraits are also their scarcities: of gesture and of compositional density, but also of interiority. For a genre so frequently focused on emotionality and the expressive potentials of the face, Lerma's portraits are resolutely psychologically abstruse. He frames his figures either straight-on or in profile, as though they were sitting for passport photos or mugshots. The standardized format of such photographs, a straight face centered on a blank wall, forefronts the sitter's identity as a state subject by denying him or her any immediate sense of individualized expression. But Lerma's concern in this body of work is not with citizenship, it is with medium. Perhaps there is something goofy about the swirling pinks that make up the face of Señorito (2021), or maybe there is something surreptitious about Impersonator (2021). But such aesthetic responses are brought on by the viewer's own psychology and relationship to form, as neither paintings represent the subjectivity of an individual, only shapes that summon us.

José Lerma (b.1971) is currently an Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he has taught since 2009. He has had over twenty solo exhibitions at galleries such as Kavi Gupta in Chicago, IL (2020, 2017, 2014), Galerie Xavier Hufkens in Brussels, Andrea Rosen Gallery in New York, NY (2014, 2010, 2006, 2004), and at museums such as the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2014), and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (2013). His works are represented in numerous collections, including The Saatchi Collection in London, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.



Installation View of José Lerma, *Ut Queant Laxis* (August 14–September 18, 2021)
Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

JOSÉ LERMA
UT QUEANT LAXIS



Installation View of José Lerma, *Ut Queant Laxis* (August 14–September 18, 2021)
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Full Ana, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
32 x 24 in
81.3 x 61 cm
(JLE21.011)





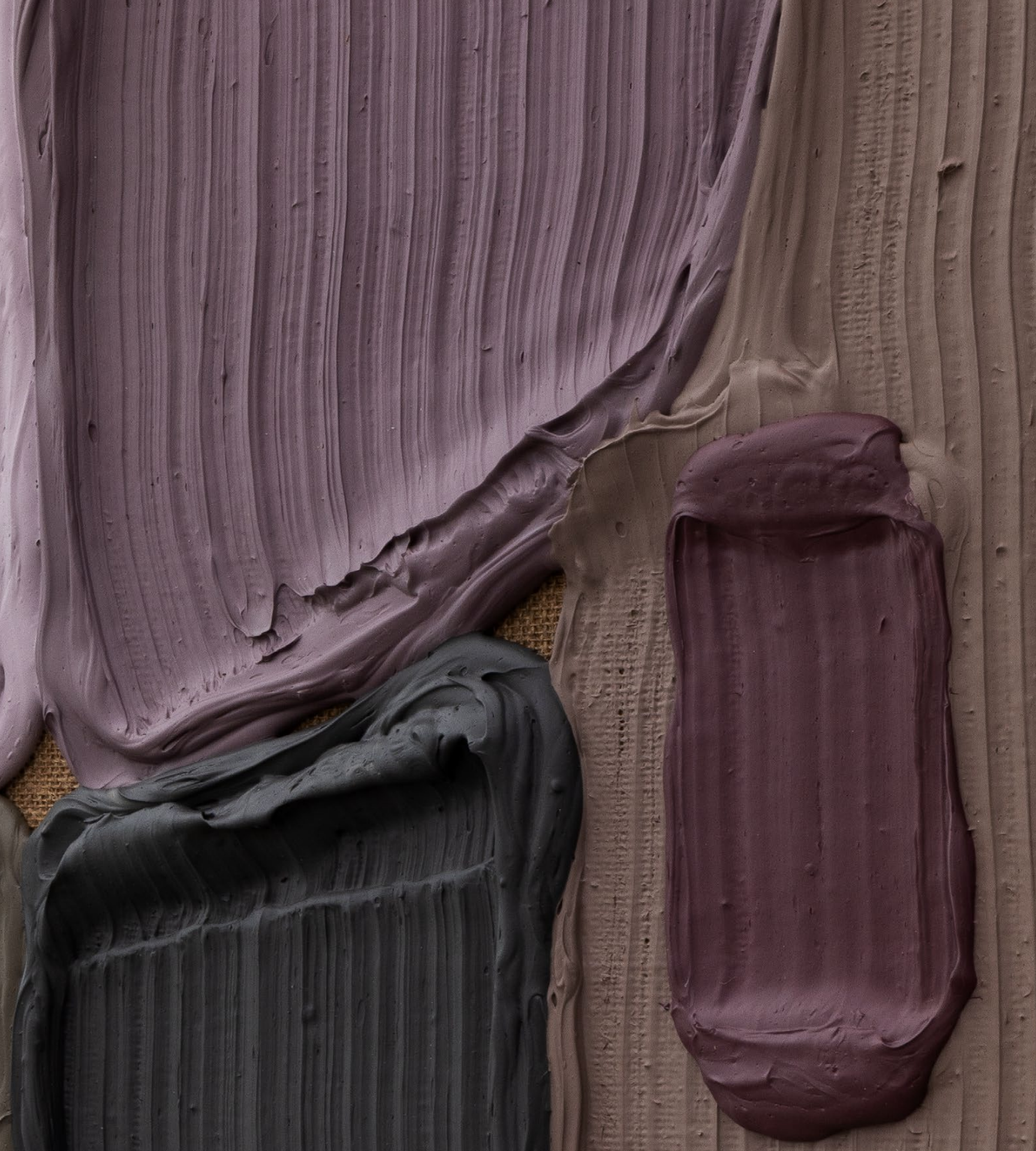
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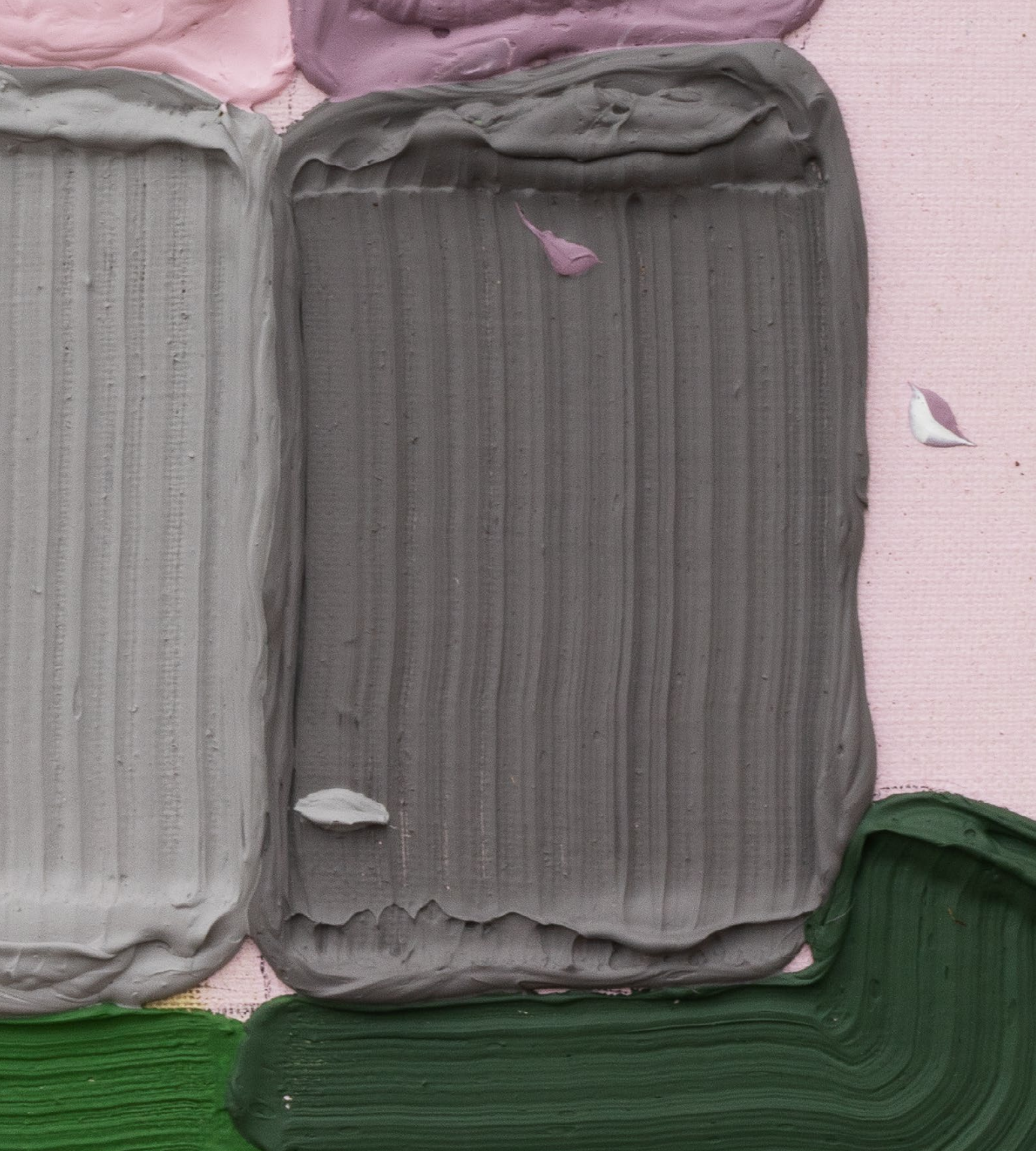
Ana, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
72 x 48 in
182.9 x 121.9 cm
(JLE21.018))







Fatigas, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
32 x 24 in
81.3 x 61 cm
(JLE21.014)





Carlos T, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
32 x 24 in
81.3 x 61 cm
(JLE21.005)





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Rodolfo, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
72 x 48 in
182.9 x 121.9 cm
(JLE21.012)







Impersonator, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
30 x 24 in
76.2 x 61 cm
(JLE21.010)





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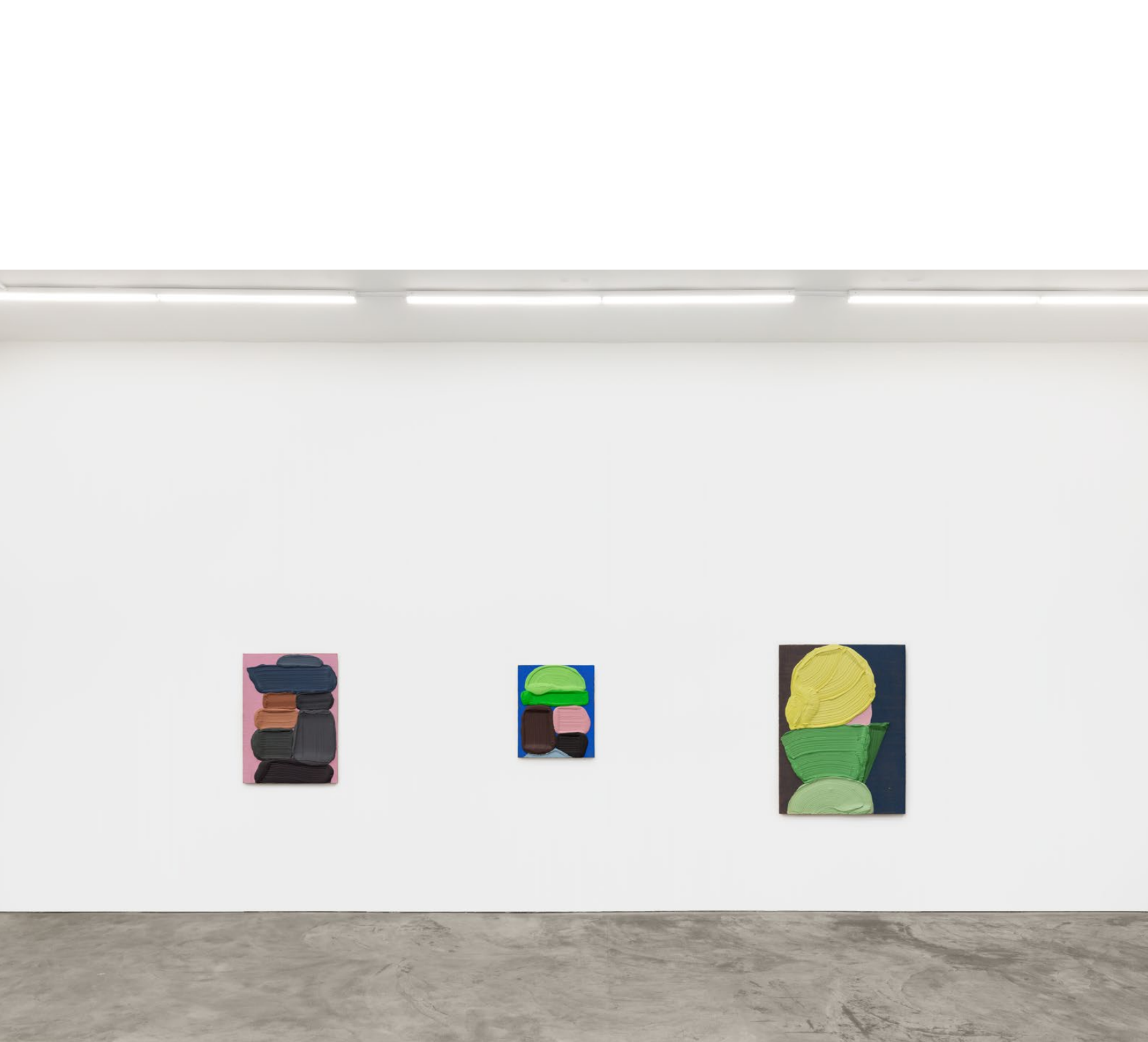
Kupferschein, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
36 x 26 in
91.4 x 66 cm
(JLE21.007)





Enrique Beanieverde, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
26 x 22 in
66 x 55.9 cm
(JLE21.008)





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Clara, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
48 x 36 in
121.9 x 91.4 cm
(JLE21.015)





Tere, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
72 x 48 in
182.9 x 121.9 cm
(JLE21.013)





El Jefe, 2021
Acrylic on burlap
20 x 16 in
50.8 x 40.6 cm





Señorito, 2020
Acrylic on canvas
18 x 14 in
45.7 x 35.6 cm
(JLE21.016)





JOSÉ LERMA

Born 1971, Seville, Spain

Lives and works in Chicago, IL, and San Juan, Puerto Rico

EDUCATION

2003 CORE Residency Program, Glassell School, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX

2003 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, ME
Fortaleza 302 Residency Program, San Juan, Puerto Rico

2002 MFA, MA, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

1998 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, US

1995 University of Wisconsin School of Law, Madison, WI

1994 BA, Political Science, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 Ut Queant Laxis, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2020 The Figure in Solitude, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL, US

2019 José Lerma, Galería Leyendecker, Islas Canarias, Spain

2018 José Lerma - lo e lo, Diablo Rosso, Panama City, Republic of Panama

2017 Nunquam Prandium Liberum, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL
The Last Upper, Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy

2016 José Lerma: La Venida Cansa Sin Ti, Kemper Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO
Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Huevolution, Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, NY

2014 La Bella Crisis, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI
`Gloriosa Superba, Kavi Gupta Washington Blvd, Chicago, IL
Guaynabichean Odyssey, David Castillo Gallery, Miami, FL
The Unitedstatian, Van Horn Gallery, Düsseldorf, Germany
Los Turistas, Diablo Rosso, Panama, Republic of Panama
European Mixed Masters, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, NY
Robusto Parasite, Roberto Paradise, San Juan, Puerto Rico

2013 José Lerma, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL

2012 The Credentialist, Museum of Contemporary Art, Raleigh, NC
Jibaro Jizz, Roberto Paradise Gallery, San Juan, Puerto Rico

2011 The Lightweight, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL

2010 I am Sorry I am Perry, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, NY
Spanish Revival, Galeria Marta Cervera, Madrid, Spain

2009 El Pendejo, Galerie Loock, Berlin, Germany
José Lerma, Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI

2007 José Lerma: Paintings, Arario Gallery, Seoul, South Korea (catalogue)
José Lerma: New Prints, Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas, TX

2006 The Golden Sea, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, NY

2005 José Lerma, Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
José Lerma, Galeria Il Capricorno, Venice, Italy

2004 Folklore of Our Times, Andrea Rosen Gallery, Gallery Two, New York, NY

2003 Two Beats Off, Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
As if Accepting Defeat, Galería Comercial, Santurce, Puerto Rico



2002 Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Institutions Project Room, M&M Proyectos, Miami, FL
Lives of the Obscure, Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn NY
MFA Thesis Show, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

2-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2016 Josh Reames and Jose Lerma, Luis De Jesus Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
2014 José Lerma and Josh Smith, Oliver Francis Gallery, Dallas, TX
2013 ARCO Solo projects, with Hector Madera, Madrid, Spain
2012 Eddie Martinez and José Lerma, Halsey McKay Gallery, East Hampton, NY
2004 American Violence: Peter Saul and José Lerma, Glandier & Byrne, Paris, France
2003 Anne Schaacte and José Lerma, 1R Gallery, Chicago, IL
Please, Don't Distort What We Had, with Scott Roberts, 7/3 Split Gallery, Chicago, IL

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021 SURFACES, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
LatinXAmerican, DePaul Art Museum, Chicago, IL
2020 The Figure in Solitude, online exhibition, Kavi Gupta
2019 With a Capital P: Selections by Six Painters, Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL
Your Favorite Artist's Favorite Artist II, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY
2017 Keep The Lights On, Diablo Rosso, Panama City, Republic of Panama
Likeness, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco, CA
In Paper We Trust, The Dot Project, London, UK
American Genre: Contemporary Painting, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME
Fake News, River, Los Angeles, CA
2016 Imagine, Brand New Gallery, Milan, Italy
The Aging Coconut, Roberto Paradise, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Terricolas, Art Lab, Santruce, Puerto Rico
McArthur Binion, José Lerma, Angel Otero, Clare Rojas, Jessica Stockholder, and Tony Tasset, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL
Objects In The Rearview Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear, Diablo Rosso Gallery, Panama City, Republic of Panama
2015 Condensed Matter Community, Synchrotron Radiation Center, Stoughton, WI
Winter Solstice / Little Sun, James Barron Art, Kent, CT
2014 Eric's Trip, curated by Cynthia Daignault and Mark Loiacono, Lisa Cooley Gallery, New York, NY
Pangaea, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
Renuncias y Adopciones, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriquena, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Dallas Biennial, curated by Cynthia Daignault and Mark Loiacono, Dallas, TX
Head, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
More Than a Likeness, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX
2013 Paper, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK (catalogue)
The System of Objects, curated by Andreas Angelidakis, Deste Foundation, Athens, Greece (catalogue)
19516 Kilometers from Milwaukee, Misako & Rosen, Tokyo, Japan
On Painting, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Gran Palma, Canarias, Spain (catalogue)
Cabinet of Threads, Galerie Van Horn, Düsseldorf, Germany
Tandem Press: 25 Years, Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI (catalogue)
Museo Segovia Lobillo, Malaga, Spain (catalogue)
Impresiones, Relieves y Resonancias, University of Puerto Rico, Cayey, Puerto Rico
Swamp, curated by Kari Adelaide, Edgar Allan Poe Park Center, Bronx, NY



- O te Peinas o te Haces Rolos, La Productora, Santurce, Puerto Rico
Pushing It; Innovative Approaches in Printmaking, Dean Jensen Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
- 2012 Roberto Paradise, Josh Lilley Gallery, London, UK
Pasiones Contemporaneas, curated by Maria de la Serna, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, Puerto Rico
The Way In, curated by Io Carrion, Popular Center, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Someone Else's Dream, curated by John McKinnon, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
Idealizing the Imaginary, Oakland U. Art Museum, MI (catalogue)
Chiquitolina, curated by Jorge Roman, La Quince, San Juan Puerto Rico
Tandem Press: 25 Years, Chazen Musuem of Art, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
Michelle Grabner: The Inova Survey, curated by John Rippenhoff, Inova, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
Where My Cones At?, curated by Ryan Travis Christian, Double Break, San Diego, CA
Raw Ille, curated by Liz Markus, Fine Arts Amagansett, NY
Material Breach, Art Amalgamated New York, NY
- 2011 Unfinished Paintings, curated by Kristin Calabrese, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), CA
Go Figure, curated by Eddie Martinez, Dodge Gallery, New York, NY
Green Gallery at 47 Canal, 47 Canal, New York, NY
Irritable Abstraction, curated by Suzane Doremus, Julius Caesar, Chicago, IL
Handler, curated by John Riepenhoff, Western Exhibitions, Chicago, IL
Painting...Expanded, curated by Marisol Nieves, Espacio 1414 Santurce, Puerto Rico
Dirt Don't Hurt, curated by Bill Saylor, Jolie Laide, Philadelphia, PA
Espacio Entre Medio, Chemi's Room, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Ira Bienal Tropical, curated by Pablo Leon De la Barra, Loiza, Puerto Rico
To Tell the Truth, curated by Joe Pflieger, Monya Rowe Gallery, New York, NY
De Bayamon a La 15, Cart Wash, Santurce, Puerto Rico
- 2010 Lush Life, curated by Franklin Evans and Omar Lopez Chahoud, Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York, NY
Don't Piss on my Leg and Tell me it's Raining, Apex Art, New York, NY
Museos Portatiles, Parking 01 Can Xalant, Contemporary Center, Barcelona, Spain
One for all, curated by Jessica Halonen, Trinity University, San Antonio, TX
From NY with Love, curated by Glorimarta Linares, Don't Projects, Paris, France
The Mobile Uploads, curated by Amanda Schmitt, Sloane, New York, NY
Go Figure, The Hogar Collection, Brooklyn, NY
The Power of Selection III, curated by Travis Chrisitan, Western Exhibitions, Chicago IL
One Degree, curated by Joe Pflieger and Phillip Vanderhayden, Middlesex College, Edison, NJ
- 2009 Submerging Artists, curated by General Store, Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany
Wallgasm, curated by John Riepenhoff, Angstrom Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
From New York with Love, curated by Glori Linares, Candela Gallery, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Rattled by the Rush, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago, IL
Objet Petit A, with Crisitina Tufino, curated by Matthew Dupont, Spoke, Chicago, IL
Good News, curated by Amanda Schmitt, Porter Butts Gallery University of Wisconsin-Madison
Cadaver Corpse, curated by Tessa Perutz, Space 1028, Chicago, IL
- 2008 Learning by Doing, curated by Alison de Lima Greene, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, TX (catalogue)
Works from the Permanent Collection, Milwaukee Art Museum, WI
En Sus Marcas, curated by Rebeca Noriega, Universidad del Sagrado Corazón, Puerto Rico (catalogue)
NY Motion 1.0, curated by Elvis Fuentes and Paco Cano, Instituto Cervantes, New York, NY (catalogue)
Alogon, curated by Gaylen Gerber, Alogon Gallery, Chicago, IL
Ice Cream Show, Loyal Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
Selected Works, Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
It's Not What You Know, It's Who You Know, with Neutral Capital Collection, Samson Projects, Boston, MA



- 2007 The S Files, curated by Elvis Fuentes, Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (catalogue)
STUFF, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Collection of Burt Aron, Detroit, MI
VAC Colección Valencia Arte Contemporaneo, Institute Valencia d'art Modern, Spain (catalogue)
Cerca Series, with Neutral Capital Collection, Lui Velazquez Gallery, Tijuana, Mexico
Someday Never Comes, curated by Eddie Martinez, ZieherSmith Gallery, New York, NY
New Labor, with Neutral Capital Collection, Leroi Neiman Gallery, Columbia University, New York, NY
Cerca Series, with Neutral Capital Collection, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, CA
Second Annual Dining Room Show, sponsored by Andrea Rosen Gallery, Amaganssett, NY
Passport to the Arts, sponsored by The New Yorker, The Xchange, New York, NY
- 2006 Farewell to Icon, curated by Maya Schindler and Karl Haendel, Anna Helwing Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Panic Room, curated by Jeffrey Deitch & Kathy Grayson, DESTE Foundation, Athens, Greece (catalogue)
Constant Disturbance, curated by Jean Moreno, Centro Cultural Español, Miami, FL
Exposición de Apertura, curated by Julieta Gonzales, Espacio 1414, Santurce, Puerto Rico
Fresh (auction), Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL
The Lovers, in collaboration with Jesus Bubu Negron, Canada Gallery, New York, NY
2x2 (auction), Dallas Museum of Art, TX
- 2005 Curvaceous, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, NY
Alice Neel Project, Robert Miller Gallery, New York, NY
Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, IL
Monster Painting, Mclain Gallery, Houston, TX (catalogue)
CORE, Glassell School of Arts, Houston, TX (catalogue)
- 2004 Sadie Hawkins Dance, Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
Summer Drawings Some Are Not, curated by Lisa Cooley, Mixture Contemporary Art, Houston, TX
CORE, Glassell School of Arts, Houston, TX (catalogue)
- 2003 Dinosaurs, Los Medanos College, Oakland, CA
Ensayo, Galeria Comercial, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Lives of the Obscure, curated by Amalia Culp, Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
No Pasa Un Dia..., curated by G. Santamarina, EX-Teresa Arte Actual, Mexico City, Mexico (catalogue)
- 2002 PR02 [En Ruta], curated by Michelle Marxuach, M&M Proyectos, San Juan, Puerto Rico (catalogue)
- 2001 Teeter-Totter, HUB Gallery, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Catapult, Whatcom Museum of Art, Bellingham, WA
Artists of the New Millennium, juried by James Yood, Rockford Museum of Art, Rockford, IL (catalogue)
- 1999 Triennial, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, WI (catalogue)
Secrets about Goo, curated by Scott Roberts, Commonwealth Gallery, Madison, WI

HONORS

- 2013 International Association of Art Critics (Puerto Rico), Best Gallery Show of 2012
ABC Cultural Spain, Best of ARCO
Huffington Post, National Edition, Summer 2013, Must See Exhibits of the Season
- 2012 Newcity, featured in the 50 most influential Chicago artists list
Huffington Post, featured on the front page of the Arts Section
Vice Magazine, Best of Art Basel Miami
- 2011 L Magazine, New York, selected as one of the 10 best exhibitions of 2012
- 2010 United States Fellow Nominee
- 2008 Wisconsin Alumnus, Forward Under Forty Award
- 2007 Art on Paper Magazine, selected for the 4th Annual New Prints Review
- 2004 Louis Comfort Tiffany Award Nominee
Eliza Randall Prize, Houston, TX
- 2003 Skowhegan Fellowship, Maine

