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ARTNEWS

SANDRA VÁSQUEZ DE LA HORRA AT DAVID NOLAN GALLERY

By Ella Coon

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Sandra Vásquez de la Horra, *Los Vientos (The Winds)*, 2016.

“Crossroads,” Sandra Vásquez de la Horra’s show at David Nolan Gallery in Chelsea, is as intimate and unsettling as anyone familiar with the work of this Chilean-born, Berlin-based artist might expect.

Playful and diabolic, Vásquez de la Horra’s style merges personal and lyrical narratives, engaging private and social memory and mythology. These narratives, or really antinarratives, which disrupt conventional notions of plot, chronology, and character development, are created from collections of (mostly graphite) drawings on wax-coated, creamy white paper.

The materials—soft graphite, buttery paper, and luminous wax—give the work a subtle, antiquated, and fleshy feel. However, this seductive quality finds a sardonic complement in the imagery the artist employs. Much of Vásquez de la Horra’s work depicts visceral scenes (such as a flaming piano or the Hindu goddess Kali’s decapitated victims) coupled with sinister phrases such as “Mother I Want to Kill You.”

Now much larger and sometimes three-dimensional, the artist’s work has been growing—quite literally. Many of the individual pieces—such as *Las Frecuencias (Frequencies)*,

2016—display a single image spread across multiple sizable sheets of paper. The composition of this work contrasts with that of the artist’s previous installation techniques. In these, Vásquez de la Horra constructed distinct storylines from series of independent images pinned together in winding and asymmetrical sequences. These new pieces, proportional to the viewer, feel commanding and somewhat confrontational.

Vásquez de la Horra has also started making “houses,” or three-dimensional freestanding drawings that resemble carousels or milk cartons. Each wall of these architectural forms is treated like a distinct pictorial plane, with different images often located on different sides.



Sandra Vásquez de la Horra, *El Sueño del Árbol Rojo* (The Dream of the Red Tree), 2016.

This scaling-up and play with dimension does more than just expand and enlarge the work. It also takes the narrative off of the wall. Each individual piece contributes to constructing a cohesive story, making the gallery space an inhabited world.

Vásquez de la Horra’s work is also becoming more colorful. And much like everything else in the show, this element has distinct symbolic weight. A red sinuous matrix, seeming to refer to the vascular configuration of a leaf, wraps around the surface of *El Sueño del Árbol Rojo* (The Dream of the Red Tree), 2016, a boxy structural work. This same pattern is found elsewhere in the exhibition, and is used to depict human flesh beneath the epidermal layer.

Motifs are not restricted to color and pattern. Heavily influenced by music, Vásquez de la Horra has taken characters and scenes from the musical world, transplanting and reiterating from piece to piece.

El Dirigente (The Leader), 2016, a drawing composed of three upright sheets of paper folded like a fan, depicts three orchestral conductors—backs to the audience—at different points in a musical sequence. These figures, arranged in a line, create a visual pun that extrapolates the rhythmic temporality found in music and applies it to a static form. This same character is found on the backside of another piece—*El Ritmo de las Olas* (The Rhythm of the Waves), 2016—amplifying its effect.