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Grand Siècle **Laurent-Perrier** It takes time to become an icon

American art features nuanced explorations of identity largely free of politicking.

By Brian P. Kelly Nov. 1, 2024 3:30 pm ET Share AA Resize

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Christina Fernandez's 'Suburban Nightscapes #9 (Riverbed)' (2023). PHOTO: GALLERY LUISOTTI

Magdalena Suarez Frimkess's 'Untitled' (2016). PHOTO: KAUFFMAN REPETTO GALLERY

Cultural osmosis is imminently present in the drawings of Lance de los Reyes, who

blends New York graffiti practice (where he tagged under the name Rambo) with

symbols and images that call to mind Mesoamerican glyphs. So too the work of

Magdalena Suarez Frimkess, who was born in Caracas, Venezuela, studied there

mash up popular Western culture and Latin American iconography—Archie

comics, Minnie Mouse and Hugo Chávez all make appearances.

and in Santiago, Chile, and now lives in California, where she makes ceramics that

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Maria A. Guzmán Capron's 'En Tu Mirada' ('In

Your Eyes'), (2024). PHOTO: NAZARIAN CURCIO

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Other artists lean more fully into tradition through their materials or techniques. Carmen Argote's totemic sculptures made of palm fronds and jute are mysteriously creepy, and her other works incorporate figs and banana. Norberto Roldán creates Ziggurat-like altars out of debris he collects from demolished houses in Quezon City, Philippines, alluring shrines to discarded pasts that breathe new life into his scavenged detritus. And Sarita Westrup nods to traditional basketry in her reed-woven works that are then caked in mortar and paint, rendering her creations—a traffic cone, a bucket—recognizable but unusable. Norberto Roldán's '100 Altars for Roberto Chabet / NO. 23' (2014-23). PHOTO: SILVERLENS Less common materials have outsize impact as well. Karyn Olivier's pieces of recycled asphalt/tar roofing, combined with color photos that peek through holes in their inky blackness, are at once threatening and beguiling, portals opening onto—or swallowing whole—alternate dimensions. Sarah Rosalena repurposes Wixárika symbols, specifically an eight-pointed star, in her smoked-ceramic 3-D prints that nod to basketry but, entirely hollow and bottomless, serve as intentionally inutile vessels. The notion of permeability is confronted most directly in Maria A. Guzmán Capron's showstopping

quilted curtain. Visitors can operate a

featuring two dancers clasping hands.

combination of several human forms,

visually arresting capstone that drives

the multitudes contained within these

El Museo del Barrio, through Feb. 9,

home the show's central message of

creators and contemporary Latin

Flow States—La Trienal 2024

American art.

2025

-Mr. Kelly is the Journal's associate Arts in Review editor. Follow him on X

SHOW CONVERSATION (0) ∨

intertwined and inseparable. It's a

pulley to reel back vibrant panels

As they do, an even more colorful

figure emerges in the middle, a

New York Walking through "Flow States," I couldn't get the word "osmosis" out of my head. At the second triennial survey of Latin American contemporary art at El Museo del Barrio, movement is a central theme—both physical movement from one place to another, and the psychological movement involved in shifting perceptions of identity and belonging, which are deeply rooted in questions of ethnicity, nationality and culture. While this sounds like a recipe for a show that's predictably identitarian, that opines on the political issues *de jour*, many of the 33 artists included by organizers Rodrigo Moura, Susanna V. Temkin and María Elena Ortiz offer a much more nuanced view of the world. That is not to say that everything here is captivating. There are more than a few examples of turgid work; several artists don't seem to be at the point of their careers where they're creating museum-level pieces; and there are inclusions (mostly participatory projects) that don't replicate effectively in this context. But the best examples embody the wide range of styles, media and messages employed and expressed by this diverse cohort. While it may be unsurprising that there is no homogenous block of "Latinx contemporary art" (the museum's term, despite little popular usage), this exhibition serves as an important reminder of art's broad remit during a period when we're tempted to pigeonhole certain groups. MOST POPULAR NEWS Christina Fernandez's photographs are a fine example. Capturing her teenage son as he spends time with friends, practices hobbies, and lives his daily life in suburban Los Angeles, these cinematic scenes dispel stereotypes of a gritty urban lifestyle among Chicanos. Joe Zaldivar's intricately hand-drawn maps also deal with the tension of place. His cartography of Manhattan, Phoenix, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and other American cities where he Joe Zaldivar's 'Detailed Street Map of Upper and his co-exhibitors reside are as Manhattan, Midtown Manhattan, Lower accurate as any atlas, overlaid with Manhattan, South Bronx, Central Brooklyn, and Vicinity' (2024). PHOTO: TIERRA DEL SOL individual streets, zip codes, points of GALLERY interest and even traffic patterns. For all this exactitude, there's also a tinge of melancholy to these works, a sense of MOST POPULAR OPINION otherness that persists even though Mr. Zaldivar was born in California, as if all the obsessive details are meant to prove that he and his fellow artists have just as much right to belong to these places as other Americans do.

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At El Museo del Barrio, this large-scale survey of contemporary Latin

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