

REBECCA CAMACHO PRESENTS



Esteban Ramón Pérez
Brown Noise

11 March through 22 April 2023
Opening Reception: Saturday 11 March, 5pm to 7pm

Rebecca Camacho Presents is pleased to announce *Brown Noise*, a solo exhibition of new and recent works by Los Angeles based artist Esteban Ramón Pérez. Rooted in themes of legacy, the duality of belonging, obscurity, and emanation, Pérez's interdisciplinary practice intertwines the cultural and artistic sensibilities of his Xicano heritage with the visual language of postmodernism, challenging conservative interpretations of existence.

Concerned with the intersections of materiality and iconography within American cultures, their implications, and their relationship to subcultures, labor practices, social classes, and socio-political histories, Pérez's work engages both personal and historical narratives. Spending much of his youth in his father's upholstery shop, scrap leather craftwork is fundamental in both two and three-dimensional pieces. Across wall-works, either stretched on handmade local cypress frames with exposed cross- corners or hanging loose on short wooden poles adorned with feathers or metal studs, leather fragments are meticulously pieced together, layered, and re-shaped, sewn to compose a uniform whole. Structural stitched seam lines establish architecture within the work, creating an abstract base to hold further figurations. Whether inscribing imagery with a modified tattoo machine or masking intricate forms then covering their surround in multiple, varied layers of translucent paints and metallic media, Pérez's non-traditional techniques both obscure and illuminate surface color and light, a metaphor for the duality of what is known and what is unknown.

Akin to the concept of chiaroscuro, a technique often employed by baroque artists and simply translated as 'light and dark' or 'clear or clarity,' Pérez's paintings embody the notion that all things are dark until touched by light. And that light does not reach all areas at all times, so there are always spots, moments that remain unseen. This combination of clarity and obscurity defines literal and figurative perception. An artist can only paint what is known to them, what is unknown remains in the dark. An audience can only see what is in the light.

The exhibition also centers three sculptures - one hanging, one on the wall, one freestanding. Composed of varied textures, techniques and materials side-by-side, each work carries forward traditional craft, folklore and cultural archetypes. In *Supertouch (Rana)*, a steer horn, a symbol of ferocity and virility, juts aggressively into space. A red leather 'flag' - an indication of danger, to stop, colored to Mexico's roots and the blood of its heroes - suspended on point and studded with an X. Peacock feathers, tokens of protections, divination and light magic, attach around and below. Painted gourds, a traditional art form for centuries in Mexico used in a range of rituals and ceremonies, populate *(Maybe) In The Next World*. While rooster feathers, significant markers of bravery, honor, responsibility, and loyalty, join lightly together with sisal in *Origin of X (Spring)*.

Esteban Ramón Pérez received his BFA in Art from the California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles CA in 2017 and his MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale University School of Art, New Haven CT in 2019. He was a recipient of the prestigious NXTHVN Fellowship in 2020-2021 and an Artadia Los Angeles 2022 grant awardee. Pérez's recent exhibitions include Lehmann Maupin, New York; Charles Moffett Gallery, New York; The Mistake Room, Los Angeles; James Cohan, New York; and Calderón, New York. Pérez's first solo institutional exhibition, *Distorted Myths*, opened at Staniar Gallery, Washington & Lee University, Lexington VA in 2022 with accompanying catalogue. His work is in the permanent collection of the Pérez Art Museum Miami and the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles.

Gallery hours: Thursday, Friday, Saturday 12noon to 5pm

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Familiar like Familia

by Alfredo Diaz

Remember the one where you spoke about aura? There was a piece with crushed velvet, layered, hung by the entrance, unstitched, held together by pins. Two diamond shaped pieces hung on the wall, touching, off centered, covered in velvet, tucked, staring at the room as people swung and missed at every pitch.

I thought “aura, aura, aura...more like *Órale!*”

That night we spoke about the frustration of always having to start from the beginning.

Then the scrap works came. It was about memory of labor to me, remnants, leftovers, pieced together to reveal a map that had its boundaries defined by your fathers' cuts. As maps usually are, it's a place someone has been, *discovered*, a place *explored*, but more like exploited. You've talked about your dad's shop as the source of material, the place you learned how to piece it all together, *con safos*. You spoke of the pride your dad took in his work, how he cared for each piece, how he restored comfort for others with style.

Here we are, decades after the call for protest and destruction that shaped our movements, the way we move, la movida. Here I am again thinking about it from the beginning, a beginning, it's a habit now or more like a responsibility que no? To take the remnants and put it together the way we learned, the way you learned. What does re-upholstering for our comfort look like?

The movement became a current, carrying bits of everything it touched along the way, becoming rich in nutrients. Like a river, it also brings some shit with it.

The scraps were always here though, always part of the protest, like chale where's the rest of it? But like we always do, and like you've done for years, we find a way to stitch it together. Not like a patch but a new surface that's yours even though every piece of it is a collective memory of all the pieces you don't own.

Here's the work now. Feeling familiar like that one time, but the pieces are not pinned instead they are skillfully stitched because you know they will try to pull at it to get their piece. They are layered, inked up like a healing tattoo, glistening, rippling from a drop that creates a portal into another side, a memory: It's not a mirror but it does reflect. The x is present, it doesn't matter if it's at the front or back, all we know is that it marks the spot, and that's where we sign.

Remember once you asked what round you were in? I couldn't say for sure right now, but you're up, all you gotta do is keep moving and let them wear themselves out.