

REYNOLDS GALLERY

AMANDA VALDEZ

First Home

September 11 - October 30, 2020

Opening
Friday, September 11
11 am - 5 pm



First Home, 2020, embroidery, gouache, oil stick on mounted paper, and acrylic paint

Reynolds Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by artist Amanda Valdez. *First Home* will open with an all-day public reception from 11am to 5pm on Friday, September 11, and will run through October 30, 2020.

Valdez presents nine works on canvas that incorporate a wide range of materials, including hand-dyed fabric, commercially sourced fabric, collaged oil stick on paper, and thread, and techniques including painting, drawing, quilting and embroidery. The artist also includes four gem-like works on paper in which she layers gouache, acrylic and graphite. Valdez explains, "Much of the work is a combination of embroidery, fabric, and oil stick on mounted paper. Several of the pieces, *ongoing union*, *Reflect & Replicate*, and *Sweet Trouble*, are exclusively fabric or fabric and embroidery, with these ones I felt called to let the color, pattern, and embroidery have space from the hand drawn elements of oil stick and allow for a minimal feeling to emerge or showcase the quilted elements without them having to negotiate hand drawn elements."

Valdez adeptly plays formal, high art abstraction against craft-oriented methods that have historically been marked as women's work. The quilted sections of her paintings are sewn into the body of the canvas - as if she is patching a hole - and stretched. This physical and metaphorical integration of modernist abstraction (typically associated with a distinct American, mid-century machismo) with handcrafts that speak of domestication and decoration is both a conscious, conceptual choice, and a functional way for the artist to push her work beyond binary definitions of painting versus textile. She fuses the approaches seamlessly, and in doing so, she stakes out her place among feminist painters and textile artists alike.

Valdez disrupts hierarchies in a way that is both visually exhilarating and incredibly sophisticated. Her color sense is playful yet grounded, and her forms hint toward the body, the earth, and the cosmos. For example, *First Home* is grounded by a central white circle, reminiscent of a full moon, which is surrounded by a collaged section of blue, green, and

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black, as if the painting is a meeting of earth and sky. The background form, created by teal acrylic and cornflower blue embroidery, may reference the figure (a head?) or perhaps nothing at all. Similarly, *Braided Offering* suggests a female form - all legs and curves - ambiguous yet powerful.



Braided Offering, 2020, embroidery and oil stick
on mounted paper on canvas, 20 x 18 inches

Valdez created the majority of the paintings and works on paper during a time of quarantine, away from her regular studio, and there is a quietude and reflectiveness in the works that seems to mirror this time. Titles like *Personal Revolution* and *Reflect & Replicate* hint toward introspection and simplification. Valdez states:

What I have to say about this body of work cannot be separated from the experiences of the last year. While I typically leave the abstraction as open to the viewer as possible and give poetic clues with titling, the intimacy of mothering my child in their first year, and enduring a shelter in place order that displaced my family is embedded in the shapes. Waves, curves, and bending shapes are being pulled up when I draw, their own signals of the loss of control and need for fluidity in taking each day as it comes. A curve is a response, it's a movement in connection to landscape and the body. One I feel as the bodies between my son and I are still interwoven, yet the process of separation has begun.

With this body of work I wanted to express a warmer color palette, while not exclusively that, it's a feeling of being dewy, half lit in the fading deep night light, a way to make the shapes glow (First Home, ongoing union, Reflect & Replicate.) While other moment of color call up chaos and staccato (Burn Within, Braided Offering).

Valdez lives and works in New York, NY. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and MFA from Hunter College in New York. She has held solo shows across the US and internationally including *Rattle Around* at Koki Fine Arts in Tokyo, Japan, *Piecework* at the Heckscher Museum of Art in Huntington, NY, several solo shows with Denny Dimin in New York, and *Hot Bed* at Dotfiftyone in Miami. She is the recipient of a residency at the New Roots Foundation in Antigua, Guatemala; several Joan Mitchell Foundation residencies in New Orleans; and has traveled on residencies to the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire and Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York, among others.