

whitewall



Studio Lenca Debuts Historiante Figures at David Castillo in Miami

The Historiantes defy colonial power by taking space, merging with nature, and becoming witnesses to their own histories.

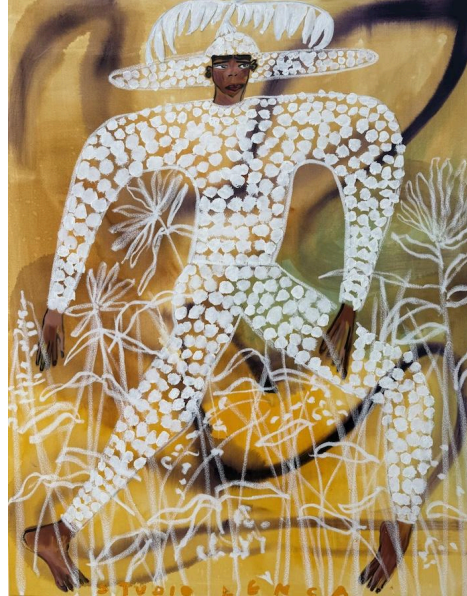
VICTORIA POKOVBA - DECEMBER 02, 2025

For *Miami Art Week*, *David Castillo Gallery* presents *Studio Lenca's* first solo exhibition in the city—an immersive, color-saturated world where the artist's signature Historiantes pulse vividly against the gallery's white walls. Born in La Paz, El Salvador, and now based in the United Kingdom, Studio Lenca reflects on belonging, erasure, and movement through these recurring figures. Their practice, shaped by lived displacement and by years working at *Tracey Emin Studios*, has traveled widely with exhibitions in New York, Hong Kong, London, Bangkok, Seoul, Dubai, and more.

Historiantes as Narrative Bodies



Studio Lenca, "Campo," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 195 x 145 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.



Studio Lenca, "Aire," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 150 x 120 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.

As a mixed Indigenous artist, Studio Lenca carries a fragmented lineage shaped by El Salvador's colonial past, civil war, and the generational rupture that followed. The Historiantes—inspired by traditional folkloric dancers yet reimagined for contemporary storytelling—become protagonists who step boldly into landscapes once denied to them. In the exhibition "Landscapes," these figures move through contested terrain, reclaiming visibility in spaces where Indigenous presence was historically suppressed.

By casting these characters at the center of the picture plane, Studio Lenca subverts the colonial gaze. The figures become insistent and unerasable. Their garments are not decorative but declarative: wide-brimmed hats, voluminous silhouettes, and vivid reds, blues, and pinks that demand space. These characters are not passive motifs that can be painted over for a more convenient narrative. They are witnesses, performers, and storytellers—each embodying fragments of collective memory that allow obscured histories to be traced.

Over the course of the exhibition, these figures gradually merge with their surroundings. In *Campo*, the character begins to dissolve into lush green foliage, the natural world acting as camouflage and protector. In *Aire*, flecks of white drift across the figure's clothing, echoing the lightness of the element and visually blending with the pale contoured flora in the foreground. The boundaries between figure and landscape grow porous, suggesting a return to a relationship with land that was violently interrupted.

Nature as Sentinel and Co-Conspirator



Studio Lenca, "Flores," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 145 x 195 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.

Nature in Studio Lenca's work is not a backdrop. It is a participant and often a guardian. The plants, fields, and skies seem to watch over the Historiantes, shielding them while acknowledging their intertwined existence. The terrain becomes fluid, shifting, and unclaimable—a counterpoint to the rigid borders that define the politics of migration today.

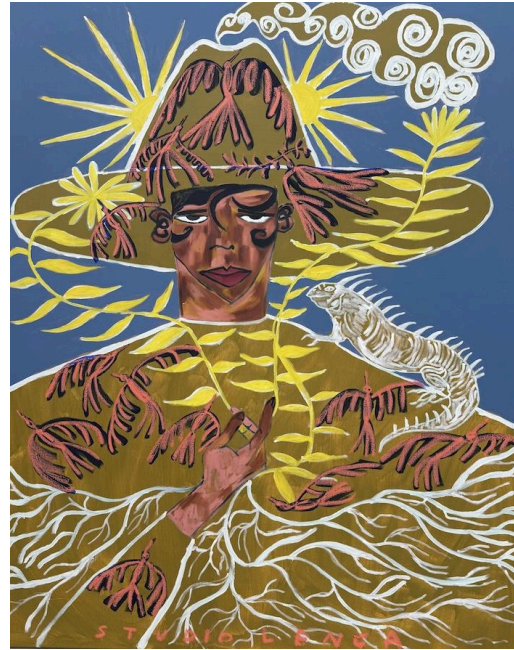
This symbiosis reflects the artist's personal experience fleeing El Salvador's civil war and later living as an undocumented immigrant. The landscapes in these works operate as emotional and political zones: places that hold memory, grief, and resilience at once. The figures appear in a state between fleeing and celebrating, a duality that Studio Lenca suggests is essential to survival. Joy and fear coexist. Movement is both necessity and ritual.

These layered narratives help articulate how people navigate survival while holding on to dignity and identity. The paintings remind us that displacement is not a singular event but an ongoing negotiation of place, spirit, and visibility.

Rutas: Mapping the Unrecorded Journey



Studio Lenca, "Lago," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 195 x 140 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.



Studio Lenca, "Raices," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 150 x 120 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.

A standout of the exhibition is *Rutas*, Studio Lenca's ongoing project developed with migrant communities across the Americas. Together, they create paintings that document their journeys to the United States—stories that rarely appear in official archives yet shape entire lives. The project now includes over 30 works and will continue at MoMA PS1 later this year.

Each participant paints their own memory, gesture, or geography of movement. Some render specific border crossings; others depict emotional terrain. The result is a cross-national, collaborative archive that resists erasure by insisting these histories be seen, held, and honored.

Together, these paintings reveal the many ways colonial and political hierarchies infiltrate daily life, shaping who is allowed to move, who is recorded, and who is forgotten. The diversity of the artworks underscores that while displacement is widespread, its impact is never uniform.



Studio Lenca, "Paisaje," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 195 x 225 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.

As Studio Lenca explains, "My mother and I, alongside our community, undertook journeys to the U.S. through overland routes. These journeys often carry a burden of shame and trauma, lacking official records or archives. Yet they are integral to our identities as displaced people and form part of the wider narrative of the United States."

In Miami, the Historiantes stand tall—defiant, rooted, luminous. They claim space not only for themselves but for the communities and histories that shaped them. Through color, gesture, and presence, Studio Lenca reimagines visibility as an act of sovereignty.



Studio Lenca, "Cerro," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 61 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.



Studio Lenca, "Milpa," 2025, oil and acrylic on canvas, 120 x 150 centimeters. Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery.