

Studio Lenca: Landscapes @ David Castillo Gallery, Miami

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David Castillo presents *Landscapes*, Studio Lenca's first solo exhibition in Miami, which takes terrain as both subject and metaphor, an active protagonist where questions of belonging, identity and displacement unfold. The exhibition draws together the artist's recurring motif of the Historiantes, figures rooted in the Salvadoran tradition of dancers re-enacting oral histories of colonisation.

For Studio Lenca, the repeated Historiante figures act as an anchor in a fractured narrative. As a mixed Indigenous person with only fragments of family history, the artist turns to these figures, recasting them as protagonists moving through contested spaces. Repeated across the canvases, they form a chorus of presence: visible, insistent and unerasable. Their wide-brimmed hats and vibrancy refuse to be muted or overlooked. Each Historiante is witness, performer, and storyteller, carrying fragments of collective memory and offering the artist a way to imagine lineage where displacement has obscured continuity.

In *Landscapes*, these figures fuse with their surroundings: terrain seeps into their bodies as they spill outward into contours of the land. The landscape is recast as a participant. This inquiry

resonates with urgency amid rising hostility towards refugees, both in the United Kingdom, where the artist is currently based, and in the United States, where he grew up undocumented after fleeing El Salvador's civil war. In response, Landscapes envisions terrain as multiplicity, fluid, porous, impossible to contain or claim.

The works echo one always being situated in more than one geography at once. Figures hover between fleeing and celebrating, between running and resting. Their gestures recall the Historiantes, whose ritual performances collapse history, myth, and movement into embodied memory. At moments, these layered gestures create multiple perspectives pressing into the same frame, unsettling and coexisting at once.

Included in the exhibition is Rutas, Studio Lenca's ongoing project with communities that archives journeys into the US through painting. With over thirty works to date, the series maps migrant narratives and will continue later this year at MoMA PS1 in New York following its inclusion in La Trienal at El Museo del Barrio. A cross-national, practice-based research project, Rutas collaborates with organisations supporting displaced communities. Painting becomes both a medium and a meeting point, enabling individuals who have undertaken journeys to share their stories. Each participant contributes a painting, narrating a unique experience of migration. Collectively, these works build an evolving archive of displacement.

Through this collaborative act of painting, Studio Lenca and participants challenge conventional understandings of maps – historically tools of colonial power and control. Instead, Rutas reimagines mapping as a celebration of diverse knowledge systems, unsettling hierarchies imposed by borders. Reflecting on his own story, the artist notes: "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 Landscapes, there is at once portrait and place. These works insist on layered presence- inside and outside, estrangement and belonging, resistance and renewal.

Studio Lenca was born in La Paz, El Salvador (1986) and lives in Margate, UK, where he works at Tracey Emin Studios. He received his MA from Goldsmiths University of London and has had solo exhibitions in New York, Hong Kong, London, Bangkok, Seoul, Dubai, among others. His work has been included in group exhibition including El Museo del Barrio, New York and Hauser & Wirth, London. Upcoming exhibitions include MoMA PS1, New York and Un-Monument | Re-Monument | De-Monument: Transforming Boston, a public art commission; recent commissions include Hermes, London. His work is in public collections including The Rubell Museum; Parrish Art Museum; Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art; and PAMM among others.