

# Cob.

Press

ALIDA CERVANTES

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SD NEWS  
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SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER GROUP

## City acquires 100 new works of art created by San Diego artists

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Artist Alida Cervantes' *Salta pa' lante (Jump Forward)* – acrylic spray paint and oil on aluminum.

## 100 NEW ACQUISITIONS TO CIVIC ART COLLECTION

As California continues to reopen, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on artists is projected to last for months, if not years. During the stay home order, many artists were left with few ways to exhibit their work and or generate income. With that in mind, the City of San Diego last year launched two initiatives to support local artists: SD Practice and Park Social.

On April 13, the City announced 100 new acquisitions from [89 local artists](#) are being added to the Civic Art Collection through the SD Practice initiative, which focused on the purchase of existing artworks from San Diego area artists. This initiative aims to support artists affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, advance the mission of the Civic Art Collection, and increase collection holdings by acquiring new works that reflect the rich diversity of artistic talent and expression in San Diego.

Acquisition of these new works was made possible through a \$500,000 gift from the estate of Thomas O. Rasmussen, an avid contemporary art collector. Rasmussen, who died in 2014, desired to expand the presence of artwork in public facilities.

"With these artworks, many of which are the first by these artists to enter the Civic Art Collection holdings, we will be able to ensure that the collection continues to grow and deepens understanding of contemporary art and local art histories," said Christine E. Jones, chief of civic art strategies of the City's Commission for Arts and Culture. "It's also important to grow awareness of San Diego artists and to help support them at such a difficult time."

The new acquisitions span artistic media from painting, sculpture, drawing, print, photography and video, installations and textiles. They reveal key aspects of San Diego's art practices and, in most cases, are the City's first works by the respective artists.

In an effort to acquire artworks, the City issued a request for proposal (RFP) and 552 artists responded. The RFP was open to practicing artists residing in San Diego County. The City convened a panel of five jurors to assess eligible artwork applications considering the priorities of the SD Practice initiative, which aims to strengthen and diversify the collection while underscoring the City's commitment to working artists and their important role in civic life.

The panel included local art professionals:

- Anthony Graham, associate curator, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego and Commission for Arts and Culture Public Art Committee member.
- Eun Jung Park, assistant professor, Art Department, Southwestern College and Commission for Arts and Culture Public Art Committee member.
- Derrick Cartwright, director of University Galleries and associate professor, Department of Art, Architecture, and Art History at the University of San Diego and director of curatorial affairs at the Timken Museum of Art.
- Gaidi Finnie, executive director, San Diego African American Museum of Fine Art.
- Alessandra Moctezuma, artist and gallery director/professor, Fine Arts Department, Museum Studies at San Diego Mesa College.

"We are thrilled to be bringing such a rich and diverse selection of works into the collection this year thanks to Thomas O. Rasmussen," said Jonathon Glus, executive director for the City's Commission for Arts and Culture. "We greatly appreciate his generosity to make these acquisitions possible and, in turn, for helping to enhance and more fully represent artists working in San Diego in this collection."

The works will be featured in public places for residents and visitors to enjoy beginning in summer 2021. To learn more about the Civic Art Collection visit [sdartcollection.com](https://sdartcollection.com) or the [Commission for Arts and Culture](#) website.

How To Spend It Interiors

## Welcome to our clash pad – the case against white walls

Contemporary artworks on candy-pink walls? Designer Rachel Chudley and gallerist Victoria Williams say it's all about the mix



© Jake Curtis/Victoria Williams (left) and Rachel Chudley

Victoria Woodcock. Photography by Jake Curtis DECEMBER 4 2020

The [National Gallery](#) doesn't want them. The Musée d'Orsay did away with them in 2011. And when [MoMA opened its renovated gallery spaces](#) last year it followed suit, transforming its standard Super White walls with bluish-tinged Cabbage White, Sulking Room Pink and deep-blue Serge (among other hues) from Farrow & Ball. "It's no longer taken for granted that you need a white wall to pay reverence to an artwork," says interior designer Rachel Chudley, whose projects are typically laden with colour and dotted with [contemporary artworks](#) – often sourced through her friend and collaborator Victoria Williams, the director of London's Cob Gallery.

"An abstract painting inspired the entire colour scheme of this room," says Williams of a room in the Highgate home of photographer Lucy Tudhope and her music producer husband Adam – one of Chudley's latest projects. "Rachel worked with specialist paint-maker Donald Kaufman [who is also, conveniently, her father-in-law] to create the bespoke wall colours."



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FINANCIAL TIMES

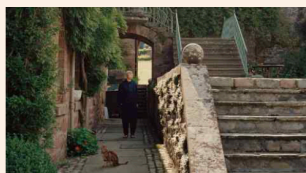
04/12/2020



Santa En Oración, 2017, by Alida Cervantes © Courtesy of Alida Cervantes and the Cob Gallery

Williams, too, has found that thus far business has held steady, with Cob curating exhibitions specifically for online. “In April, we put together a show called *Escape Fantasy* by the American artist Frances Waite, who works in pencil,” she says. “Her drawings are all about the apocalypse, so we thought that was nicely timed.” This month, Cob is presenting Mexican artist Alida Cervantes’ figurative paintings at online art fair Untitled, Art Miami Beach, while also releasing work from Tomo Campbell and Faye Wei Wei – whose paintings both feature in a just-finished Chudley scheme in London.

#### Recommended



#### How To Spend It

Notes from the castle: ancient and modern find harmony in a spectacular Scottish seat

Where will their collaboration take them next? “Why don’t we do a hotel together?” suggests Chudley, adding that she’d also love to bring more [sculpture](#) into her designs. “Cob has done lots of work with Meekyoung Shin, who makes the most insanely beautiful replicas of antique Chinese vases but made out of soap. I’m absolutely obsessed with her work.”

Williams would like to ramp up the sculptural scale further and “do a project that has land, so that we can go monumental outside”. Now appears to be the time for big and bold. Chudley has found her clients more open to her wilder ideas. “It’s that apocalyptic, end-of-the world thing,” she concludes. “People seem to be saying: ‘What’s the point of being modest?’”

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N+1 MAGAZINE, ISSUE 35  
Fall 2019

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## Savior Complex

Abolish private property. I was a teenage telemarketer. Lorelei Lee on sex work and consent. Not-boyfriends, no girlfriends. Pre-mourning diary. Mark Greif reads the Mueller Report. Thinking about design thinking.



TONY TULATHIMUTTE

## The Feminist

*A straight flush of stable-pair-bonding qualities*

His friends, mostly female, told him he was refreshingly attentive and trustworthy for a boy. Meanwhile he is grateful for the knowledge that *female* was best used as an adjective, that sexism harms men too (though not nearly to the extent that it harms women), and that certain men pretend to be feminists just to get laid.

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THE MODERN ART NOTES PODCAST

01/11/2018



EPISODE NO. 510

ALMA W. THOMAS AT THE CHRYSLER

RONALD LOCKETT AT CRYSTAL BRIDGES, GEORGIA

# THE MODERN ART NOTES PODCAST

*Each week, artists, art historians and authors join host Tyler Green to discuss their work*

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NO. 365: CHARLES WHITE, ALIDA CERVANTES

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## THE MODERN ART NOTES PODCAST

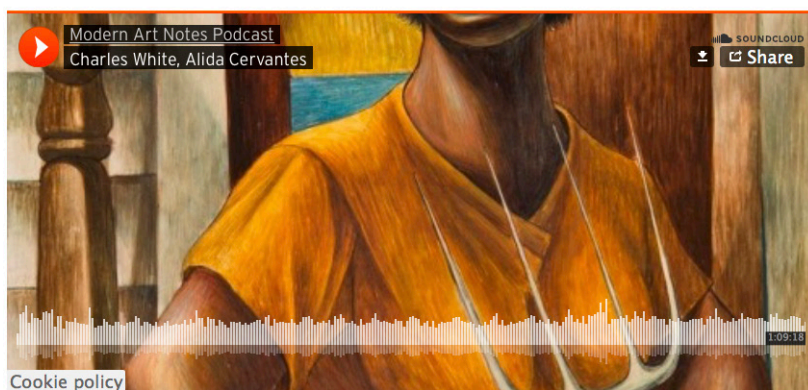
01/11/2018

Episode No. 365 of The Modern Art Notes Podcast features curator **Esther Adler** and artist **Alida Cervantes**.

With Sarah Kelly Oehler, Adler is the co-curator of [“Charles White: A Retrospective”](#) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The exhibition is the first major museum full-career survey of White’s work in over three decades. It spotlights White’s painting, drawing and photographs, and includes archival material especially related to his mural practice. “Charles White” is on view at MoMA through January 13, 2019, when it will travel to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The exhibition catalogue was published by the Art Institute of Chicago, which originated the show, and is distributed by Yale University Press. [Amazon offers it for \\$34.](#)

On the second segment, artist [Alida Cervantes](#) discusses her work on the occasion of [“Being Here with You/ Estando aquí contigo”](#) at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. The exhibition presents the work of 42 artists and collectives living and working in the San Diego and Tijuana region. The exhibition, which is at MCASD’s downtown Jacobs Building, is on view through February 3, 2019. The exhibition catalogue is available at the museum. Concurrently, Cervantes’s work is on view in in [“Hello hero, hero hello. Hello Hero, Hello hello”](#) at Efrain Lopez Projects in Chicago. It’s up through November 10.

**Air date:** Nov. 1, 2018.





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CREATIVE BOOM

18/05/2018

CREATIVE BOOM

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## Known Unknowns at Saatchi Gallery features the work of 17 contemporary artists

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Alida Cervantes Horizonte En Cálma, 2011 Oil on wood panel 152.4 x 213.4 cm © Alida Cervantes, 2011  
Image courtesy of the Saatchi Gallery, London

Known Unknowns is a major new exhibition at [Saatchi Gallery](#) featuring the work of 17 contemporary artists from across the globe, born between 1966 and 1990, from its own collection.

WRITTEN BY: **KATY COWAN**

18 MAY 2018

The title refers to the artists' status in the mainstream art world – whilst they are largely unknown, their respective practices are greatly admired by their artistic peers and seen as breaking new ground.

The show, which runs until 24 June 2018, explores a diverse range of art forms including painting, sculpture, video and mixed media, with a particular focus on the craft of art-making. The works deal with a myriad of themes that relate to the visual conditions of contemporary life, such as the exponential flow of images, the representation of the body in the Internet age, and the ethics of viewing versus voyeurism.

"These artists are not afraid to explore new media in thought-provoking ways, and each pursues a highly individualised practice," explains the Gallery.

"They are a seemingly disparate group, yet together reflect the diversity and breadth of contemporary art in a globalised and increasingly digital age. While Known Unknowns does not offer an obvious unifying theme or ideological point of view, it presents its audience with a group of artists that are worthy of wider exposure."

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THE BAY STATE BANNER

18/05/2017

THE BAY STATE  
**Banner**  
EST. 1965

## Border hopping: Artist Alida Cervantes confronts Mexico's past and present



Celina Colby



Sex and power dominate Alida Cervantes' exhibit, "Alida Cervantes: Majas, cambujas y virreinas," showing at the Mills Gallery in the South End. (Photo: Photo: Courtesy Mills Gallery)

Much of Cervantes' work is reminiscent of Francisco de Goya, Madrid's cheekiest 19th-century court painter. Goya is famous for his "Caprichos," a satirical series playing on social corruption. "La nube" by Cervantes has a similar humorous quality, showing a set of men and women jostling with each other under a large cloud. It's difficult to tell whether it's passion, panic or physical violence driving the characters, but it seems things might calm down if they had the sense to move out from under the symbolic cloud.

Cervantes often paints on wood, and her Mills Gallery exhibition is paired with draped fabric, potted plants and large scale artworks, bringing an imposing physicality to the space. Though many of her figures are rooted in Mexico's Victorian past, the fight for power despite racial, gender and social prejudices transcends time and borders.

Mexican artist Alida Cervantes crosses the border daily from her home in San Diego, California to her studio in Tijuana, Mexico. You can imagine how that journey is rife with inspiration. "Alida Cervantes: Majas, cambujas y virreinacas," showing at the Mills Gallery in the South End through June 25, plays on this experience and on Mexico's socially and sexually charged colonial history.



Author: Photo: Courtesy Mills Gallery

Sex and power dominate the exhibit, curated by Candice Ivy and presented in conjunction with Wellesley College's Alice Cole Fellowship. Many pieces include one nude figure confronted by or juxtaposed next to a clothed one, begging the question, Who has the control? Gender isn't the only factor at play; race and class are also components in the dance for social priority.



Author: Photo: Courtesy Mills Gallery

Cervantes plays on the popular 18th-century casta paintings that were used to identify the social order of, and therefore subjugate, people of mixed race during Spain's colonization of Mexico. In "Matadora," a black woman stylized like a Barbie, kneels between the legs of a white matador, raising a knife over her head as though about to stab him. He looks off, unfeelingly into the distance, still clutching his red cape.

"Tente en el aire," an oil on wood piece, seems at first glance like a Victorian-era figure riding a horse through a lush landscape. On closer inspection, a darker-skinned figure can be seen lying horizontally, perhaps tied on the back of a

second horse. It's a reminder that the privileges of one group of people always come at the expense of another.

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VICE

30/09/2015

VICE

## Mexican Painter Alida Cervantes Dips Her Brush in Sex, Race, and Violence

We talked to the artist about interracial relationships, alter egos, and the unsteady power dynamics of love and sex.



By [Olivia Parkes](#)

30.9.15



ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF ALIDA CERVANTES

You'll recognize the stories in Alida Cervantes' paintings, even if you haven't seen some of them play out like this before—after all, a lot of girls confess to having done some bad things to their Barbies. Cervantes, a Mexican artist who was born in San Diego but grew up in Tijuana, plays with dolls, puppets, kitsch figurines, and masks; the miniatures, for the most part, that we've made of people. She blows them up—these paintings are *big*—and explodes assumptions about image and power. Cervantes' paintings present a kind of distilled folklore, both hellish and humorous, telling tales of love and violence and the power struggles inevitable in both.



Raised at the edge of the US/Mexico border, [Cervantes](#) absorbed an early sense of the hierarchies that determine social life—intimately, at home, and on the broad stages of history and politics. In a series of works inspired by the Mexican [casta paintings](#) of the 17th and 18th centuries, Cervantes depicts interracial couples embroiled in dramas that highlight or subvert hierarchical notions of sex, class, and race. Cervantes flips narratives of domination and subjugation from one picture to another: The same figure can be cast as both victim and aggressor.

**Read More:** [Bettina Speckner's Unsettling Jewelry Is Absolutely Not Art](#)

In pictures both vulgar and subtle, Cervantes wrestles Mexico's complex colonial history and hybrid society into an arena that defies specifics of time or place. The heaviness of some of the scenes—the castration in *Horizonte en Calma* (2011) for instance—is lifted entirely by the freedom of the paint, and by an irrepressible sense of humor. The paintings are funny, and Cervantes knows it: "Sometimes I know a painting is finished because it makes me laugh." The lightness of touch, the confidence and the pleasure in the paint seem to say, "It's just a game, after all."



"HORIZONTE EN CALMA," 2011

## **BROADLY: How did you start painting?**

**Alida Cervantes:** The story is not particularly epic. I painted when I was a small kid in school, as all kids do, but then stopped. When I was about 11, I started drawing portraits of people I knew or of famous pop stars (mostly Duran Duran). Later in high school I would draw my classmates and pin them on the wall for everyone to see and judge. So I was drawing for many years, but not painting. I think I was afraid of painting. I remember the only painting I made during those years was a really small awkward painting of a duck. Then around the time I was 18 I went to study painting in Italy as an exchange student. Right after I started doing it I knew it was what I wanted to do.

## **How did lose that fear of painting? Does fear, or fearlessness, still play a role in your work?**

Yes, I was afraid. I still am. My process has been one of me trying to recognize and negotiate the two things that painting most provokes in me: fear and pleasure. Ironically, I feel more fearful now than back when I started. I think it's because I'm more aware of it now. The best way to ignore it is to connect to the sensuousness of painting and the pleasure it brings to me. It's like pleasure is a way of neutralizing fear.

## **As it turns out, it's a big rush and also pretty fun to be a macho dickhead ladies man.**

## **How did you know it was what you wanted to do?**

Tijuana was a really small town when I was growing up. The main message sprouting out around me as a woman was, "Find a man to support you, get married, have babies." I always sensed that I needed a way out of that. When I started painting I felt like I had found a space for myself, a space where I could explore things outside of the bubble I had grown up in, but also react to them. Painting gave me a lot of pleasure. It excited me.

## **Have your subjects and your process changed a lot over time? Has there been a core there, driving the work?**

My process and subjects have changed a lot over the years and are still changing. Living like I have, crossing a border between two worlds on a regular basis, can make you a bit schizophrenic! I'd say this has affected my stylistic expression to a large degree. In terms of a common core, I think that my work has always been directly or indirectly autobiographical.

**Tell me about the original *casta* paintings.**

The original *casta* paintings were made in Mexico during the 17th and 18th centuries and depicted the interracial mixing of the time. After the Spanish arrived, the Indians started to die in large numbers, which brought about the importation of African slaves. The three races intermixed (whites, Indians, and blacks), and the Spanish created a caste system based on the classification of people by racial makeup. Whiter people were on top, Indians in the middle, and black people on the bottom. The *casta* paintings depicted interracial couples and their offspring, usually in a domestic setting. The artists would write racial tags for each individual on the paintings in the popular terms used to describe various racial combinations. For example, "black and Indian produces *lobo*" (literally *wolf*), "Spanish and Indian produces *mestizo*," "Spanish and black produces *mulato*," "white and *mulato* produces *morisco*," etc.

**Watch:** [Artist Marilyn Minter on Depicting Female Sexuality](#)

**Why were you drawn to them?**

These paintings represented many aspects of my own life, past and present. The paintings depicted certain ideas about class, gender, and race as they were during the colonial period but which to a large degree I had also been brought up with. For many years I was involved in my own "casta" relationship with a man of a different class and race, which also made me identify with the work. The paintings spoke to my interest in the expression of power relations impacted by love or sexual desire.



"SENSIBILIDAD," 2013

**Describe the process behind your paintings, from source material to execution.**

I wanted to paint a very simple thing: an interracial couple in the midst of some sort of drama, dealing with some combination of love, sex, and power. I had been playing around on Photoshop with different images of dolls, Mexican folk art figures, masks, classical European sculptures, etc. I made tons of collages and at one point started to print and paint the ones I was most drawn to.

**And the painting process?**

The painting process was pretty repressed (ironically people talk about how "loose" the paintings are) because I was basically trying to reproduce the collage. I was sort of enslaved by wanting to reproduce it exactly as it was, but with paint. I was more interested in the pleasure of the final image than in the process of making it, which is something that has changed dramatically in my work now. It made me discover the power dynamic in my own relationship to painting at the time, in which I was extremely dominated by the image I was trying to reproduce. So the way I was painting was very much related to what I was painting.

**With the black Barbie killing the matador, I think it's OK that she's attacking him, even though he looks like he could be a nice guy.**

**Still, you could have left the work with the digital collages, which stand alone as compelling pieces in their own right, but you didn't—you made paintings. What is about painting an image that transforms it?**

When you paint an image it's like passing it through a filter, through the artist. Like a car going through a carwash: It goes in looking a certain way and comes out looking different. Artists are filters. I want to see what happens when images get filtered through me by painting. I am interested in that process, in which my life experience determines what is in my brain, and my brain communicates to my body, and my hands to the brush, and the brush to the surface. I don't find the process of just printing the collages engaging in the same way, although I agree they can stand on their own as pieces.

**What is it in figurative painting that most interests you?**

My work is about human nature. I am drawn to telling stories about humans (and animals). It makes sense for me to paint figures.

**The figures in the paintings feel very much "on display," like they've been arranged into these narratives or encounters by a third party. What, or who, are these figures to you? Do you feel a sense of their desire or autonomy, like characters in fiction?**

I agree with you. I make an arrangement and it tells a story—it's like playing with dolls. And it's very in your face, like being front row at the opera. I do ask myself questions about the characters. What they must feel, what their motives are, how they came to be in each situation. Like in *Matadora*, I thought, "Well, that guy had it coming to him." Although I'm not sure if the black Barbie is killing him because he did something bad to her, or if she's just really pissed that he kills bulls for a living. And I make judgments. With the black Barbie killing the matador, I think it's OK that she's attacking him, even though he looks like he could be a nice guy. What I don't know is if she'll regret it.

**Talk to me about scale—do you always work big?**

I like blowing anything up. I have a hard time making medium-sized paintings (although my *casta* paintings look medium to me now) because they don't stimulate me enough. If I'm going to make something I want it to be really big or really small. When I make something big it's a lot about being able to move my body around and to a degree to impose upon the viewer. In that sense it is also tied to my performance work.



"OBEDIENCIA," 2013

**Tell me about your alter ego. How does the performance element of your practice fit with your paintings, or are they completely distinct?**

My alter ego is a Cuban timba (Cuban salsa) singer called El Puro that I developed during my relationship with my ex-partner, who's also Cuban. Timba is a male-dominated genre, and the performers are highly sexualized. The music is sometimes very misogynistic. The performance was about appropriating Cuban machismo. [Ed. note: *Cervantes performs El Puro in drag.*] It was about getting out of a body that is looked at and judged and getting into a body that does the looking and judging. As it turns out, it's a big rush and also pretty fun to be a macho dickhead ladies man. It's also quite tragic.

**Do you view painting as a performance?**

My performance work is just now starting to become more explicitly apparent in my painting process. In the same way that as a woman I appropriate machismo in the performances, I'm now playing with the idea of appropriating 'macho' painting—this sort of large-scale expressionist gestural painting style. But using it to treat the subject matter of the woman that I am.

**Who or what have you been most influenced by?**

I think one of the things that has influenced me most has been experiencing the complexity of relationships growing up at home, between my parents, my brother, the servants that lived with us—I'll go as far as to include the pets! The power dynamics between us (parent/child, husband/wife, master/servant, etc.) were very distorted, and it made me curious about what drives humans to set up those relationships. Growing up in a border city like Tijuana only added to that. I would continuously cross the border to go to school, and the feeling of being a part of Mexico but at the same time outside of it, the competing realities on each side of the border; these things had a big influence.

**What's the art scene in Tijuana like?**

The art scene in Tijuana is small but very vibrant, fresh, and without the bullshit and pretentiousness of the art world in other places. There are no big galleries, museums, or collectors (with a couple of exceptions), so the scene consists of artists making and showing in art spaces, small galleries, or the street. And it's always accompanied by great food and beer!