

## Extended Statement

Throughout the years, I have worked on different concepts for my paintings, however, my paintings have the female figure as the central subject. The technique that I mostly use is realism because it helps me to express better the messages I would like to convey and depict. The genre that I use is magical realism because I like to combine fantasy with reality to play with emotions.

In a series present in my website, I analyze the concept of excesses and materialism. I named this series *"Beauty and Excesses"*. This series is a critique of consumer culture, commercialization, and absence of moral values in our society that give place to chaos like the one we are living today. Researching excesses in our society depicted in painting, I found myself in conversation with the following artists and philosophers: Plato, Dante Alighieri, Hieronymous Bosch, Peter Bruegel the Elder, and Francisco de Goya.

In *"Shoot Me, I Am Already Dead"*, I chose the concept of violence in an indigenous community in the south of Mexico. This series tells the story of brave indigenous women who saved their small Purepecha town from narco-violence. My work is also a critique to the indifference of society towards indigenous security issues in Mexico. This concept, however, is mostly universal because this theme can be adapted to any issue referencing actual problems in our world such as those of powerless human beings like the 'black-lives-matter' or the 'me-too' movements.

I am very attracted to the use of textiles in paintings, this is why in my paintings I try to incorporate them all over. In this series, you can see that in my paintings the women are wearing their distinctive rebozo (shawl). This rebozo emblemizes social, religious, ethnic, and cultural practices. A rebozo is universally associated with the feminine, and in my paintings, I also associate it with strength, courage, and resistance.

For the series *"Still Here"*, I chose to work on the concept of domestic violence in women and girls. I worked on a series of paintings with the subject of domestic violence during the recent pandemic. This series of work tells the story of women and girls who were victims of domestic violence in a time when there was no escape because of lockdowns around the world. The pandemic only exacerbated this issue. This body of work is also a critique to the indifference of

society around the world towards domestic violence, and the powerlessness experienced as a direct refute of the pandemic. In the painting “Another Day” we can see a mother holding her baby and her two daughters playing around her without noticing the domestic abuse marks in their mother.

As a woman, mother, and daughter I am extremely passionate about this issue. These statistics clearly show gender-based violence is devastatingly on the rise. It occurs in every segment of society, regardless of class, ethnicity, culture, religion, during war or peace. The victim's only crime is that she is female.<sup>1</sup>

For this series, I did extensive research on domestic violence and violence against females depicted in paintings and other works of art. I went back as far as the sixteenth century all the way to current times to travel through art history and understand better the dialogue among artists and how they depicted female pain and violence against them. My goal was to analyze contemporary artists from around the world to explore the many dimensions of gender-based violence. During my research, I found out that we tend to admire art (we romanticize the violence) created in the Renaissance and in the Baroque ignoring the violent subject matter of violence.

For the series “**Sugar Rush**”, I explore the subject of *Commodity Fetishism: A Critique of An Organizational Life Under Contemporary Capitalism*. This series of work tells the story of children and young adults who are victims of a commodity fetishism that got exacerbated in a time when there was no escape because of lockdowns around the world during the recent pandemic. This body of work was created as a message for the need to identify an alarming behavior in our youth after becoming addicted to technology, especially to mobiles and tablets. For this series, I did extensive research on the concept of “commodity fetishism” that was conceptualized by Karl Marx in 1848 in his classic *Capital* where he explains consumer capitalism. To understand better this concept, critical theorists such as Benjamin argued that Marx’s economic analysis could be complemented by a wider theory of capitalist subjectivity which in

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence: Art and Music

turns can be analyzed by Freud's psychoanalysis, aiming in particular to understand how capitalist socio-economic relations created and "damaged" modern subjectivity.<sup>2</sup>

The concept of "commodity fetishism" offers a great way to explore the relation between Marxism and psychoanalysis. After WWII this concept was fully studied and used when explaining the commodity as part of a general system of signs and meanings. In this moment is where the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan enters the scene to understand better the concept of commodity fetishism. Lacan's concepts are based in the "real" and "jouissance" which are libidinal drives that cannot be symbolized which in turn are never fully understandable. Psychoanalysis theory perfectly captures these mechanisms better than traditional analysis. Lacanian conception of commodity fetishism helps us understand capitalist processes of organization constructing specific subjectivities related to consumerism. The paintings related to this series: "Sugar Rush", "My BFF", and "Cotton Candy" all depict families affected by technology. The main characters are "there", present, but in reality, they are "absent" in another world.

For the series "**Ordinary World**", I chose the subject of Mexican Indigenous Culture: Their Textiles and Flora. The paintings I created for this series are a hymn to the Mexican Indigenous beauty and traditions. Mexican culture is representative of Indigenous culture. The most recognized Indigenous population in Mexico are the Maya and the Aztec. Their crafts contain traditional patterns recognized in the entire world. Since the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Mexican government have tried to integrate indigenous people into Mexican society. Through their culture this is possible. In 1946, the Mexican Ministry of Education created a program of integration where indigenous arts and crafts were key to promote their culture as Mexican. Sadly, indigenous women have been marginalized having no access to education as indigenous men. The illiteracy rate for indigenous women is 20 percent higher than indigenous men. This has

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<sup>2</sup> Steffen Böhm and Aanka Batta, "*Just Doing It: Enjoying Commodity Fetishism with Lacan*", University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, CO4 #SQ, UK

been one of the reasons that indigenous women remain at home performing domestic activities or doing crafts.<sup>3</sup>

Mexican indigenous women have their own distinct textile patterns according to the region they belong. Women's deep involvement in the textile production process in Mexican indigenous society shows how this activity is present in their daily activities and how it is representative of their culture. Since colonial times, indigenous men have focused on agricultural pursuits while women have spent their time creating textiles. Still today it is a very feminine activity. Mexican indigenous women use their textiles as a means of addressing personal identity and the value of their work. Their rebozos (shawls) emblemize social, religious, ethnic, and cultural practices. A rebozo is universally associated with the feminine, and in my paintings, I also associate it with strength, courage, and resistance.

According to Margarita de Orellana, the sensibilities of indigenous people is manifested in popular art and these feelings are intimately related to the psychology of their society reflecting its customs<sup>4</sup>.

Quoting Dr. Atl, in his now classic *"Popular Arts in Mexico"* which was published nearly fifty years ago says, *"Popular arts are those which spring spontaneously from a people as an immediate consequence of their family, civil or religious needs. When they are cultivated under an artistic or commercial influence foreign to these needs, they cease to be true popular arts."*

Indigenous textiles in Mexico are traditionally considered as part of the popular arts of the country which are present in the dresses, blouses, skirts, handbags, sashes, belts, and shawls of Mexican indigenous women. Indigenous women take pride in their choice of clothing which they use to pay tribute to their dead, when they gather with the living, when they go to church, to the market, or to any other place<sup>5</sup>. In these 6 paintings I am incorporating bright colors that

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<sup>3</sup> World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Mexico: Indigenous peoples. The UN Refugee Agency. <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=49749ce423&skip=0&query=Mexican%20Indigenous>.

<sup>4</sup> Orellana de, Margarita. 1979. *The Popular Arts in Mexico*. *Artes de México*, No. 196, EL ARTE POPULAR DE MEXICO, pp. 97-102.

<sup>5</sup> Orellana de, Margarita. 1979. *The Popular Arts in Mexico*. *Artes de México*, No. 196, EL ARTE POPULAR DE MEXICO, pp. 97-102.

represent the Mexican culture. These bright colors and diverse forms of their textures reveal an extraordinary artistic sensitivity. Their patterns depict a great cultural legacy of Mexican pre-Hispanic artistic practice that has been preserved even after the destruction of their culture. Their persistence represents a victory of the oppressed classes<sup>6</sup>. Flowers are represented in many forms in indigenous Mexican textiles. The floral diversity in Mexico is among the richest in the world. In Central Mexico, Teotihuacan artists depict the flower world in their textiles since the Epiclastic period. They also include in their textiles butterflies and colorful birds that populate their region. These representations continuously influence forms and patterns in today's textiles.<sup>7</sup> An example of the use of flowers in textiles is a popular pattern of two intertwining and flowering branches surrounded by singing quetzals with spiders on one side and butterflies on the other. The butterflies represent deceased warriors and the spiders represent the female inhabitants of the flower world.<sup>8</sup> Mexican Indigenous textiles' patterns imitate not only nature, but also depict stories found in monuments such as the Temple of Quetzalcoatl which was believed to be an artificial mountain created by flowers. An example that flowers are often represented in Mexican artisans' Patterns. Designs based on flowers have been found as well in Aztec territory where bright and colored flowers predominate. Bright flowers symbolize "permit ordinary people to glimpse the Spirit Land, and of dreams and visions of the beauty of the Spirit Land".<sup>9</sup> Flowers were often represented in Aztec times that it is refer as "flower world". The Aztecs represented a cosmic order with flowers where they elaborated on the flower world concept when telling the birth of our world. The painting in this series, "Fragility in Perpetuity", is a large format painting where roses are depicted as if they are Mexican indigenous women and as if the canvas were a large ceramic vase. Roses are cultivated in central Mexico and their fragility

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<sup>6</sup> Orellana de, Margarita. 1979. *The Popular Arts in Mexico*. *Artes de México*, No. 196, EL ARTE POPULAR DE MEXICO, pp. 97-102.

<sup>7</sup> Turner, Andrew D., 2021. *Beauty in Troubled Times The Flower World in Epiclastic Central Mexico, A.D. 600–900*

<sup>8</sup> Turner, Andrew D., 2021. *Beauty in Troubled Times The Flower World in Epiclastic Central Mexico, A.D. 600–900*

<sup>9</sup> Sandstrom, Alan R. 2021. *Flower World in the Religious Ideology of Contemporary Nahua of the Southern Huasteca, Mexico*.

and vulnerability are similar to the fragility and vulnerability of Mexican indigenous women. They grow under harsh circumstances and their beauty persevere.