



Jean-Pierre Villafañe

Divertimento: Where there is a catastrophe, there is an escape

La Oficina de la Embajada presents:

Jesus "Bubu" Negrón: *Colilliones Híbridos*

Lulu Varona: *LABOR-DADA*

Embajada 2nd Floor

March 25 – May 22, 2021

Opening Thursday, March 25, 5-9pm by appointment

Embajada is pleased to present three solo exhibitions by Puerto Rican artists Jean-Pierre Villafañe, Jesus "Bubu" Negrón, and Lulu Varona.

Jean Pierre Villafañe presents a selection of new paintings and drawings made between New York and San Juan for his first solo exhibition at the gallery entitled *Divertimento: Donde hay una catástrofe, hay un escape (Amusement: Where there is a catastrophe, there is an escape)*. Trained as an architect, Villafañe's pictorial work traverses the intersection between figurative painting and architecture, while drawing from an expansive breadth of idiosyncratic associations to present **irreverent** compositions.

Villafañe constructs social environments exploring notions of intimacy, sexuality and self-concept in a satirical and macabre fashion. Through intermingling carnival figures, his paintings examine the inescapable performativity of being. Inscribed in social settings such as bars, museums, public squares or cultural centers, the characters, arrested in moments of decadence and indulgence, dance, drink and sing in an overlapping and hyperconnected manner. These scenes of social abundance stand in contrast to a present-day reality in which boundaries between public life and the domestic have been suddenly obliterated feeding an impulse to reconfigure interpersonal relationships and examine the way in which bodies move through spaces. Jean-Pierre's satires, brimming with rhythms and striking colors, elicit ambivalent states, rich in irony, joy, tenderness and contempt. –Osvaldo Finardi (Milán, 1984)

Jean-Pierre Villafañe (b. 1992, Puerto Rico) received his MA in Architecture at Columbia University in New York in 2019. He received his BFA with advanced standing from SCAD, completing his last year in Hong Kong, focusing on the implications of urban conditions for social mobilization. His interest in architecture encompasses design as resilient infrastructure through continued international studies in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, the Republic of Maldives and UAE. In 2017, he collaborated with Tatiana Bilbao's office on the architectural installation (*Not*) *Another Tower*, for the Chicago Architecture Biennial at the Chicago Cultural Center. In 2016, he volunteered as an artist to help define a visual identity for a Syrian Refugee Camp in Ritsona, Greece. Every year, he contributes work designated to collect funds for the education of youth in Kasai, Congo, in Africa. Villafañe has been painting since a teenager, starting out as a muralist and continuing his painting practice alongside his education in architecture. In 2019 Villafañe shifted his focus to concentrate and develop his painting practice. He currently resides and works between San Juan and New York.



La Oficina de la Embajada presents:

Jesus "Bubu" Negrón: *Colillones Híbridos*

On view at *Oficina de la Embajada*, Jesús "Bubu" Negrón presents *Colillones Híbridos*, marking the 20th anniversary of his ongoing series *Colillones de colilla (Cigarette Butts Made Out of Cigarette Butts)*. Starting in 2001, Negrón would handpick discarded cigarette butts off the streets to use as material to weave into larger-scaled representations of a cigarette butt. The resulting works address waste and consumer culture while drawing parallels between the mass produced and the handmade. First formally presented in the PR02 Biennial organized by Michy Marxuach, Negrón has revisited the project throughout his career, exhibiting the project widely from the Sharjah Biennale in 2007 to MSU Broad Art Museum in 2017, exploring endless variations with the materials and possibilities for cultural engagement.

For this exhibition Negrón presents two new works in the series, *Colillon Híbrido #2* and *Cigarette Carpet #4*, this time taking inspiration from indigeneous and psychedelic motifs to weave intricate patterns. Presented in a painted room of iconic cigarette colors (white, gold and yellow), Negrón invites the viewer into an immersive experience allowing craftsmanship to take center stage while provoking questions of labor and consumption.

Jesús 'Bubu' Negrón (b. 1975 Barceloneta, Puerto Rico) began his artistic career studying at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas in San Juan and had his first residency at M&M Proyectos in 2002, Puerto Rico. Negrón has exhibited widely in notable solo and group exhibitions in institutions across the globe, including his most recent exhibition at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York (2019), Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros in Mexico (2013) curated by Taiyana Pimentel; the 1st Bienal Tropical in Puerto Rico (2011) where he was awarded the "Golden Pineapple" prize for best artist; Trienal Poligráfica in Puerto Rico (2009), curated by Adriano Pedrosa, Julieta González and Jens Hoffmann; the Sharjah Biennial (2007) in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates curated by Mohammed Kazem, Eva Scharrer and Jonathan Watkins; Whitney Biennial in New York (2006), curated by Chrissie Iles and Phillippe Vergne; the T1 Torino Triennale in Turin, Italy (2005), curated by Francesco Bonami and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, and Tropical Abstraction at the Steidelijk Bureau Museum in Amsterdam (2005), curated by Ross Gortzak. In 2017 Negrón was awarded The Visible Award for his project, Brigada PDT - a grass-roots community organization for the preservation and well-being of the neighborhood, its history and its people. Negrón lives and works in Barceloneta, Puerto Rico.



Lulu Varona: LABOR-DADA

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LABOR-DADA, María Lulu Varona's first solo exhibition at Embajada, features new and recent textile embroideries that explore existential concerns through colorful poetic narratives. The works involve a cross-stitch technique made in an 8-bit style alluding to classic video games and comic strips. Made with cotton thread and Aida cloth, Varona's labor-intensive practice employs color as language to address the human condition.

For *LABOR-DADA* Varona presents film-like panels depicting characters and shapes engaged in contemplative plots. These are presented in conjunction with a group of new works that more directly reference Puerto Rico's current and recent socio-political events. In *Mapa*, 2021, stories of protests, hurricanes, politics, landscape and regeneration unfold in a masterful manner. In three other works, Varona de-constructs an emblematic sound and phrase from the puertorican trap singer Anuel, the onomatopoeia *Brrr*, an expression of cockiness in the contemporary puertorican slang.

Also on view are a series of drawings that reveal the process Varona employs to develop her compositions in advance of translating them into cross-stitch patterns. A table with an embroidery frame holder stands engaged in a work in progress, emphasizing craft and the hand-made.

María Lulu Varona (b. 1993, San Juan, Puerto Rico) lives and works in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Varona learned her embroidery techniques from her grandmother growing up applying it to make works addressing contemporary conditions. She has exhibited work at Bronx Art Space, New York (2017) Roberto Paradise, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2017), Fluxus Factory, Brooklyn, NY (2019), Embajada, San Juan Puerto Rico (2020), MACO Feria de arte, Mexico City amongst others spaces.