

CARLOS / ISHIKAWA

Manuel Solano: Ancestry

10 November 2022 – 21 January 2023

Private View: Wednesday 9 November, 6–8pm

*Ever since I can remember
Waves of something overdriven
Funny ways, our skins behaving
Pulsing through in ripples like a ruffling of feathers
Up the spine, atop both shoulders
And down my arms and into fluttering forearms
An involuntary voltage, however there for reasons of display
A conduit for Nature to make bare for all to read
My excitement and my instinct and all I have evolved to be
A fragile, undulating lineage of mastery and care
Through branches or millennia
Sinuously so, a neck returns a stare
Gently curving gestures, tails who twist
Exquisitely delicate and graceful summit
Cooing evolutionary show of flair
An answer to an ancient call
Ancestral bending of a winged wrist
Electrochemical flamboyance, feral and primeval
Ignoring movements of the jaw, erupt in laughter like a caw
Or a puffing of the chest or the roughing of a crest
And my wing that sheaths a claw*

– Manuel Solano, 2022

Over the last eight years, Mexico City-born artist Manuel Solano has developed a body of deeply personal yet critical work that invents powerful new languages while affirming the radical potential of artistic production for self-expression.

Solano deals thoughtfully with the role of identity in the interpretation of art. In 2014 the artist lost their sight due to complications related to HIV and as a result of the Mexican government healthcare system's inept treatment of the condition. Having previously worked primarily in video and in hyperrealist painting, just a month after losing their sight the artist embarked upon a group of works title "Blind Transgender with AIDS." This bold and diverse series of paintings would see the artist reinvent their style, restlessly explore new subject matter, and proactively challenge the role of biography in encountering their work.

Since then, Solano has, through painting, interpreted personal memories that predate their blindness in a mode that is surreal and frequently autobiographical. These works have included pop cultural references that have significant meaning to the artist yet communicate profoundly to a broad audience about how our lives are shaped by cultural experiences.

–Alex Gartenfeld, Director, Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) Miami, excerpted from *Manuel Solano: I Don't Wanna Wait For Our Lives To Be Over*, ICA Miami, 2019

Earlier this year, Carlos/Ishikawa presented *I Still Look Like A Model* – a show comprised of important works from this formative series – executed at a time when the artist did not know whether they would survive their diagnosis. Like much of the work which would follow in Solano's practice, these paintings depict remembered scenes, images, portraits.

Ancestry – on view at Carlos/Ishikawa from 10 November 2022 – is the first body of work Solano has developed which does not draw from memory. Rather, these new paintings respond to recent discoveries in palaeontology, establishing

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that for many millennia, dinosaurs – particularly those which we grown accustomed to seeing depicted as monstrous reptiles – were, in fact, more bird-like, feathered.

Whilst researchers have had access to this information for several decades, widespread acceptance has been slow. Renderings of feathered dinosaurs have gradually begun to emerge in the past few years as evidence has amassed – but mainstream media, museums, textbooks, and the entertainment industry have been extremely resistant to this new information, to reimagining what we have understood as historical fact, to otherness. The director of the Jurassic Park franchise has publicly stated his refusal to accept this information, and that “no feathers” would appear in the films, which are marketed – of course, like most dinosaur images, content, and toys – to young boys, with assumed masculine interests. *Ancestry* addresses the ways in which representation of otherness is resisted, redefined, repressed.

Dinosaurs have been appearing in Solano’s paintings for many years – remembered scenes of playing with dinosaur figurines as a child, images and moments from films and television – but *Ancestry* marks a new approach. Working together with their studio assistants, Solano had to develop all new modes for executing their paintings, without any existing imagery or remembered references. They began with a group of wet clay models, shaped by hand to evoke what they imagine the form of these feathered dinosaurs would be.

“Dinosaurs are something that for a huge amount of people are very important, especially in their early lives, even though nobody has ever seen one and we know relatively little about so many of them. To me they occupy an almost spiritual or religious space, due to the way that they somehow capture our collective imagination.”

–Manuel Solano, Dundee Contemporary Arts, 2022

Solano (b. 1987) lives and works in Berlin. In recent years, Solano’s work has been the subject of major solo institutional exhibitions, including: Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, Scotland; Pivô, São Paulo; Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon; ICA Miami; and the Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City. Solano has also participated in group exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris; The New Museum Triennial, New York; amongst others.
