

Radamés Juni Figueroa*La 187*

April 29–June 24, 2023

Embajada is pleased to present *La 187*, Radamés "Juni" Figueroa's second solo exhibition at Embajada, opening Saturday, April 29.

La 187 features a series of new paintings and drawings that continue Figueroa's whimsical ruminations on quotidian life in Puerto Rico. The exhibition marks a shift in mood of his painting practice, opting for a more introspective spirit while never straying from his signature playful visual language. An updated installation of Figueroa's well-known coconut reproductions that mimic road-side coconut water kiosks, reflect the paintings' locale and focal point of Highway 187, a well-known scenic road connecting Río Grande in Puerto Rico to Carolina, and passing through Loíza, site of inspiration for much of Figueroa's practice.

Three variations of a single composition anchor the exhibition, a local woman sits on a bench at a bus stop by the side of Highway 187, looking at her phone in front of lush tropical vegetation and tie-dye like sky. What may seem like a typical scene of daily life at first glance is contrasted by detailed monochromatic and seemingly subliminal illustrations within the greenery behind the figure. Each painting has its own set of subliminal imagery that celebrates local culture, one depicting Bomba, Plena and Salsa musicians, another renders traditional Vejigante masks from the region, and the third portrays various tropical plants. Menacing faces comically lurk from the bushes, adding an element of playfully-served danger to the otherwise serene scene. Personal references and inside jokes inject the work with an idiosyncratic bent, appearing in the form of background graffiti that add layers of meaning such as a reference to the site of his curatorial project, the Grand Tropical Biennial. Through these contrasting visual cues, Figueroa meditates on what it means to exist in the dichotomy that makes up contemporary Puerto Rico, a metaphor that can be applied to the island's larger social and political complexities.

Bio

Radamés "Juni" Figueroa (b. 1982, Bayamón, Puerto Rico) obtained his BFA in painting from the Escuela de Artes Plásticas (2007) and participated in La Práctica program at Beta Local (2013), San Juan, Puerto Rico. He has been included in notable solo and group museum exhibitions internationally including the University Museum of Albany, NY (2020), Numu at SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe (2018), North American Peruvian Cultural Institute (IPCNA), Lima (2018), Perez Museum of Art (PAMM), Miami (2017), SculptureCenter, NY (2014), Highline Art, New York (2017), The Whitney Biennial, NY (2014), MALBA Buenos Aires (2014), Kunsthalle Zürich (2012) among many others. In 2011 Figueroa co-curated the Tropical Bienal Tropical in Loíza, Puerto Rico, together with curator Pablo León de la Barra. In 2021 Figueroa won Artissima's illy Present Future Prize with Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City. Figueroa lives and works in San Juan.