

HANNAH HOFFMAN

Luz Carabaño, *encuentros*

September 9 - October 21, 2023

Opening Reception on Saturday, September 9 from 6-8pm

The act of image-making is always also a potential act of visualizing the ineffable. Between the eye's observations and the movement of the hand, there is an opening in which we have a chance to glimpse a world unbound by conventional schemes of classification. This is a potential that is fully realized in Luz Carabaño's recent paintings and drawings. In these enigmatic works, the eye is not given any foothold that supports easy recognition. There are no cues that allow effortless decoding of the objects that we encounter in the images. Instead, it is as if the works insist that we dwell on the shapes for what they are rather than the label under which they may be subsumed.

There is a visual language at work here that cannot be exhausted by verbal description. If ordinary language is a language devised to sort the world into classes of familiar objects - a world of tables, chairs, trees etc. - then Carabaño's language is one that gives articulation to the unfamiliar. Organic shapes assemble into archetypal forms that appear both as fleeting abstractions of everyday life and symbolic portents. In some images, swirling tendrils morph into calligraphic gestalts that close in on themselves like fledgling vortices. In other images, sprawling radial forms seem to echo both biomorphic and architectural structures.

None of the paintings have the same shape. Each has its own individuality and specificity, but there is clearly a family resemblance between them. What are these shapes called? Do they even have names? There are no pure rectangles, triangles, or circles here. Nor do the shapes of the canvases appear to aspire to belong to some abstract realm of geometric form. Rather, the shapes seem resolutely of this world, mutating and fluctuating in accord with the same principles as the natural world.

In the same way that the surface tension of water lets a raindrop hold its shape, so the surface of Carabaño's paintings seems to contain within it a tension that has the power to determine shape. At its edge, the smooth surface swells upwards as if the paintings have been filled to the brim. Content and form are held together in a pinpoint equilibrium mediated by the skin of the painting. If one more drop is added, the painting will have to shape-shift into a new equilibrium.

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Even so, there remains a question about the phenomena encountered in these works. What is their metaphysical status? The shapes that emerge through the paintings' gauze-like blur do not appear to be mind-independent entities. But nor are they phosphenes arising spontaneously without any outer source. Instead, Carabaño's paintings construct atmospheres in which the physical world is allowed to reverberate in unison with the mind's innate capacities for representation. In this virtual space, to recognize is more than merely to identify. It is to cognize again, to recall the world to mind under a new guise.

- Jens Dam Ziska

Luz Carabaño (b. 1995, Maracay, Venezuela) lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her BFA in Studio Art from New York University in 2017 and completed her MFA in Painting and Drawing from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2022. Solo exhibitions include *sombras*, Lulu, Mexico City, 2023; *rastros*, Larder, Los Angeles, 2022; *Unfoldings*, april april, Brooklyn, 2022; *an echo, a shadow, a shape*, New Wight Gallery, UCLA, Los Angeles, 2022; *Ni Aquí, Ni Allá, Dimensions Variable*, Miami, 2019. She has also exhibited at CULT Aimee Friberg, San Francisco; in lieu, Los Angeles; CASTLE, Los Angeles; Chris Sharp Gallery, Los Angeles; Make Room, Los Angeles; Calderón, New York; and Diablo Rosso, Panama City.