



Federico Herrero
The sun and the moon
27/11 2021 – 15/01 2022

Mendes Wood DM is proud to present its first exhibition of work by the Costa Rican artist Federico Herrero in its Brussels gallery.

Herrero is known for his vividly colorful visual language and his immersive installation practice that blurs the divide between canvas and environment, articulated in the vibrant tonalities of Central America's urban landscape, whose kaleidoscopic hues inform everything from the houses in his native San José to the city's street curbs and murals.

The artist will be taking over the first floor of the gallery space with a dialogue between nine paintings realized in oil and acrylic and site-specific paintings made directly in the space to create an experiential whole for the viewers. "Working on this kind of scale allows my painting to be more physical – it enters the body through the senses," Herrero explains. Indeed, this sensorial aspect of his work finds its root in the color-field abstraction of mid 20th-century painting as well as the rich history of Formalism in Latin America.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of his practice is that, almost always, Herrero works without sketch or masterplan. However, he rejects labelling his practice as "spontaneous" or "improvised", words that somehow imply a lack of care or forethought. His way of working is best described as instinctive, operating with a level of concentration that he explains as almost "speaking through sounds". Using color and form as a substitute for language, perhaps akin to the work of Etel Adnan, Herrero creates what can be interpreted as a kind visual poetry that is accentuated by the physical and psychological immediacy of his practice.

"The artist who gave me the tools to develop my work was Roberto Matta," Herrero says, "I was fascinated with his way of mapping space and the way he would position himself between the metaphysical and the physical world. Furthermore, he never worked from sketches, he would just stand in front of a blank canvas or space and let images appear. That is exactly how I work."

Federico Herrero (b. 1978, San José) lives and works in San José, Costa Rica.

He has exhibited widely internationally, with solo exhibitions and public installations in São Paulo, Brazil; San Francisco, USA; Dusseldorf, Germany; Kanazawa, Japan; Tokyo, Japan; Mexico City, Mexico; Freiburg, Germany, and London, UK. Recent major institutional projects include *Tempo aberto*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Niterói, São Paulo (2019); *Open Envelope*, Witte de With, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2018); and *Alphabet*, a site-specific installation for the atrium of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2018). Herrero was the recipient of the Young Artist's Prize at the 49th Venice Biennale (2001) and his work is in the permanent collection of numerous institutions including the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan; Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Tate Modern, London, UK; MUDAM, Luxembourg; MUSAC, Castilla y León, Spain; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA, and São Paulo Museum of Art, São Paulo, Brazil. Herrero is also the founder of Despacio, a contemporary art space in his native San José, which is an important force in the continued development of Central America's artistic voice.

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Wood
DM

13 Rue des Sablons / Zavelstraat
1000 Brussels Belgium
+ 32 2 502 09 64
www.mendeswooddm.com
[@mendeswooddm](https://www.instagram.com/mendeswooddm)