

Jonathan Torres

*El Fufú de Teddy (Teddy's Curse)*

With a special viewing of videos by Allison Schulnik

March 30–May 25, 2024



Embajada is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Jonathan Torres entitled *El Fufú de Teddy (Teddy's Curse)*. The exhibition also features a special viewing of video works by Allison Schulnik, courtesy of PPOW.

*El Fufú de Teddy (Teddy's Curse)* reflects on ideas of memory, melancholy, and decay through fictional narratives. Torres evokes mystery and unease that invites us to take a deeper look into his twisted world. On view are a series of new and recent paintings and sculptures made over the last two years between his Brooklyn studio and residencies at the Sharpe Walentas Studios in DUMBO, NY and San Juan 721 in Santurce, Puerto Rico.

The new paintings locate abandoned buildings around Puerto Rico that become sites of altars or cemeteries for discarded teddy bears as in the paintings *Las Marias*, 2024 or *La Casa de los Peluches del Barrio Gandul*, 2024. Torres' brush strokes, color palette, and built up surface capture the enigmatic energy of these places. Through compositions of forgotten and disintegrating stuffed animals, Torres suggests the accumulation of lost souls. This sense of abandon is further emphasized by a series of six new small sculptures, made from stuffed animals covered in synthetic hair and chunks of oil paint that become an extension of the paintings, or as the artist refers to them, "tridimensional paintings." These unsettling figures tap



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into our collective sense of nostalgia and the grotesque to relay a contemporary anxiety with political and social connotations.

Torres also creates fictional narratives casting himself as protagonist in scenes of catastrophe and heightened drama. Fires rage while dangerous confrontations take place. A series of self-portraits are rendered in a similar fashion to the stuffed animals in which faces are obscured and disfigured. Through Torres' baroque, expressionistic, and impasto style of painting, the artist augments the monstrous and infuses the work with dynamism to suggest a dystopian landscape in an arrested state.

To complement the exhibition, three mesmerizing stop-motion films by artist Allison Schulnik will be on view. Schulnik's paintings and videos have been an inspiration for Jonathan's work, following her career through the years, and including one of the videos presented here as part of his thesis dissertation while finishing his MFA at Brooklyn College in 2014. The flickering and fleeting nature of Schulnik's animation is a poignant meditation on the temporality of all existence.

Jonathan Torres (b. 1983 San Juan, PR) received his BFA in 2009 from the Escuela de Artes Plásticas, San Juan, and his MFA from Brooklyn College in 2012 under the mentorship of Vito Acconci. He is a recipient of the 2022-2023 Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program. Torres has been exhibiting in solo and group shows between New York and Puerto Rico for over ten years at galleries and institutions including: Below Grand, NY (2021), KM0.2, San Juan (2021), Embajada, San Juan (2020, 2019), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo MAC, San Juan (2020), Essex Flowers, NY (2020). Torres' work belongs to public and private collections including the Museum of Fine Art (MFA), Boston and Museo Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico (MACPR), San Juan.

Allison Schulnik (b. 1978) is known for her uncanny approach to traversing the internal and immaterial terrains of nostalgia, childhood memories, and dreams. Her films have been included in internationally renowned festivals and museums including MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; LACMA, Los Angeles, CA; Annecy International Animated Film Festival, Annecy, France; and Animafest Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia. Solo exhibitions of Schulnik's work have been presented at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA; Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Oklahoma City, OK; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS; Mark Moore Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Zieher Smith, New York, NY; and SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA. In the fall of 2022, Schulnik presented, *Purple Mountain*, her second solo exhibition with PPOW, New York.