



mas damas, damas, damas, damas
curated by Embajada, San Juan
The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
Opening August 7, 2021

Táina Cruz
Larissa De Jesus
Glendayls Medina
Nora Mité Nieves
Livia Ortiz Ríos
Vanessa Gully Santiago
Edra Soto
Maria Lulú Varona

mas damas, damas, damas, damas brings together eight artists of Puerto Rican descent working across interdisciplinary approaches to painting, drawing, sculpture and installation. Expressive figures weave throughout abstracted and architectural forms and symbols addressing identity and objectifying personal histories while exploring new possibilities in contemporary pictorial language.

Edra Soto's signature architectural structures from her ongoing series GRAFT, are inspired by Caribbean vernacular. Three panels that mimic the wrought iron screens covering doors, porches and windows that are widely used in Puerto Rican domestic architecture are installed in the window, greeting viewers and permeating the exhibition. Similarly, **Nora Mité Nieves'** references urban architecture, specifically within the Caribbean landscape. A modernist decorative concrete block commonly seen in Puerto Rico is a recurring motif that evokes personal memories.

Livia Ortiz Ríos' practice investigates abstraction through a controlled chaos, deconstructing forms and juxtaposing layers to reveal her process. Ortiz Ríos employs unconventional surfaces and materials such as mylar and plexiglass to create a unique pictorial language. **Lulu Varona** also employs unconventional mediums featuring recent woven textiles that explore domestic patterns through colorful abstractions.

Solitary female figures rendered by **Larissa De Jesús Negrón** entwine their way throughout the exhibition. Positioned in a bathroom setting, the figures suggest an intimate and deeply personal narrative. Also employing a figurative approach, **Táina Cruz** presents mysterious, fantastical and colorful compositions. Fairy tale characters, animals and spirits converge to propose a spiritual realm.

Vanessa Gully Santiago's paintings and drawings depict deeply psychological and intimate scenes that convey conflicting expressions of desire and detachment, vulnerability, and imbalances of power.



Glendalys Medina's signature forms that originate from hip-hop & pre-colombian symbolisms form new geometric structures to render portraits of her parents. Ms Puerto Rico and Mr Borikén use Taíno symbols in celebration of her Afro-Caribbean heritage. The titles are intended to inform the public of the many identities of Puerto Ricans on the island and the mainland.

In the back room, a selection of figurative drawings such as Soto's series of the famous performer Iris Chacon, known as "The Puerto Rican Bombshell" are featured together with a video by Cruz shot in a Puerto Rican neighborhood in New York with a transportive sound track of salsa music.

Taína Cruz (b. 1998, New York, NY) received a BFA in sculpture & critical theory from Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), Baltimore in 2020. She has participated in several group and online exhibitions including documento, EMBAJADA, San Juan (2020), Hard Opening, Housing NY (2020), The Decameron Day 7, New Release Gallery (2020), and Something edgeless, something spectral, In/corporeal (2019) and A Gathering at Housing gallery (2021). Cruz will be featured in a solo presentation by Housing at Liste Basel art fair this coming September. Cruz lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

Larrisa De Jesus Negrón (b. 1994 San Juan, Puerto Rico) received her BFA from Hunter College in 2017. She had her first solo exhibition at Sabroso Projects, Brooklyn in 2020 and the following year at More Pain, New York (2021). Negrón has participated in group exhibitions including, Striving After Wind, Chapter NY (2021), Speech Sounds, More Pain, New York (2021); documento, Embajada, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2020-21); Imagining Reality, Future Gallery, Berlin, Germany (2020-21); 100 Drawings from Now, The Drawing Center, New York (2020); The Privilege of Getting Together, Regular Normal, New York (2020), and YB2P, Catinca Tabacaru Gallery, New York. Negrón lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Nora Maité Nieves (b. 1980 San Juan, Puerto Rico) received her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2010, and her BFA from La Escuela de Artes Plásticas, in San Juan, 2004. Recent group exhibitions include: Electric Hue, Proxyco New York, NY (2021), documento, EMBAJADA, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2020), Rubus Armeniacus (Himalayan Blackberry), curated by Jessica Kwok, Jessica's Apartment Gallery, New York, NY (2019), Repatriation, curated by Bianca Ortiz, Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR (2019), Eddy's Room at Galleri Thomassen, curated by Austin Eddy, Gothenburg, Sweden (2018), Lo Natural at Unisex Salon Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2018), Expansive Threads curated by Edra Soto at The Latino Arts Gallery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (2018), Gallery Chicago at The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, Chicago, Illinois (2017), Material at The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, Chicago, IL (2016) Terrain Biennial in Chicago, and Where The Heart Is at Fresh Window Gallery in Brooklyn, New York (2015). Maité Nieves lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Glendalys Medina (b.1979, Ponce, Puerto Rico) received an MFA from Hunter College and has presented artwork at such notable venues as PAMM, Participant Inc., Performa 19, Artists Space, The Bronx Museum of Art, El Museo del Barrio, The Museum of Contemporary Art in Vigo, Spain, and The Studio Museum in Harlem among others. Medina was a recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2020), a Jerome Hill Foundation Fellowship (2019), an Ace



Hotel New York City Artist Residency (2017), a SIP fellowship at EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop (2016), a BACK IN FIVE MINUTES artist residency at El Museo Del Barrio (2015), a residency at Yaddo (2014, 2018), the Rome Prize in Visual Arts (2013), a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Interdisciplinary Art (2012), and the Bronx Museum Artist in the Marketplace residency (2010). Medina is currently on faculty at SVA's MFA Art Practice program and lives and works in New York.

Livia Ortíz Ríos (1985 Arecibo, Puerto Rico) obtained her BFA in painting from the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus in 2007. In 2012 she obtained an MFA in studio arts from Memphis College of Arts. She had solo exhibitions in the Memphis Jewish Community Center Gallery 2014 & Pushed to the Brink at Sweet Lorraine Gallery, in Brooklyn NY 2017. Recent group exhibitions include: Electric Hue, Proxyco Gallery (2021), [...]ENTREFORMAS, Museo de Arte Puerto Rico, San Juan, (2021), CACPR, Mana Contemporary Jersey City, NJ (2020), Muestra Nacional de Arte, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, San Juan, PR (2016) Annual Juried Exhibition Masur Museum, Monroe. Louisiana (2015), Mandala International, Freight + Volume Gallery, New York. Ortíz Ríos lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Vanessa Gully Santiago (b. 1984, Boston, MA) received her BFA in 2016 from The Cooper Union School of Art where she was the recipient of the Michael S. Vivo Award for Excellence in Drawing and in 2013 she earned her MFA from Mason Gross School of Art, Rutgers University, where she was awarded the Paul Robeson Emerging Young Artist Award. She has attended residencies at Byrdcliffe Art Colony and Vermont Studio Center. Solo exhibitions include Young Professional at James Fuentes, No Touch at Thierry Goldberg and Private Accounts at American Medium (both in New York). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Mrs. Gallery, Embajada, Rachel Uffner Gallery, Helena Anrather Gallery, JTT Gallery, Marinaro Gallery, and Foxy Production, Sibling, in Toronto, Soyuz Project Space in Italy, Rosenwald Wolf Gallery in Philadelphia, C. Grimaldis Projects in Baltimore, and Smart Objects in Los Angeles, among others. Her work has been written about in ArtForum, Forbes, and Hyperallergic. Gully Santiago lives and works in Queens, New York.

Edra Soto is a Puerto-Rican born artist, curator, educator, and co-director of the outdoor project space, The Franklin. Soto has exhibited extensively at venues including El Museo del Barrio, NY; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art's satellite, The Momentary, AK; Albright-Knox Northland, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago, IL; Smart Museum, IL and the Abrons Arts Center, NY. Recently, Soto completed a large-scale public art commission titled "Screenhouse", currently on view at Millennium Park in Chicago. The artist has attended residency programs at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Beta-Local, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Residency, Headlands Center for the Arts, Project Row Houses and Art Omi, among others. Soto has been awarded the Efroymsen Contemporary Arts Fellowship, the Illinois Arts Council Agency Fellowship, the inaugural Foundwork Artist Prize and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant, among others. Between 2019-2020, Soto exhibited and traveled to Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Cuba as part of the MacArthur Foundation's International Connections Fund. Soto holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a bachelor's degree from Escuela de Artes Plásticas y Diseño de Puerto Rico. The artist lives and works in Chicago.



Maria Lulú Varona (b. 1993, San Juan, Puerto Rico). Varona learned her embroidery techniques from her grandmother growing up applying it to make works addressing contemporary conditions. She has exhibited at Bronx Art Space, New York (2017) Roberto Paradise, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2017), Flux Factory, Brooklyn, NY (2019), MACO Feria de arte, Mexico City (2020), Embajada, San Juan Puerto Rico (2020), amongst other group shows at independent galleries spaces. Also have participated in art-residencies such as International Studio and Curatorial Program in Brooklyn, NYC (2018), Flux Factory in Queens, NYC (2019), Program for Independent studies at the Contemporary Arts Museum of Puerto Rico (2020) and at Artist Cooperative Residency and Exhibitions in rural southwest Wisconsin (2021). Varona is currently included in Counterflags curated by Natalia Viera Salgado at Abrons Art Center. Varona lives and works in San Juan, Puerto Rico.