

Caroline Mesquita

Quiet Splash

March 26 - June 13, 2026.

Like the oxymoron of the title—by definition, a splash cannot be quiet—Mesquita's work often seeks to bring together concepts and materials that at first glance appear antagonistic. Rather, the discretion expressed through the everyday themes she gravitates toward may relegate the spectacular dimension of her work to the background—a spectacle nonetheless born from illusion. The virtuosity of Mesquita's installations thus often reveals itself only after a period of observation, once the first sweep of the gaze—sometimes capable of obscuring the level of complexity embedded within the work—has passed.

For instance, the bathing scene presented at PEANA appears, at first glance, to be of great figurative simplicity. The starting point of the sculptural project is a large square base of oxidized brass: we quickly enter into the fiction that this surface is water. Two metal legs, firmly planted on its blue surface, suggest the existence of a liquid space beneath the hard flatness of the metal, cleverly evoking how water swallows any object it encounters. Around the pool, other elements complete the scene: three aligned faucets, where fresh water can be accessed to wash the body after swimming—or perhaps to drink from—as well as a set of changing cabins. A bird also inhabits the landscape; its stiff legs lending it an almost human posture, subtly displacing the scene away from mere mimicry of reality. Meanwhile, other works—noticed only in a second moment—come to animate the frozen, quiet splash surrounding the scene's sole humanoid figure.

Using the technique of marquetry, a series of wall pieces extends the installation, offering glimpses into adjacent, inaccessible spaces (showers, a sauna...) populated by out-of-sight accessories (buckets, coat racks, lockers...).

They function as discreet glimpses of details, sensations, and hidden participants: a hand holding a towel, legs on tiled floors, feet glimpsed beneath shower stalls... The stop-motion video clips, visible through the peepholes of the changing cabins—where entirely new characters come to life—reverse the viewer's perspective and suggest that the entire scene, though seemingly scaled to our world and semi-real, is not meant for us, or at least belongs to a parallel universe in which we remain mere onlookers.

While the motif of the pool and public bath—shared across cultures as a site of community, hygiene, and social exchange, where bodies are stripped of markers of identity and a form of equality may emerge—holds significance for the artist, water here also evokes, however subtly, the enduring myth of the fountain of youth. Yet, rather than functioning symbolically alone, it serves primarily as a pretext to foreground the versatility of Mesquita's use of brass. Like all metals, brass can be endlessly transformed—a premise that underpins Mesquita's practice, resonating with the possibility for reinvention, a means of eluding a certain destiny.

At PEANA, this logic of transformation is not approached in isolation but in direct relation to the history of the site. Prior to its current function as a gallery, the building housed Club Condesa (1940), widely regarded as the first women's swimming club in Mexico City. The pool that remains at the back of the space operates less as an architectural remnant than as a latent structure, holding within it the memory of past uses and bodies. Within this framework, the presence of the women who once inhabited the space emerges not as a narrative subject but as a residual trace: their occupation of the club—marked by forms of emancipation that challenged prevailing social norms—reverberates faintly, inscribed in the atmosphere rather than explicitly represented.

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The exhibition extends beyond human presence, suggesting other forms of circulation and persistence embedded within the site. The drops of brass flowing from the faucets, as well as the pool itself, may thus be read both as a subtle nod to the buried networks of lakes and rivers of Mexico City—long subsumed by urban infrastructure, their presence now largely invisible yet still pulsing beneath the surface. Ultimately, however, it may be unproductive to rely too heavily on symbolism to explain Mesquita's work: her practice is less about things, spaces, and people themselves than about the unspoken tensions that bind them together.

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