

# White Columns

## Oswald Saenz

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June 25 – August 1, 2026

Reception: Thursday, June 25, 2026, 6-8pm

White Columns is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Oswald Saenz (b. 1964, Medellín, Colombia). The artist is currently associated with YAI Arts, a nonprofit studio supporting artists with intellectual and developmental disabilities in NYC. Working entirely from his imagination, and often through the middle of the night, Saenz's drawings depict familiar, quotidian subjects – women, houses, flowers etc. – distilling them down to their most fundamental curves and contours and infusing them with hallucinatory color, wobbling rhythm, and traces of spirit made flesh.

A cousin of the legendary artist Fernando Botero, Saenz taps into the South American tradition of magical realism, in which the natural and supernatural are wrapped up in one another like his tangled vines. Saenz's self-identification as an artist recurs in his signature at the bottom of many of his drawings; at times, his name is accompanied by the phrase "The Best Artist." "Not everybody is an artist," he says. "I was born with it. It felt natural. Ideas pop into my head. I put them on paper."

Saenz's vivid palette and often bawdy, almost farcical depictions at times conceal a darker undercurrent of grief. In 2021, the artist's mother passed away from complications of the Covid virus. Her death deepened Saenz's interest in the unseen world – angels, mythical animals, dancing flames. His artistic practice, he says, is his mom's way of speaking through him. Her presence dwells in every woman he conjures on paper.

There's a strange rhythm to the works present in this exhibition. The stark lines in the artist's conception of architectural and interior spaces differ from the flowing curves manifest in the flora and fauna present elsewhere; the over encompassing saturation of color is highly contrasted by the absence of it in other works. Highly structured scenes of dark and seedy bars and pool halls are redolent of adult life, while Saenz's more loosely rendered cartoon-like figures hover at the threshold between the playful and the fantastical. Saenz's highly idiosyncratic visual world is both a straightforward evocation of art's inherent animism and an invocation of the spiritual forces that imbue daily life with meaning.

**Oswald Saenz** was born in Medellín, Colombia and moved to New York in 1974; he currently works at YAI Arts in Manhattan. He was artist-in-residence at Summertime in 2021, culminating in the solo exhibition *Deborah*.

To learn more about YAI's mission and programs: [www.yai.org/yaiarts](http://www.yai.org/yaiarts)

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White Columns' 2026 summer programs focus on the work of artists who are currently represented in **White Columns' Curated Artist Registry**, and have been organized by Violet Saxon (Curatorial Assistant) and Adeja Sterling (Gallery Assistant). Founded in the early 1980s the Registry provides a platform for artists – of all kinds – currently without gallery representation in New York. The Registry currently includes the work of more than 500 individual artists.

The Curated Artist Registry is currently open for submissions through August 6, 2026 at 11:59pm.

To learn more about the Registry, please visit: [registry.whitecolumns.org](http://registry.whitecolumns.org)

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For further information about this exhibition contact: [violet@whitecolumns.org](mailto:violet@whitecolumns.org)

Gallery hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am to 6pm.