

Sol Calero
La Sauna Caliente

La Sauna Caliente is an immersive recreation of a spa-like scenario which references the wellness retreats typical of the Vorarlberg region around Bregenz. The proliferation of spa environments and the ever-growing presence of wellness culture and aesthetics in Western societies reflect the evolution of self-care into a commodity, a part of a system where fitness, health and inner/outer beauty have become direct markers of social status.

The aesthetics of Western relaxation often converge with a penchant for the “exotic,” whether expressed through minimal, vaguely Eastern decor (bamboo, incense, images of the Buddha), or in grand environments such as the Tropical Islands Resort in Brandenburg, Germany—a gigantic former airship hangar containing an artificial habitat of eternal summer. Here the resort is both a literal and a metaphorical bubble where visitors can distance themselves from the anxieties of contemporary life and indulge in an array of health and beauty treatments. This elaborate escape is situated against a vacation-like backdrop reminiscent of the Pacific Islands, or perhaps the Caribbean—it doesn’t matter which.

The staged exoticism of these environments is not merely aesthetic: it effectively produces a sense of closeness to nature for customers, adding a legitimizing (if illusory) layer of authenticity to their relaxation. Abstracted from its surrounding territory and constructed around the physical care of the individual, this artificial ecosystem presents a direct manifestation of the isolating systems created by wealthy societies oblivious to the world’s larger-scale reality. As we cleanse our pores and relieve our souls, the conditions of our existence as advantaged communities rely precisely on a worldwide socio-economic imbalance, which we need to ignore in order to properly *enjoy ourselves*.

La Sauna Caliente invites visitors to join in on the rituals and contradictions of self-care. Slippers and robes embroidered with the brand name “Caliente” await each guest. Warm light, bespoke changing rooms as well as lounge chairs and plants all provide the appropriate decor for relaxation. Interspersed throughout the installation are contributions from invited guest artists, including Blunt x Skensved, Rubén D’hers, Trevor Good, Cristian Guardia, and Érika Ordosgoitti. Calero collaborated with Hanne Lippard on a series of posters featuring surreal juice recipes titled *You say banana*, which are also installed as an audio work to be heard while reclining among the faux foliage. *Desde el Jardín*, the telenovela Calero co-directed with Dafna Maimon, can be viewed from rows of sun-chairs in a screening room. Calero also worked together with local textile printing company RUEFF to produce a custom fabric emblazoned with her multicolored design of plants and fruit, which she draped as shades and curtains to dramatically reshape the space. Following the opening of *La Sauna Caliente*, curator and writer Max Jorge Hinderer Cruz joined Calero for a public conversation about her work and its connections to tropicália.

¡CALIENTE!