

Sol Calero

Pasaje del Olvido

Memories are not merely recollections of the past, but also projections of what we have built that past to be. It may be idealized, it may be exaggerated or suppressed, but it is always an abstraction. Sometimes memory fails us, and our reminiscence isn't linear and complete, but fragmented and contrasted in intensity. Personal memory is anchored in sensorial experiences, impactful events, and emotional magnitude, so the images that result in the narrative of that memory have the same kind of texture. In Calero's series of paintings for *Pasaje del Olvido*, this tonality has taken over: the elements coexist in different scales and hierarchies, while backgrounds, figures and patterns are juxtaposed in a sort of irrational harmony. Amongst snakes, dominoes, landscape bubbles, floral wallpaper and pieces of furniture, her images appear as blurry but detailed accounts of a dream.

Calero has questioned projections throughout her practice: how do cultures imagine and represent themselves? How do we see and describe others? What expectations do we have of places and societies labeled as exotic? Both personal and collective memories tend towards a narrative of self-mythologization that creates identity; in the case of shared pasts, it turns into historical narrative. In the Latin American context, memory is a key element in the understanding and the articulation of colonial legacies. For many cultures, oral transmission has been the only channel for passing on traditions and practices that have been left out of the canonized version of history. In rapidly changing environments with violent and volatile circumstances like Venezuela, personal history and collective memory become the only alternative to mainstream discourses driven by political agendas. In this way, the personal memories that are inherited within a family and live on through people represent a way of telling stories that defy institutionalized and mediatized narratives.

Throughout her paintings and installations, Calero has created a visual vocabulary that does not represent one particular experience, rather embodying how collective thought turns complex realities into cleanly outlined icons. In her work, paintings are like souvenirs—an abstract memory of a larger environment encapsulated in an object. During this period, Calero circled back to familiar stories and personal archives to rescue memories from oblivion and present a domestic yet oneiric universe of exuberant semblance and diffused boundaries.