

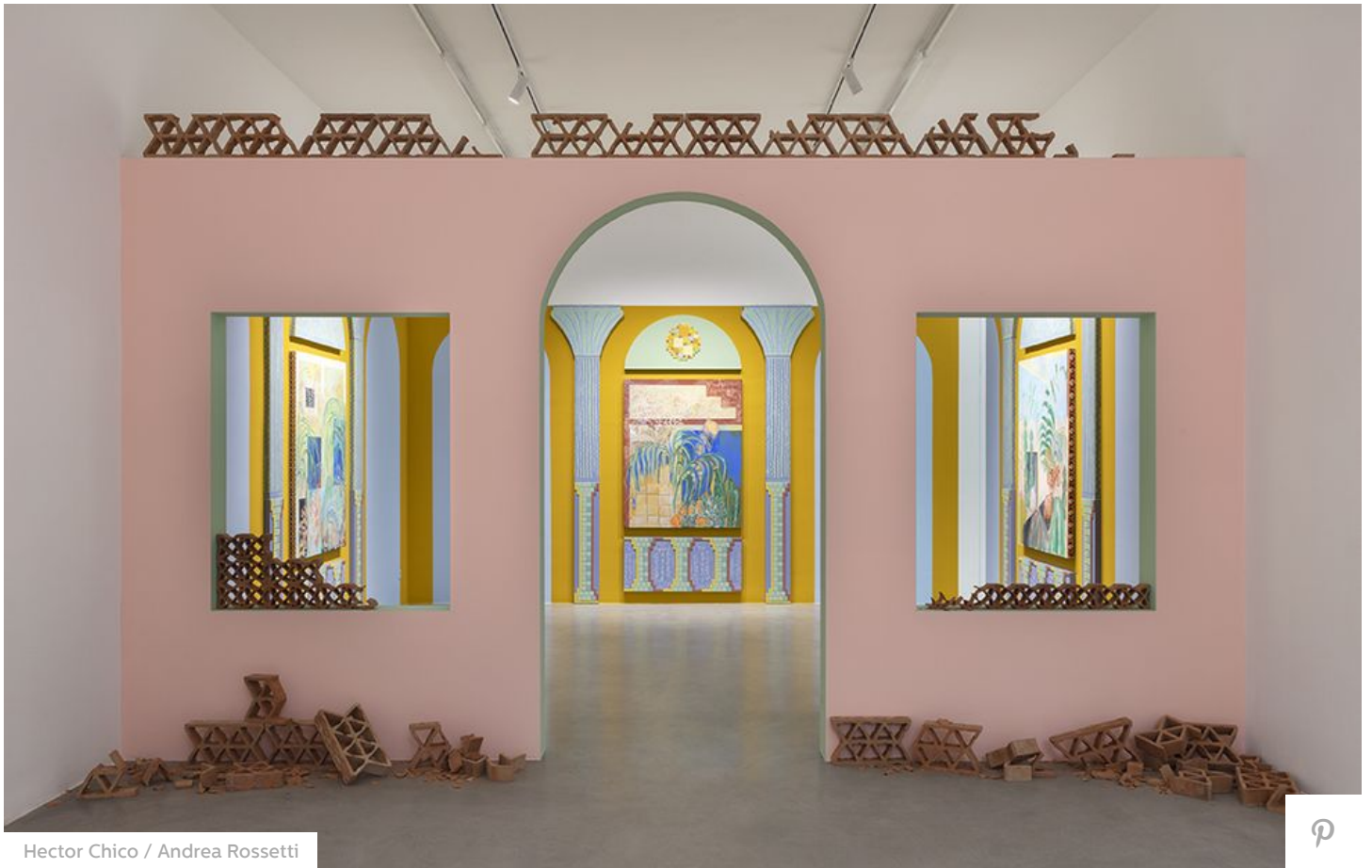
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Art

## SOL CALERO, THE ARTIST WHO EXPLORES THE DESIRE FOR REDISCOVERY

*At the Francesca Minini Gallery, the Venezuelan artist recreates an abandoned architecture that draws inspiration from Caribbean colonial houses that have been taken over by vegetation*

By ALESSANDRA DE FRANCESCO 02/05/2023



Hector Chico / Andrea Rossetti



Rediscover an unexpected beauty. Follow clues scattered in distant places. What does it mean to identify with a researcher, an archaeologist?

The historian and anthropologist Yuval Noah Harari argues that the Sapiens, a species belonging to the genus Homo, otherwise called human beings, have distinguished themselves and have survived the dangers of evolution not only for a developed intellectual capacity, but above all for the invaluable ability to tell stories.

Through images and language, the need to communicate over the centuries has turned into a ritual, unique of our species, capable of uniting minds and creating communities based on shared values. Hence the need to produce figures, objects and finally writings: symbols full of lessons and meanings to be handed down to posterity.

It is fascinating that the evidence of our culture and our passage can be lost for years, centuries, or forever. There seems to be a continuous behavior in history, whereby we scatter traces of our existence in the present. Perhaps we allow ourselves the pleasure of losing them because we are confident of finding them again in the probable future?



Sol Calero, Casa Encontrada. View of the exhibition at the Galleria Francesca Minini

Hector Chico / Andrea Rossetti

Now imagine you are walking through a jungle and come across a ruined building. Would we run away in terror or more likely look for forgotten traces? And it is around the desire for rediscovery that **Sol Calero** weaves the threads of the search for him. Born in Venezuela, raised in the Canary Islands and matured in the city of Berlin, the artist has developed an interest in different cultural codes. Architecture

and design, naturalistic elements and anthropological clichés recovered from archives or family memories merge in her work to develop **site-specific installations**, with paintings and objects that invite the observer to interact and immerse themselves in the dynamics of an exotic world. Brick by brick Sol built the foundations of her research, rediscovering them in a new light **Casa Encontrada**, the exhibition conceived for the industrial spaces of the **Galleria Francesca Minini in Milan**, on display until 6 May.

The Venezuelan artist recreates an abandoned architecture that draws inspiration from Caribbean colonial houses that have been taken over by vegetation. A mosaic, depicting a glimpse of a sunset between stone columns, invites you to enter the depths of the house. Tropical plants and flowers invade doors and windows painted on canvas, they climb the walls of hybrid houses/jungles where human absence is breathed deeply. To separate the spaces sunscreen tiles, which allow imaginary rays to partially pass through them. Each element seems to have been studied in detail to recreate a paradoxical oasis of serenity.

Only a few shards scattered on the floor appear like a note out of tune, suggesting melancholy details of a story yet to be told.



Sol Calero, Casa Encontrada. View of the exhibition at the Galleria Francesca Minini

courtesy photo

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## **How was the Casa Encontrada exhibition born?**

The starting point of this project was looking back. With La Cantina de la Touriste, the exhibition created last year in the Bergen Assembly, I felt I had reached a sort of balance, which allowed me to explore many of the founding elements of my work. Architecture, painting, furniture design, sculpture, but also the social element and interaction with the public. It's like an era has ended.

## **A breaking point with the past?**

With this exhibition I wanted to take a small step towards revisiting some elements developed in the past. So more than a breaking point I see it as a new reading. Specifically, I thought of a conceptual project, more formal than the previous ones, with the idea of reproducing a ruin, an abandoned place.

## **Yet it doesn't look all that much abandoned.**

I like to create welcoming spaces. Of those that attract you when you enter. Of those who then realize that: “Oh, wait a second, this project is about hyperinflation in Venezuela”, as in Casa de Cambio. Lately I've realized how important it is for me to play with spaces. Also reflect on the relationship between space and body, but I will try to develop this theme in the future.

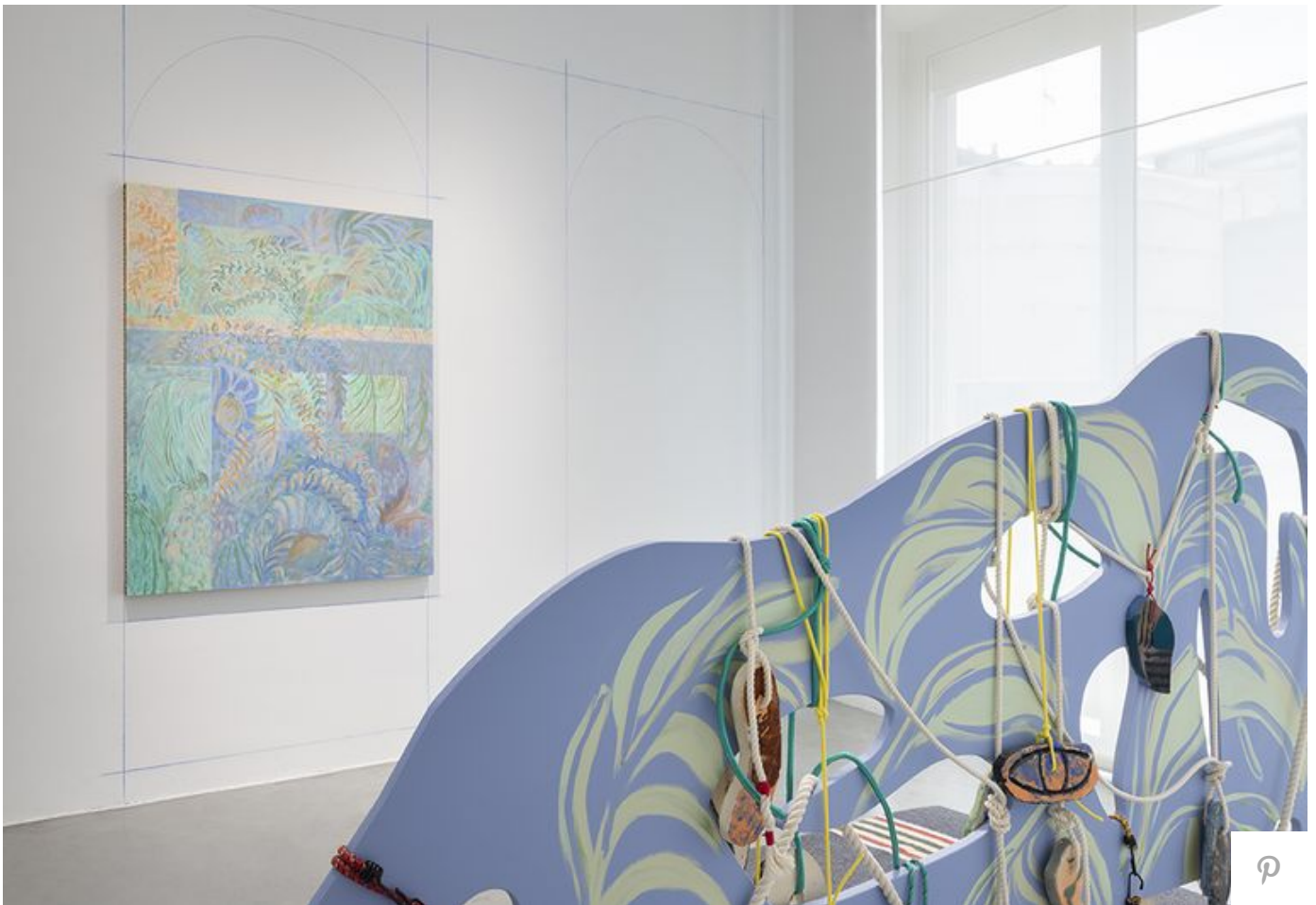
In Casa Encontrada I wanted to explore how architecture, painting and mosaic – which is a new element in my work – combine in this space. Imagine digging and finding fragments of a ruin. How would they behave in a museum and what would they do? Now I realize – after I finish it – that the whole process has been about asking myself: where do these elements come from and what do they have in common?

## **And do you have any idea what it was previously?**

I think it was a house, which is why I gave it the name of Casa Encontrada – Casa Ritrovata. It's somewhere in the Caribbean and has a lot of references to the

colonial architecture, which is everywhere in Latin America. It's an art that I took a lot of inspiration from, studying the use of those bright colors. I also went back to reviewing the project I developed in 2015 in London, in the Voltaire studio, where I recreated a Caribbean painting school. From there I recovered the idea of the facade, which I then developed for this exhibition, imagining nature dissolving into it.

Important is the absence of man and the ghostly feeling that one can experience in a ruin.



Sol Calero, Casa Encontrada. View of the exhibition at the Galleria Francesca Minini

courtesy photo

## Are we the ones to visit its ruins?

I like to think about the audience in my projects. I like that he can sit or interact with the installation. But there wasn't a big expectation here, I think the intention was to recreate abandoned places. A trip I took to Japan last year inspired me a lot: I was working on a project there, in a very isolated area. All the inhabitants had moved to the city and the human absence was clearly perceived. The

architecture also told in a very beautiful and poetic way what had happened. I remember walking into a school that had been closed for a long time and seeing objects left in that position for 30 years. And when you enter a space like this what do you feel? I'm interested in hearing its architecture.

### **Nature totally invades the spaces, what can you tell me?**

Caracas is an incredible example of modernist architecture. Here some of the greatest architects have come to build masterpieces. Gio Ponti and the Villa Planchart come to mind, one of his best-known works, very close to where I grew up. There today the tropical nature is taking over everything, it's very beautiful. Even the birds are taking over the city. Beautiful guacamayas that come from the jungle are adapting to the city by reproducing quickly. They are domesticated and now live in houses. It's like the city is turning into jungle. And of course there is a very sad aspect.



Sol Calero, Casa Encontrada. View of the exhibition at the Galleria Francesca Minini

Andrew Rossetti

### **Related I guess to the situation in Venezuela**

My country is disappearing. This happens in a dictatorship and when a government works hard to make people forget where they came from. You start being poor when you forget who you are and where you come from. Because you ask yourself: "What will I eat today?". What can we do? Help us remember.

### **How do you remember and what do you remember?**

I remember through writing and studying archives. Part of my exercise is also remembering my family and relationships, remembering that my grandmother was an artist and lived in her country house in Venezuela. I often talk with my cousins and we share some photos.

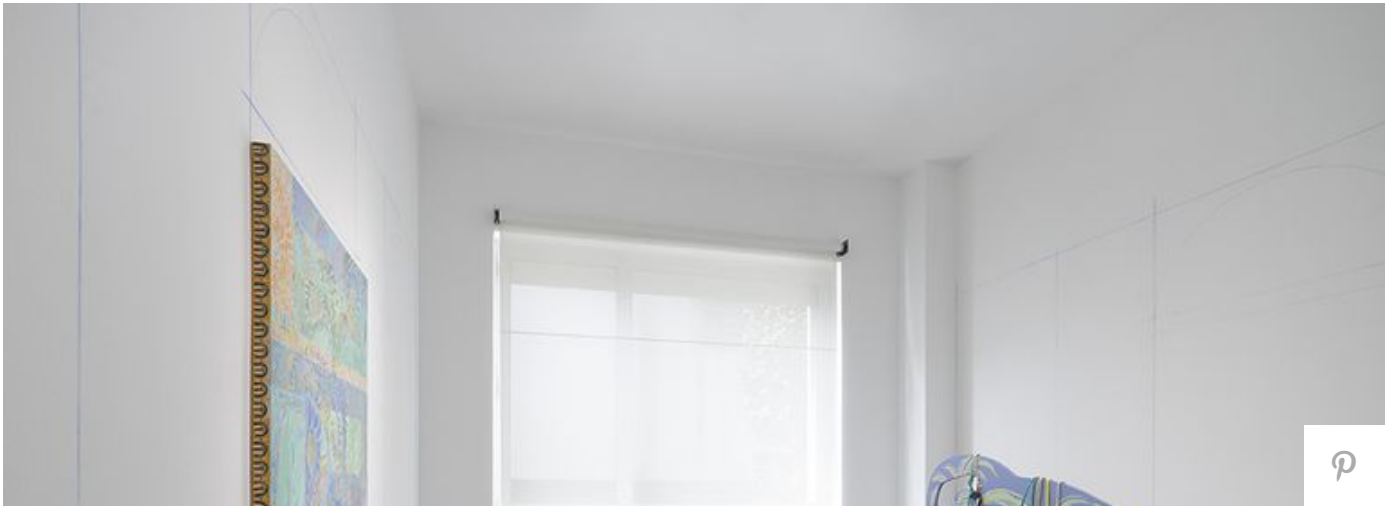
One day I had a memory project and I asked them for help. It was fun to discover how we all remembered the same things, how we all had some kind of collective memory.

### **Why did you have to leave Venezuela and where did you grow up?**

My father was Spanish and with him I had the opportunity to move and study in Europe. The situation in Venezuela was getting worse and I too was curious to go abroad. I grew up in the Canary Islands, which are culturally very similar to Venezuela due to a large two-way migratory flow. The Canarians moved to Venezuela in the 1970s, during the economic crisis in Franco's Spain. Today, most of the Canarians who live and have families there also have a grandfather in Venezuela. In Tenerife I really felt at home.

### **Maybe nature is a little different?**

Have you noticed the cacti inside the paintings?



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Andrew Rossetti

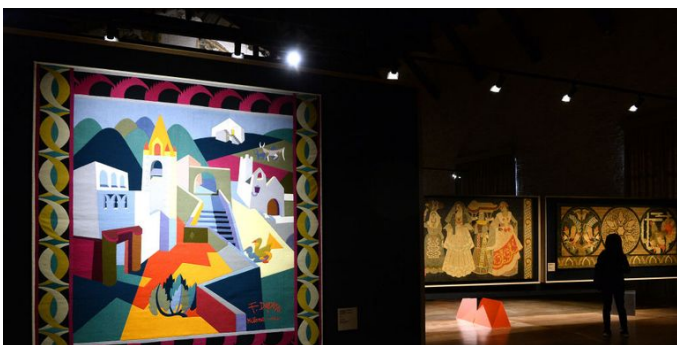
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THE VIEWS OF EVA JOSPIN



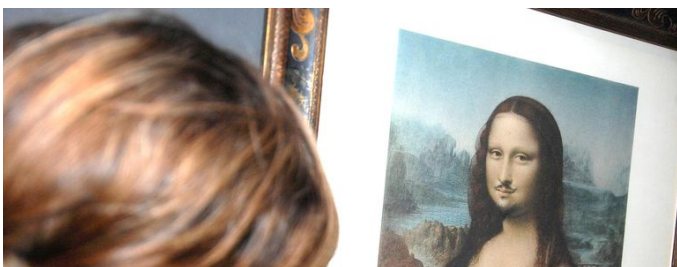
DIVAN JAPONAIS, A SNAPSHOT OF TOULOUSE-LAUTREC



JOURNEY INTO THE LIFE OF FORTUNATO DEPERO



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