

SOL CALERO

“Se empeñaban en tapar las grietas, pero las paredes seguían sudando”
(They kept trying to cover the cracks, but the walls kept sweating)

Villa Arson, Nice

14 February - 3 May 2020

Sol Calero's current solo exhibition at Villa Arson in Nice is the result of her four-month residency at the art center and art school compound. The installation pivots around the experience of the architecture it's in, integrating the contrasting layers of the villa, from the 19th century original mansion to the 1960's Brutalist style museum, celebrating the important role of the surrounding nature throughout. Her formal vocabulary merges with the palette of the French Riviera in an enveloping itinerary through her paintings. Continuing the exploration which began with her recent series "Pasaje del Olvido", Calero merges her interpretations of Latin American flora, architecture and iconic patterns, with scenes abstracted from personal memories. The oneiric mix of landscapes and still-life opens up a loosened and more narrative new direction in the artist's pictorial practice.

Inspired by her daily walks and careful observation of all of the faces and features of the Villa, the artist integrates both physical and historical layers of the building's present and past. From beginning to end, we find bridges that connect inside and outside, academy and museum, nature and architecture. The characteristic dark red of the school's old building façade expands into the main walls of the exhibition, guiding the visitor through the rooms and onto the formerly blocked interior patio, while the outlines of the vast windows stay printed on the walls as the sunlight travels across them through the day. Holes are opened on the walls, exposing the underlying structure and the raw materials under the surface as part of the display. After the torrential rains that affected parts of the building and created leaks in the walls of the exhibition spaces, Calero decided to work with the damage and opened up the moldy or cracked areas, letting the walls breathe and integrating the building's skeleton with its skin, pushing them to become central, almost sculptural parts of the show. The bridge appears again in the form of a raised walkway around the area which floods when it rains, taking the audience above the puddles and around the main site-specific piece, and over to the next room.

During the process of her residency, Calero worked on three collaborations with the institution: the library, the gardener, and the ceramics workshop. The "Reading Room" of the exhibition, furnished with custom re-upholstered beds, presents a selection of books focusing on the study of Latin American

art. It is permanently open to the students of the adjacent school and will be donated to their library after the show's end. The same principle applies to all the plants presiding over the different rooms, which will be re-planted in the gardens. They were chosen with the counsel of the Villa Arson's gardener of twenty years, who has shaped the way the emblematic site looks for the past two decades. Finally, Calero's experimentation with ceramics in the school's workshops takes part of the exhibition in a small-scale version of her iconic cut out standing sculptures, now hanging off of the hollowed out walls as dangling pieces. "They insisted on covering up the cracks, but the walls kept sweating" is a homage to an architectural landmark and a narrated journey through space.