

## For Immediate Release

**Carolyn Castaño**

**Otros Seres**

**16 March – 4 May 2024**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, March 16th, 5:00 – 8:00pm**

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Otros Seres* by Carolyn Castaño marking her fifth solo exhibition with our gallery. The show is divided into three galleries with new mixed media paintings and a monumental sculpture in Gallery 2, older portraits from the *Tropical Baby* and *The Hair Boys* series in Gallery 3 and early mixed media works on paper in Gallery 4.

Stemming from 19th-century painted travelogs and maps used as visual tools during the colonialization of the Americas, a series of sixteen watercolors entitled *This is Dedicated to the One I Love (Collection of Living and Deceased Glaciers)* depict the effects of global warming produced by the overdevelopment of natural resources. The sequence of images shows remnants of glaciers alongside earlier whole versions that remain only in memory making reference to the environmental impact colonialism has had on the fertile landscapes. The watercolors create a narrative for the larger paintings and sculpture included in the exhibition. Continuing to collage various materials such as sequins, appliques and cut paper on to the surfaces, Castaño layers her paintings while constructing landscapes that pay homage to the historic topical maps. In *Cumanday- Beautiful Mountain (Nevado del Ruiz)*, the Cumanday glacier is painted on to the surface of the canvas with layers of collaged materials including flora and fauna made from cut paper as well as branches, birds, palm trees and local tropical flowers both painted and applied as patchwork adding to the colorful landscape. Near the bottom of the composition, red and blue grid-like patterns inspired by Pre-Columbian textile patterns such as the Tocapu tunic, worn by inhabitants of Colombia's mountainous regions, reference both the flag of the Wiphala people and graphs used in COP climate conferences.

The paintings set the scene for a large, glazed terracotta clay sculpture entitled *Madre Monte- Reina de los Jardines* that was made in collaboration with Kim Torres and placed in the center of the gallery. The sculpture depicts a woman with brown skin and black hair who is adorned with plants and surrounded by animals as she baths in a pool of water at the bottom of a glacier. Like the female nudes portrayed in an earlier series of landscape paintings, the bountiful woman transcends her human presence becoming a symbol of the personification of the Americas by European colonizers. The prominent goddess in Colombian folklore, Madre Monte protects the land and punishes those who cause harm to it thus depicting her as powerful goddess removed from any vulnerability in her posturing. Overall, the this series draws awareness to environmental concerns while celebrating folklore and traditions of those whose honor would benefit most by helping to stop the destruction.

In addition to the new work, a selection of hard-edge portraits made nearly 20 years ago will be presented from the *Tropical Baby* and *Hair Boys* series. These flamboyant paintings maintain Castaño's early iconic style of pale white figures outlined in black with set within colorful racing stripe patterns and floral motives. Inspired by the allure of the beauty parlor, punk fashion and childhood memories of her mother and her friends, Castaño depicts her subjects with elaborate hairstyles reminiscent of 80s new wave posters. The heads are shown popping out of decorative accoutrements carefully placed in the colorful abstract landscapes accentuating the fierceness of their stare. The obsessive detailing in the hair showcases Castaño's flamboyant, calligraphic gestures and her graceful skill with watercolor and acrylic paint. The use of watercolor on large sheets of paper is further celebrated in a group of collage-drawings that are meticulously constructed from images cut out from magazines and adorned with feathers, beads, false eyelashes and baubles. Largely culled from high-fashion editorial spreads and advertisements, the pilfered images are rearranged and layered with the extravagant assortment of shimmering materials.

Castaño is a multi-disciplinary artist who uses eco-feminist frameworks to explore the landscape, migration, and female identities in painting, installation, and video. She received her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1995 and her MFA from UCLA's School of Art & Architecture in 2001. Castaño is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, California Community Foundation Getty Fellow Mid-Career Grant and COLA- City of Los Angeles Individual Artist Grant. A version of our exhibition debuted at Craft Contemporary in Los Angeles last fall in the exhibition, *Cumanday-Beautiful Mountain*. Most recently, Castaño's work was included in the exhibitions, *Cumbi: Textiles, Society, and Memory in Andean South America* at the Tucson Museum of Art and *It's About Time* at the Brand Library and Art Center in Glendale. Last year, she created an important outdoor mural supported by the Clarion Alley Mural Project in San Francisco. Castaño's work has also been exhibited in the solo exhibition, *Cali es Cali* at both the Orange County Museum of Art and Pasadena City College. Past exhibitions include *We Must Risk Delight-Twenty Artists from Los Angeles* at the Magazzino Di Sale as part of the 2015 Venice Biennale; *Phantom Sightings* at LACMA (traveled) and *International Paper* at the Hammer Museum. Castaño is an Associate Professor of Painting and Drawing at Long Beach City College.