

## For Immediate Release

**Carolyn Castaño**

***Future Ruana***

**10 September – 29 October 2022**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, September 10th, 3:00 – 7:00pm**

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Future Ruana* by Los Angeles-based artist, Carolyn Castaño marking her fourth solo exhibition with our gallery. The show will include mixed-media paintings and textile sculptures.

In this new body of work, Castaño envisions the utopian promise of Modernism while paying homage to the glory of South America's Pre-Columbian gold empire and her cultural identity as a Colombian-American. The paintings in *Future Ruana* adopt several visual languages: abstraction, collage, watercolor painting, screen-printing, fabric and sequin appliqué that speak to identity and family memory, the relationship to the land and the craft and skills that are passed down amongst immigrant families from generation to generation.

The show is named after the humble *ruana*, a woolen poncho worn up and down the Andes used as a multipurpose, utilitarian object for warmth and protection or laid on the floor for comfort as a rug or bed. For Castaño's series the *ruana* is reimagined as both a metaphorical object with speculative implications like a magic carpet or as a cape for flying and as a visual component where the underlying structure of the *ruana* serve as compositional strategy for the paintings.

The mixed-media paintings depict various patterns including the V-neck shape of the opening of a *ruana*, the square design repeated on the Incan *uncus*, a tunic worn by men and first made during the colonization period and the geometric stripes found within Pre-Columbian textiles and pottery. Castaño takes an experimental approach reconfiguring the overall shape of the *ruana* within her surfaces including areas of colorful foliage and native birds that are created with the use of watercolor, gouache, sequins, synthetic fabrics and embroidered appliques. These angular areas are intersected by spherical shapes, many with worn surfaces made from gold foils, that represent the god *Sué* (Sun God) in the ancient religion of the Muisca. The use of these femme-coded materials has become a signature style in Castaño's work and pays respect to women's work and the labor of migratory men and women.

In addition, unique textile works become Castaño's versions of experimental *ruanas* with imagery of personal artifacts from her family's migration passed down from each generation. Employing her late father's skill as a screen printer, Castaño creates textiles with images collected from her father's photographic archive including ID photos, airline tickets, travel logs and nostalgic images of both Los Angeles and Cali, Colombia. These poetic *ruanas* are overlaid with images of the sun and hand-painted flowers—a skill learned from Castaño's grandmother, Zoila who painted tablecloths and garments. In addition, images of various migratory birds such as the Cerulean warbler and Gold-cheeked Warbler are depicted as metaphors for Castaño's family migration/immigration from Colombia to the United States in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

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. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally including the recent 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 (traveling) and *International Paper* at the Hammer Museum. Castaño is an Associate Professor of Painting and Drawing at Long Beach City College.