

Victoria Miro announces representation of María Berrío



Portrait of María Berrío, 2019
Photography: Kyle Dorosz
Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro, London/Venice

Victoria Miro is pleased to announce representation of María Berrío. Work by the Brooklyn-based artist will feature as part of the gallery's presentation at Art Basel Miami Beach in December 2019. Her first solo exhibition in the UK will take place at Victoria Miro in June 2020.

Based in Brooklyn, María Berrío grew up in Colombia. Her large-scale works, which are meticulously crafted from layers of Japanese paper, reflect on cross-cultural connections and global migration seen through the prism of her own history.

Populated predominantly by women, Berrío's art often appears to propose spaces of refuge or safety, kaleidoscopic utopias which in the past have been inspired in part by South American folklore, where humans and nature coexist in harmony. To these apparently idealised scenes, however, Berrío brings to light the hard realities of present-day politics. For example, *Oda a la Esperanza (Ode to Hope)*, 2019, in which girls appear captive within an institution-like environment, refers to the Trump administration's family separation policy. *Wildflowers*, 2017, which depicts numerous women, children and animals has at its centre a railway carriage that might equally refer to the New York City subway or the train known as *La Bestia*, which transports migrants across Mexico to the US border. Writing in the catalogue for the New Orleans Triennial *Prospect. 4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp*, where the work was shown in 2017–2018, Alexandra Giniger comments that 'In her canvases, animals, though plentiful, take a secondary role to women, who dominate en masse. The message may be that we, as humans, must task ourselves ever more staunchly with protecting one another through these swampy times.'

Speaking about the women that feature in her work, the artist says ‘They are embodied ideals of femininity. The ghostly pallor of their skin suggests an otherworldliness; they appear to be more spirit than flesh. These are the women I want to be: strong, vulnerable, compassionate, courageous, and in harmony with themselves and nature. They combine the elements of women who are typically thought of as powerful – the captains of industry, resolute politicians, fiery activists – with the traits of those who are not usually thought of as such, thereby underlining the common force found in all women. The female soldier fighting on the front lines is of interest, but so too is the mother who finds a way to feed her children and sing them to sleep amid bombing campaigns and in the ruins of cities. To truly ennoble womanhood, we must discover and appreciate the beauty in every action, big or small.’ (Georgia Review, Spring 2019).

An enduring interest in the human relationship with nature can be seen in a new series of figures, which the artist calls ‘the bathers’. United by a simple garment – based on one of Berrío’s own dresses – the figures appear in moments of solemnity, acting upon or reacting to the natural world. The surreal environments they occupy offer an unsettling context for their otherwise ordinary activities, provoking viewers to reflect on their own connection to their surroundings and raising questions of resilience and persistence in the face of catastrophic loss. The primal ritual of bathing and the gestures that bracket it offer a moment of communion that reflects on our common experiences as social beings.

Work by María Berrío was featured in Victoria Miro’s 2019 summer exhibition of three young artists, presented in association with The Great Women Artists.

About the artist

María Berrío was born in Bogotá, Colombia in 1982, completed her BFA at Parsons School of Design in 2004, and her MFA at the New York School of Visual Arts. Recent institutional group exhibitions include *People Get Ready* at Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, NC (2018), *Prospect.4 Triennial*, New Orleans (2017–2018), *Art on Paper Biennial*, Weatherspoon Museum, Greensboro, NC (2017), *CUT N MIX*, El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (2015).

Berrío’s work is in permanent collections such as Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice, New York, NY; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Weatherspoon Museum of Art at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China.

Additionally, her work can also be seen in the public realm at the N subway stop at Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn, where 14 of the artist’s works have been translated in mosaic using a variety of media including glass, ceramic and enamel.

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