

The T List

A Spanish Artist's Meditation on Femininity



Violeta Maya's "Poco a Poco Me Quito la Paja" (2023). © Violeta Maya, courtesy of Alzueta Gallery, Barcelona

By Salomé Gómez-Upegui

To create her escapist landscapes, the Madrid-based artist Violeta Maya starts by drenching raw canvases in water. She then spreads them on the floor and, as they begin to dry, spontaneously applies pigments and acrylic paints that tint the surface, resulting in fluid shapes and mesmerizing hues. Maya considers the process a form of meditation. Next week at Alzueta Gallery in Barcelona, Maya's solo exhibition will feature 17 paintings that she created earlier this year during an artistic residency at Alzueta's space on Spain's Costa Brava, a humid environment that slowed the usual drying process of the artist's canvases, resulting in unusual compositions. She also sought to explore her beliefs around femininity by experimenting with shades of pink that she'd been repelled by in the past. The paintings will be accompanied by ceramic sculptures and a large central installation featuring hand-painted fabrics. "*Precisamente Porque el Rosa Me Incomoda*" ("*Precisely Because Pink Makes Me Uncomfortable*") will be on view from Dec. 13, 2023, to Jan. 17, 2024, alzuetagallery.com.

LES NOUVEAUX RICHES

Interview with Violeta Maya

August 2022 | DANIEL LICHTERWALDT

Violeta Maya (Madrid, 1993) trained at Central Saint Martins (London) living and working in Madrid. Her paintings are an immediate and direct channel through which the artist shapes her emotional landscape at a given moment, occasionally blending in specific memories of her past experiences.



Her creative process incorporates the material qualities of the pigment, as well as those of the support itself. Maya exposes these elements (pigment and canvas) to uncontrollable factors such as humidity – when the canvas is drenched before painting – and time, which determines when the canvas dries and the painting is thus finished. Therefore, her work is a conscious dual exercise where the projection of a sensation meets the contingency dictated by other material and arbitrary forces, the intention of an image and its result imbued with chance.

What's your inspiration? What is your process of creating a composition?

Hey! Thank you for inviting for an interview to your lovely magazine. My biggest source of inspiration is nature I would say, its shapes, textures and most of all, colours are an infinite source for composing pictures to me. Also some other artists, like Miró, Yayoi Kusama or Helen Frankenthaler, but also Velázquez and Van der Weyden for their amazing use of colour. About my process: Many times, When I arrive at my studio I have certain colours in mind for that day, but nothing else. I lay the canvases flat on the ground, soak them in water, and the countdown begins. The canvases dry at different speeds, depending on the month and time of day. They usually take a few hours. Once dry, they no longer welcome the paint in the same way: it is the humidity of the canvas that offers surprise, branches out the brushstrokes, blurs the colours, amplifies the stains and explodes the pigments. I have found a method that radically incorporates the will of the support itself: it is its reaction to the water and the temperature that irreversibly marks the work's deadlines and its final result. I paint as a form of meditation; through colours, stains and the balance between them, I try to capture my emotional state in the immediate present and I sort of freeze it in time. A translation of emotion into form that can only take place in that state of alertness and perceptive lucidity rooted in the here and now. In turn, at times, there is a subtle and unconscious exercise of remembrance in the work: sometimes the paintings are linked to a somewhat precise memory or sensation that I retrieve from past experiences of mine. Each work thus encapsulates a certain emotional landscape.





Can you describe your typical working day?

They all vary, as I'm such a big fan of improvisation... I don't plan my days enormously. But I usually wake up and have a chilled breakfast, reading mails, or messages and then I go to my studio in my moto. I do little things like tidying up, swiping the floor (which I find very relaxing). And then I cut some pieces of fabric and start painting! Depends on the day I'm either very inspired and I can go on for hours, or the thing is not really flowing and I have to move on to other tasks like computer stuff or going to see an exhibition. It depends.

What does your work aim to say?

I don't aim to say anything! I do it because it helps me focus my attention on something, and forget about the rest of the world for a bit. As if it was some kind of meditation. And I hope people can feel that when they see my paintings, and get a little of that from them.

How does your atelier look like?

I am not gonna lie: it's a really messy cave in the heart of Madrid. But very fresh!

How do you know or decide when an artwork is finished?

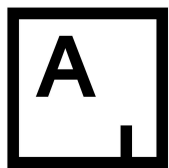
When, with the least amount of elements, the composition feels balanced and complete, without seeming boring to me.

How do you spend your free time?

I love to be in nature as much as I can, in the future I would like to just move. But watching a sunset, or looking at the sky, trees and plants gives me the most pleasure. I also love playing music and watching movies. I'm quite a cozy person.

What are you working on right now? Is there an exhibition planned?

Yes! I'm working on a series inspired in my recent trip to Iceland. The colours and landscapes left me so shocked. I will exhibit it at Palau de Casavells in Catalunya for the whole summer. It's based on my visual and sensorial memories of the Icelandic glaciers. Large blue blocks, the wind that bypasses them and the extreme cold reappear months later, channelled into strong pigments and stains. Hope you have a chance to visit it.



Art

5 Artists on Our Radar in March 2023

Artsy Editorial

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“Artists on Our Radar” is a monthly series produced by the Artsy team. Utilizing our art expertise and access to Artsy data, we highlight five artists who have our attention. To make our selections, we’ve determined which artists made an impact this past month through new gallery representation, exhibitions, auctions, art fairs, or fresh works on Artsy.

Violeta Maya

B. 1993, Madrid. Lives and works in Madrid.



Violeta Maya

Se va el caimán, 2022

Alzueta Gallery

Environmental factors are Violeta Maya’s principal collaborators on her spare, elegant paintings. In a process recalling Abstract Expressionist artist Helen Frankenthaler’s soak-stain method, Maya works on wet canvas laid out on the

ground and allows the surface to diffuse her pigments into soft, colorful contours. Humidity and temperature influence the final outcome, making the canvas a record both of the artist's hand and of the place in which it was painted.



Violeta Maya
Mujer de pocas palabras VIII, 2023
Alzueta Gallery



Violeta Maya
Cada vez más bold, 2022
Alzueta Gallery

In “A Site,” a group show on view at Madrid’s Alzueta Gallery through March 25th, Maya presents work that collaborates with the environment in additional ways. Delicate paintings on silk, like *Mujer de pocas palabras VIII* (2023), hang loosely from the wall, fluttering in response to the movement of viewers through the space. The artist considers painting to be a meditative process; with their gentle motion, balanced compositions, and soothing pastel palettes, these works cultivate quiet contemplation in the viewer, too.

Maya received a BA in design from Central Saint Martins in London. She has exhibited widely in her native Spain, including at Carrasco Art Gallery and Galeria De Arte Rodrigo Juarranz.

—Olivia Horn