

from: Frieze.com, Sol Calero Dortmund Kunstverein,
by Moritz Scheper
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In her past exhibitions, Berlin-based Venezuelan artist Sol Calero has often built functional rooms within installation environments: at London's Studio Voltaire it was a school ('La Escuela del Sur', 2015) at Kunsthaus Bregenz it was a spa ('La Sauna Caliente', 2016-17) and, for her presentation at Art Basel Statements in 2016, a currency exchange ('Casa de Cambio'). Calero doesn't simply transpose these spatial models, but subjects them to a distinctive makeover that teems with bright, light tropical visual references while taking into account these spaces' social dimensions. Also common to Calero's exhibitions is a hidden emphasis on painting: while in some cases this is more conspicuous, in others it retreats behind the decorative function of the pictures that are placed within her spatial environments.



Sol Calero, 'Interiores', 2017, installation view, Dortmund Kunstverein. Courtesy: Dortmund Kunstverein, Dortmund; photograph: Simon Vogel

For 'Interiores', her show at Dortmunder Kunstverein, Calero employed once more this familiar vocabulary and emphasis on staging. The view through the Kunstverein's floor-to-ceiling windows into the exhibition space reveals an opulent three-dimensional tableau installed to be seen from the outside in. Entering the installation, the viewer's senses are over-stimulated by the closely-packed set-up, the diversity of materials and the stark colour contrasts. The temptation to submit to this carefree, feel-good atmosphere is powerful, especially since Calero doesn't make analysis easy, titling the entire exhibition as a single work: 'Interiores' (2017).



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Once the initial effect of this bombast wears off, it gradually becomes clear how the installation was made: on a tile-effect PVC floor, the artist positioned various set elements, some recalling the shapes of palm fronds, others portraying playful tangles of South Pacific flora and tropical fruits. Their sensual softness and muted shades are reminiscent of Henri Matisse's cut-outs, while the staggered arrangement of the set walls resembles the layout of a Baroque picture-frame stage. This impression is amplified by a horizontal painted foliage border that hangs from the ceiling. Finally, Calero crosses this finely worked setting with ready-mades sourced from DIY stores: this emphasis on vernacular makeshift construction looks to another Latin American trademark or cliché that is deliberately foregrounded by the artist.

These ready-mades and painterly elements were linked by more than Calero's cultural associations, however. The artist deliberately filled her installation with gates, doors, windows, curtains, blinds and screens: all architectural modules that can be linked to the *finestra aperta* as a central visual metaphor within modernity. Here, we find an expansion of the open window metaphor into a three-dimensional, walk-in painting, which can also be read as a clever doubling of the view through the window into the Kunstverein – and thus into Calero's installation-as-picture. Perhaps more so than in her past exhibitions, here painting was the main focus where all of the lines in the installation converged. For in spite of its borrowings from set design, 'Interiores' offered no functionality, nor did it stimulate a particular social interaction.

Moreover, this exhibition was not a backdrop for something else – in contrast, for Calero's 2016 'Desde el Jardín' show at David Dale Gallery and Glasgow International, she used the exhibition as a location to shoot a telenovela of the same name, produced in collaboration with Dafna Maimon for Conglomerate, a collaborative art project presented in the form of a television network.



Sol Calero, 'Interiores', 2017, installation view, Dortmunder Kunstverein. Courtesy: Dortmunder Kunstverein, Dortmund; photograph: Simon Vogel

In this teeming visual agglomerate of cues ranging from Matisse to Memphis design, one could enjoy tracking down playful references to minimal, conceptual and op art. Lightness and fun are a feature of all of the artist's works. This time, though, the viewer could abandon themselves to this ludic aspect. Reassuringly, the show suggested a development of Calero's art beyond the 'exotification' of social spaces that had already threatened, in her previous exhibitions, to become rather formulaic.



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