

Tang Contemporary Art presents:

## El Jardín (The Garden) : Studio Lenca Solo Exhibition

Artist: Studio Lenca

Curator: Jeeun Hong

Exhibition Dates: 15 July - 26 August 2023

Venue: Tang Contemporary Art Bangkok

Opening Reception: Saturday, 15 July at 4:00 PM

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On July 15, 2023, Tang Contemporary Art will hold a solo exhibition of emerging artist STUDIO LENCA at Tang Contemporary art in Bangkok. This is Tang Contemporary Art's second collaboration with the artist after "I'm working on leaving (Seoul)." In this exhibition, the artist expands and explores the universal themes of migration, belonging and identity, through the concept of El Jardín (The Garden).

The garden is civilized nature in the sense that it differs from the irregular, disorganized, sprawling nature of the forest. In Renaissance works of art, nature was often perceived as a space of disorganization and was often depicted as an extraordinary space separated from everyday life. On the other hand, a garden with architectural order may seem similar to a forest, but it is quite different. While a forest is open with unclear boundaries, a garden has clear boundaries and is closed. The plants in the garden are selected from a sculptural point of view and are organized and decorated together with architectural elements. The garden is an idealized space that can be closed off from the outside world and remain pure. The garden, which has inspired many artists such as Monet and Matisse, has also become an ideal space and a place of reflection for Studio Lenca, as well as a refuge for the marginalized. In this exhibition, Studio Lenca invites the viewers to enter El Jardín (The Garden), a space for flourishing.

The romantic and dramatic elements that make up the garden are selected by the artist and are gently present on the canvas, wrapping around the subject. The organic combination of vibrant plants depicted in free lines and brilliant colors and the elements of the work constantly draw the viewer's attention. And the figures in the space, dressed in elaborate costumes and hats, look out at the space outside the canvas, extending the work beyond the artwork and into the space of life. The vibrant figures have a regal, dignified quality. Here the marginalized take center stage as active agents of change, recalibrating the narrative. The figures in the work thrive in the visibility and place making afforded by El Jardín.

The recurring motifs of ships and military uniforms hint at the colonial legacy and violence of the artist's home country of El Salvador. These elements, which may seem incongruous, exist in the liminal space between the real and the imaginary where the artist has asserted his identity and confronted his country's past.

Throughout the work, harmonious and discordant colors contrast and layers emerge. The artist explores the materiality of paint and brush marks as a metaphor for his displaced, layered identity. His work is an affirmation of the internal and external worlds, histories and identities. The harmonization of intentionally neglected free lines and colors creates a dance-like energy and fills the work. Universal experiences of who we are, what we see and where we have come from, converge on the canvas.

The artist's lived experiences are at the core of his work. Studio Lenca approaches contemporary issues by proposing an alternative narrative through his own tangible artistic style and telling stories as vibrant as El Jardín. This exhibition offers a refuge for the marginalized. Through this exhibition, the artist hopes to provide a space for visibility, community and conversation in El Jardín.

## About the Artist

b.1986, El Salvador

Currently lives and works in Margate, UK

Studio Lenca (José Campos) fled his native El Salvador during the violent civil war in the 1980s. The war claimed the lives of over 80,000 Salvadoreños and displaced much of the population. José travelled to the US by land with his mother and grew up as an undocumented illegal immigrant.

Eventually settling in the UK, José received a Masters from Goldsmiths University of London in 2019. His work is collected and exhibited globally and was recently acquired by the MER Foundation.

His work focuses on ideas surrounding difference, knowledge and visibility. José Campos works under the name of 'Studio Lenca' as the language of 'studio' refers to a space for experimentation and a place that is constantly shifting. Lenca refers to the ancestors of his native El Salvador.

His colourful paintings depict Salvadoran figures adorned with costume and ornament that playfully explore masculinity, the colonial past of the country and its current violent discourse. The hats and costumes allude to the folkloric traditions of Los Historiantes. MS-13 markings and 18th street tattoos are absent, instead whimsical imagery and bold colours portray a softer, more vulnerable experience.

The figures in Studio Lenca's work embody vignettes of the artist's formative years, escaping the civil war and reckoning with his reality in a hostile environment.

The navigation of identity within Studio Lenca's work sits in parallel with that of El Salvador and its neighbouring countries. Riotous layers of paint, flora, fauna, logos and artefacts represent untold stories and silenced voices. The painful legacy of colonialism, mass immigration and more recent cultural imperialism is writ large. Studio Lenca shares a maelstrom of unresolved narratives; himself and his culture displaced.

## Tang Contemporary Art

Since its founding in Bangkok in 1997, Tang Contemporary Art has opened 7 spaces in Beijing, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Seoul to promote the development of experimental art in different regions. In the past 20 years, Tang Contemporary Art has organized groundbreaking exhibitions in its gallery spaces, and also cooperated with important art institutions in China and abroad to accomplish outstanding art projects. The gallery strives to initiate dialogue between artists, curators, collectors and institutions working both locally and internationally. A roster of groundbreaking exhibitions has earned Tang Contemporary Art internationally renowned recognition, establishing its status as a pioneer of the contemporary art scene in Asia.

As one of China's most influential contemporary art platforms, Tang Contemporary Art maintains a high standard of exhibition programming. Tang Contemporary Art represents or collaborates with leading figures in international contemporary art, including Ai Weiwei, Huang Yongping, Shen Yuan, Zhu Jinshi, Chen Danqing, Liu Qinghe, Liu Xiaodong, Chen Shaoxiong, Wang Yuping, Shen Ling, Shen Liang, Wu Yi, Xia Xiaowan, He Duoling, Mao Xuhui, Wang Huangsheng, Yang Jiechang, Tan Ping, Wang Du, Yan Lei, Yue Minjun, Wang Jianwei, Yangjiang Group, Zheng Guogu, Lin Yilin, Sun Yuan&Peng Yu, Qin Ga, Wang Qingsong, Yin Zhaoyang, Feng Yan, Guo Wei, Chen Wenbo, Ling Jian, Qin Qi, Yang Yong, Peng Wei, He An, Zhao Zhao, Xu Qu, Chen Yujun, Chen Yufan, Xue Feng, Cai Lei, Li Qing, Wang Sishun, Xu Xiaoguo, Li Wei, Liu Yujia, Wu Wei, Yang Bodu, You Yong, Li Erpeng, Jade Ching-yuk Ng, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Adel Abdessemed, Niki de Saint Phalle, AES+F, Michael Zelehosk, Jonas Burgert, Christian Lemmerz, Michael Kvium, Sakarin Krue-On, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Natee Utarit, Kitti Narod, Gongkan, Entang Wiharso, Heri Dono, Nam June Paik, Park Seungmo, Jae Yong Kim, Diren Lee, Dinh Q. Lê, Rodel Tapaya, Jigger Cruz, Ayka Go, Raffy Napay, H.H.Lim, Etsu Egami, etc.

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