

Studio visit

LAUREN MOYA FORD

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I recently met a fly fisherman who also makes his own flies and nymphs. He showed me boxes and boxes of his creations, some of which are as small as my pinky nail. The flies' colors and textures vary widely; some imitate insects found in nature and others are flights of fancy, with bold, colorful plumes jutting out. His supply box was filled to the brim with exotic bird feathers and hundreds of spools of pure silk thread. He pulled out two spools of yellow thread and told me that when wet, together they perfectly replicate the color of a specific type of mosquito larvae that is only active for two weeks in October. The fly fisherman reminded me of the painter Luísa Jacinto <http://www.luisajacinto.com/en/> not only for her effervescent colors and attention to detail, but for her work's pursuit of something extremely specific and extremely elusive.

At times iridescent, neon, glowing, infrared- colors gain otherworldly qualities in Luísa's hands. Like the fly fisherman, she is an astute study of color and its capabilities when mixed and layered. Rows of paint samples hang on her studio wall as a catalog of potential, and she talked about the discovery of certain shades that revolutionized her work. Luísa's paintings contain a variety of textures from levels of build up: she works in light washes, thick strokes, or even applies pigment straight onto the canvas. "Loving a surface has to do with fighting it," she says.

Where do these images come from? Photography, cinema, and increasingly Luísa's own experiences and memories are source materials for her paintings. Some images which are found and used immediately to create paintings and others may lie 'dormant' for months or years. Facebook also spurs paintings via friends' and strangers' photos. She co-opts today's ultimate self-curation tool for the transformational processes and materials of painting: moving from photograph to painting "starts to ask for something different- it is different- then it's a matter of resolving this new body," she says. Then it is a matter of fighting for the right distance, turning a source that is personal and specific into an image that can be universal.

The moments in Luísa's paintings could go either way- presence or absence (as is the case in the *Still Life* series), consuming or consumed (*Falling* series), threatening or loving (*Crave* series). Her figures are caught in a decisive moment; "these moments are really quiet, but something's changed." Luísa captures extremes in the subtlety and economy of a brush stroke: her painting of a reclining man with a dark reddish mark on his chest could be a nipple or a wound, and his face could be in an expression of rest or pain. Figures caught between ecstasy and repulsion remind me of the work of Marlene Dumas, Kai Althoff, and especially Edvard Munch. Last fall's exhibition of his work at the Thyssen Museum featured a room filled with different versions of his "vampire" composition in prints, paintings, and drawings made over 20 years. In it, a man crouches beneath a woman, her long hair spreading across his body and her mouth at his neck. Despite the embrace, the image contains something precariously sinister; it is this vacillation that draws us into the world of the painting itself.

“Say something again and say it better,” Luísa’ explains about her return to certain compositions, like Munch did with his vampire image. She loves Diego Velázquez’s paintings that have faded enough to see his sketch marks beneath the finished layers, where he rearranged his subjects’ postures over and over again. It is a search to reveal “an involuntary life that comes out of you, like energy escaping,” she says. Indeed, her figures are shown sleeping, kissing, reading- times when we relinquish ourselves or give ourselves entirely. Despite or perhaps because of the transformation of painting, there’s a lingering human residue in her works. Memory- her own or someone else’s- is captured in these surfaces of her paintings’ diaphanous layers, dreamy colors, and ambiguous human situations.

Luísa’s solo exhibition *An Instant of This* is on view at Galería Silvestre (<http://www.galeriasilvestre.com/>) in Madrid until May 4, 2016. Her installation *Casa* at the Casa-Museu Medeiros e Almeida <http://casa-museumedeirosalmeida.pt/> in Lisbon is up until May 1, 2016.