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FROM THE HEART

BEHIND THE CHEERFUL HUES OF LAURA MOSQUERA'S PAINTINGS IS AN EXPLORATION OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.

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Walk into Laura Mosquera's home studio in Brooklyn and the first thing that captures your attention is a vibrant painting done in acrylic, flashe and gouache. In fact, you're not likely to breeze past any of Mosquera's sculpted handmade canvases, which fit together like puzzle pieces, without taking notice. Awash with bold colors, patterns and shapes, collectively they create a fascinating visual tension. Take, for example, one piece that represents a previous romantic relationship. "I was with someone who was a great person, but our personalities didn't match very well," Mosquera says. "He was very structured in the way he saw life, and I realized I was trying to fit within that mold." Part of the image represents the version of herself conforming to his personality, while the rest signifies her transcending it and starting to break free. Human experiences such as this one—and the emotions, memories, reactions and relationships that contribute to those experiences—are at the heart of Mosquera's work. Her abstract paintings are symbolic of the emotions and feelings we try to keep buried but inevitably must face.

Born in Panama to a Colombian mother and a Guatemalan and Dutch father before moving at age 3 to the United States, Mosquera grew up in a Latino neighborhood of Chicago. She moved to New York City in 2013, but the influences of her multicultural upbringing are evident in the vibrant colors to which she is drawn. "My mom's



Artist Laura Mosquera's studio is filled with her work, such as *Not Enough to Stay* (below), which was inspired by her experience in a former relationship, and *Flip Time Dance* (opposite).



Colombian culture was also kind of blended, so I can't tell you which influence came from where," the artist says. "I think it's a beautiful thing about Latino culture that even though we might be Mexican, Puerto Rican or Dominican, we all know each other, so to speak."

Mosquera admits that when she starts a new piece, her creative process can get a little chaotic. "The key is to muddle through all the inspiration," she says. "I draw a lot so I can figure things out. Sometimes I'll see a shape that might spark something, but I can't explain it. I'll think of these shape combinations and try to get them from the brain to the fingertips before they're lost."

While most of her work is currently on display in residences and offices—in addition to collections at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the Art Institute of Chicago—Mosquera's goal is to expand to a more urban context. "I'd like to start working on public art proposals. I can picture my paintings on the side of a building or in parks."

There's no doubt that the eye-catching complexity of her paintings would render them talking points in such locations. "I don't think they're easy to figure out," she says. "But for me, what they represent is that life is beautiful even though it can be really difficult. As individuals, we're all trying to be understood by each other or accepted, and that's what I'm interested in. I want my paintings to be about that human experience." ■

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