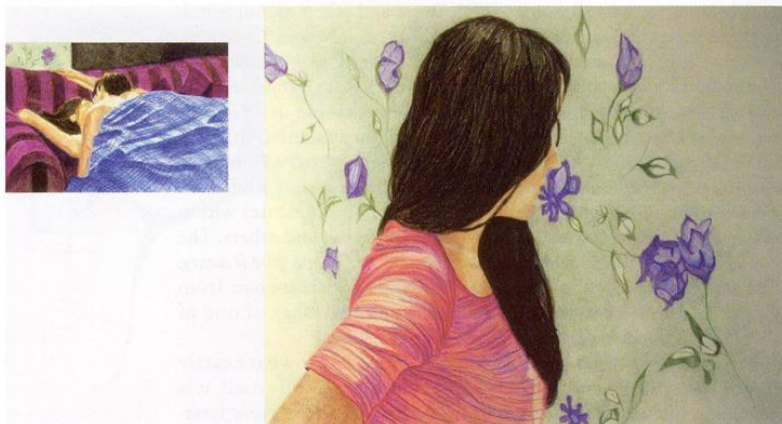


CHICAGO

## Laura Mosquera

MONIQUEMELOCHE

This must have been an *annus horribilis* for Laura Mosquera, so forlorn and melancholic are the images in her exhibition, called “in the



Laura Mosquera, *Blurring the Line Between Love and Lust*, 2006, colored pencil on paper, overall 13 x 26 1/2”.

deep end.” Best known for large and sometimes ebullient paintings of young men and women posed against sharply defined abstract backgrounds, the artist here showed only a single painting. Eleven mostly small drawings made up the rest of the show, suggesting that, for Mosquera, hunkering down over a small piece of paper, using colored pencil or graphite, working with knuckles and wrist rather than elbow and shoulder, is more in keeping with her mood than painterly business as usual.

Certainly the content of the work bore out such a hypothesis. As is the case with most of us sooner or later, it’s love, apparently, that’s at the center of Mosquera’s problems, love and the misery it often leaves in its wake. The drama of human coupling, especially when it goes awry, is her theme, and, though she avoids any overt narrative, these works throb from the hurt that results from the breakdown of passion. The smallest drawing here, part of the two-piece *Blurring the Line Between Love and Lust* (all works 2006), would seem to be a memory of better times—a couple lies on a sofa bed, their intertwined bodies covered by a sheet. This drawing is paired with a larger one, depicting a woman in profile who literally turns her back on the lovers, lost in thought, her face largely obscured by a swath of her black hair, which suggests a mourner’s shroud. The taut embrace in *Can You Risk It*, in which the woman’s face and body are obscured and enveloped by the person she kisses, her presence indicated only by hands that caress her lover’s head and shoulders, also feels ephemeral, as if she momentarily grasps here what she will not retain.

The sumptuous meandering pattern in the background of this drawing, as in several of the works, is less a depiction of wallpaper than a reduced echo of Mosquera’s usual abstract fields, a revisiting of her signature process, slowed down and made pensive. In most of the drawings, and in her one painting, Mosquera’s female protagonists (three of the drawings are self-portraits) are depicted as eerily passive and inert, as if prostrated, worn out by inner pain, lying alone, prone on a couch or a bed, or staring blankly into space. There is a kind of shock and awe to the agony the artist chronicles, one that manifests itself not in histrionics or bluster but in the steady torment of living quietly through anguish.

Mosquera’s project manages to negotiate its way around personal therapy or a simple appeal to pity. Her eschewal of narrative allows us to empathize more readily. There is a frankness here, and a sensitivity toward some of the intimate passages of life that transcends autobiography to achieve something universal.

—James Yood