

boundary

Emiliano Cerna-Rios: Emilianopolis

Opening Reception Saturday, December 11, 2021, 6 - 9pm

Exhibition dates: December 11, 2021 - January 29, 2022

A city is born out of both the collective and individual consciousness and comprises narratives, aesthetic concerns, and the dreams of its creators and inhabitants; it emerges at the intersection of nature and culture. One also finds such elements at the heart of artistic practice. The title “Emilianopolis” conveys the idea that I am the city and the city is me. In connecting my name to the “polis”, I point to neither a fictional nor real city, but instead to the mutable nature of my relationship to place and identity. My placement of ceramics atop paintings references the layered condition of Pre and Post Columbian America. This multi-leveled reality opens the imagination to the historical and the mythical buried within the continents’ rich and bewildering past.

I execute diverse takes on similar themes with ceramics (buildings, vessels, monoliths), allowing them to emerge with varying degrees of sophistication and crudeness. In effect, contemplation of these objects invites the viewer to ponder their possible function or their relation to the canvas. Or, instead, it might put them in the place of fifteenth century Europeans, who would search for and discern between the “high” sophisticated and the “low” crude ceramics of the people they encountered in the Americas. These investigations sometimes included, but often went beyond, the aesthetic. To them, following the trail of the “high” meant finding peoples and cities that were likely to also possess gold, silver and other natural resources. Prime targets for conquest and extraction, these riches would then go on to fund and madly accelerate new cycles of identity crafting and city building. I pursue a cosmology of American urban identities that are rooted in histories of discovery, exploitation, transmutation, and their links to the places, bodies, and minds we currently inhabit.

Emiliano Cerna-Rios is a painter from Lima, Peru who draws on the literature and populist histories surrounding the conquests and evolutions of the Americas, aiming to conjure and reinterpret these histories’ opposing perspectives and narratives. He employs traditional materials to address his own influences and predecessors, probing and altering the imagery of relatively regional or obscure illustrators and artists. He divides his time between Minneapolis and Los Angeles.