

FORT GANSEVOORT

NICK QUIJANO

Memories of Puerto Rico

November 19 – January 2, 2021

An online exhibition

organized by Bobbito Garcia



Nick Quijano, *La siesta de Tía (Aunt's siesta)*, 2020, Gouache on Arches paper with wood matte, 12.5 x 12.5 inches.

Beginning Thursday, November 19th, Fort Gansevoort will present *Memories of Puerto Rico*, an online exhibition featuring a selection of paintings by Nick Quijano, organized in collaboration with critically acclaimed Puerto Rican author, filmmaker, and DJ, Bobbito Garcia.

Memories of Puerto Rico is Fort Gansevoort's first exhibition with Nick Quijano, who was born in New York and is now based in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico. Quijano moved to "La Isla del Encanto," the enchanted island, in 1967 at the age of thirteen. The foundation of his artistic practice was formed at the University of Puerto Rico, where he focused on architecture and environmental design, and studied under the late painter José Antonio Torres Martinó (1916 – 2011). Crafting a creative philosophy based upon his response to the local context and identity as a citizen of the Caribbean, Quijano experimented with various mediums, from collage and printmaking, to furniture design and assemblage, before devoting himself exclusively to painting.

The energetic culture of Puerto Rico takes center stage in Quijano's art. In providing perspective on his oeuvre, curator Bobbito Garcia observes, "the good-hearted people of our island really have this sense of respect and care for their neighbors. When I saw Nick's work, this sensibility was immediately apparent. He is painting for the common people." Quijano represents his subjects through a patriotic gaze, rendering the specifics with deep affection. *Baila la calle (de noche, baila la calle de día) (Dance night and day)* (2014) and *El Encuentro (Rendezvous)* (2020) incorporate two of the artist's central themes: music and dance. The former painting portrays a couple dancing hand in hand on a city street, with the pavement beneath their feet mirroring their lively rhythm. *El Encuentro* captures the allure of an environment animated by music, focusing on a couple's tentative foray into a crowded disco. *Merengue* and *bolero* – two styles of music and dance that enjoy paramount popularity in Puerto Rico – are depicted as catalysts for unity among members of the community – vehicles through which the collective and intimate are experienced.

Influenced by both recollections from childhood and the aesthetics of Caribbean folk art, Quijano also aims to illustrate the sacred nature of quotidian life on the island. *La siesta de Tía (Aunt's siesta)* (2020), captures his proclivity for conventional scenes. In this painting, a woman reclines on her sofa, enveloped in a tender atmosphere. The meticulous patterns of her surrounding interior lure the viewer to examine all the painting's detail closely.

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Another signature of Quijano's work, his use of rich color to express emotion and visual wonder, often extends beyond the surface of the painting to implement the picture frame as part of his composition. Two examples of this technique are *Mancogero (Mango man)* (2020) and *Mercado (Market)* (2020), in which the boundaries of the frame are breached in order to animate the composition, carry its energy outside of the formal experience of the work itself, and indicate that the imagery we see is an amalgam of what is observed and what is remembered – or, rather, beyond the limits of the physical.

Through the transformation of memory, Quijano creates a portal into the everyday happenings that unite the past with the present in a celebration of timeless experiences. He has said, "I hope that people can relate to these pieces, because they are autobiographical, if not physically or metaphorically, then symbolically," In this sense, *Memories of Puerto Rico* is an homage to the distinctive heritage of Puerto Rico, and a means through which the artist introduces elements of this heritage into the conversation of contemporary art.

Nick Quijano was born in 1953 in New York, NY. He earned his BA at the University of Puerto Rico in 1970. He has exhibited his work at the American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY; The New Museum, New York, NY; El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY; The Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA; Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, Puerto Rico; Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Galería Obra, San Juan, Puerto Rico. His work is included in the collections of the American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY; El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, San Francisco, CA; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico; Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, Puerto Rico; and Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico.