
INTERLOCUTOR

EXHIBITION FEATURE - IN HER SPACE AT C24 GALLERY

February 15, 2022



Installation images by Regina Urazaeva. Photos courtesy of C24 Gallery.

In Her Space, the current exhibition at C24 Gallery, features work by sculptor Cal Lane and painter Roxa Smith. At first glance, one might notice the prevalence of intricate patterns in each artist's body of work—in Lane's, the lace-like cutouts in shovels, dumbbells and oil drums as well as in her steel renderings of submarines and giant panties, and in Smith's, the colorful jumble of upholstery, rugs, furnishings and plants that populate her slightly off-kilter interiors. One might even take note of the contrast between Smith's explosive color palette and Lane's monochromatic creations. But beyond the aesthetic beauty of the work, you find two artists exploring the nuances of being imprisoned by forces that impact the way we exist in the space around us. Lane's work takes a critical look at traditional notions of femininity, exploring the field of gender through the materiality of steel, a seemingly masculine entity. Smith's observations about the value of beauty and luxury are colored by memories of gated residences in her home country of Venezuela as well as her time during the pandemic lockdown. The layers of visual, emotional and thematic comparison between these two bodies of work makes for an exciting and unexpectedly illuminating conversation.



"Loopy Loft", 2017, Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm)

Thoughts on *In Her Space* by Roxa Smith:

I have a long history of painting familiar domestic environments, landscapes, and everyday objects. Influenced by my Venezuelan upbringing, a passion for lush color, intricate patterns, and naïve and outsider art dominates my work. My oil, acrylic, and gouache paintings emerge from slow observation as I metaphorically collage different elements into the work to create tableaux steeped with personal symbolism. Imagery is idealized and dramatized to form and re-form a visual narrative that fluctuates between observation, description, interpretation, and invention.

The pandemic and its restrictions reshaped my perceptions of personal space. Familiar objects acquired new significance, particularly chairs and houseplants. Chairs became metaphors for our collective isolation, while houseplants assumed nurturing and cohabiting roles. Working in a small confined indoor space, *The Covid Chair Series*, a series of nine 8" x10" gouache paintings, chronicled my quarantine experiences of 2020 through early 2021. As a symbolic plea for inner grounding or a reflection of loneliness, a single chair anchored the center of each painting. Fern-like plants, seasonal flowers, or imagery referencing the social and political upheaval of this period framed each chair, a reflection of this dense and complicated time.

As lockdowns eased, the diaristic *Covid Chair Series* painted during isolation evolved into larger oil and acrylic paintings of interior settings resplendent with plants, exploding with lush, vibrant color, and intricate, contrasting patterns. These effervescent compositions, with their shifting, oscillating planes present familiar, yet idiosyncratic off-kilter worlds. Infused with a unique, magical vibrancy, their vivacity acts as a foil to the darkness and grief often present in our reality.



“Doily Dumbbells” (detail), 2020, Plasma cut steel
Large Dumbbell: 14.5 x 48 x 14.5 in. (36.8 x 121.9 x 36.8 cm), Small Dumbbell: 10 x 14 x 10 in. (25.4 x 35.6 x 25.4 cm)

Thoughts on *In Her Space* by Cal Lane:

I am fascinated by where people place meaning, and meaning in objects, lifestyles and religion. I like to work as a visual devil’s advocate, using contradiction as a vehicle for finding my way to an empathetic image—an image of opposition that creates a balance, as well as a clash—by comparing and contrasting ideas and materials.

My reaction to Modernist philosophies has inspired a lot of my work. With the celebration of the industrial revolution, the machine-made object did not seem relevant anymore. Industries that have polluted the planet and created a culture of waste leave behind relics of rust. Taking these past functional objects and hand carving them into delicate skeletons was a process of creating a balance of visual power—not to claim one is better than the other, but to question the objects and practices we claim to be superior. There is also a secondary relationship being explored here, of lace used in religious ceremonies, as in weddings, christenings and funerals, and its relationship to class and sex.

The metaphor of lace further intrigued me by its associations with hiding and exposing at the same time...like a veil to cover, or lingerie to reveal. It also introduces a kind of humor through the form of unexpected relationships. Like a wrestler in a tutu, the absurdity of having opposing extremist stances is there for reaction and not rational understanding; the rational discussion arises in the search for how one thing defines the other by its proximity.

Technique as performance has been a driver for a lot of my work. Flame-cutting steel, sifting dirt, braiding tires, painting nails were all adopted crafts from specific places. My grandmother who sifted sugar through lace to decorate cakes, my mom who taught me how to become a hairdresser, watching women paint their nails—appropriating their avocations and turning them into large scale industries alters the hierarchies of the relationship we have with materials and techniques.



"The Covid Chair Series", 2020, Gouache on board, 10 x 8 in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm), each

Roxa Smith, Bio

Roxa Smith is a Brooklyn-based artist working primarily in figurative painting and collage. Born and raised in Venezuela, she studied Western Art History and German at Bowdoin College, Maine and received a Postgraduate degree in Fine Art at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She moved to New York City in the early 1990s where she began to explore and eventually anchor her work in themes of quotidian domestic settings. Various international genres influence Roxa's work including Latin American art, Indian miniature painting, Post Impressionism and naïve art.

Throughout the years, Roxa has exhibited in multiple solo exhibitions and two-person shows. In 2013, she had a midcareer show in which she exhibited over 25 pieces in the atrium of the Conde Nast building in Times Square, New York City. Roxa has also exhibited her work at many other venues such as: The Focus Gallery at the Sheldon Museum (NE), Kenise Barnes Fine Arts (NY), Lyly's Gallery at the Roger Smith Hotel (NYC) and George Billis Gallery (NYC and LA). Roxa's work has additionally appeared in numerous group exhibitions nationally and internationally.

Roxa has received a range of awards, residencies and fellowships. Most recently in 2021, she participated in "Creative Imperative," a program sponsored by the Vermont Studio Center, Vermont and was awarded an Artist Grant by the same program. In 2017, Roxa was a finalist for a Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Arts and Design commission (Brooklyn, New York.) In 2013, she was awarded the prestigious New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA)-Basil Alkazi Fellowship at the Sheldon Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska. In 2012, Roxa received a Fellowship in Painting from NYFA a year after receiving a grant to attend NYFA's Boot camp: Artist as an Entrepreneur program in 2011. She has been featured in *New American Paintings*, *Studio Visit Magazine*, *Artspace Magazine*, the NYFA Newsletter *Artspire*, and *HuffPost*.



"Pantie Chain", 2018, Plasma cut steel, 9 x 65 x 8 in. (22.9 x 165.1 x 20.3 cm)

Cal Lane, Bio

Cal Lane's artwork is physical, reflective, and conceptual. She pokes fun at gender roles and the machismo long associated with sculptural expression. Her fabrications wink to the work of artists Louise Bourgeois and Judy Chicago, while her ideas inventively contrast with her choice of materials. Reminiscent of Duchamp's readymades, Lane deconstructs the modernist image of the pure industrial object, by manually cutting into the form and redefining it. Solid steel transmutes into delicate, open patterned lace and monumental sculpture become intimate. A Canadian, Lane was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1968, but spent her formative years on the West Coast on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Her sculptural talents were first discovered in her mother's isle salon, where she worked part time as a hairdresser after school and on weekends. She studied welding and metalwork during that time, a practical skill she used after high school to support herself. She repaired tug boats and did heavy structural work in industrial applications.

Lane recognized, "I was always an artist; making things was my way of trying to understand the world. Becoming a welder was how I made money." Foremost an artist, the desire to go to art school was natural. She returned to her birth place to attend the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and taught welding to architecture students to fund her own schooling. Lane graduated in 2001 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and moved to New York State where her studies continued. Lane focused on sculpture at the State University of New York and completed a Master of fine Arts in 2005.

For the last 20 years, Lane has lived and worked in New York's Putnam Valley. In her artwork, process is thought expressed. Materials are electrifying and meaningful. She originates novel techniques and develops new ways to see familiar objects. Lane finds it quite amusing to take industrial products and carve them into useless delicate objects, saying, "It's a funny way to visually rebel against a past that no longer seems relevant."



Left: Cal Lane, "Untitled (Shovel)" (detail), Plasma cut steel and wood, 44 x 8 x 5.25 in. (137.2 x 20.3 x 13.3 cm), each
Right: Roxa Smith, "Rebirth", 2021, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm)

C24 Gallery Info

C24 Gallery is a contemporary art platform established in 2011 in New York City. The Gallery presents a diverse roster of artists whose work focuses on multiple levels of societal discourse through complex, engaging and expertly rendered work in a variety of mediums. Under the leadership of Director and Curator David C. Terry, and with additional presence in both Istanbul and Berlin, we have developed a program encompassing a multiplicity of voices from all over the world that speaks to a sense of global awareness and interconnection. In addition to our exhibition program, the Gallery engages in collaborative partnerships with non-profit institutions and other cultural organizations, including the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA), Field Projects, Goethe-Institut, Berlin-based A:D: Curatorial, the UK-based ING Discerning Eye Exhibition, Soho House, the German Consulate General New York and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). As culture producers, we support social equity, restorative justice and environmental protection, offering thought-provoking content and programming to support and promote our artists while engaging in multiple, ongoing conversations and projects within the creative community worldwide.

<https://interlocutorinterviews.com/new-blog/2022/2/15/exhibition-feature-in-her-space-c24-gallery-cal-lane-roxa-smith>