

Sydney Acosta

Filled With Song

June 24–August 19, 2023

You're in the woods, and on the move, floating. Is this (*butterfly meme*¹) astral projection?

Amongst the trees lurk shadows of the unknown, the suppressed, our unnameable fears and unwelcome desires. But they also offer safety, refuge, freedom, space for autonomy and self-discovery. Sprites play in the shade and bright clearings offer picnic spots. The woods are an away-from-it-all in life and lore, for Baby Suggs' life-giving sermons², for witch Sabbats and rebellion planning, outlaws, fireflies, wills-o'-the-wisp, mothlight, moonbaths and alien landings.³ The woods are a good place to hide and a good—or bad—place to get lost.

"In the middle of our walk of life I found myself within a forest dark, for the straightforward pathway had been lost."⁴

In these lightless landscapes the deep velvet blackness of charcoal marks are made as the paper's tooth snags the soft carbon residue of burnt willow. The paper's physicality, its roughness, sounds the charcoal out, like the rumble strip on a highway. It makes tones that echo the thick reverberations of the fattest wire strings at the low reaches of a keyboard and their grungy electric descendants, if there was ever a playlist for these works. (There was.) Highlights of untouched surface ping bright.

You can't make work like this and keep your hands clean. The body gets indexed all

1 A meme in which an anime character misidentifies things around him.

2 Baby Suggs is a holy figure and healer from Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) who preaches self-love and creates community in a clearing in the woods.

3 *ET the Extra-Terrestrial*, dir Steven Spielberg (1982)

4 *The Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri (1321)

Sydney Acosta

Filled With Song

June 24–August 19, 2023

over the paintings—brush gestures, finger painting, smudging—and the paintings get all over the body, in the making and in the viewing. To look at them puts you in the density of your physiological being, makes you want to touch or be touched, to breathe, walk, eat, fuck, to draw.

Mostly the marks are expressionistic and textural, but here and there there's a leaf or a plant. It's not plain old plein air. These are woods of the mind, of memory. And it's an emotional, experiential memory but also a reprographic kind of memory, of mechanized process, sampled sources. Somewhere along the way there had been a book: Persian plants turned into motifs and woven into tapestries, later photographed and printed, later photocopied, later hand-copied loosely onto the canvas: a breadcrumb trail of palimpsestic imaginings.

Movement through the parallax of verticals means always-shifting vistas. Figures of pattern and illustration chime through optical experiences of moving from light into darkness and back, disorienting us in our vision, our sense of location and our ways of knowing.

Pass a double rainbow in a flowery clearing, framed by two trees or the columns of a proscenium, or both. Memories of memories, of the visioning and artifacts of predecessors transferred as dream objects and saved xeroxes.

Pass a person-sized stack of four cadmium hearts, a fleshy cairn to immodesty, an "up yours" to taste. It's brash, ridiculous, unabashed, an embarrassment! Filled with song, its cup runneth over with love and bulging sexy exuberance. It has big balls, swollen vulva, a baboon's gaudy ass. It doesn't just wear one heart on its sleeve but four. It is excessive, joyful, deranged and demanding. Heavy hearts sing the great weight of their fullness.

Sydney Acosta

Filled With Song

June 24–August 19, 2023

Two sister skellies straight-shoot, zooming into the belly of the underworld. Light and dark angels of death making air out of bedrock, flight from substance, ascension from descension. Their graveblasting is a spell to ward off earthboundness.

A yellow ghost-car coasts through a gray mist. It could be a Lamborghini or a Porsche, a Mazda, a Camaro. Or all of them, or none. I don't know cars and it doesn't matter anyway, dream objects are destabilized, unfixed from worldly things. We witches don't care for the fixity of branding. Autonomy bites her thumb at your naming systems out here in the woods. A fast, sexy idea-of-a-car in a perpetual wheel spin is the thrill that sends us air bound. A vanitas. A shiny low-slung twelve cylinder broomstick flying through the rain.

What is a street racing scene doing in the forest? I told you, at witching hour we have no use for your logic. To find oneself in another time, space, surface and mode of meaning is precisely the experience of Acosta's "woods". This is a poetics of outside, the outside of the woods, the outside of time, a transzonal muddling of spaces real and symbolic. The hour of crepuscular encounter, a breach in the matrix of capitalist clock-time shared in the half-light market district by vendors setting up and ravers leaving the warehouses. This hour is dedicated to all Our Ladies of the Flowers.⁵

Anyway, the traces of that after-hours scene, the tire mark "donuts" that magically appear overnight on our streets, aren't they the fairy rings of the city?

~ Olivia Mole 2023

⁵ *Our Lady of the Flowers*, Jean Genet (1943), a poetic novel in which the narrator journeys through the Parisian underworld without leaving his prison cell.

Sydney Acosta

Filled With Song

June 24–August 19, 2023

Sydney Acosta (b. 1987, Yanaguana aka San Antonio, TX) lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her MFA from UCLA in 2021. Recent exhibitions include *Groundwork*, Dreamsong, Minneapolis, MN; *When Stones Clash*, Michael Benevento, Los Angeles, CA; *The Death of Beauty*, Sargent's Daughters, Los Angeles, CA; *of the world* (with Luz Carabaño), Castle, Los Angeles, CA. This is her first exhibition with the gallery.