

PAUL SOTO

Stephano Espinoza Galarza
Un volcán en mi cuarto
March 6 – April 13, 2024
New York

PRESS RELEASE

PAUL SOTO is pleased to announce *Un volcán en mi cuarto*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by the Ecuadorian artist Stephano Espinoza Galarza (b. 1992, lives and works in New Haven, CT). Espinoza Galarza's exhibition will open at the gallery's New York location on Wednesday, March 6 with a reception for the artist from 6 to 8pm. *Un volcán en mi cuarto* will run until Saturday, April 13. This is the artist's debut exhibition with the gallery, and his first in New York.

Stephano Espinoza Galarza explores archetypal narratives, fantasies, and obscured memories in his interdisciplinary practice. His subjects undergo a metamorphosis as they move between tangible form and representation. Working from memory, photographs, and observation from his personal history and life, Espinoza Galarza intertwines circular timelines and non-linear narratives. Through his use of color, shifts in scale, and fluctuations between pictorial and sculptural techniques, he offers the viewer new forms that convey a complex fabric of inner experiences, ones that encompass perception, thought, emotion, and their intermingling.

The artist's new series of paintings featured in *Un volcán en mi cuarto* depict stage-like scenes featuring altered readymade elements such as figures, papier-mâché, and toys. Engaging in a process akin to pretend-play, he meticulously arranges these components in the studio over time. With a sense of free agency and childlike exploration, he maneuvers, scrutinizes, and manipulates his assemblages, sketching, photographing, and ultimately translating them into paintings. Infusing a forensic approach with generative and embellished elements, the paintings undergo rhythmic layering and refinement, resulting in entirely new compositions. The thickly layered oil paint on his supporting surfaces is subjected to glazing, covering, resurfacing, sanding, and wiping, bearing the scars and residue of this transformative process, and of memory.

Inspired by landscape and its role in Ecuadorian art history in shaping a national identity in post-colonial Ecuador, Espinoza Galarza explores the imagery of the "exotic" that permeated and shaped Ecuador's cultural landscape both nationally and abroad, imagery that surrounded him as a child. These depictions, which he encountered as secondhand and forged reproductions at home, continue to influence his vision, lingering in his subconscious and dreams. The dirty, lumpy shapes and forms rendered in his paintings relate here, evoking a kaleidoscope of perspectives of a real but imagined terrain. Reframed as maquettes within the constellation of readymade figurines and cutouts inside his studio, the paintings that feature these elements induce a sense of vertigo.

Stephano Espinoza Galarza was born in 1992 in Guayaquil, Ecuador. He received his MFA from the Yale School of Art, Yale University; and his BA in Social and Cultural Analysis from New York University. His works have been exhibited at Media Agua, Quito, Ecuador; Juniin, Guayaquil, Ecuador; Yale School of Art, New Haven, USA; UTA Art Space, Beverly Hills, USA; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Quito, Ecuador; and Casa de la Cultura, Quito, Ecuador, amongst other venues. He lives and works in New Haven, CT.

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