

# SALAMATINA GALLERY

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May 19, 2017



## ALMANAQUE DE ARENA: VERONICA VILLEGAS: NEW WORKS

Opening reception:  
Wednesday, June 21, 5:30–9:30PM  
May 31–July 05, 2017

876 Joseph E Lowery Blvd NW  
Atlanta GA 30318

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*Only by living absurdly is it possible to break out of this infinite absurdity.*

—Julio Cortazar

*Life and death have been lacking in my life.*

—Jorge Luis Borges

Salamatina Gallery is pleased to present its first solo exhibition with Veronica Villegas, a painter who lives and works in Mexico City. For this exhibition, Villegas presents a new body of work, *Almanaque de Arena*, which explores relationships between religious icons and the social and historical background of Latin America.

Many Latin Americans entrusts their wellbeing to religious images, which provide impetus for spiritual journeys made in search of better lives. In works like *Mistagogos Our Lady of El Cobre* (2016), Cuba's main religious icon—which is synonymous with the country's nationalist identity—is used

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as an allegory for how sacred art and politics collide. Other works of the artist combine not just Latin American religious references but African ones as well; works like *Ngongtanga* (2016) hybridize folkloric objects from different contexts. Russian matrioshka dolls, references to Mexican ancient sculptures, and even African masks and vodum fetishes are combined and juxtaposed to illustrate how these symbols are in perpetual, transnational circulation—one that exceeds Western imaginaries. *Demiurgo* (2015), meanwhile, takes as its inspiration the Rebis, the alchemical conclusion of joining spirit and matter into a being of both male and female genders. Villegas associates an artist's creative process with this alchemical union.

Taken together, these works use allegory the way Julio Cortázar and Jorge Luis Borges might. Both writers have been very influential to the artist, who references them many times. Borges defined allegory as a superficial labyrinth of far-fetched metaphors, while Julio Cortázar developed the concept of almanac literature as a new format for telling stories with prose, poetry and images. Both lead Villegas to reflect on ideas of repetition, rite, and myth as it relates to transculturalism, religious piety, and national identity.

**Veronica Villegas** was born in 1989 in El Paso, Texas. Villegas lives and works in Mexico City. She received her BFA and MFA from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in 2012 and 2016, respectively. Her artwork is focused on contemporary religious imaginaries in Latin America and their relationship to different cultural contexts.

Exhibitions include Casa Galleria and Leo Trotsky Museum, Mexico City, Mexico (2016); and Mexican Honorary Consulate and Cervantes Institute, Hamburg, Germany (2015).

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The Salamatina Gallery was founded by Oksana Salamatina in 2008, in Manhasset, New York, with a subsequent location opening in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2015. The gallery's programming priorities include artists' historical surveys, site-specific installations, and retrospectives from across the United States and the world. In an effort to promote innovation in contemporary art, the gallery supports the development of new genres and experimental works by both emerging and recognized artists.

The gallery's recent programming has been focused on museum projects that go beyond the gallery's walls. Current institutional collaborations include the Venice Biennale, Arab American National Museum, Center for Civil and Human Rights, Atlanta, and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art.

In the past, the gallery have worked with the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC; Brooklyn Museum, NY; Birmingham Museum of Art, AL; Center Pompidou Paris; RÉUNION des Musées Nationaux–Grand Palais, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille; Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, Italy; Arte Laguna Prize, Milan, Italy; Nassau County Museum of Art, NY; Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia; and Art in Embassies, Smithsonian, DC.

**For further inquiries please contact the gallery at [info@salamatina.com](mailto:info@salamatina.com) or at +1516.439.4471.**

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