

Figueroa, Ana Hilda. "Ana González Sean Kelly." *ArtNexus* #124 / *Arte en Colombia* #170  
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R E V I E W S

Cocos Nucifera, 2025], the radiant palm trees appear to glow from within, alluding to the pollution left behind by energy companies and the resilience of the island's natural ecosystem. *The Flaming Musaceae* [2025], *Figure 1861* [2022], and *The Great Survivor* [2022] have a markedly romantic sensibility, centering the tropical landscape as both a protagonist and witness to sociopolitical changes. The fluorescent representations of species such as the banana plant and the breadfruit tree also recall their colonial histories, as they were brought to the Caribbean islands as sustenance for enslaved people. The prominence of vegetation in most of the works compels us to reconsider nature as an agent of history and a silent observer of environmental change.

In 2024, Rodríguez traveled to Guadeloupe, in the Antilles, and was able to appreciate the differences and similarities between Puerto Rico and the French territory. *The Light Tree Livistona Australis on Guadeloupe Soil* [2025] represents an Australian fan palm that seems to generate energy through the explosion that covers its foliage. Once again, the vegetation bears witness to the island's colonial history and becomes a testament to the problems Guadeloupe experiences due to pollution, lack of economic opportunities, and deficiencies in basic services. In *The Ascension of Notre Dame de l'Assomption, les Saintes* [2025], Rodríguez plays with the name of the parish church located in Terre-de-Haut, depicting it with powerful flashes that can simultaneously signify a spiritual ascent or its destruction.

The exhibition *La luz de alante* [The Light Ahead] invites viewers to perceive the hidden narratives in Caribbean landscapes and appreciate nature's resilience and enduring power. It also questions the future of territories like Puerto Rico and Guadeloupe in the face of climate change

**Ana González.** *Angapaccha*, 2024. Sublimation printing on rough canvas. 157 1/2 x 58 3/4 in. (400 x 149 cm). Courtesy: Sean Kelly



and economic dependence from the United States and France through dystopian and apocalyptic visions that imagine infrastructure collapse in the Caribbean Island territories and globally.

NOTES

1. Rodríguez, Gamaliel. Artist statement. March 2025.
2. Ibid.

FRANCINE BIRBRAGHER-ROZENCWAIG, PHD

### Ana González Sean Kelly

The natural resources, the flora and fauna of the Andean forests, are in imminent and sustained danger. In the fourteen artworks on display in her exhibition *Bruma* [Haze], Ana González [Bogotá, Colombia, 1974] underscored the damage caused to nature by the human hand. Open to the public from January 10 to February 22, this was González's first solo show in New York City.

González earned a degree in architecture from Colombia's Universidad de los Andes in 1997 and a master's degree in arts and media from ENSBA - ESCP, France, in 2001. Her work, held in collections in Colombia, the United States, France, Sweden, Switzerland, and Italy, is based on anthropological and botanical knowledge, indigenous ontologies, and the use of artisanal techniques. It always involves an interest in participatory and community elements.

*Bruma* focuses on landscapes that submerge viewers in stark dichotomies: old/new; past/future; before/after; protected/desecrated. Which side corresponds to each adjective is not always evident, however. An exercise in introspection, the exhibition seeks to represent the physical strangeness and remoteness of the Andean ecosystem. Only ten percent of the region's species have been catalogued, and many are endangered by deforestation and climate change.

González uses haze to create the effect of a virginal, forsaken place, hence the title of her exhibition. In series like *Devastaciones* [Devastations], she prints photographs of haze-covered Andean landscapes on textile materials and then partially tears up the tapestry, breaking the image's coherence. In her paintings, she uses wax in aerial perspectives to produce the illusion of distance, as in the diptych *Kyba* [2024]. The practice and the materiality of the symbolic are significant in González's artistic concept. We are prompted to reflect about the presentation of the tapestry, a genre that has grown in popularity in recent years thanks to the influence of Latin American and indigenous artists. In *Bruma*, haze is more than a formal resource. It is a metaphor for what has been obscured: ecological loss, cultural erasure, and histories made invisible by colonizing and extractivist agendas. By disentangling their plots, González creates a physical metaphor for deforestation, a slow-moving phenomenon that reflects the erosion of ecosystems. Her process also signals the possibility of once again knitting it all together, of regenerating the connection through memory and artisanal craft.

The artworks in *Bruma* are titled in the language of the Muisca, a civilization that flourished in the Colombian Andes between the years 600 and 1600 CE. These titles invoke the spiritual importance that the Muisca placed on the environment, in contrast with our contemporary culture of accumulation and consumption. For example, the title of *Angapaccha* [2024], a large-format work that spills off the wall and into the gallery space, means "powerful waterfall". The

title of *Quimabaya* [2024], a monumental work in five sections offering a panoramic vista of the cloud forest, means “sacred house”. González finds inspiration in the intersection between the natural and the human. For *Devastaciones* [Devastations], she leans on the writings of the eighteenth-century German naturalist and geographer Alexander von Humboldt, who saw the natural world as a web of interconnected life and once said that “if one thread is pulled, the entire tapestry may unravel.”

The exhibition centers on what cannot be seen but still exists: stories that our landscapes are yet to tell. It recalls the phrase “if these walls could talk,” but in terms of the mountains, rivers, and forests. Stories are told through visual repetition and cycles of undoing and recreating. The monochromatic use of a dark shade of green functions as a reflection and representation of nature. The palm trees stand out in the forest to create a visual pathway. The indeterminate, the rustic, plays with compositions of light and shadow in these works of art.

Ana González has carried out several social projects with Colombian indigenous communities in the Santa Marta Sierra Nevada, and in Nukak del Guaviare, and with the Misak women of Cauca. Her creative practice finds nourishment in this region, and she has sought to give something positive back to the community. For this exhibition, González collaborated with the Misak community of Cauca to produce an edition of bags made in their traditional weaving techniques and printed with an image created by the artist. All the proceeds from the sale of these bags went to the Misak craftswomen. At a time when the climate catastrophe dominates global discourse, González reminds us that ecological collapse is more than a scientific concern; it also produces spiritual and cultural disintegration. *Bruma* calls on us to listen—to the mountains, rivers, and forests—and to protect the world we share.

ANA HILDA FIGUEROA

## Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez Instituto de Visión

*Mopa Mopa Imaginaries* is the title of Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez’s first solo exhibition at the Instituto de Visión in New York, curated by Beatriz López. The title refers to Mopa Mopa, a pre-Hispanic artisanal technique from Colombia’s southern Andes, also known as *Barniz de Pasto* [Pasto varnish] because its practice has been rooted in San Juan de Pasto since the colonial era. This technique has had significant social, symbolic, and cultural relevance from its origins to its current consolidation. For this reason, UNESCO declared it an Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2020.

For Friedemann-Sánchez, Mopa Mopa is of great interest for its aesthetic value and mestizo character, the result of combining a pre-Hispanic indigenous technique with native and European iconographic elements. This idea of *mestizaje* is precisely the fundamental theme of the work she has been doing since 2011, following her move from New York to Lincoln, Nebraska. At that time, she asked herself how she would structure her new life if she were a writer. She dedicated time to reading and took a Chicano and Latinx literature class at university, which inspired her to break away from the codes she had used up until then as a visual artist. [1] Since then, she has dedicated herself to examining patterns of violent exploitation and subjugation that define colonialism in various manifestations of visual culture.

Through an ecofeminist, decolonial, and intersectional lens, she uses visual narratives to explore the structures of colonization and racial identity in contemporary society. [2]

The painting and archival collection projects she has completed over the past fourteen years are organized into a visual novel titled *Mestiza dos veces* [Twice Mestiza], a reference to her experience as a Colombian American woman with European and Native American roots. Each chapter addresses a specific conceptual theme. *Pinturas de casta* [Casta Paintings, 2015–2021] draws on the Spanish colonial tradition of casta paintings made in the 18th century to illustrate the variations resulting from the miscegenation of Spaniards, Indigenous peoples, and Africans that justified racist and classist societies. The drawings *India gentil* [Gentle Indigenous Woman, 2017] and *Morisca* [Moorish, 2017] included in the exhibition belong to this series. To create these works, the artist invited Latinas to trace their bodies on paper, posing in a vulnerable and scrutinizing position with their arms raised above their heads. Outlined against black backgrounds, the figures wear ceremonial masks from the collection of her mother, anthropologist Nina S. de Friedemann, and others acquired on eBay. Their bodies, covered with topographical textures, have a ghostly and ethereal presence.

Friedemann-Sánchez has researched the visual cultural history of Mopa Mopa, studying colonial pieces in museums, books, and private collections. She has also worked with the tradition’s bearers, familiarizing herself with this laborious technique, which involves making wooden objects covered in a handmade plant resin from the leaf buds of the Mopa Mopa shrub, which grows in the Amazon region. The finished pieces resemble lacquered objects. Drawing on her research, the

Nancy Friedemann. *Dream Map and Cornucopia with Cacao*, 2025. Ink on Tyvek mounted to a cradled panel. 68 ½ x 46 ½ in. (174 x 117 cm). Photo: Larry Gawel. Courtesy of the artist and Instituto de Visión

