"They insisted on covering the fissures, but the walls still perspired"

Sol Calero was born in Venezuela where she grew up until the age of 17. Her paintings featuring plant motifs mixed with vernacular architecture create a vibrant festive effect proper to the tropical iconography of her origins and South American culture. They are often devised as more or less accurate childhood memories, based on personal or family ‘archives’. Strongly influenced by the work of indigenous artists in Peru (including Inca tradition) after the Spanish conquest - votive paintings by La Escuela Cuzqueña (16th to 18th centuries), in particular – her work cannot be reduced to a colourful territorial cliché; an entire continent cannot be summed up in a postcard. Her conception of art is totally syncretic, at the crossroads of several cultures, identities and experiences. Thus, her painting can also be perceived by the Western eye, in particular through the prism of Matisse who, in his day, was one of the first Europeans to free colour from its codes and stereotyped juxtapositions.

Beyond painting and its eternal references, the singularity of Sol Calero’s work is also totally immersed in the places and contexts in which she works. At Villa Arson, she developed her project during her residency, when the region was struck by almost tropical rainfall last November and December (a situation referred to in the title she chose for this exhibition).

The artist built a walkway to avoid stepping in puddles of water and the areas most affected by seepage. She also took apart waterlogged partitions and used rubble as material for making sculptures. She plays on the light flooding in through the gallery’s large windows, to deflect it in the rooms, just as she duplicates the red-ochre colour of the Centre d’Art’s central patio to bring it from the outside into the exhibition areas, along with the natural vegetation.

Her installations often appear as interiors: living room or hair salon, waiting room, travel agency, café or snack bar, bureau de change and even a bus made of painted wood, recently displayed at the Tate Liverpool. After realising the Villa Arson library had very few books on South American art, she ordered some thirty of them to create a small library with two sofas and an eccentric bed. The books will later go to the School’s library to enrich its collections. The artist wished for students and visitors to occupy this reading room to bring it alive - a place in which to reflect, a school within a school - extending its immersive processes to the places where she lives and works.

This exhibition was conceived during the artist’s residency at the Centre d’Art from November 2019 to February 2020.

Curator: Eric Mangion
Credits: Aude Levère, Rebeca Pérez Gerónimo, Bryce Delplanque, ChertLüdde (Berlin), Crévecœur (Paris) and Barbara Gross (Munich) galleries, Villa Arson staff and workshops (ceramic, in particular).

**Sol Calero** (born in 1982 in Caracas, Venezuela) lives and works in Berlin where she codirects the Kinderhook & Caracas ‘project space’ with fellow artist Christopher Kline. Her most recent solo exhibitions in Europe include: Tate Liverpool (2019); ChertLüdde, Berlin, (2019); Museum van Boijmans Beunigen, Rotterdam (2018); Brücke Museum, Berlin (2018); Gallerie Crévecœur, Paris (2018); Düsseldorf Kunstverein (2018); Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich (2018); Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon, (2018). She also participated in collective exhibitions at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2019); Preis der Nationalgalerie, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2017); Casa Anacaona, Folkestone Triennial, Folkestone (2017).

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Translation: Claire Bernstein

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Media partners: Art Press, ParisArt Le Journal des Arts, L’Œil and La Strada

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**+ Informations: solcalero.com**