

Tanya Leighton

(CULTURE)

AT EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO TRIENNIAL, FIVE LATINX PAINTERS TO WATCH

BEATRIZ COLÓN

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN SECK



LEFT TO RIGHT: ESTEBAN JEFFERSON,
CHAMBRE PARENTALE, 2021;
UNTITLED, 2021.

When Bad Bunny released the song *Estamos Bien* (We're Good) the summer after Hurricane María hit Puerto Rico in 2017, it became an instant anthem for Puerto Rican resilience. As the title of El Museo del Barrio's inaugural triennial—or *La Trienal*—in 2021, it transcends borders, representing the tenacity of Latinx artists across the globe in spite of systemic racism and injustice, the rise of totalitarian regimes throughout South America, COVID-19's impact on BIPOC communities, and beyond.

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Kurfürstenstraße 156, 10785 Berlin

+49 (0)30 21 972 220, info@tanyaleighton.com, www.tanyaleighton.com

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Estamos Bien is El Barrio's first national large-scale survey of Latinx contemporary art. It runs through September 26, having opened the same weekend this March that a year prior New York shut down. A convergence of "generations, genders and ethnic and racial backgrounds" brought together through Latinidad, *La Trienal* follows "two years of research and studio visits by the curatorial team" which includes the museum's chief curator Rodrigo Moura, curator Susanna V. Temkin, and artist [Elia Alba](#).

There are elements of both individualism and unification coursing through the entirety of the exhibition, as unique experiences are highlighted and still find common ground through shared experiences that are inherent to being Latinx. Among the myriad of talents represented in the show, five artists exploring painting piqued our curiosity. Through Vincent Valdéz and Esteban Jefferson we see stolen histories and oppression. Sandy Rodríguez and Victoria Gitman explore and depict traditional methods and items inherent to their Latinx heritage. Meanwhile, Cándida Álvarez reminds us of the strength Latinx communities have come to be known for.

Esteban Jefferson

In his long-term "Petit Palais" project, which follows his similarly themed 2019 series "Chambre Parentale," Esteban Jefferson challenges the traditional value of art established by institutions and their practice of diminishing non-European cultures and histories. Jefferson's combination of a sketch-like setting, juxtaposed with hyper-realistic objects found in a Parisian apartment the artist resided in—and works wrapped in shiny plastic and tape, allude to colonial references and stories yet to be told.