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a crocodile passed by today, I said hello, he said hello, that annoyed me

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Mayra Villegas

Artist Statement

The creatures in my paintings are vastly invested in catering to my sensibilities. Emotional cowardice, impulsive politeness: through them, I am relieved of those personal culprits. They lend ropes, take blame, spit in eyes, and color my streams of consciousness. Furthermore, they manifest personal and social arrays of vexing scenarios. Suffocating hierarchies, the monotony of existence, my paintings aim to offer respite from such malaise.

The worlds I construct in my paintings are unfamiliar, uncanny, and idiosyncratic. The creatures themselves are utterly foolish and decrepit: hefty viscous body structures, decaying aging teeth, uncoordinated droopy eyes, faulty limbs, and weightless mouths. Their features remain remote, hinting only at the slight possibility of a human/ mammal ancestral relationship. The notion is to not have them tied to anything in particular, leaving room for outsider interpretation.

While remaining deeply suggestive and sensational, I still want my creatures to factually embody emotion. Overt facial expressions, concentrated oil stains, degenerate sloppy mug shots, all of these qualities enable me to deface and desensitize bad days, hecklers of all classifications. They function as a white noise, creating an unsettling quietness that is all relieving of personal anxieties, lamentations, and impending dooms. Those “noises” are composed of violent compassions, outbursts of language, and lacerated images. Essentially my own garden of earthly delights that encompass: Shakespearian plays, Tuskin Raiders, Orcs, Victorian novels, punk rock, my brother poking my face, cat hair, my mother’s hug, that joke my brother made about feeding me KFC if I ever experienced a coma. Inhabitants of my imagination are all genetically coded in my creatures.

They are redeemers of the void; they talk to one another, bicker, put on shows, do what they do. They invite viewers to take a lighter approach to those vexing situations, to abandon pessimism for a moment’s time. My paintings highlight the underdog: the one being sat on, being burped on. The idea is

to assess strength to the most unusual, unsuspecting character. We garner sympathy for the victim, not for the Neanderthal bully.

Space, emptiness, nothingness, my creatures are there to eliminate that; to exist in-between. They cover vulnerability; plaster themselves onto canvas to reinforce. Roland Barthes once described the art of wrestling as a “spectacle of excess, full of emotions without reserve.” My work contains an excess of images, colors, and marks to achieve a similar spectacle.

Ultimately, my paintings are resolving, absolving even, personal and societal grievances.