

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

## Hulda Guzmán

**Drawing on surrealism, Mexican muralism and Caribbean folk traditions, Guzmán's junglescapes and studio scenes conjure portals to a mythic realm. Charged with postcolonial and ecological discourses, her paintings revitalise tropes of the natural world as a repository for our wilder instincts.**

Hulda Guzmán was born in 1984, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. She lives and works between Santo Domingo and the rainforest-covered mountains of Samaná, on the country's northeast coast.

Guzmán's paintings are populated by a technicolour cast of humans, animals, anthropomorphic plants and imaginary creatures. Employing distinct architectural locations and spatial tricks such as *mise en abîme*, her narratives occupy contradictory, dreamlike realities. Characters lounge on ambrosial shores beside derelict flats, join dancefloors that spill into the rainforest and chase demons through chic interiors. Though rooted in Guzmán's liberal childhood, these wittily painted gatherings also reflect her experiences of the artistic community in Samaná.

Echoing the paradisaical fantasies of Henri Rousseau and Paul Gauguin, Guzmán frequently interrogates imagery connected with her Caribbean heritage. The modernist style of her sparse interiors represents "a metaphor for human order," Cathryn Drake explains in *Artforum*. It is "a reflection of the commercial exchange of goods around the globe, the most insidious form of colonisation." These allusions to imperialist history emerge in contrast to the natural landscape, opposing mercenary tendencies with hints of a transcendent perspective.

The artist's recent works explore humanity's role within a vast ecosystem. Towering trees and lush foliage dwarf her subjects, evoking nature's immeasurable complexity. Often employing wood as a surface for her paintings, Guzmán allows the textured grain to blend with leaves and skin. She explains that these works "are a celebration of nature [...]. On the other hand, they question our own nature as creators of our 'reality' and examine the manifested world in relation to and reflection of the inner world. [...] We must transition from our industrial materialistic society to a more contemplative culture, one that is based on consciousness and ecological symbiosis."

Guzmán studied fine arts and illustration at Escuela de Diseño Altos de Chavón, La Romana, Dominican Republic (2002–2004). She went on to receive a BA in visual arts from Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Mexico City, Mexico (2004–2006).

A solo exhibition of the artist's work opened at Stephen Friedman Gallery in March 2022. Guzmán has shown with institutions including Fine Arts Center at Colorado Collage, Colorado Springs, Colorado; Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado; Art Museum of the Americas, Washington DC, USA; Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San José, Costa Rica; Museo de Arte Moderno, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil and Pérez Art Museum, Miami, Florida, USA. She featured in the Dominican Republic's pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2019.

Guzmán's work is included in public collections including Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland, USA; Centro León Jimenes, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic; Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Caracas, Venezuela and New York City, New York, USA; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas, USA; Denver Art Museum, Denver, Colorado, USA; Fundación Casa Cortés, San Juan, Puerto Rico; He Art Museum, Guangdong, China; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida, USA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California, USA; Museu de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, Florida, USA; Pond Society, Shanghai, China and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, California, USA.