

LORIEL BELTRÁN
Calor y Color

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New York



Loriel Beltrán, *Full Spectrum Contrast, 2022 (detail)*

PRESS CONTACTS

Sarah Levine
Global Director of Marketing & Communications
slevine@lehmannmaupin.com

Alejandro Jassan
Associate Director of Press Relations
alejandro@lehmannmaupin.com

Isidore of Seville, the savants' savant, said in the seventh century AD that color and heat were the same since colors came from fire or sunlight and because the words for them were fundamentally the same, calor and color.

– Michael Taussig in *What Color Is the Sacred?*

Lehmann Maupin presents *Calor y Color*, an exhibition of recent work by Miami-based artist **Loriel Beltrán**. The exhibition marks the gallery's first solo presentation with the artist, who joined Lehmann Maupin's program in February 2023.

Beltrán creates sculptural accumulations of paint and color that defy traditional notions of artistic media. As he poetically merges painting and sculpture, the artist states that his works “resist becoming images” and instead materialize color in its full complexity. Situating his work between the legacy of Latin American modernism and postwar painting in the United States, Beltrán dissolves distinctions between image and object, surface and substance, plane and structure. Although his work probes optical effects, Beltrán remains equally invested in issues of materiality, process, and industry, foregrounding artistic labor and the residue it leaves behind.

As a Miami-based artist born in Venezuela, Beltrán locates his work at the intersection of a variety of art histories and traditions across the Americas. He identifies points of connection between the physicality of his painted strips and Gego's notion of the line as object, while his perceptually complex compositions also gesture to histories of the Op and Kinetic art movements in Venezuela, with the work of artists Jesús Rafael Soto and Carlos Cruz-Diez embedded in his visual memory. At the same time, he identifies significant points of connections with a number of postwar United States artists, evoking Jack Whitten's material experimentations, Lynda Benglis's pours, Agnes Martin's organic grids, the notion of the flatbed picture plane in Jackson Pollock's work, Mark Rothko's exploration of the color's expressive potential, and Robert Morris's engagement of chance and gravity.

Works in *Calor y Color* consider the interplay between particular combinations of colors, often indicated by technical abbreviations in Beltrán's titles. Several works exhibited here, such as *PSMYLV* and *Chromatic Black*, consider particular pairings or groupings of colors to explore the optical vibrations they both suggest and create. Others, such as *Large Refractions (FS)*, *Full Spectrum Contrast*, and *Full Spectrum (pools and shards)*, allude to the complete range of possible hues visible to the human eye. Beltrán has described the resulting works as “panels of code,” and rather than depicting a single image, they suggest a distinct visual language, replete with numerous possibilities for imagery.

The result of a meticulous process, Beltrán's surfaces are composed of layers of paint that have dried to create vibrating optical effects. The artist produces custom molds and pours paint into them, allowing the paint to harden and dry over

time. He sometimes integrates objects into his molds—including leftover materials or detritus from his studio—to insert “interruptions” in his compositions. Beltrán repeats this process for several months, or even years, allowing layers of paint to coagulate and accumulate. The artist then removes the mold and slices the resulting object—a hardened block with swirls and layers of color—into strips using a custom-built machine. The strips are then arranged into planar compositions, which he adheres to a wooden substrate.

Here, as throughout his practice, Beltrán examines how color and light attach themselves to form to suggest tactile, physical presences. Observing the etymological connections between the words calor and color, the artist is struck by the way that color, while produced by light, also maintains connections to matter—emanating from the sun, extracted from minerals, produced as pigment. Beltrán's practice grew out of his initial fascination with the buildup of dried paint on his palette, and his works draw upon an aesthetics of accumulation, reflecting a similar attention to the remnants of artmaking and the traces that color leaves behind. As his surfaces accumulate layers of paint, so too do they accumulate layers of memory and meaning.

Registering acts of artistic labor and visualizing the passage of time, Beltrán's works evidence a slow and demanding physical process. The artist has stated that prior jobs in construction, fabrication, and installation continue to inform his artistic practice and his relationship to materiality. Beltrán's work manifests this labor and physical exertion, and he distinguishes artistic labor from other forms of labor precisely because of its visibility. “Regular labor is meant to be invisible. If you see how a wall was painted, it's a bad job,” he states. “Artistic labor is meant to be seen, or to expose itself.”



Loriel Beltrán, *Yellow Purple*, 2022 (detail)

Loriel Beltrán (b. 1985, Caracas, Venezuela; lives and works in Miami, FL) earned his B.F.A from the New World School of the Arts, Miami, FL. Recent solo exhibitions of his work include *Over the Sun, Under the Earth*, CENTRAL FINE, Miami, FL (2022); *Constructed Color*, Museum of Art and Design, Miami, FL (2021); and *New Old Paintings*, CENTRAL FINE, Miami, FL (2020), Beltrán's work has also been exhibited in a number of significant group exhibitions, including *Cut: Abstraction in the U.S. from the 1970s to the Present*, Frost Art Museum, Miami, FL (2019); *GUCCIVUITTON*, Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami, FL (2015); *T.A.Z.*, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL (2015); *Global Positioning Systems: Urban Imaginaries*, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL (2014); and *Liquid Matter*, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA (2011). Beltrán was also a co-founder and co-director of the artist-run gallery and collective Noguchi Breton (formerly GUCCIVUITTON).

His work is included in a number of notable private and public collections, including the de la Cruz Collection, Miami FL; Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami, FL; and Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL, among others.



Portrait of Loriel Beltrán in his Miami studio, 2023. Photo by Oriol Tarridas

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.



Lehmann Maupin in New York. Photo by Matthew Herrmann