

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



Victoria Gitman, 'Untitled', 2020. Oil on board 8 x 8 1/8 in. Photography courtesy of the artist and Garth Grenan Gallery, New York.

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.

*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.

#### *Victoria Gitman*

Even after reading the “*Untitled*, 2020. Oil on canvas” description on the plaque for Victoria Gitman’s hyper-realistic work, it is hard to know if we’re being fooled, as the difference between the artist’s practice and photography feels minimal. Gitman painstakingly reproduces to scale productions of luxurious objects through specific light sources and magnifying glasses, the latter of which might feel necessary to catch the infinite details found in her *trompe-l’oeil*-style pieces.