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Maria Guzmán Capron's Deliciously Tactile Fabric Figures, or "Hot Aliens"

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Lauren Moya Ford | October 12, 2021



Maria Guzmán Capron, *Olas Malcriadas*, installation view, Texas State Galleries, August 23 – November 12, 2021. All images courtesy of the artist and Texas State Galleries.

Maria Guzmán Capron's fantastical, colorful textiles are a lot of fun to look at. The artist's solo exhibition [Olas Malcriadas](#) at Texas State Galleries is filled with deliciously tactile, collaged fabric figures that smirk, crouch, and embrace across the gallery's walls and floor. The title of the show — loosely translated from Spanish as "Naughty Waves" in English — is apt: Guzmán Capron might know the rules, but she chooses, happily, to break them. Her picaresque personas are fascinating and funny, but they also offer us work that feels distinctly fresh and new.

The artist began working with fabric as an undergraduate. She didn't have any formal training in sewing, but, "It was so exciting to not know how to use a material and to invent my own way," Guzmán Capron told Hyperallergic by email. Nowadays, her sewn and loose threads mingle with acrylic, latex, and spray paint over a dynamic patchwork of found fabrics. Up close, dynamic abstractions and color combinations emerge, and in some passages — like in the flowery arm of Guzmán Capron's wacky, "Mona Lisa"-like "Ventana" (2021) — the artist replicates a fabric motif in paint, adding another curious layer for viewers to decipher. But despite the busy, clashing visuals, the artist manages to keep a delicate balance of harmony and rhythm across her works.



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“When I choose fabric,” Guzmán Capron wrote by email, “I follow my intuition and also sift through layers of meaning, signs, and cult signals alongside color, pattern, and texture.” In fabric — especially those she finds in the sale bin — the artist reads clues about what’s deemed tacky or tasteful, acceptable or odd. Guzmán Capron was born in Italy to Peruvian and Colombian parents, and moved to the United States at age 17. “People recognized me as foreign without even speaking to me,” she said, saying that her clothes marked her difference. Today, the vivid palette and patterns in her artworks mirror the ways that she and her family dress. “The exuberance is familiar and comforting to me,” she noted, “but I know it can feel brash to others.”

The artist, who playfully refers to her figures as “hot aliens” and “beyond-human characters,” insists that her creations are brown bodies “performing an otherworldly femininity” that reflects herself and her immigrant, Latinx community. Beyond their bright hues and mischievous protagonists, Guzmán Capron’s works “embody emotions, desires, and my relationship to the world,” the artist explained. While she says she’s tried in the past to blend in, she now hopes that her work will create space for difference. “My family would say I am ‘*ni chicha ni limonada*’ (neither the sweet purple corn drink nor lemonade),” Guzmán Capron told Hyperallergic. “I am a new thing and I want to signal with my textiles to other in-between people that they belong.”



Maria A. Guzmán Capron, *She Wants More*, 2021, Fabric, thread, batting, latex paint, spray paint, and acrylic paint.



Maria A. Guzmán Capron, *Sombra*, 2021, Fabric, thread, batting, latex paint, spray paint, and acrylic paint.



Maria A. Guzmán Capron, *Ventana*, 2021, Fabric, thread, batting, latex paint, spray paint, and acrylic paint.



Maria A. Guzmán Capron, *Ventana* (detail), 2021, Fabric, thread, batting, latex paint, spray paint, and acrylic paint.