



View of “nepantla,” 2019.

“nepantla”

GAMMA GALERÍA

GUADALAJARA

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Cracked adobe shelves line the gallery's perimeter, their shapes derived from the contours of three geographic boundaries: the Pacific Coast of the US, the Panama Canal, and the US-Mexico border. Made by curators Timo Fahler and Rafa Esparza, the ledges generate an axis of physical relationships, conjuring a top and a bottom in the space, a ground for sculptures to stand beside, a landscape above which paintings float. The earthen, hand-shaped platform is a new border, a means of generating the titular *nepantla*, Nahuatl for *in-betweenness*.

Greeting viewers on the shelf nearest the entrance is Diana Yesenia Alvarado's clay sculpture *Diablita* (Little Devil) (all works cited, 2018), a small, quasi-Looney Tunes critter that embodies the oft-opposed qualities of these *nepantla* zones: natural, man-made, fantastic, quotidian, bound, free, beautiful, ugly. Like its base, the sculpture was formed by flesh touching earth. As these tactile processes accrue, viewers begin to better feel the borders' innumerable forms of contact: land abuts land, sea kisses coast, state meets individual, ideology crashes into the dirt of reality. The included artists, all LA-based,

search for means to move beyond binary imagination. In Karla Canseco's roiling, opaque video *todavía es tan extraño* (It Is Still So Strange), a bright-blue whirlpool spins, centripetal energy pulling everything into its churning heart. A narrator warns, English and Spanish overlapping: “It's not understood by everyone . . . Sometimes it's not understood by those closest to us.”

Ahorros Seguros (Secure Savings), Alfonso Gonzalez Jr.'s brilliant enamel painting, draws from recent histories of state violence to summarize the consequences of a world reduced to it. Before a scene of US Border Patrol agents teargassing migrants near Tijuana, *alcancías* rest on a foreground ledge, piggy banks protecting pennies. This is homeland security. A pathetic vision of space.

— Lucas Matheson

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