



View of “nepantla,” 2019.

## “nepantla”

GAMMA GALERÍA

GUADALAJARA

February 2–April 20

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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