

REVIEWS

neighboring square; it sometimes peels off the surface. The acrylics Bechara uses gives his edges a dimensional quality, emphasizing associations with textile weaving or basketry. The artist meets the preprogrammed system with idiosyncrasy and defect: in short, with humanity.

What historical conditions encourage a reinvigoration of the colored grid now? Although artificial intelligence has been around since the 1950s, it became impossible to ignore in 2023. From university classrooms to the halls of the US Congress and even the social media accounts of art museums, anxiety about human redundancy has never been higher. This anxiety might be mapped onto the greater control that Bechara seems to exert over the various versions of *Random 28*: Instead of granting each of the colors in his predetermined formula an equal opportunity to land on the grid, he emphasizes various permutations of blue, red, yellow, and green—to dazzling effect. Each jewel-toned sea Bechara crafts gives way to a scintillating field of optical confetti as the viewer gets closer to the work's surface. There is much hand-wringing about technology's new capabilities, yet Bechara's art suggests the potential for opportunity rather than obstruction.

—*Daivda Fernández-Barkan*

Sandra Cinto

TANYA BONAOKDAR GALLERY

The twelve paintings in Sandra Cinto's solo exhibition here, "May I Know How to Be the Sun on Cloudy Days," were composed of dueling idioms. In each one, gossamer threads seemed to glide across the foregrounds of expansive landscapes. The imagery appeared almost coauthored, touched first by a fine hand that captured the stillness of mountaintops and dense mists in black ink—emphasizing line over depth, mystery over clarity—and then by a gymnast who interpreted nature's dynamism and symbioses as a series of fluid gestures via white paint and intricate geometric patterns.

This show, Cinto's tenth at the gallery, spanned two floors. The first was primarily devoted to paintings with gold grounds featuring craggy landforms as though seen from afar, while the second presented bird's-eye views of open seas and skies rendered on bright-blue grounds. The Japanese pictorial tradition is often cited as one of Cinto's influences, and indeed the golden canvases displayed a deep sense of *mono no aware*—that is, a melancholic understanding of the world's impermanence. One might even have mistaken the exhibition's namesake mural, which filled the gallery's back wall, for a gilded screen of the Momoyama period (1573–1615), were it not for its propulsive westerly winds (Japanese works typically scan from right to left) and the Brazilian artist's use of modern materials, such as acrylic paint and permanent marker, in its creation. Set against an archaic imperial hue, Cinto's complex black-and-white patterns on this 2024 piece—and the two paintings flanking it, *Landscape in Gold I* and *II*, both 2023—materialized and dissolved in wistful, elegant sighs. Like the silk of Walt Whitman's lovelorn spider, her threads unfurled into abysses. Woven at times into webs and ladders, Cinto's lines rode on specks of bright pigment resembling spores and ocean mist, as if they were hoping to steady themselves on more solid masses.

The paintings upstairs were simpler in composition yet more buoyant in mood. Their color scheme was based on that of Portuguese Azulejo tiles, which have inspired some of the artist's public murals and civic installations in South America and Asia over the course of her three-decade career. Applied onto horizontal streaks of blue and white acrylic, the arabesques in the four "Open Sea" canvases, all 2023, as well as those of the four "Day Flight" paintings, all 2023, were calmer and more uniform than their first-floor counterparts. The "Open Sea"



works could be read as foam-crested waves, while the "Day Flight" pieces tessellated into reticular masses with flourishing tendrils, floating in midair like the cities of Renee Gladman's Afrofuturist line drawings.

In the spirit of public art, the symbolic underpinnings of Cinto's paintings here were highly accessible and straightforward. Their golden hues represented sunlight, and details such as bridges and swings evoked the wandering and play of childhood. Yet a pair of sculptures subtly incorporated into the exhibition offered a contrast, as they seemed more off-putting and hermetic in temperament: *Bench Bed*, 2019/2023, an ostensibly functional wood-and-bronze seat with asymmetrical armrests, was displayed in the center of the first-floor gallery, while *Levitating Bookshelf*, 2023, a piece resembling a group of assorted volumes gummed shut with gold paint, was installed on a wall above the second-floor landing. Indeed, Cinto's paintings exuded warmth and sociality, but *Bench Bed* looked too much like an art object to be treated as a site of comfortable repose. A chimera akin to the modified furniture in Brian Goggin's outdoor sculpture *Defenestration*, 1997, *Bench Bed* produced an alienating effect and a series of double takes in the gallery. *Levitating Bookshelf* also seemed to delight in deception—the work was made entirely out of wood and contained neither pages nor text.

Of course, Cinto is no stranger to surrealist sculpture. In 1996, as part of "Antarctica Artes com a Folha"—a landmark exhibition that gathered sixty-two then-emerging Brazilian artists at the former headquarters of São Paulo's city hall—she exhibited a human-size cage to protest structures of biopolitical domination. While the two sculptures here proved more ambiguous than that in meaning, they evoked a frustrated longing for a kind of unfettered, openhearted optimism—in short supply everywhere these days—that could be found only within the worlds of the artist's paintings.

—*Jenny Wu*

Champion Métadier

CEYSSON & BÉNÉTIÈRE

It matters that Champion Métadier began her career as a *painter*, and that she did so at a time when that medium was in crisis. That fact gives

View of "Sandra Cinto: May I Know How to Be the Sun on Cloudy Days," 2024. Wall: *May I Know How to Be the Sun on Cloudy Days*, 2024. Foreground: *Bench Bed*, 2019/2023.

necessary context for her exhibition at Ceysson & Bénétière, where she exhibited not paintings but single-edition prints of images made with Photoshop Elements.

For many young artists in post-1968 France, painting was prohibited. It was, after all, the form par excellence of bourgeois subjectivity, apparently reifying the idea of unique personal experience. In keeping with the generational call to proletarianize artistic labor, art collectives came into vogue, the most influential of these, Supports/Surfaces, seeking to recuperate the medium. The group hewed rigorously to the material reality of painting via its physical constituents, replacing potentially expressive brushwork with impersonal operations such as stretching, cutting, and folding.

Métadier, however, never fit snugly into this paradigm. For one thing, Supports/Surfaces was exclusively male, whereas she belonged to the militant feminist collectives Femmes en lutte and Collectif Femmes/Art. These groups argued that, by prohibiting painterly expression before women could realize *their* subjectivity, male artists showed they would rather forfeit their game than let women play. Influenced by psychoanalytic feminism—the most prominent theorist of which, Julia

Kristeva, even attended some meetings of Collectif Femmes/Art—these groups sought to emancipate painting from its misogynistic history.

Fast-forward to today, to Métadier's Photoshop "TOXICTOYS" series, 2019–23. Why—when all prohibitions on painting have clearly been lifted—should she finally give up the fight and work in, of all things, an outdated version of Adobe's flagship software, a mass-marketed product designed primarily for commercial application, targeted to a homogenized "user"? In the Elements program, style is not a mode of self-expression but a prefab option on a drop-down menu—e.g., `LAYER_STYLE>BEVEL_AND_EMBOSS`. Photoshop is an à la carte medium. The product

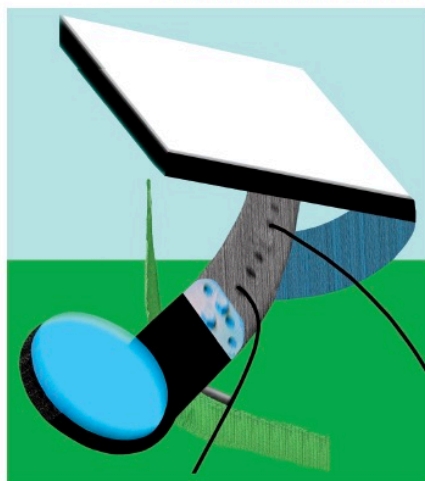
thus critically reframes Métadier's lifelong problem—reconciling a leftist critique of personal aesthetics with a feminist demand for self-knowledge—in terms appropriate for new sociopolitical conditions. It facilitates, finally, a way to reclaim artistic subjectivity without regressing into bourgeois false consciousness.

To realize this promise, Métadier seeks what she calls "the liquid image," forms bounded without boundaries, substantial without shape, perpetually unsettled. The task of finding them presents an obvious challenge. For however long she tinkers with the forms in process—often months—she must ultimately vitiate the recalcitrant fixedness of works printed on paper. In her "TOXICTOYS," Métadier responded to this predicament with forms that evoke processes of secretion. Glowing reds ooze like John Carpenter gore. Slick blacks seep like crude-oil spills. Acid greens coagulate like cartoon vomit. These references share a protean sense of existing between states. They produce the feeling of abjection, to employ a term that Kristeva used to describe how certain substances—pus in a wound, the skin of boiled milk, putrefying flesh—frustrate our attempts to cleave the world into subjects and objects, refusing to be contained in a definite state.

Métadier counterposes her liquid abject forms to geometric vector graphics. She frequently uses a simple rectangle, skewed obliquely, then beveled to appear three-dimensional. Crucially, neither perspective nor lighting is consistent across the image, securing its flatness. This quality is essential, for it puns on the difference between process and product, i.e., the mass-manufactured computer screen on which the works were made, and the pure-cotton paper on which they were printed.

Linking the geometric and fluid forms, strange tubular lines whip across her compositions. They evoke lashes, tentacles, and robotic cables—blending the organic and artificial with cyborg-like effect. Juxtaposed with the geometric vector shapes and amorphous slush, these linear forms parody the traditional role of *disegno* as they attempt to wrestle control from chaos. When the artist brings their openings parallel to the picture plane, where she applies a crude blur effect to further estrange them, we see that they are hollow. They thus evoke the orifices—mouth, anus, etc.—from which abject fluids project. These are places that foreground the body's permeability, where we experience ourselves as neither subject nor object. Métadier neither succumbs to personal self-expression nor limits her investigations to material facts, but critiques any demand that artworks enforce the difference.

—Harmon Siegel

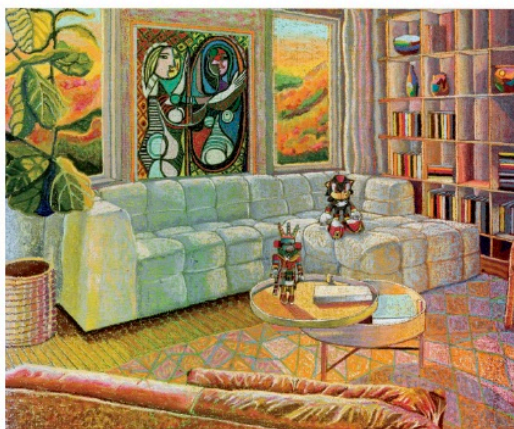


Champion Métadier, *TOXICTOYS*, 2022, ink-jet print on cotton paper, 66 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 58 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". From the series "TOXICTOYS," 2019–23.

JJ Manford

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

You might know a place called Hayden Rowe Street—as JJ Manford titled his exhibition of paintings here—in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. It's a colonial burg, incorporated in 1715, with 215 properties listed in the US National Register of Historic Places. It is also a well-to-do area: Many of the houses on this tony boulevard are quite grand, even palatial, while others are more self-contained and insular, as though oblivious to the outside world. Manford showed us their upscale interiors or the bucolic views from their porches. No human beings appeared in these images, although the occasional creature (a cat, a bird) entered the scene. The pictures were populated mostly by objects, natural or manufactured, carefully staged and richly colored, obtaining a kind of hallucinatory presence, often intensified by the odd angle from which we entered the depicted spaces. Manford calls himself a *chromophilic*—the term refers to "intense passion and love for color,"



JJ Manford, *Living Room with Picasso Poster, Shadow, & Kachina Doll*, 2023, oil stick, oil pastel, and Flashe paint on burlap over canvas, 72 x 90".