



TOM REICHSTEIN  
c o n t e m p o r a r y

## ALEJANDRA CAICEDO

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english text

Alejandra Caicedo paints not what is seen, but what persists.

Her images unfold in a suspended register between seduction and unease, where tropical abundance is neither idyllic nor ironic, but charged — densely, insistently — with memory. What appears at first as lush sensuality reveals itself, upon closer attention, as a field of negotiation: between geographies, between identities, between the promises one inherits and the realities one inhabits.

Born in Cali and now based in Hamburg, Caicedo works within what might be understood, following Homi K. Bhabha, as a *Third Space* — a site where identity is neither fixed nor reconciled, but continuously translated. Her paintings do not illustrate migration; they metabolize it. They hold its contradictions in tension: desire and loss, projection and rupture, belonging and estrangement.

This tension finds its most eloquent articulation in her objects.

A Prada shoe, rendered with near-devotional precision, becomes more than a symbol of luxury — it is a vector of aspiration, a coded promise of arrival. Yet it rests uneasily among tropical flora, its elegance pierced by vegetal intrusion, its autonomy compromised. Nearby, a scorpion — dark, vigilant — introduces an undercurrent of danger, a reminder that paradise is never without its own toxins.

Similarly, oysters, papaya, olives, and orchids — objects historically embedded in the Western still-life tradition — are recontextualized. In the Dutch vanitas painting, such elements signified wealth, ephemerality, or moral allegory. In Caicedo, they shift register. They become carriers of climate, memory, and origin — less about possession than about emotional geography. The still life is no longer a display of abundance; it is an archive of displacement.

Her compositions borrow from classical painting: balanced, frontal, carefully staged. Yet this structural discipline is infiltrated by contemporary iconography — plastic chairs, manicured nails, synthetic colors — that disrupt any illusion of timelessness. The result is a productive friction: a painting that appears stable but feels unsettled.

The body, when it appears, refuses wholeness.

Fragmented, absorbed into its surroundings, or extended through braided hair that snakes across the pictorial space, it resists the authority of the traditional portrait. These braids do not function as nostalgic markers of origin; they operate as connective tissue — lines of continuity that traverse space, binding figure and environment into a single, unstable organism. The body does not end at the skin; it disperses.

Even in absence, it resonates. In the ceramic works, vegetal forms twist into something at once organic and artificial, seductive and defensive. Thorned stems weep translucent droplets; flowers seem both blooming and dissolving. These objects do not imitate nature — they stage its mutation. They echo the body without representing it, suggesting a presence that has been displaced but not erased.

Color, in Caicedo's work, is neither decorative nor excessive. It is calibrated. Saturated pinks, lacquered reds, enamel greens, and deep, almost liquid blacks create a chromatic intensity that recalls both Latin American visual traditions and the psychological charge of artists such as Frida Kahlo or Maruja Mallo. Yet unlike the expressionist excess often associated with such palettes, Caicedo maintains a remarkable equilibrium. Her colors seduce, but they do not overwhelm; they linger.

Time, too, is held in suspension.

A step is about to be taken, a hand about to grasp, a gesture about to unfold — yet nothing fully resolves. This temporal hesitation becomes a visual analogue to the migrant condition itself: a life lived in anticipation, in translation, in the perpetual threshold between what was and what might be.

Caicedo does not offer reconciliation.

Instead, she proposes something more rigorous: the endurance of ambivalence. Her work insists that identity is not a destination but a continuous act of becoming — one shaped by movement, memory, and contradiction. In this sense, her paintings are not representations of paradise, but its critical afterimage: a place where desire persists, even as it is complicated, fractured, and redefined.