

Show Statement – Todo Que Me Falta Es Tú

In Mia Carameros' work we see the tension we experience in Lent – knowing both the darkness of Good Friday and the light of Easter Sunday. Her piece, *For Rachel Joan*, is like a gesture of death – flat starkness of paint, empty of color. Mia said she poured her “blood, sweat, and tears” into this piece. With perfect hidden brushstrokes she articulates the lifeless flora with leaf-shaped cervices, cracks, voids that pull us inward, like Lent, in to a shifted perspective. In Lent, perhaps now we see the suffering of Creation alongside our grief, we see our own hearts blackened with sin, we see our relationships with God and with people more broken than we realize... But, then we turn and step back and see something beautiful.

The piece titled *The Embrace* is a collection of 6 of the 59 paintings in an ongoing project, part of Mia's processing the loss of her grandfather she called Lito. In Mia's own words:

My grandparent's wedding anniversary is in late spring. 61 years this year. The first year without Lito my mom and my Tiá surprised my Lita by planting 59 tulip bulbs in their garden so they would bloom around the same time and remind her of him. This series is in homage to their love and devotion to each other.

Mia painted silhouettes as the tulips wilted and decayed, capturing a narrative of intimacy and care. In this collection of 6 paintings is an inward movement, a contained security. Like an embrace. Like a safe place to grieve, and move, and maybe even dance a bit...

With the gallery lights off the sculpture *Untitled (Alamo Vine)* looks like a wind-swept twig. This found branch is of the morning glory family. In growth, this plant has large white flowers with dark burgundy centers that emerge each day, pointing toward the sun, shining in the glory of the warmth and light God provides, and then shriveling and wilting as the sun sets. In rest, this plant has no leaves and only the seed pods remain. In cast bronze, the delicacy of the vine and pods is preserved in rigid metal. Mia initially created the work with “pin mounts,” nail-like spikes meant to sink into drywall to secure the piece. Because of the unique hanging system in our gallery, those pin mounts are now visible and integral to the piece. The gallery lights create a collaborative image of shadows, like the back of a tapestry that is simultaneously visible. Do you see the crown of thorns?

Mia's keen and sensitive observation of the world around her, the time and attention necessary to make such careful marks, draws us in to look closely. These artworks may have clear lines but the pull inward and outward is more nebulous - grief is not linear. How often do we feel repelled by the grief and suffering and sin of others, or in our own hearts? But Jesus comes forward and keeps coming forward. In fact, it is our sin and suffering that draws him toward us. And he is so gentle. Gentle like the sway of a vine in the warm summer wind. Gentle like a crisp leaf from a tulip fluttering to the ground. Gentle like the tip of a brush pregnant with ink kissing the paper.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” - Matthew 11:28-30

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We know his yoke is easy, and we know his burden is light, because we know what Jesus did. As he hung on the tree he was thinking of beauty, of us (...for the joy set before him... Heb. 12:2). He was facing the blackest black, abandoned by his Father (...why have you forsaken me?... Mt 27:46). And he remained on the cross so that we can pivot in our darkness, so we can feel an embrace, and so we can turn our face toward the sun and know our Father. He invites us to come to him in our sorrow and suffering, and experience it with him, because he knows it and he is gentle with our hearts. And being with Jesus, finding rest for our souls, is beautiful, isn't it?

- Sonya Menges