



CHRISTINE LAFUENTE

# Unbridled Expression

The paintings of Christine Lafuente are a culmination of all of her past experiences, and her latest body of work is no exception. The Brooklyn, New York-based artist's subject matter is diverse, working in land, sea and cityscapes, all of which have an influence on her current focus: still life. Her latest body of work, a group of floral still lifes bathed in natural light, are showcased in an upcoming exhibition at Somerville Manning Gallery.

While simple, beautiful and bright on the surface, the story behind the creation of these paintings is full of unexpected adventure and uncertainty. In March of 2020, Lafuente traveled to Old San Juan, Puerto Rico, just before the pandemic blew up. "I imagined taking my easel down to the beach and interacting with the people," she says. The vacation turned into a situation in which she had to shelter in place in Puerto Rico for five months by herself, painting on the terrace where she was dwelling. "The houses in Old San Juan all are these wonderful candy colors—500-year-old buildings in pink, lime, turquoise and lavender. And I really embraced these in my paintings. The thing I hadn't anticipated was how much time I'd spend staring across the mountains at San Juan. The Caribbean skies are filled with rainbows and tropical storms, this epic drama." These skies make their way into some of Lafuente's still lifes as "wild wallpaper" to simulate the drama of the skies.

Lafuente explains that when she finally made it back to New York, while there was this limited mobility in the state, she found herself in the studio pushing toward new expressions of freedom and playfulness. "I've been putting the fun into the painting. I realized how much I missed spring time in New York while I was in San Juan." She started focusing on all of the beauty in her own home, looking at it all with fresh eyes. "The daffodils, cherry blossoms, pansies, peonies, roses, hydrangea, whatever I could find." She adds, "I have found a new freedom in isolation, reflected in this body of work. I see myself evolving toward abstraction in a more playful way. I am painting with gestural brushstrokes that seem to become objects in and of themselves."



The majority of works in her exhibition at Somerville Manning Gallery embraces flowers native to the northeast, painted in her studio under natural light at varying times of day. "I play with where I'm putting my light source, and I just love looking for deep saturation in the shadows...My still life set-ups mirror the metropolis outside my window."

Somerville Manning director Rebecca

Moore says, "Christine's palette continues to evolve and astound me. The vibrancy in these new paintings gives such a punch to the work and allows the small scale to command a larger space." The exhibition will be on view April 8 to 30. ●

**Somerville Manning Gallery** Breck's Mill,  
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- 1  
*Zinnias and White Hydrangea in Full Sun*, oil on linen, 16 x 12"
- 2  
*Summer Bouquet with Cosmos*, oil on linen, 18 x 14"
- 3  
*Cosmos by the Sea*, oil on linen, 16 x 16"
- 4  
*Kitchen by the Sea*, oil on linen, 14 x 18"