

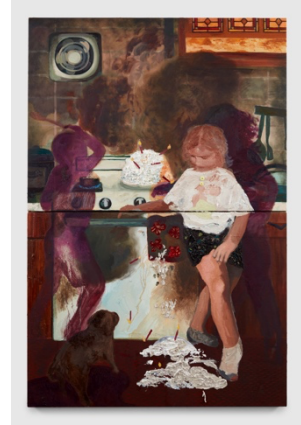
PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

VERONICA FERNANDEZ

I Should Have Prayed For Other People

17 January – 15 February 2025

Private View | Thursday 16 January 2025 | 6-8 pm



Summer Inside (I'm Going To Make You A Home), 2024
oil on canvas, diptych

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is pleased to present *I Should Have Prayed For Other People*, American artist Veronica Fernandez's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Fernandez's paintings offer dreamlike windows into childhood memories, narrating raw anxieties alongside moments of understated joy and innocence. These psychological spaces are influenced by the characters, sights, and sounds of the artist's own upbringing as her family experienced financial insecurity, travelling between temporary housing solutions across the East Coast of the United States. The children play in motel rooms, on sofa beds and beneath chain-link fences, or they exist in expansive, oneiric fields amidst burning objects and horizons. However, despite the weight of the routine hardships they face, they are curious and affectionate, determined to find delight amongst their tribulations.

In the exhibition title, *I Should Have Prayed For Other People*, Fernandez gives voice to each of her subjects, narrating their guilt for being unable to fully take care of one another from their own precarious positions. Although the paintings are imbued with an emotional urgency – the panic of the smoke alarm going off, the grief of a pet dying, or the fear of an intruder's presence – the children themselves play out moments of accountability and adult mundanity. With no supervisory presence, they fold their laundry in *The Years*, tend to their own nosebleeds in *Everything Bleeds Brown*, bake their own birthday cakes in *Summer Inside (I'm Going To Make You A Home)*, and penny pinch, using a water bottle as a makeshift piggy-bank in *Stages of Grief*. In these small gestures and symbols, the works are portraits of their resilience: children who are driven by compassion and survival, eager to distance themselves from the dysfunction and danger of their surroundings.

As the children navigate their own cycles of anxiety and hardship, Fernandez contextualises their emotional rhythms alongside temporal cycles: the change of the seasons, and the natural decay of living things. Autumn leaves scatter the floor in *I deserved it, Didn't I? (Apocalypto)*, snow melts into the grass in *Stages of Grief*, and

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overripe bananas darken, mottled by fruit flies, in *Nausea*. In textured whorls of steam or smoke, or abstracted brushwork softening the boundaries between subject and ground, even concrete objects and figures begin to dissolve into space, they too succumbing to the waning forces of Fernandez's world-building. These entropic and sequential processes mirror the shifting emotions in each painting, as isolation melts into fear, or excitement turns to panic. As she partners emotional intensity with a generative ambiguity, Fernandez asks us to consider the complexities of these childrens' lives, their wants and needs, their losses and dreams.

Veronica Fernandez (b. 1998, Norfolk, VA) completed her BFA at The School of Visual Arts in NYC. Her recent solo and duo exhibitions include *What will you give?*, Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2024); *I'll Never Close My Eyes Again*, Galleria Poggiali, Milan (2023); *When You Hold Onto My Spirit, Will You Let Your Spirit Grow?*, Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles, CA (2022); and *I Put My Faith In My Temple*, Thierry Goldberg, New York, NY (2020). Recent group exhibitions include *Horizons*, Sow & Tailor, Hong Kong (2023); *Goddesses*, Jeffery Deitch Gallery, Miami, FL (2022); *Hot Concrete*, curated by Melanie Ouyang Lum, K11 Musea, Hong Kong (2022); *Narrative Minds*, Asia Art Centre, Taipei (2022); *I Do My Own Stunts*, Spazio Amanita, Los Angeles, CA (2022); *Visual Unpredictability*, Patrick Parrish Gallery, New York, NY (2021); *Buscando Recuerdos*, Hashimoto Contemporary, New York, NY (2021); and *De Lo Mío*, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, New York, NY (2020). Collections include Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Pond Society, Shanghai, China; and X Museum, Beijing, China.