Sad Girls
Jasmine Zelaya
Main Gallery

Exhibition Dates: May 27 – July 23, 2022
Opening Reception: 6 – 8 PM, Friday, May 27, 2022
Artist Talks: 2 PM Saturday, May 28, 2022

May 11, 2022, Houston, TX - Art League Houston (ALH) is proud to present the exhibition, Sad Girls, an installation of new works by Jasmine Zelaya in the Main Gallery. The title of the exhibition is a reference to Chola culture. The distinctive Chola style is characterized by dark, undulating hair, winged eyeliner, and dark lipstick; achieving a look that is both intimidating and vulnerable. The look and culture encompass a state of mind and a state of being that was welcoming to brown communities, especially one that women and girls could identify with at a time when there weren’t many avenues for brown communities and children of immigrants to feel control over their identity.

Zelaya’s parents emigrated from Honduras to the U.S. in the 1970’s, and her experience of growing up at odds between two cultures has influenced her work. Remembering her sister applying the maroon tube of L’oreal mascara in repeated, careful strokes, Zelaya says, “I was mesmerized by each application, which I eventually came to see as a ritualistic, intentional act. I am still intrigued by the idea that the outward manipulation of one’s appearance can transform their state of being.”

The artist applies graphic floral patterns over the faces in her paintings and sculptures, masking the tensions that lie beneath the surface of one’s appearance, but also offering a kind of personal protection from the world. These floral elements also serve as symbols of not only a familial narrative (the women in her family are all named after flowers), but the contrast of the natural and artificial world, whose rhythmic application reminds the artist of the ritual in which we transform our outward appearance in order to navigate our lives and feel empowered.
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Jasmine Zelaya is a multi-disciplinary first-generation Honduran-American artist based in Houston, Texas. The daughter of parents who immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1970’s, much of the artist’s work references the aesthetics of that period. Zelaya’s work explores themes of identity, assimilation and the brown body through a familial narrative rich with symbolism. Zelaya received her BFA in Painting in 2006 from the Kansas City Art Institute. Her work has been included in exhibitions at the Blaffer Art Museum (Houston), Project Row Houses (Houston), The Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts (Lubbock), and was recently included in the 2021 Texas Biennial: A New Landscape, A Possible Horizon, at the San Antonio Art Museum. Recent public art projects in Houston include Twins for Art Blocks at the Main Street Marquee and Detroit Red at the Moody Center for the Arts. Her work has been featured on television media and in numerous publications, including as a cover artist for New American Paintings (#132).

For more information, visit www.artleaguehouston.org, or contact Jimmy Castillo, Director of Exhibitions and Curatorial Projects, at jimmy@artleaguehouston.org or 713-523-9530.

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