

# CARDI GALLERY PROJECTS

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Franklin Collao, *New Frontiers* (triptych), 2020  
Oil on cotton, 150 x 300 cm (59 1/8 x 118 1/8 in)

## FRANKLIN COLLAO

### QUEERING ABSTRACTION

Curated by Sofia Gotti

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In recent writing, novelist Travis Jeppesen makes a case for queer art as a category that has little to do with sexual orientation. He explores how queerness is expressed through art, frequently in the representation of non-normative bodies. When considering the possibility of a non-representational queer art, he asks “*in what ways [...] does queerness articulate itself in the allegedly “pure” cerebral realm of abstraction?*”. Looking at Franklin Collao’s practice, we find ways to articulate how the historic oppositional realms of abstraction and figuration may be queered. In his most recent body of work, the artist depicts the breaking down of barriers and the process of transition from one reality or symbolic system of truth into another.

A recurrent image in the selection, is a galvanized chain link fence that has been clipped and pulled apart. Pictured on the other side of the

violated fence, is a fluorescent dimension or a new frontier (somewhere between ideas of heaven and the feeling of “let’s disco”!). This image has roots in the artist’s experience of the border dividing Mexico and the United States in his hometown, Tijuana. In conversation, **Collao** recounted how Mexican migrants seeking to cross the border are subject to the projected image of the United States, which is synonymous with prosperity and promise. This conception of a US reality is felt in absolute opposition to the reality of Mexico’s social context. The fluorescent dimension beyond the wired fence in his paintings, echoes such idyllic ideas of success informed by pop culture, the mass media, the internet, and advertising. Here, **Collao** is depicting the imagined idea of the other side, the symbolic order upon which the dream of America is built on.

**Collao**’s practice transforms his juvenile aspirational dreams of making it to the United States into a critique of those cultural constructs that cast Mexico into a culturally subaltern position. **Collao** activated this process in 2009 through an intervention onto the border wall in Mexicali/Calexico. With the word *Penétrame* (penetrate me) painted in cubital letters on the wall’s surface (Mexico side), the artist cast out an invitation to defile the border, but by making love to it. Because it invites incomers to penetrate, the wall’s quintessentially divisive role is subverted. Further still, the action of crossing a border and of transitioning from one reality into another, is imbued with erotic energy formalised in the act of penetrating, and refreshed by the frequent insertions of bondage elements, which recur in his oeuvre. Notably, in this selection we find fabric fastenings in the series gathered here *Windows 2020*. Earlier canvases depicting Pre-Columbian stone artefacts of faces embellished with numerous piercings, were also fitted with S/M leather straps.

Formally, **Collao**’s queering of abstraction is highlighted by his technical mastery. An expert colourist, he undertakes the traditional academic challenges of painting soap bubbles, reflective surfaces and spheres. He uses oil paint only, and never employs airbrushing techniques. While his meticulous (high art) execution approximates his work to painterly photorealism, the symbolic realms evoked imbued with pop culture in addition to the characterising scale, anchors it to abstraction. By taking from both erudite and popular culture, **Collao** bridges and queers traditional categories. His act of queering is intended as the questioning of the status quo and the opening of for new idyllic dimensions, queer and symbolic orders of truth.

Franklin Collao (b. 1982, Tijuana), lives and works in Milan. He studied Fine Art at the Escuela de Artes, UABC, Tijuana. His recent solo exhibitions include: *Penétrame*, R3, Milan, 2017; *Tijuana Youth*, Galería Laesart, Tijuana, 2006. In addition, his work has been featured in Group exhibitions including: *Virtual Reality*, Universidade do Vale do Itajaí, Brasil, 2016; *Lakino*, Galeria Neurokian, Berlin and MPBA, Museo del Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, 2013; *Faith for Non Believers*, Galeria Frontera 96, Mexico City and Bienal de Pintura Rufino Tamayo, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City, 2012; *Caviar Izquierda*, Zona Maco, Mexico City, 2010; *Running into the Political Equator, Mexico/Israel and Relative Distance*, CECUT, Tijuana, 2009; TNT, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, San Diego, 2007.

Sofia Gotti

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## PRESS

Edoardo Osculati

edoardo@cardigallery.com