

NINO MIER GALLERY

NEW YORK | BRUSSELS

Ana Villagomez

Sweet Subterraneans

Brussels

April 22 – May 31, 2025

*"The house in which she had lived as a child was the house of the spirit which does not live blindly but is ever, out of passionate experience, building and adorning its four-chambered heart—an extension and expansion of the body, with many delicate affinities establishing themselves between her and the doors and passageways, the lights and shadows of her outward abode, until she was incorporated into it in the entire expressiveness of what is outward as related to the inner significance, until there was no more distinction between outward and inward at all."**

Ana Villagomez's works are multi-chambered organisms in their own right. The different layers in her collage-like paintings interact with each other while also maintaining their own distinct presence. Like a beating heart, they are in constant dialogue, allowing meaning to circulate and take shape in the eye of the viewer. As one attempts to decipher what unfolds on her canvases, new meanings and connections rapidly emerge. Abstraction intertwines with illusionism, and the multiple densities and textures—achieved through the blending of different paints—add further depth to her compositions.

In Villagomez's intuitive scenes, the emotional and the rational become entangled, while the recognizable and the mysterious engage in an ongoing dance. More than ever before, the works in *Sweet Subterraneans* form a vast, cohesive world—more defined, densely layered, and punctuated by cutouts. These cutouts, sometimes highly recognizable, are removed from their original context, mirroring the human impulse to relocate and reinvent. The theme of movement and the search for a new home is deeply personal to Villagomez. Born and raised in Texas, she later relocated to New York, where she currently lives and works. Despite this, she remains closely connected to her roots abroad. As she puts it: *"I could not make this work without my roots—I am Mexican American."* In today's political climate, however, this identity has taken on a newfound complexity. Questions of belonging that once seemed unthinkable have now become pressing. *"For the first time in 30 years, my American Identity is being questioned by those in power"*, she reflects.

Villagomez's Mexican heritage and border-spanning culture are both subtly present and deeply embedded in her work. Folktales such as that of *La Lechuza*—a wronged woman who transforms into an owl at night to haunt wayward nocturnal wanderers—or the vintage covers of 1970s Mexican science fiction novels once sold in her parents' Houston-based bookstore, are enduring influences in her life and art. The shapeshifting, transformative nature of her forms and compositions clearly embodies this sense of magical realism.

*"...love, the great narcotic, lined fingertips with clairvoyance, pumped iridescence into the lungs for transcendental x-rays, printed new geographies in the lining of the eyes..."**

The creation of Villagomez's works is an intuitive, physical experience. Spreading her canvases across the floor, she approaches them with surgeon-like precision. The quick drying time of acrylic paint heavily influences the shapes that emerge, and often, forms only reveal themselves to her over time as she reassesses what she has entrusted to the canvas.

NINO MIER GALLERY

NEW YORK | BRUSSELS

Water-soluble mediums are essential to her process. To counteract the rapid drying of the paint, she sprays or drenches her works with water, inviting the natural forces of evaporation and absorption to play a role in their formation. It is in these moments that plants, figures, and limbs seem to magically appear. Rather than using conventional paintbrushes, Villagomez paints with her hands and body, giving her work a deeply corporeal identity. When she does not engage her body directly, she turns to discarded or repurposed household materials—old socks, duvet covers, and rags. This practice resonates with her roots, as Mexican muralists have long used such materials in their work.

Ana Villagomez (b. 1991, lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, US) received a BFA from University of Houston in 2013, and an MFA from CUNY Hunter College in 2021. She has had recent solo exhibitions with Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY, US; Pazda Butler, Houston, TX, US; and a solo project at ADAA Fair with Pazda Butler, New York, NY, US. Her recent group exhibitions have been with Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY, US; Britz + County, Palm Beach, FL, US; Deli Gallery, New York, NY, US; Christies, New York, NY, US and Martha's, Houston, TX, US. In 2023 and 2024, Ana Villagomez was Adjunct Assistant Professor at Hunter College, New York, US.

* denotes quotes from the novel *The Four-Chambered Heart* by Anaïs Nin (1950).