

Art Review: Romina Gonzales's "The Return" at Visitor Center

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Last Updated: 04/05/2022 11:53 am

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Installation view of "The Return," an exhibition by Romina Gonzales at Visitor Center in Newburgh. At right, "Sibilant III" (on the floor) and "Desert Spring" (on the wall).

An artist known for her interdisciplinary approach, working seamlessly between sculpture, printmaking, and performance, Romina Gonzalez's "The Return" at Visitor Center in Newburgh is a healing journey for a pandemic-traumatized populace. Gonzales is best known for her work in glass. "Finding the Window," which was installed at the New York Hall of Science in 2021 and is on long-term display, is a wondrous series of "window panes"—sinuous glass forms that look as if they were pulled, like taffy—connected via copper scaffolding and hanging in the museum's atrium.



"Even Pull"; Romina Gonzales; glass, copper, steel; 2022

For her exhibition at Visitor Center, which continues through April 23, Gonzalez continues her exploration of glass, this time on a less monumental scale, inviting the viewer to engage close-up with these sui generis forms as they distort light, space, and expectations. Even when offering up a whimsical tidbit, like *A Mound, a Corner or a Grotto*, a pile of sapphire-blue oval glass forms like a heap of forgotten hard candy melted together, Gonzales challenges our perceptions of the possible and invites us to imagine new exits from current predicaments. What Raymond Carver referred to as "a new path to the waterfall."

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"A Mound, a Corner or a Grotto"; Romina Gonzales; glass, epoxy; 2021

There are other delights to be found in "The Return." The pairing of *Sibilant III*—what is in essence a block of sulfur-covered clay viewers are encouraged to stand on (without shoes, so as better to connect with the healing properties of the element)—with *Desert Spring*, a bright yellow painting of sulfur on wood which you stare on while standing on *Sibilant III*, seems downright silly at first. Two lumps of sulfur—one on the floor, one spread on some wood and hung on the wall—in the midst of an elegant, glass-and-copper fantasia. What the rough magic of the pieces reveal, however, is an artist not only technically masterful and aesthetically compelling but also attuned to matters of the soul, that battered bird inside us, deeply bruised by a global pandemic. Beyond simple beauty, "The Return" offers respite.

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