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"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"
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Romina Gonzalez: The Return at the Visitor Center (Newburgh)



Romina Gonzalez, Enlightenment, 2022. Courtesy of the artist.

Romina Gonzalez (<http://www.rominagonzales.com/>): *The Return*

Visitor Center (<https://www.visitorcenter.space/>) (Newburgh)

March 12 through April 16, 2022

By JONATHAN GOODMAN, April 2022

Romina Gonzalez, originally from Peru, now lives upstate in Newburgh. Her very good show, “The Return,” is currently on exhibit at the Visitor Center, whose gallery occupies the first floor of a large brick house in the city. The show is partly installational, partly a precisely placed grouping of individual sculptures made of glass, sulfur, and copper, and unusual material such as hand sanitizer. Gonzalez uses these charged substances to create a post-minimal, post-Arte Povera vocabulary, whose results are subtly placed in the two thousand square foot space. Seen as a single entity, the collection of individual works of art brings us to a cohesive statement, one determined to bind the individual works into a whole.

At the same time, the single sculptures are marvelously constructed, glass being the major element. Glass, often regarded as a craft material, becomes here an vehicle of three-dimensional lucency and transparent form. Gonzalez, who works regularly with glass, has found a way of turning it into a statement fully in keeping with the contemporary interest in a wide range of media.



Romina Gonzalez, A Mound, a Corner or a Grotto, 2019. Courtesy of the artist.

The Visitor Center's space is ample enough to display Gonzalez's spare single works to their separate advantage. There is enough room for the works to stand on their own, even as they combine to make a strikingly relational statement. Copper rods extend from the floor, or stand without support in the middle of the room; other sculptures simply sit on the floor or hang from the wall. So the space is at once an activation of the gallery's entirety, as well as being a stage for individual works of art. In conversation, Gonzalez speaks of mythical impulses, including tarot and Egyptian art, that flow from her, and our, sense of disappointment and loss regarding the ecology of social and natural resources. As a result, the language of her art becomes highly evocative in its use of accessible materials, often industrial or synthetic. Her outlook

may be abstract, but it is resolutely committed to a language of direct declaration. In that sense, Gonzalez is closest to minimalism in her approach, but she merges that particular style with a flair for environmental expression. And the artist never loses sight of the importance of the individual object in its own right. The sculptures are striking examples of glass or metal, sometimes both. In the blue glass work titled *A Mound, A Corner or a Grotto* (2019), Gonzalez has fashioned a heap of small rounded forms, partially translucent, which also reflect light. Vaguely (maybe not so vaguely) scatological, the mound attracts us by means of its gorgeous color and the extravagance of its overall form. This small but compelling work reminds us that Gonzalez's use of glass, a material often associated with elegance and refinement, can be made into a rough statement, a declaration of the physically uncouth.



MENU

Primarily made with sulfur and copper, *Bridge of Incidents* (2022), stands without visible support on the floor, with two copper rods leading upward to a yellow sulfur bridge, whose rounded form rises upward.. Sulfur has been described as being capable of quickening your solar plexus chakra—an association full in keeping with Gonzalez’s visionary eclecticism. Jumping from material to material, and from culture to culture, Gonzalez might be criticized for ranging too wide and too far in her associations. Yet the individual work is successful, given the aura of its materials, as well as its symbolic form. *Enlightment* (2022), a smallish triangular pocket of glass enclosing a viscous body of light purple hand sanitizer, rests on a small, flat pedestal of copper. Who would have thought that the piece could have such luminous properties using the gel, so commercial a material? Yet the drawing attracts us, while the form of the glass reminds us that light passes through transparent materials with unusual grace. Gonzalez, still a young artist, already has worked up an idiom that is original. “The Return,” then, suggests her determination to go back to the basic properties of the substances she uses, which are evocative of both industry and mysticism. It is an effective combination. WM



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