

Curator

Bonny Poon in conversation with the Argentina-based artist Victoria Colmegna about her new exhibition at PAGE (NYC)

Victoria Colmegna is one of the art world’s most intriguing personas, frantically border-hopping between fashion design, fan items, family memorabilia, alternative medicine, and art commodities. The artist just opened exhibitions at PAGE (NYC) in New York, followed by Emanuela Campoli in Paris. Colmegna works across a variety of media, including paintings, photographs, a hangover pill, knitted sweaters based on Picabia canvases, and managing a band made up of the artist’s ex-boyfriends.

Bonny Poon, the Toronto-based artist, gallerist, and confidante of Colmegna, caught up with the artist about her show in New York as she returned from Paris following the opening of her new exhibition.

What was the concept behind Superficial, your new show at PAGE (NYC)?

The concept for the show was to present juicy, playful, compact, commercial, and easygoing works. It was the continuation of a series shown in Milan earlier this year, along with the presentation of an ongoing project about my hangover pill.

Do the works in Superficial then become uncanny doubles? Is this “narcissism of the child” not also relevant to your new exhibition in Paris?

True, they are doubles. It’s also a submissive marketing strategy to adapt the size of these works to the gallery. In Enfant Gâté, the show at Emanuela Campoli in Paris, the works are about the narcissism of parents dressing the child in the latest art trend (i.e., my Picabia obsession) and letting the child mirror their desire, which is impossible to verbalize.



Installation view, Victoria Colmegna, *Superficial*, PAGE (NYC), 2023



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What is your relationship to styling, fashion, and clothes?

It's a very melancholic, investigative, and obsessive one. My memory is linked to textures and colors more than anything else. I haven't thrown away my graduation gown or the '90s family ski clothing—I have them in my studio. I have the same relationship with photos—for example, the fashion procession of my father's funeral. Then transporting boxes with his clothing around the world endlessly. Clothes have something very karmic, very charged. They tell a story about a personality linked with an epoch. I recently made paintings from archival images of the Manson girls, and I went hunting for the exact handbag they used: a beaded one embroidered with an elephant. And I stuck it on top of the painting.

Curious! How did you hunt down the exact handbag of the Manson girls?

I discovered that a beaded bag from that time would often be embroidered with an elephant or a palm tree. I learned that it was an Indian wholesale tourist trend.

Do you think personalities change as epochs do? Or that there is a timelessness to them?

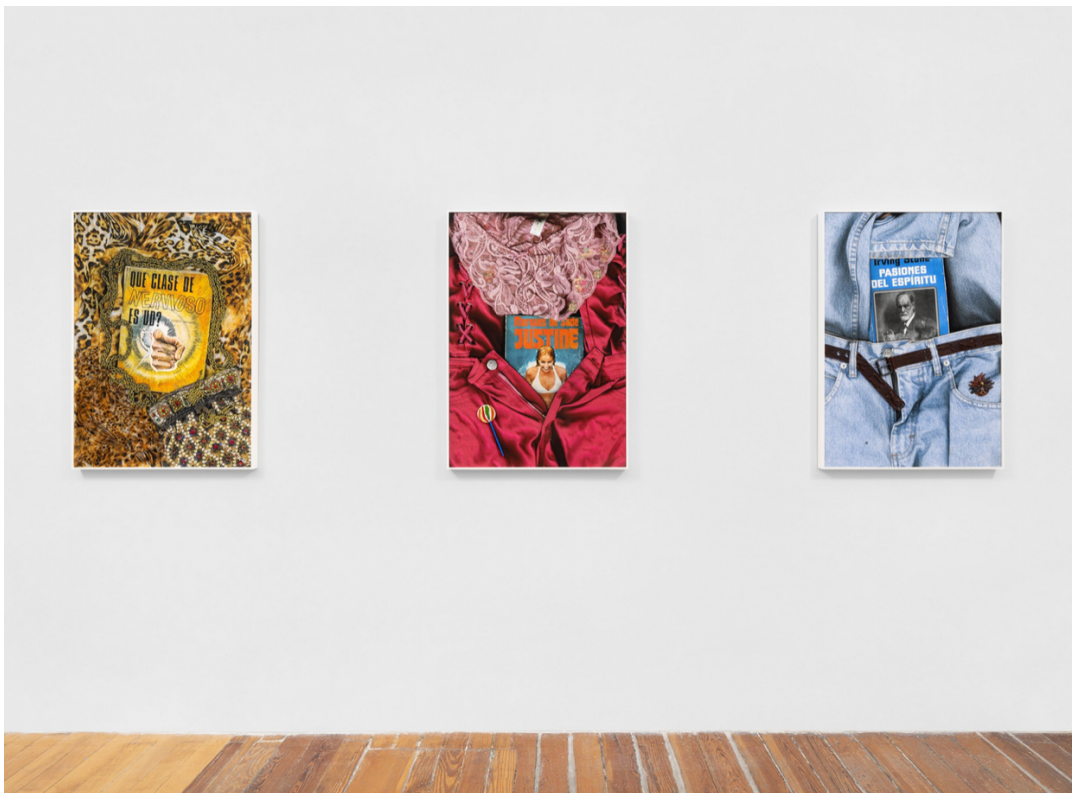
Personalities change in interesting, superficial ways. Schizophrenic hippies happened in a certain timeframe, and excessive dandies, too.

Considering clothes for their archival or forensic properties emphasizes the past. In contrast, I think for most people, the potential energy they invest in outfits have more to do with aspirations that belong to the future: the desire to transmute into another identity.

Yes, this is a more contemporary, time-machine vibe and emo-Proustian.



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Victoria Colmegna, *Justine*, 2023, inkjet on cotton paper, mixed media collage, mounted on panel with frame, 36.75 x 25.75 inches



Victoria Colmegna, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 2023, inkjet on cotton paper, mixed media collage, mounted on panel with frame, 36.75 x 25.75 inches

How does the cult of personality factor into your artistic practice?

It's all about personality. I'm very into attitude—technique can come and go, depending on external factors, and I don't worry much about it. But personality is untouchable, a museum of personalities. I'm also highly influenced by esoteric psychology and astrology, so I'm obsessed with categorizing traits and so on.

What is the museum of personalities?

Four friends get together and go through outfits laid out on sofas in a living room, remembering their psychedelic trips and other epochs. It was interesting once having a “bad dressed” party in Buenos Aires. The concept of “bad dressed” was very different for everyone. Some chose lazy, others cringe, etc.

By categorizing traits, do you view that in the way you might organize a wardrobe or a bookshelf? Do you invent the categories, or do you follow existing systems?

Yes, it's a way of organizing concepts. There is also some invention. For example, taking Marquis de Sade or Artaud as self-help books. They all have a message directed toward survival.

Where did the selection of books come from?

The books are desperate cures for our somatic and philosophical beings. They relate to our positioning in the art world. From Sade's *Justine* (sodomasochism) to *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (spirituality vs. ego).

These books offer cures that lead you, like Ariadne's thread, through the labyrinth. The art world is a minotaur?

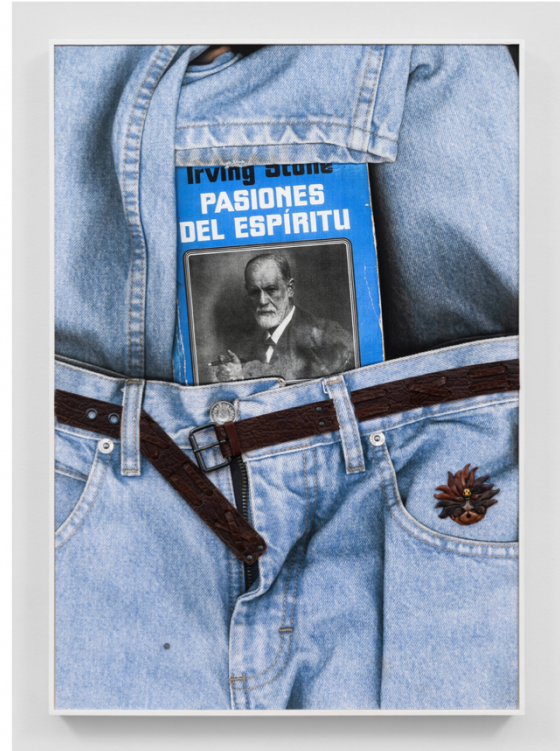
Yes, and the ego, too.

What was your guiding logic behind the pairing of outfits and accessories with these book covers?

This process is like playing with Barbies and dressing up but with books. They also have obvious links. *The Tibetan Book of Healing* is lighter, so it has a towel to be read on the beach. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* is paired with studded belts for the infamous flagellation. Each also has a predominant color. Super simple, non-intellectual art, just fun. Also, with *Pasiones del Espiritu*, the book on Freud and daddy issues, I used a classic Western cowboy jean in this phallic composition. Freud's use of symbolism is marked by the indigenous jewelry placed there.



Victoria Colmegna, *The Tibetan Book of Healing*, 2023, inkjet on cotton paper, mixed media collage, mounted on panel with frame, 36.75 x 25.75 inches



Victoria Colmegna, *Pasiones del Espíritu*, 2023, inkjet on cotton paper, mixed media collage, mounted on panel with frame, 36.75 x 25.75 inches

Did (or do) you play with Barbies much?

Yes, I play with them more now than then.

Why was it critical to stick 3-dimensional objects onto the surfaces?

So that they become non-graphic design works. This decision also has an aspect of sacrifice. I cut out the objects and stick them on there, I let them go for the public.

Do you think the performance of persona, and by extension, of self-portraiture or autobiography, is inherently superficial?

Yes, totally. This aspect of superficiality is obligatory. Then you can suck them inside the mirror.