

Jorge Luis Santos
Manchas de Zapatos
January 9 – February 27, 2021
Opening: Saturday, January 9, 12- 6pm



Jorge Luis Santos working in his studio in Miami

Lowell Ryan Projects is pleased to present *Manchas de Zapatos*, a solo show by the Cuban artist Jorge Luis Santos. The exhibition will feature a body of his most recent abstract work, including seven monumental canvases and paintings from his *Rojo* series. Working on multiple pieces at the same time (arranged sometimes on the floor, other times on the wall), Santos wields paint like an extension of himself, and it is not uncommon to find shoe prints, handmade gestures, and stains alongside brush strokes in his works.

While this is not a new process for Santos, who is by now considered one of Cuba's foremost abstractionists, the works included in *Manchas de Zapatos* mark an exciting new direction for him, inspired by a 2016 relocation to Miami. Most notably, in place of the more somber color schemes seen in his earlier works, Santos now embraces a more exuberant palette. The result is work that feels viscerally celebratory—an affirmation of joy's resurgence.

Throughout his career, Jorge Luis Santos has proved himself something of an anomaly; within Cuba's predominantly figurative art landscape, he developed an early and enduring commitment to abstraction. On the one hand, this has allowed Santos to subvert the

aesthetic expectations of politicization so often imposed on art coming out of Cuba. At the same time, if every creative act is inherently political, perhaps none is more radical than abstraction—an artistic register that injects *the individual* (with all the emotional and psychological complexities therein) into every mark on the canvas.

While living in Cuba, that expressionistic range often revolved around the urban landscape. White, black and ochre dominated his canvases, which often had a texture reminiscent of stucco or cement; and in many works, scrawled numbers and letters were faintly visible, like old graffiti on the side of a building. Then in 2016, Santos came to the States in a cultural exchange program, and began to witness a sea change in paintings, a liberation of color and mark, leading to the works he produced for this exhibition.

Manchas de Zapatos, the title of the show, literally translates to “shoe stains,” but what the idiom refers to is individuality, to taking your own path. Santos has managed to remain intrepid his whole career, always searching out the unknown. After many years at work he’s found something new—joy—and in our current moment, a testament to joy’s resilience has never been more necessary.

Jorge Luis Santos (b. Quivicán, Cuba, 1973, lives and works in Miami, FL) creates visceral, abstract works on a monumental scale. Throughout his long and celebrated career, he has continued to experiment—in material (in addition to acrylic, he has worked in oil, mixed media, found objects, iron, and wood); in form (painting, sculpture, and installation); in palette; and in process (for the works in this show, he has used a brush taped to a long pole, a palette knife, his hands, and the sole of his shoe as mark-making tools). Jorge Luis Santos exhibited his work extensively in solo and group exhibitions at institutions, galleries and art fairs internationally since 1994. His work has been written about and discussed by prominent Cuban scholars and critics including Rafael Acosta de Arriba, Elivia Rosa Castro, Nelson Herrera Ysla, Elsa Vega Dopico, José Manuel Noceda, amongst others.

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