



WAVE HILL SUNROOMPROJECTSPACE

August 19 - October 1, 2023

MAX BENJAMIN SARMIENTO

Por El Amor al Circo (For the Love of the Circus)

MAX BENJAMIN SARMIENTO

Born 1995, Queens, NY
Lives and works in Queens, NY

El Circo, 2023, detail in *Por El Amor al Circo (For the Love of the Circus)*, 2023.
Acrylic, watercolor on paper, clay, fabric, foam, paper, smalti, wire, wood, concrete, found objects, flowerpot, tree branch, string and acetate.
Courtesy of the artist.

During his residency at Wave Hill, 2023 New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellow Max Benjamin Sarmiento experimented with material and scale to create tableaux that merge the pastoral, urban, magical and quotidian, drawn from his upbringing in Ecuador and his life in Queens. Inspired in part by the architecture and energy of Wave Hill, he conceived of *Por El Amor al Circo (For the Love of the Circus)*, a six-part narrative about a circus run by a mother, father and son who happily perform together. When the father is diagnosed with an incurable disease, the matriarch, driven by religious and superstitious beliefs, makes a pact with the devil to secure a cure.

Sarmiento employs various artistic techniques, including sculpture, painting, mobiles, performance, video, sound and found materials to bring his circus to life. Biographical details draw from family storytelling, superstitions, recurring dreams and the artist's memories of visiting the Circo Hermanos Vázquez with his father in Queens. Influences include the larger-than-life puppetry of Poncili Creación and the use of miniature puppetry as in Wes Anderson's 2004 film *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*. Art historical references abound, such as Alexander Calder's toy theater *Cirque Calder*, motifs inspired by Henri Matisse's designs for the Vance Chappel in France, and a reproduction of Francisco Goya's *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* appears at the base of the *Diablo Tree* sculpture, where the story begins.

Central to the exhibition are performances with figurines that conclude the story, with the son taking on the role of ringmaster to stage his first show. On display, figurines and video capturing the performances add depth and emotion to the storytelling experience. Weaving together cultural history, personal memories and mythic imagination, Sarmiento presents a universally appealing and transformative place for reinvention and delivers a captivating and ultimately uplifting tale that provides abundant metaphoric potential and a confluence of emotions.

Max Benjamin Sarmiento is a self-taught artist who works with a variety of materials. Before becoming an artist, he pursued a career in architecture, where he picked up skills that would later translate into his practice. Sarmiento's work has been exhibited in New York at NYC Culture Club, Dinner Gallery, Independent Art Fair, Chashama, SVA Chelsea Gallery and La Bodega Gallery.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Performances (15 min.) AUG 19, SEP 17, OCT 1 at 1, 2, 3 and 4 PM.

SAT, SEP 30: *Meet the Sunroom Artists* at 2 PM and performances at 1, 3 and 4 PM

Organized by Curator of Visual Arts Rachel Raphaela Gugelberger, the Sunroom Project Space provides an opportunity for New York-area emerging artists to develop and exhibit a site-specific project as a solo show. The 2023 season features, consecutively, Jae Hi Ahn, Jacq Groves, Grace Sach Troxell, Jill Cohen-Nuñez, Max Benjamin Sarmiento and Bel Falleiros.

THE SUNROOM PROJECT SPACE IS SUPPORTED BY THE MILTON AND SALLY AVERY ARTS FOUNDATION; NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS; NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST EDWARD AND SALLY VAN LIER FUND; AND POLLOCK-KRASNER FOUNDATION. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS PROGRAM IS PROVIDED BY THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS; NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR AND THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE; RUTH FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS; AND BY CATHY AND STEPHEN WEINROTH COMMISSIONING FUND FOR THE ARTS.



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