

Margaux Ogden Comes To Puerto Rico

BY SCOTT INDRISEK | SEPTEMBER 08, 2016



Detail of Margaux Ogden's "Loose Ties," 2016 (left) and "Not Long Now," 2016 (right)
(Courtesy of the artist)

Margaux Ogden's [paintings](http://www.margauxogden.com/#!paintings/c4j9) (<http://www.margauxogden.com/#!paintings/c4j9>) demand a second look—and, in many cases, a second read—combining angular bursts of colorful geometry with scraps of highly personal, often enigmatic, text. This past weekend she opened a solo exhibition at [Embajada](http://www.embajadada.com/Flooded-Penthouse) (<http://www.embajadada.com/Flooded-Penthouse>) in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Some of the work on view is also collected in a new book, "Flooded Penthouse," which combines Ogden's images with a text by Hunter Braithwaite. ("Almost always, art writing comes *after* the creation of its subject," he told me. "The idea here was to write alongside Margaux as she worked, influencing and being influenced in equal measure, allowing the themes of the work—confession, obfuscation—to become the form of the writing.") I spoke with Ogden about what she's showing in Puerto Rico, and how margaritas and Kanye West indirectly inspire her practice.

Can you tell me a bit about the quartet of monoprints in the show? I love the hand-made feel—like a radioactive, punk version of Matisse's cut-outs.

This summer I was at the Aurobora Residency in Sun Valley, Idaho, working with a master printer. We spent a day mixing colors and running flats. Then, using hand-cut stencils, we ran the prints again. Once I achieved a ground I was happy with, I started carving into some of the top layers. It was almost like making my paintings in reverse. In a barn off Route 75 I spent hours carving into the prints with a loose razor blade. My index finger was numb for a week after that but I was happy with how they turned out.

Can you tell me a little about the book you've made to accompany the exhibition?

Embajada approached Hunter and me with the book idea and we spent the spring writing and drawing. Originally it was just going to be something small, but now it grounds the show. I started with a series of watercolors and drawings on transparencies which we shuffled, layered, and scanned. We worked side by side, creating these compositions, abusing our offices' color printers. I was trying to break the drawings down to individual text, symbols, and gestures.

In general, what can you accomplish working on a small-scale that you can't when making a larger painting?

There's an intimacy to smaller works. More is at stake, and there is less room for error. It's like writing an essay using only five words: you need to be really sure of those five words.

How does text (and fragments of text) operate in your work?

It was originally a way for me to make it more personal, to insert more of myself in there, add humor. But then I started using text that wasn't necessarily mine, stuff I had overheard, made up, mashed up, faux-confessions, real confessions. Something would embarrass me or seem too heavy-handed and I'd erase it, cross it out. In the book Hunter and I talk about redaction—about how what's left out is perhaps more interesting than what remains. Sometimes I want the text to recede into the painting and just function as any other mark, other times I want it to be read, laughed at.

Can you tell me about your typical studio routine? What tricks, tactics, or tools help get you motivated?

Well, there's an amazing taco and margarita place near my studio, which is where most of my time and money goes...Just kidding! It's not too exciting. My studio is a short walk from my apartment. I get in around ten, but don't get into the work until noon. I have coffee, read, shuffle things around, organize my paints chromatically, etceteras, before starting. I just work on one painting at a time. It's really just about spending time with the work. It's easy for me to stay invested if I'm consistently working. It's like a muscle. As soon as I stop, the self-doubt begins. I have a few good friends with studios in the same building; it's helpful to have people close to you, also working. It makes it feel like you're being social on a Friday night when you're actually just painting. I listen to a lot of Drake, Kanye, and Bob Dylan with my studio mate, [Tess Bilhartz](http://www.tessbilhartz.com/) (<http://www.tessbilhartz.com/>). Highly motivating...

Who are some painterly peers you admire whose work we should also investigate?

[Dana Frankfort](http://danafrankfort.com/) (<http://danafrankfort.com/>), my former professor and mentor, did Aurobora before me. It was nice to see how she translated her paintings, which I've always admired, into monoprints. She's is one of the best people to talk about painting—or anything—with.

Margaux Ogden's "Flooded Penthouse" (<http://www.embajadada.com/Flooded-Penthouse>) opens September 3 at Embajada in San Juan, Puerto Rico

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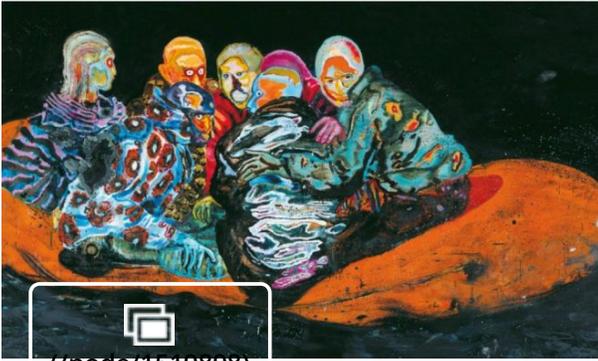
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