

# MODERN PAINTERS

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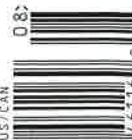
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WHAT SURVIVES?

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**BOGOTA**

ALL ABOUT  
**KUITCA**  
INTERVIEW BY ROBERT STORR

**LATIN AMERICA'S NEXT BIG STARS**

US/CAN





## Seeing Stars

THE DIRECTOR OF COLECCION PATRICIA PHELPS DE CISNEROS  
INTRODUCES LATIN AMERICA'S MOST PROMISING TALENTS.

GABRIEL PEREZ-BARREIRO words

Latin America is as diverse as it is hard to delimit. One of the occupational hazards of working as a curator of Latin American art is being asked to find common threads or similarities in a region defined by difference and by the relative isolation of each of its parts. In picking these four young artists, I have tried to demonstrate some of this diversity. Their works, produced across Central and South America, have impressed me in different ways and for different reasons. One thing they may have in common is that each is something of an outsider in his or her context.

## FEDERICO HERRERO

COSTA RICA

Sometimes an artist appears out of the blue; his or her work does not seem to connect to its context, its time, contemporary trends, masters, or influences. Such was the impression when the 22-year-old Federico Herrero first appeared on the international art radar. Herrero's rise to fame was remarkable, worthy of an art world fairy tale. In 2000 he was exhibiting small paintings on trees in downtown San José and painting murals in the washrooms of the Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo de Costa Rica. The following year he won the award for best young artist at Harald Szeemann's 49th Venice Biennale, launching a successful international career.

Herrero's work confounds expectations about painting and contemporary art. His high-contrast Day-Glo compositions at first seem to be responses to Japanese Pop aesthetics, yet close-up they are painterly paintings in which the pleasure of each brushstroke is clearly visible. Although they do not resolve as playful icons, neither are they cerebral meditations on abstraction, à la Gerhard Richter. Instead they occupy a unique place, both exuberant and serious, and demand to be taken on their own terms.

FROM TOP: Federico Herrero, *Green Landscape with Nine Circles*, 2008, MIXED MEDIA ON LINEN, 67 x 59 IN. Herrero, Installation view of *Untitled*, 2008, KUNSTVEREIN FREIBURG, 2008, MIXED MEDIA, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE. OPPOSITE: Herrero, *Blue Mountain*, 2008, MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS, 118 x 78¾ IN.



Herrero also blurs the division between studio and poststudio artists. Although he has an intense studio practice, working on several large canvases at once, his imagery and process spread naturally into the public sphere. One of his most remarkable bodies of work consists of an ongoing series of photographs of found paintings, anonymous negotiations of public and private space through color applied to parking lots, fences, security gates, and other sites where the decision to respond to a topographical feature demonstrates an uncon-

scious aesthetic choice. In these pieces, he captures a popular aesthetic that clearly informs his own oeuvre in an organic way. In others he intervenes directly into the public space, creating joyful explosions of color and form in the most unlikely places. Above all, Herrero's work is about the point of contact between the end of one space and the beginning of another. From the apparently dissonant clash of forms and colors comes an overpowering harmony, and perhaps this is the root of the visual fascination of his work.