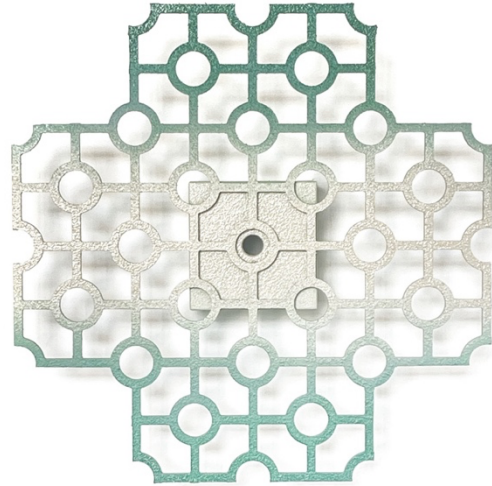


Edra Soto

por la señal | by a signal

September 5 – October 5, 2024

Reception: Thursday, September 5, 6-8pm



Morgan Lehman Gallery proudly presents Edra Soto's solo exhibition *por la señal / by a signal*, a series of abstract works inspired by Puerto Rican *rejas*, wrought iron screens which are common in the archipelago's lower and middle-class communities. This new presentation draws from Soto's personal history and cultural heritage, examining the connections between Puerto Rican cultural memory, African and Black influences, and the colonial history of the United States.

In the series of artworks, "por la señal", after which the exhibition takes its name, Soto reinterprets the tabernacle—a devotional object also known as "the place of dwelling" — derived from her Catholic school upbringing. The artist has documented her frequent travels to Puerto Rico through photographs, and these images make their way into the work by way of viewfinders, implanted within each piece. By revisiting the symbolism of the tabernacle in tandem with personal documentation, Soto questions the methods of indoctrination from colonial traditions and transforms the tabernacle into a space for personal memories. In conversation with "por la señal", the artist has included a porcelain series titled "dos cuerpos / two bodies", which reintroduces abstract fragments of *rejas* motifs to represent forms of communication.

The title *por la señal*, taken from a phrase used in Catholic rituals, also hints at themes of communication and migration. Through this body of work, Soto explores the experiences of migration and her relationship with her maternal heritage, offering an intimate look into the cultural and historical elements that shape her identity.

With this exhibition, Soto reveals the threads of colonial historical lineage in the United States and continues to impactfully confront us with Puerto Rican cultural memory.

Edra Soto (b. 1971) is a Puerto-Rican born artist, curator, and educator. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BA from Escuela de Artes Plásticas y Diseño de Puerto Rico. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago, the Smithsonian, and the DePaul Art Museum, among others. Soto has exhibited extensively including shows at the Smithsonian Museum, El Museo del Barrio, the MCA Chicago, and the ICA San Diego. She has been awarded the US Latinx Art Forum Fellowship, 3Arts Next Level Award, Efroymson Contemporary Arts Fellowship, the Illinois Arts Council Agency Fellowship, the inaugural Foundwork Artist Prize, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant, and the Bemis Center's Ree Kaneko Award. Soto has exhibited and traveled to Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Cuba as part of the MacArthur Foundation's International Connections Fund.