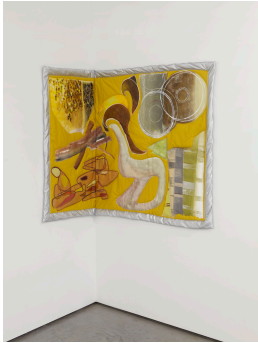


Ana Navas

*roll up (one's) sleeves*

September 7 - October 5, 2019



She is thirteen centimeters shorter than the average Dutch woman. One of the works in her solo presentation *roll up (one's) sleeves* is a low bronze plinth showing the imprint of her shoes. This base exactly compensates what the artist herself lacks in height in order to conform to the Dutch average. Concepts such as transformation, assimilation and appropriation play an important role in the work of multimedia artist Ana Navas (1984, Quito, ECU). Navas' presentations often consist of installations in which paintings, objects, assemblages and video function as 'areas' in which those processes of transformation and assimilation take place.

*roll up (one's) sleeves* presents mimicry as a key theme, alongside notions of stereotype (or stereotypical identities) and the role of the accompanying costumes in social interactions. The bronze pedestal piece *Thirteen is a lucky number*, 2019, is one of the works in which Navas engages with 'pretend play' in a world full of prescribed behavior. Another work in which she refers to those behavioral codes is the intriguing series *Donation Vases* from 2019. Here we see steel frames shaped like inverted drops in which a drawing in steel can be seen, as it were. A ceramic vase is hung below each of these frames. Every vase has a different shape, and each vase carries a text fragment from a book by Lois P. Frankel, 'Nice girls (still) don't get the corner office. Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers' (New York, 2004). This US bestseller is divided into chapters with advice on diverse subjects, such as how to dress for specific situations, how to behave, or tips on language use.

In an almost cartoonish manner, a chubby vase with the text "Unless feeding people is a conscious strategy, just say no to feeding people at work" is accompanied by the image of a bagel with a boiled egg on top of it. The text appears to encourage women to shed the classic, 'soft' caretaker role once and for all. The book quotes thus constitute a reference to role-play, and in this sense a role can also be understood as the immaterial version of a costume.

Over the past years, Navas has particularly immersed herself in the codes of image design: fashion advice, particularly from the late 1970s and 80s age of *power dressing*, makes an appearance in several works. *Patilleras* (2018), for example, is an assemblage with a pair of silver ear jewelry at the center of the composition. Whoever wears the jewelry will also have sideburns, located at exactly the right spot, because fake hair has been incorporated in the jewelry. Navas constructed the assemblage around the silver objects, using the type of carpet that can be found in cars and other more domestic textiles, such as bath mats. The textile patterns are reminiscent of art-historical movements, such as Bauhaus designs or existing designs such as the *Prince of Wales* pattern, which immediately evokes images of school uniforms and other formal attire. The fictional props in some of the assemblages, such as the imitation sideburns, fake Adam's apples and pillows for obscuring the waistline, constitute a playful commentary on social codes regarding appropriate outfits for women in a professional setting (in line, of course, with the male office-wear trends of the era).

Whereas the artist sometimes appeared in earlier works herself while wearing flamboyant attire, she has now created costumes for household appliances and objects such as an ironing board, drying rack or vacuum cleaner. Though these everyday objects easily invoke art-historical references, Navas is mainly interested in the diluted versions of these references as she considers those to be the most 'social' ones. Her work arises from an ever-recurring interest in the relations between design, art, and 'low-brow' disciplines such as decorative crafts. She examines the perception of art outside the context of art, as well as the notions of 'original' and 'copy'.

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The series of *Tara* works in this exhibition, for example, involves an investigation into archetypical painting and the required properties for such a work to be considered a painting. The compositions were constructed from image fragments that show up on internet when you search for terms such as ‘contemporary painting’, ‘abstract painting’, or even just ‘painting’. They are based on household interpretations of iconic gestures from art history.

*roll up (one’s) sleeves* suggests a sense of ‘let’s get the job started’, of physical labour, but Navas employs the title from the perspective of associations with image-building strategies, no matter whether they concern art, fashion, or politics. Her paintings, sculptures, photographs and objects show what can happen when one rolls up one’s sleeves.

Ana Navas was born in Quito, Ecuador, in 1984 and grew up in Venezuela. From 2004 to 2010 she studied at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe, where she took a ‘Meisterschülerin’ (MA) program with Franz Ackermann in 2010-2011. From 2012 to 2014 she was a resident at De Ateliers in Amsterdam, followed by residencies in France, Mexico, Brazil and Colombia. Her work has been shown in solo presentations at, among others, the Kunstruimte art space of De Nederlandsche Bank in Amsterdam (2019, NL), Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2018, DE), Galerie Stadt Sindelfingen (2017, DE), P///// AKT Amsterdam (2017, NL), CEAAC Strasbourg (2017, FR), Abra Caracas (2017, VE) and Nixon, Mexico City (2017, MX). Ana Navas’ work has been included in public and private collections both nationally and internationally.

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