

Clint Roenisch Gallery

Luis Mora

Blooming
21-28.8.2025

A return to flowers

By Tatum Dooley

In the six years since writing the introductory essay for *Say It With Flowers*, I have written about flowers an unusually high number of times. It seems that Luis Mora has primed me for a specialization in the subject.

When Luis Mora asked me to revisit the series for the second edition of the book and corresponding exhibition, titled *Blooming*, at Clint Roenisch, it felt like no time had passed at all. It's a text that remains razor sharp in my mind. The book sits prominently on my bookshelf; when I see its red cover, I remember the swell of people at the opening, how quickly the edition sold out, and how thankful I was to be part of such a project. Each time I have been asked to write about an artist whose subject is also flowers, I have thought about the words and themes I explored with Mora.

For Marie-Michelle Deschamp's cerebral sculptures, I wrote: "Gardens contain the past (seeds from hundreds of years ago), exist in the present, and will be propelled into the future as they continue to bloom."

For Rebecca Wood's archival photographs, I wrote: "Still, I dream of a garden. A place to grow things. I'm pulled towards the hope of cultivating a self-sustaining organism that exists beyond myself."

For the painter Keiran Brennan Hinton, my then-boyfriend and now-husband, I wrote: "On Thursdays, I'm at pottery class, and he's painting flowers that I bought for him or he bought for me—and, eventually, that someone might give to someone else. A statement of love vis-à-vis a statement of love."

All of these sentences could be written about Mora's photographs, and accumulate to something larger I'm trying to get at: the universality of life and how it is echoed in art; the ability for art to create permanence out of impermanence; and the connection between the

past, present, and future. When I look back at the essay I wrote in 2019, I have a chance to give a new life to the words and themes. Mora is now doing the same thing with the second edition and expanded exhibition, *Blooming*.

In addition to the flowers and gardens recorded to the written word, there have been wedding bouquets, flowers sent in sympathy, birthday peonies, and get well soon flowers. There have been flowers I have grown and flowers that have rotted in a vase, forgotten in the haze of life. All of this is to say, life has continued to be lived, and flowers have continued to be omnipresent. If I can be literal for a second: there have been many times I have said it with flowers.

In *Blooming*, there are new works that haven't been seen before, new formats, and new ways of framing. Monobloc chairs—the omnipresent plastic chair prevalent worldwide—are stacked as sculptural objects, their presence also depicted in the markets that Mora captured. These 3-D elements of Mora's exhibitions (previously, plastic buckets and airline lounge seating) act as periods or commas. They bridge the physical distance between the space where the photograph was taken and where they are shown.

It's as if the photographs Mora took in Paloquemao market in Colombia have continued to grow, like a perennial flower that reemerges in a slightly new form. In the time between 2019 and today, Mora's life has also changed: he married Melanie, moved homes, and had two beautiful children, Rome and Veneda. Here, he is asking: Does the context of these photographs change with time? Or do they stay cemented in place? How can showing the work in a new space change how they are seen?

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Hours:
Wednesday to Sunday
12pm - 5pm

The power of a photograph is that it records a sliver in time when it was taken. But it also has the ability to reflect the moment in which it is viewed. What the viewer projects onto the work, how they are feeling when they look at it, impacts how it is seen. This is one of my favourite things about art: something created at one distinct time and place can expand outward to new places, people, and experiences. Like a seed, one piece can propagate in thousands of directions. *Say It With Flowers*, and now *Blooming*, are projects that have continued to grow, introducing us to new ways of looking and thinking.

In Mora's photographs, he captures not only the flowers at the Palomares market, but the labour of the growers and vendors. Similarly, the exhibitions he mounts don't just include himself, but writers, curators, gallerists, designers, printers, framers, and the support of family and friends. What Mora is capturing, both in his photographs and through praxis, is community. You—the person reading this—are now implicated. Welcome to the world of flowers!

What comes after *Blooming*? In Mora's photographs, flowers are being put out to sell. We don't know where they go. They could be apology flowers, Valentine's Day flowers, funeral flowers, anniversary flowers, or just because flowers. They are Schrödinger's flowers—open to all possibilities and lives. Occasions that call for flowers will continue in our lives. And so will Mora's photographs and the flowers for sale at the market down the street.

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Sebastián Rodríguez-Besa

Toes On The Nose, an exhibition of new paintings by Sebastián Rodríguez-Besa, presents four works created during a personal residency in Mexico City. This series emerges from a practice of daily observation and nomadic adaptation, where the artist discovered new modes of balance—both physical and creative—while constructing temporary spaces for intensive focus. The paintings are atmospheric and layered, brimming with the accumulated energy of a city that refuses easy categorization and an artistic process rooted in precarious attention.

In Mexico City, Rodríguez-Besa discovered the drive to return to a mode of observation that precedes the visual noise of familiar territory—to inhabit the raw experience of seeing before interpretation sets in. These four paintings, created during a two-month stay with his partner, transcribe, layer, and obscure the daily accumulation of visual encounters: the particular light filtering through temporary windows, the colors bleeding from market stalls, the domestic rhythms of shared space converging with the restless energy of an unknown city, but culturally familiar to some degree.

Working between large and intimate scales, Rodríguez-Besa compulsively collected visual fragments throughout each day—sketches made on walks, observations stolen between routine and discovery, the archaeological sediment of growing up Latin American mingling with immediate Mexican cultural encounters. These landscapes of memory manifest as layered compositions where muted greens, dusty pinks, and weathered blues create atmospheric spaces punctuated by moments of vivid yellow and deep black. Popular iconography surfaces in these canvases, but so do the sound and smells of the markets and its food, the weight of temporary walls, fragments of underground aesthetics, and the recurring motif of spaces transformed into personal places. These images emerge and recede from the compositions depending on where the viewer focuses; none is prioritized over the other.

This nomadic studio practice meant learning to paint with whatever tools felt necessary—emotion channeled into gestural marks, focus applied with tangible vigor, uncertainty transformed into productive territory. Working from improvised setups, Rodríguez-Besa found moments of precarious balance where complete attention was required, where the physical act of painting became a form of meditation on presence and risk. He repeated visual languages at different speeds and intensities, often cannibalizing imagery from his own

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visual memory to strip away preconceived ideas and understand them differently within this new context. This activity reflected his process of navigating displacement while embracing the temporary as a form of home.

The varying scales—two large canvases, one medium, one smaller—function like the experience of being simultaneously grounded in domestic routine and unmoored by constant discovery. When daily observation became the organizing principle, everything demanded attention: the colors that refuse easy categorization, the particular chaos of streets, the quiet moments of shared intimacy. These painted moments collapse abstraction and figuration, where gestural marks suggest architectural fragments, organic forms, and half-remembered encounters with equal weight. Like windows or doorways have functioned in Rodríguez-Besa's earlier work, Mexico City itself serves as a container for exploring how quickly foreign spaces become intimate when you're paying attention.

This series reveals what happens when you give yourself permission to look longer, to engage with the challenging paintings that emerge, to recognize that challenge as necessary growth. The works ask viewers to see through and among multiple layers of information—personal history, immediate experience, cultural memory, and the accumulated iconography of contemporary life converging into new visual languages. Indeed, these paintings demand that we look, and look again, at our own capacity for observation and reinvention within borrowed spaces. In experiencing these works, viewers are invited to find their own moment of focused balance, their own toes on the nose—that sensation of complete attention at the edge of discovery.

In the book *Los Detectives Salvajes* (The Savage Detectives) by the writer and poet, Roberto Bolaño describes Mexico City as a chaotic and vibrant space, full of contrasts, where youth and decadence, poetry and violence, coexist in an atmosphere of searching and uncertainty. The city is another character, a labyrinth of streets, bars and marginal neighborhoods where the characters, especially the young poets, lose and find themselves in their search for poetry and for themselves.

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