

Desiree Morales

In a personal collection of photographs taken by Desiree Morales, lies a black and white image of what appears to be a dressing room. Her camera lens angles in such a way it only captures one corner of the room. You can see a portion of a mirror, a mirror light, the crease of the corner wall, and a stool. Through this unassuming shot, she lures me into taking a second look at the potential spaces between the dark and light shadows of the photograph. The dressing room ceases to exist and abstract bodies begin to appear. While this candid snapshot is not a part of her most recent body of work, it is an excellent introduction to the evolution of Desiree Morales' photography.

Her latest works are electrifying images of strong, bold colors popping out amongst white spaces. They dance within hints of shadows and light exposing the essence of density. There is so much for our eyes to explore, feeling as if we have stepped into a fantastic three-dimensional world of Oz. The intricate weaving of colorful shapes immediately mesmerizes us into discovering its vast dimensional forms.

If you did not know Morales was a photographer, you might think her background was in graphic design. Although not a graphic designer, she is in fact a designer, challenging the contemporary role of photography in art. There is an ingenious process to Morales' art practice. Her complex compositions evolved from photographing painted objects on metal, to painted objects on Styrofoam. Painting on metal did not achieve the dimensional effect she wanted to capture, leading her to brilliantly construct her own physical structures out of Styrofoam.

The vibrant colors you see in her photographs are painted sections of paper, which are glued to Styrofoam. After each composition of shapes is arranged, she mounts each design in place for her grand photoshoot. Once mounted, the structures become art in motion working to captivate its future viewer. Her abstract portraits invite us to look between the shadows. We begin to experience a variety of depth intertwined between the primary color family and their daring, vibrant cousin – orange.

Before long, the shadows dance between shades of light and dark red, prompting us to pay attention to the colors created through the marriage of reds and oranges. Morales' use of canary yellow enables distinct transformations of color; the hues marry one another producing fragments of mango, pineapple, and lemon. In another image, the royal blue forms call to mind her earlier black and white photograph.

Black and white spaces inhabit the corners of each image adding the signature mark to Desiree Morales' dimensional essence. Through her work, we get a chance to experience the fascinating idea of spatial construction. The more we observe, the more we begin to understand Morales' viewpoint of the world and the way she sees images. Her work invites us to reflect on the difference between a physical object and the process/outcome of photographing physical objects.

- Jessica Ayala