

New paintings by Luisa Basnuevo at Mira Mar

Luisa Basnuevo, a painter from Miami, is showing new work at Allyn Gallup Contemporary/Mira Mar Gallery, 1284 Palm Ave. N. Although this is Basnuevo's first one-person gallery show, she has exhibited extensively for the past decade in museum exhibitions. Last spring, her work was shown at the Dunedin Art Center. Elements of her newest paintings reflect her response to seeing Leonardo da Vinci's work on exhibition in New York and her contemplation of the matrix of war.

Basnuevo is a painter's painter. If you like the texture of paint and the way you can move it onto, into and across the surface of a canvas, you will appreciate her work. Like any painter she has had to create a vocabulary of expression. One form she has adopted resembles the cap or pod that covers the buds of the eucalyptus tree. This shape dominates her compositions. The eucalyptus is a tree thousands of years old. Its timber is valuable and its leaves contain oils used in medicine. It is a reference that binds her work to millennia of history.



"Procession #1" (2003) by Luisa Basnuevo is one of the works featured at Mira Mar Gallery.

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In this writer's opinion, the star of the show and the painting that should be acquired for a museum collection is called "Three Cordilleras" (2001). It's one of the larger canvases (67" x 80"), a vast composition of form and colors that includes yellows, ochre, red, terra cotta, brick, clay and rust. There are scrapes of paint, drops and washes, under paint and under drawing visible on the surface. Basnuevo is not afraid of revealing her process to you. It seems that as we project ourselves into her landscape of pod shapes, we are caught in a sand or dust storm. There are three defined planes of space and, while we can also choose to remain detached and assume an aerial view of the landscape, we can feel isolation or contemplate issues of survival if we imagine ourselves as one of the painted pods.

In "Cabrales" (2003), we can discern layers of white paint and, it seems, diagrams and plans – perhaps an erased sketch of ladders, catapults and ramparts. Like all her work, this one is about redefining our ideas about perception and evidence that helps determine our orientation to and in space. "Regroup" (2003) is a work that, although devoid of color, is rich in shades of black to white, with gray, tan, beige and browns providing the middle ground. Again, her process is very much in evidence as forms merge, blend and morph, emerge, recede or fade. Each time we try to retrace our steps across the surface, we stumble on a new discovery buried under or between forms. The picture appears to redefine itself, as we are preoccupied in another part of the painted plane.

For a 2003 series of numbered works



Luisa Basnuevo's "Three Cordilleras" is on display at the Mira Mar.

called "Procession," Basnuevo has created a new form. It is a triangular shape that could represent helmets, shields, tents, missiles or some other kind of armament. The shapes are arranged in tight groupings, battalions or troupes. These groupings move left to right or right to left. In "Procession #2," these forms look like trees or conifers. Basnuevo has combined colors one would not ordinarily think of using together – blues, greens, yellows and oranges. The consequence of her choice of colors is to isolate focus in different areas of the canvas that creates some tension and yet does not dissolve the unity of the

composition as a whole. "Procession #3" is subtle. It seems to be all about movement of legions or battalions along patterns and tracks. "Procession #4" is the most regimented and squared. There is alignment and formation. A portion of the surface appears bombed out, sacked or obliterated.

The gallery is also showing a few drawings from 2001. They are pigment, matte medium and charcoal on paper. In these works, as well, Basnuevo isolates one pod from the group, and in these drawings, the groupings of pods are incredibly densely packed.