

## Felipe Baeza

by Isabella Achenbach<sup>1</sup>

*I open against my will dreaming of other planets  
 I am dreaming of other ways of seeing this life*

These lines title a large-scale painting by Felipe Baeza, who combines collage, mixed media (such as twine and glitter), egg tempera, and printmaking mediums to make heavily textured two-dimensional works. Dreams of other planets, of another life arise through bodies depicted in states of transformation – often half human, half flora. Full foliage bursts from human heads, overtakes torsos and limbs, and erotically vines its way in and out of desirous mouths. Baeza’s is a language of passion, assisted by a palette of deep violet, indigo, black, blood and cherry red.

Baeza’s approach to material aligns with the concepts that underline his work. This is visible in the seven new pieces shown at the Biennale Arte 2022, a continuation of a series the artist has developed since 2018. Using paper and transfer techniques, Baeza builds up his figures with layer after layer on panel, canvas, and paper, only to then sand, carve, and physically alter the elements within each composition. This intense material manipulation recharacterises traditional drawing and painting processes, and connects to the artist’s intent to create hybrid bodies, “fugitive bodies,” as he describes. Reflecting on the migration he experienced coming to the United States from Mexico, and migration across the globe, his densely layered works depict humans, interspecies bodies, and plants in commingling states of metamorphosis. Described by the artist as love letters, his paintings and collages are both deeply personal, a form of imaginative self-portraiture and future building – Baeza’s othered and liberated bodies stand triumphantly, a declaration supporting many states of being, and the multiplicity of ways to see and experience life.

Baeza’s exploration of the “fugitive body” is continued in a collage-on-paper series called Gente del Occidente de México (2017-2019). Conflating the ancient and the contemporary, photographs of carved pre-Columbian stone sculptures are combined with fragmented sections of human bodies taken from fashion and erotica magazines. Stone and flesh meet at the joints, creating new beings – not human, not relic, but somehow both. In this, as in the new works, is an acknowledgement and full acceptance of all politicised identities that have historically been disavowed.



Felipe Baeza, *Encuentro Mágico*, 2022. Ink, embroidery, acrylic, graphite, varnish and cut paper collage on panel, 14x11 inches.

1. Isabella Achenbach’s essay accompanied the exhibition catalog for *The Milk of Dreams*, 59<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, ITA