

Marion Colomer,  
French artist living in Washington D.C.

**MELANCHOLIA** by Marion Colomer  
**Arlington Art Center, part of the Fall Solos 2016**

3550 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201  
Metro : Virginia Square, orange and silver lines.

**on view: October 15 - December 18, 2016**

*Opening night: Saturday 15th October 2016, 6 to 9pm.*





Detail, A woman, Watercolor on paper and embroideries. 2015, 78x' 42.5'



Dana El Masri in her studio, working on creating a « wet earth scent » for *Melancholia*. 2016



Preparatory composition drawing. 2016

In Marion Colomer's recent work, *Melancholia*, beauty oscillates between daydreaming and doubt. Colomer's large-scale watercolors guide the viewer toward a different perspective of the intimate. The work is in constant tension of regression, double meaning, and contradiction. In moments of narrative, sometimes the artist presents the Edenic lush jungle, where other times nature is all-consuming and dangerous, speaking to the threat of death that awaits us. Images of raw sexual desire are at once divested of meaning, lifted out of the realm of the pornographic, and detoxified in the soft renderings of drawn bodies, their expressions reflecting the melancholy of lost desire. The bodies are left blank, present in their absence as if their fragrance and essence faded. This series started with the sensuality of a scent, a perfume that would, to some, smell like a lost paradise, with a fragrance of green leaves and rainforest, while others would experience within this effluvia something dangerous, a smell of dampness, or of decomposing soil. For this immersive installation Colomer collaborated with Dana El Masri, NYC based perfumer, creating a original scent.



A Man, Watercolor on paper and embroideries. 2016. 78x' 42.5'



A couple, Watercolor on polyethylene paper and embroideries. 2016. 78'x 60'

Marion Colomer, a French painter, has been based in Washington, DC since 2013. She has lived in Paris, New York, and New Delhi, and has had numerous exhibitions in France and India. Colomer graduated from Paris' Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-arts in 2008 with a Masters of Fine Arts specialized in paintings. She is currently working as a painting conservator at the US Capitol, restoring the Brumidi Corridors murals. Most recently Colomer was named an S&R Foundation fellow at the residency program for DC artists, housed at the Fillmore School in Georgetown.



Colomer's work is rooted in the question of intimacy, treated with sensuality and turned towards the "other." Colomer's paintings reflect an interest in the hand and traditionally female crafts, in which ornamentation and beauty are rendered in layers of bitter and acerbic meaning.



Washington Post, December 2016

The Washington Post

Museums

## In the galleries: A limited number of shades of gray

By Mark Jenkins December 9

PLANAD



Michele Montalbano's "Hide and Seek," paper and hand-cut wallpaper on canvas, at the Arlington Arts Center. (Michele Montalbano/Arlington Arts Center)

### Fall Solos 2016

The seven Mid-Atlantic artists in Arlington Arts Center's "Fall Solos 2016" deal in incongruity and juxtaposition, whether of media or subject or both. Lewis Colburn simulates Colonial-era artifacts such as rifles and a spinning wheel, mostly in wood, yet with some pieces molded of translucent red urethane. Michele Montalbano overlaps pieces of wallpaper, primarily with designs that evoke 18th-century France but interleaving a few scraps whose imagery suggests a boy's bedroom out of "Leave it To Beaver."

Painting oozes into sculpture in Andrew Hladky's mainly black pieces, the most unruly of which send tendrils off the canvas and into space. Michael Booker and Liz Guzman alternate between flat and 3-D formats, and both can paint realistically — or surreally — when they choose. In Booker's striking "HSG Bust II," a sculpture is hidden behind painstakingly rendered lacy garments. Some of Guzman's tropical landscapes incorporate objects, but she also simulates depth in large, immersive pictures whose foregrounded leaves promise paradise beyond.



Marion Colomer's "A Man," watercolor and pencil on paper with embroidery, at the Arlington Arts Center. (Marion Colomer/Arlington Arts Center)

The hybrids are edgiest when they encompass human flesh. Amanda Burnham's expressionist drawing-sculptures imagine cities as organisms, with arms and lips jumbled with doors and windows, all eerily lighted. Marion Colomer's pencil drawings of nudes are set in painted jungles that are more colorful than their inhabitants. Yet most of the people are in sexually explicit poses, giving them an erotic charge that belies their wispy rendering. Colomer even helped craft an original perfume for the installation, adding another dimension.

**Fall Solos 2016** On view through Dec. 18 at Arlington Arts Center, 3550 Wilson Blvd., Arlington. 703-248-6800. [arlingtonartscenter.org](http://arlingtonartscenter.org).

Blog, Arlington Art Center, Interview, December 2016

## Melancholia: Marion Colomer's Lost Paradise

[f My Page](#)

written by AAC Marketing and Development Intern Erica Sobers

Marion Colomer is a French painter currently based in Washington, D.C. She enjoys incorporating the human figure and emotions into her work to create a still life, saying this method represents both how time passes and how it stands still.

She uses figurative drawing to bring her vision to life. Her latest work, *Melancholia*, incorporates the human figure and is sure to give viewers something to talk about.

---

***melancholia: noun (mel·an·cho·lia \,me-lən- 'kō-lē-ə\)***  
***a feeling of sadness and depression***

---

Upon entering the all-black Truland Gallery, viewers are immediately enveloped by the scent of green leaves and rainforest. Fall SOLOS 2016 artist Marion Colomer collaborated with Dana El Masri, NYC-based perfumer, to create the signature scent for her aptly titled, *Melancholia*, saying she wanted it to evoke a feeling of being lost in paradise.

*"I wish to present a selection of these paintings in an installation with a scent that would recreate this emotion of smelling something beautiful, yet with a morbid aspect of putrefaction. The scent that is an illusion would engage the viewer in a multi-level emotional experience."*



Installation view of Marion Colomer's *Melancholia*. Photo by Dawn Whitmore

**Why and how did this body of work begin to form in your mind?**

I felt I needed to work on making the theme reflect the idea of a conflicting point of view within a visual element. The images are inspired by pornography, but I wanted to reimagine them, with a sense of intimacy. My work is exploring beauty – I stitch embroideries on the canvas, employ colorful watercolor –, yet is acerbic. I wanted to develop an installation that would immerse the viewer in an experience, using scent, and visual figurative drawings where the paradox of the presence of the absence is the focus point.

***I wanted to develop an installation that would immerse the viewer in an experience, using scent, and visual figurative drawings where the paradox of the presence of the absence is the focus point.***

Painting the jungle was also important to me. It's beautiful yet dangerous, invading, where space and time seems to disappear. The people depicted stand in front of the viewer, but their figures are ghost-like and almost disappear instantly, reminiscent of a scent that is ephemeral as well, evoking the lost desire and the melancholy that arises.

**What do you want the audience to take away from this work?**

I hope they will experience the multi-faceted layers of the work, and feel the desire and melancholy that exist because of the absence. For Victor Hugo [a French poet], melancholy is happiness of being sad. I would like if it could create a debate, or discussion; visions of [The Garden of] [Eden](#), and maybe for some others anxiety.

***I believe that figurative painting can convey a deep message, even when exploring beauty.***

I would hope that the reactions to the painting are not about sex and pornography, but rather a view on intimacy. I also hope that figurative painting still holds an important

place in today's contemporary art scene. I believe that figurative painting can convey a deep message, even when exploring beauty.

### **How does your exhibition/work fit with this particular gallery?**



Twine upon entering the Truland Gallery. Photo by Dawn Whitmore

I had a special installation arrangement for this gallery. I wanted to have a corridor to create a gradual immersion that allows the scent to become stronger as you walk through the twine into the gallery.

The space is dark and theatrical. The light shines on the sequins that are ornamenting the watercolor drawings. I intentionally covered the space like a wallpaper because I wanted a baroque installation with disjointed elements.

### **What artist has influenced you the most?**

I am classically trained, I do a lot of copies of still life from 17th century Dutch artists. But one artist in particular? Some people find Gauguin in my work.

---

***Melancholia* is currently open for viewing until December 18th in the Truland Gallery located on our Lower Level. See more of Marion's work in Ward 12, a group exhibition at the Fillmore School on view Dec 7- 21.**

**Join our FALL SOLOS 2016 artists along with AAC resident artist Alice Whealin for a gallery talk Saturday, December 10, 1 – 4pm.**

*\*This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity\**