

**CARLOS RODRIGUEZ**  
***Costumbres Amorosas de los Animales***  
October 28 - November 28, 2020

**FORTNIGHT INSTITUTE, NY**  
\* by appointment  
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Fortnight Institute is pleased to present Carlos Rodriguez's first solo exhibition in the United States, *Costumbres Amorosas de los Animales*. The artist, born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, works and lives in Mexico City. The title of the exhibition is derived from a 1945 book, of the same title, on the study of the biological and loving habits of animals. In Rodriguez's new paintings and ceramics, he explores the physical similarities and amorous practices between animals and humans. The perpetual act of love, tenderness, joy, and companionship is present throughout, a departure from the more sexual but tender queer male figures usually depicted in his work. In the painting, *Abrazos en los Arboles, Consuelo* (*Hugs in the trees, Comfort*), both man and koala have tears running down their face.

*Costumbres Amorosas de los Animales*, can be read similarly to a fable, imbued in mythology and symbolism. Early fables depicted animals engaged in human-like situations, intended as moral lessons to the reader. The paintings depict different scenes, beginning with *Primer Encuentro* (*First Encounter*) and concluding with *Reino Apacible* (*Peaceful Kingdom*), inspired by a utopia where beasts and humans return to a primordial paradise. Referencing the myth of Narcissus, in *Reino Apacible*, the figure discovers that in his reflection, it's not just him that he observes, but the world, composed of what he loves. And in the end, a playful revelation becomes clear, the animals contemplate their human reflection.

In the book "Sapiens," Yuval Noah Harari writes of animistic beliefs among ancient foragers: "Animism (from 'Anima', 'soul,' or 'spirit' in Latin) is the belief that almost every place, every animal, every plant, has awareness and feelings, and can communicate directly with humans. Animists believe that there is no barrier between humans and other beings. They can all connect directly through speech, song, dance, and ceremony..." In the paintings, nature, animals, and man, inhabit an animistic realm where the ritual of life is fully embraced. The surrounding nature, reminiscent of Henri Rousseau, is alive, communicating through forms and colors. In *Garras Protectoras* (*Protective Claws*), an enormous bear protects a male figure with soft round claws. Their emotionality and physicality is almost the same. In Paleolithic times, the bear was a being of magico-religious admiration. "Shamans or medicine men often dressed as bears and imitated the bear's gait in their dances to take on its healing powers, or shape-shifted into bears for their spirit journeys." (Saunders, *Animal Spirits*, 1995).

The ceramics are sculptural companions to the paintings. For the artist, the ceramics function as fertility idols, or protective charms. The ceramics are evocative of small Greek terracotta statuettes, which were used for various purposes as dedications to the gods, offerings to the dead, and ornaments of the living. Two of the Greek words for statue: *Agalma* is a 'source of pleasure,' and *Kolossos*, 'a substitute for somebody absent or unknown.' Rodriguez's work is not only a source of pleasure and joy, but an allegorical reminder of our connections to nature and other beings.