



1
2
3
4
5



sebastian restrepo multitasking

October 12–December 20, 2024

6572 SW 40th Street
Miami, FL 33155

www.namepublications.org
info@namepublications.org

“What eating really means:”
An Ode to Zeb Restrepo’s Domestic Iconology
Monica Uszerowicz

Imagine a drawing of a house, like how children depict them—schematic, square-shaped, with four-paned windows and a welcoming door. Thicken its lines with white paint; give it a proper roof. Nestle the house in a landscape of photosynthetic green—curl-topped trees, a grassy floor—and adorn the scene with precious details: a lemon-yellow truck, a blue bottle-shaped pond dotted with ducklings, and a white, squat picket fence. The fence, surely part of the home, is oddly placed—a few inches away, truncated in length and protecting nothing.

Juan Sebastian “Zeb” Restrepo painted *Farmhouse* in 2024, recalling the solitude of lockdown-era Illinois, where they lived in a small house while attending graduate school. “It felt very prophetic, very isolated,” they tell me. When I saw *Farmhouse* earlier this year, I was disarmed by its comic sweetness: the perspective, both top-down and head-on; the harmonious convergence of so many elements on an impossibly flat plane, like Richard Scarry’s sunny educational illustrations; the delicious cheer of the colors, like cake icing. Each object, fragmented and isolated, becomes singularly significant and curious—this truck, this little duck. And that fence! Detached from its house, the fence becomes a peculiar simulacrum, evoking the weight of its intention by failing to fulfill it. There’s nothing to guard. The short, scant slats ask: What are fences for, exactly? Are they protective? Divisive? “Fences keep things in and out, even though that one isn’t doing anything,” Zeb says. “I included it for its symbolism of safety, of sentimentality. I like sentimentality, and I like absurdity.”

Zeb remembers taking colored-pencil classes at an all-boys Catholic school in Barranquilla, Colombia, before immigrating to Miami. “I have vivid memories of looking out at the courtyard and seeing the trees sway,” they share. For Zeb, it’s the little things. Today, they wryly—and whimsically—render everyday objects and moments: Roaches looming over dirty dishes. A morning swim in a mammoth pool. The erratic tableaux of a lunch table. The organized chaos of a medicine cabinet, painted flat, with a nail file, toothbrush, pill bottles, and Pepto Bismol uniformly positioned. The cigarette that quells frustration—in the self-portrait *Creative Block*, 2023, the artist smokes under an interrogative green light bulb, gazing tiredly at the viewer. Blue teardrops, blue toothpaste foam. Every item a symbol, every symbol a key on the map legend of Zeb’s heart. In their hands, the quotidian becomes iconographic.

And isn’t it? Painting food, for example, “helps me explore what eating really means,” they explain. “Creating art from everyday life reveals fundamental insights, such as the passage of time.” A colored-pencil portrait of the artist and their mother, entitled *Raised by a single parent in Miami, FL*, 2023, is drawn in shallow space, with

impossible proportions: the flat circle of a tabletop, on the same plane as its legs, faces the viewer. Mom’s plate is already clean, and she stands over her child, perhaps protectively, in Minnie Mouse polka dots and pink heels. The setting is tidy. The sun, outside another four-paned window, is beginning to set. Zeb describes their mother, an optometrist, as “a key influence in my development as an artist and teacher. Her attention to detail, as reflected in her cleanliness, inspires me.” The title says it all—a snack is an act of love. This meal was made with care, and another day is complete.

Multitasking, indeed. In their painting *Multi-tasking*, 2024, a cat walks across a bed frame, above a quilt cluttered with yet another cat and the flotsam of the day: a laptop, tangled headphones, brown pants, a yellow shirt, an open book. Zeb’s two cats, Esau and Jacob—named for Lorenzo Ghiberti’s *Gates of Paradise*—often appear in their work, soft and stoic in otherwise chaotic scenes. The repetition is intentional, a practice drawn from Zeb’s love of postmodern signifiers (like emojis) and the strange lexicon of the subconscious—the patterns our minds draw from pleasures, heartaches, and rituals. “I’ve been thinking about how to tell a story with icons,” they say. “Trees, for example, embody nature, something structured, safe.” They consider, aloud, how Tarot cards transform recognizable symbols (a cup, a wand, a star) into profound messages. “Through building my own iconography, I’m essentially trying to create a Tarot card deck. When I think of fire signs, I think of electricity. When I think of numbers, I think of people. When I think of cats, I think of how they have their own personal characteristics and behaviors: the domestic scene as a setting for the Tarot card.”

Imagine drawing the Two of Trees, the Four of Fences, the Sleepy Cat. The naïf, matter-of-fact charm of the images will enchant at first draw, then impart something else, open to your quiet interpretation. Something deeper? Maybe. Zeb’s stuff of life, just-so, already prompts knowing laughter, pangs of nostalgia, memories of years or hours past. A cat stretching on the bed, the protective shade of a tree, a mother’s love—even if that’s all there is, it’s so very much.

Sebastian “Zeb” Restrepo is an artist currently based in Florida. Their drawings and paintings depict everyday scenes and offer intimate windows into his domestic life. Zeb earned an MFA in Painting from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and a BFA in Painting from Pratt Institute and is currently an Adjunct Faculty member at Florida International University and Miami Dade College.

Founded in 2008, [NAME] Publications is dedicated to making books with an emphasis on histories and practices often marginalized in dominant art and design histories. The press facilitates the production of books by artists, designers, curators, and scholars with practices anchored in the Americas. It disseminates these titles and builds new audiences for them through exhibitions, public programs, and the salvaging of archival materials. *Sebastian Restrepo: multitasking* is made possible with the support of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council; the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; Teiger Foundation; and The Jorge M. Pérez Family Foundation at The Miami Foundation.

[NAME]

