



# VORTEX

Valerie Campos  
APRIL 18 - JUNE 14, 2024



1811 FRANKFORD AVENUE  
PHILADELPHIA

Valerie Campos' *Vortex* series evokes the physical instability, fragility and transfiguration that embody the relevant issues of our times. To this end, she combines historical art references from ancient and modern sculptures, geometric shapes and pre-Hispanic elements as universal symbols, whose juxtaposition represents the fusion, collapse, and disjunction of human history. This work opens a universe that is essentially unresolved and depicts life as a vortex of activity, sound, and fury.

Campos leverages the vortex as a swirling center of energy that can produce a range of physical, emotional, and spiritual effects. She explores the liminal space between the conscious and unconscious worlds striking a balance between chaos and order. She anchors her work with horizontal and vertical lines, which form an invisible grid that translates three-dimensional space into flattened compositions of patterns and colors.

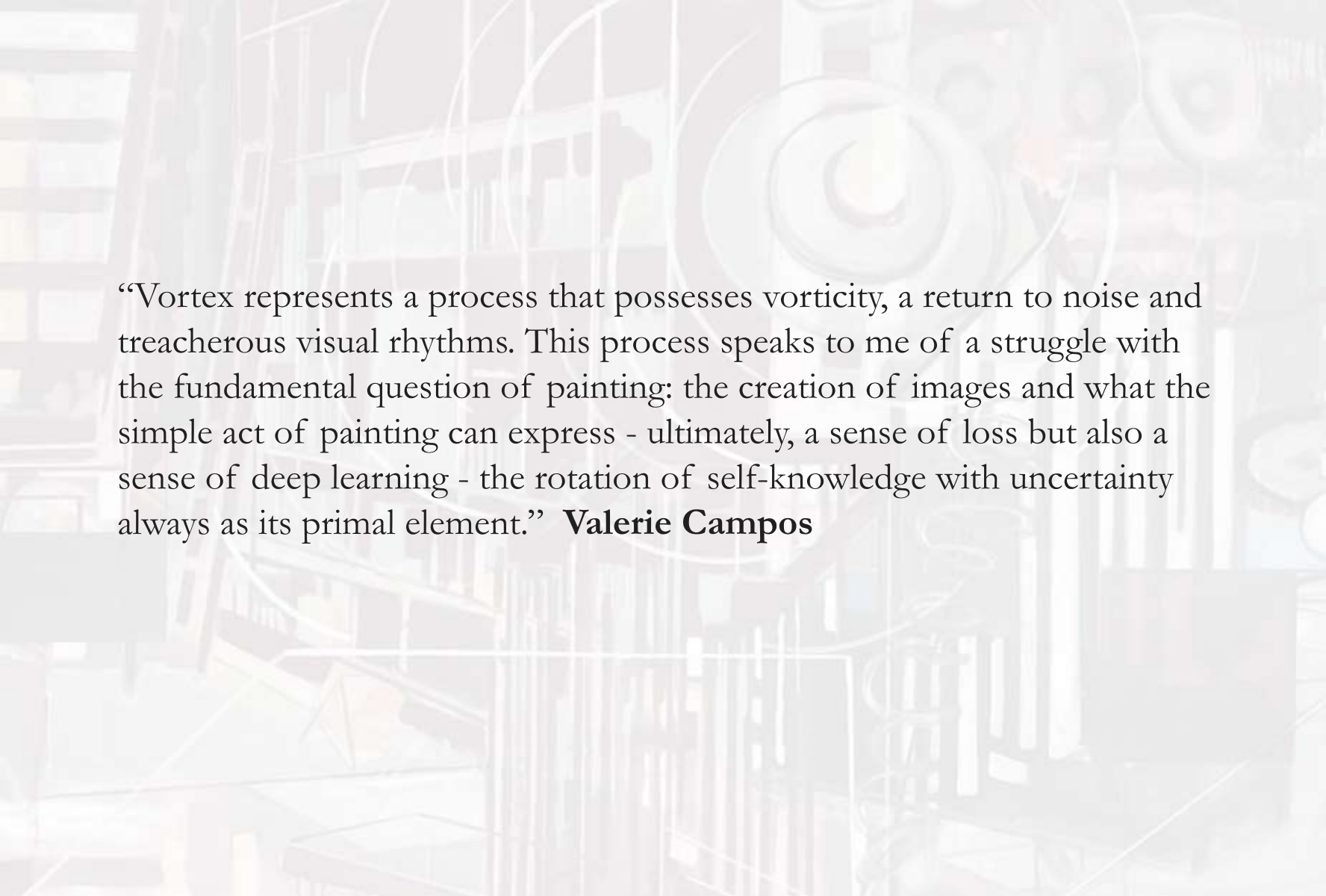




In this manner, the *Vortex* offers the freedom to allow many contradictions, and much humor in these works. New cartoonish representations of anthropomorphic figures emerge from pre-Hispanic bacchanalias, yet Campos creates ambiguity in her images by expanding the forms and colors to purge her paintings of any specific representative references. Multiple metamorphoses of the body underscore polysemy; this uncertainty is an axis for the creation of art and a visual reminder that there exists a higher state of vibration.

Conceptually, *Vortex* is Campos' return to painting of treacherous visual rhythms. This process speaks to the fundamental struggle of painting: the images created vs the act of creation, which allow the artist to reveal many levels and layers of emotions, ranging from deep learning to a sense of loss.





“Vortex represents a process that possesses vorticity, a return to noise and treacherous visual rhythms. This process speaks to me of a struggle with the fundamental question of painting: the creation of images and what the simple act of painting can express - ultimately, a sense of loss but also a sense of deep learning - the rotation of self-knowledge with uncertainty always as its primal element.” **Valerie Campos**



**ASCENSION, 2022**, Oil on canvas, 84 x 143 in



Valerie Campos in her studio





**CONVERSATION NO. 1, 2022**, Oil on canvas, 72 x 78 in



THE ART OF MESOAMERICA Mary Elton Miller

POET IN NEW YORK

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Complement. My Enemy. My Oppressor. My Love



**THE BALL GAME, 2022**, Oil on linen, 40 x 55 in



Campos' most recent



**BAD SPIRITS, 2022**, Oil on canvas, 72 x 78 in



**Valerie Campos** is a self-taught artist born in Mexico City (1983) and raised in Los Angeles, California, where her first visual influences were street art and Lowbrow, an underground pop surrealism movement indebted to comics and punk. Inspired by a wide range of musical genres, Valerie paints sonorous and organic spaces, combining abstract and figurative elements, that she fragments and reproduces in a kaleidoscope-like manner, which replicate the natural rhythms of life.

Campos' most recent works are part of her non-figurative repertoire, which rely on the game of chance as a starting point. The corpus and the plastic vocabulary of Valerie Campos are polysemic by nature, and dynamic in their themes that arise from the continuous metamorphosis of the eroticism of the body, and the fusion of symbols and spaces created from the concurrence of depth and surface. The forms and rhythms that emerge express evocations and memories of places always in movement. As a composer of symbolist adventures and topological deviations, Campos displays a surprising solvency in her drawing, a quality that elevates her to a higher level than others of her generation, especially considering her auto-didactical formation.

This current series revisits and constructs a dialogue with elements of previous series, such as *Where Dreams Come True*, 2011 (Museum of Oaxacan Painters); *Cuentos Subterráneos del Eterno Retorno*, 2016 (Museum of Contemporary Art, Mexico City); *Evocaciones, Resonancias y Fantasías*, 2021 (Vaiven Collectors, Mexico City); *Monochromatic Series*, 2023 (Wexler Gallery, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia); and *Analogías* 2023 (M5 Contempo Gallery, Oaxaca).

Since the beginning of her career, Valerie Campos has strived to reconcile representations from very different origins, to transversalize the contents and principles that determine individual, community and social behaviors. Thus, universal symbols cohabit the length and breadth of her work, sometimes being more evident, and at other times almost subliminal presences, which fuse elements from the high Mesoamerican cultures, in particular the hieroglyphics of the Mayan and Mixtec codices, along with caricatures and their capacity for synthetic communication. The mixture of elements strengthens an ironic display, which brings out humor through parody, demonstrating that it is important to do things seriously, but not to be solemn.

Campos' aesthetic deeply contemplates the materials and supports, canvases, papers and pigments with which she works, and demands a significant introspective process in the studio. Her gentle, but profound, intellectualism allows her to formulate her idea-notion-emblem of the body-consciousness. She astutely recognizes that the subject is not equivalent to the psyche from which it emerges (Freud), nor is the subject equivalent to the body from which it emerges (Foucault). Yet, the body can be a substitute for the psyche, and vice versa. Hence, the definition-identity of gender becomes a social construction, perhaps even an individual postulation.

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Valerie Campos painting at Wexler Gallery in Philadelphia

Nakedness and transparency of desire, and the flight of eroticism, serves as conductive threads of an iconic grammar made of conceptual and sensitive-sensual forms. In its infinite wisdom, art innately functions as a structure of meaning between the living and the dead, mediates the poles of genitality (male and female) and articulates immanence with transcendence (creatures and deities). Reality is fractal whose material and imaginary manifestations form a continuum.

Campos has exhibited her work in various solo and group shows in Europe, North America, and Asia. She has been awarded various national and international grants, such as the National System of Art Creators (Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte 2020) and the Young Creators Program (Programa de Jóvenes Creadores 2014/15) in Mexico; Back to Basic, Finland in 2019; the K.I.A.R Odisha program, India in 2019; Glo Art, Laneken, Belgium in 2017; LAC, Kansas City, United States in 2014/15; Xu Yuan Centre, Beijing, China in 2013/14; Red Gate Gallery, Beijing, China in 2013; and Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada in 2011.

Campos' work has been selected in competitions and biennials including the Film Festival KC 2015; the 4th Yucatan Art Biennial 2009; the National Biennial Monterrey Artemergente 2010; 1st International Biennial of Engraving José Guadalupe Posada 2013; the International Festival of Contemporary Art Alpilles-Provence, France, 2014; and ARTFEST 2006.



DR. LUIS IGNACIO SÁINZ

In addition to her artistic achievements, Campos has developed cross-cultural projects in the arts. In 2014, with the support of Francisco Toledo, she founded the Nao Now project to promote cultural exchanges between Mexico, China and the US. In 2020, She founded Vaivén Collectors, a non-profit platform that produces short-form documentaries, academic essays, and arts events to disseminate, promote and open dialogues on contemporary art in Mexico.

Valerie Campos currently lives and works in Mexico City and New York. She holds a scholarship from the National System of Art Creators (Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte), an award given by the Mexican Ministry of Culture to artists with a robust professional trajectory.

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