

PORTFOLIO



Cómo construir una Isla

Resent works by: **Fabián Detrés**

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Artist Biography — Fabián Detrés

Fabián Detrés (Puerto Rico, 1978) is a multidisciplinary visual artist with more than 25 years of professional experience. His practice is primarily rooted in painting and encompasses drawing, printmaking, photography, photomontage, installation, and other experimental media. He began his studies at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico at the age of 16 and earned a Bachelor of Visual Arts, specializing in Painting, in 2001, graduating *Summa Cum Laude*. His distinctions include the Dr. José R. Oliver Medal, second prize at the 1998 Annual Student Exhibition, and the UNESCO Medal in 2005, awarded in recognition of his experimental photography and contributions to Puerto Rican visual arts. In 2009, grants from the Karrvaz Foundation and III Millenium enabled him to develop artistic projects in Albacete, Spain, over the course of one year.

His work is closely connected to the historical, social, and economic realities of Puerto Rico's Central Mountain Range. He explores migration, isolation, displacement, and the transformations of rural communities from a nostalgic and subjective perspective. Through fragmentation and collage aesthetics, his paintings examine what remains and what has disappeared, bringing together images and experiences that address territory, identity, and belonging.

His research extends into documentary and historical fields through the creation of the *Archivo Digital Histórico del Pueblo de Maricao* and his involvement in projects related to the U.S. decennial census. These experiences inform his examination of territorial and cultural inequalities, a subject he addressed in his conference *Descentralización del Arte Contemporáneo en Puerto Rico*, presented at M.A.R.A. in San Germán, Puerto Rico, in 2025. The conference examined disparities between the metropolitan area and peripheral regions in access to resources and opportunities for artistic development, situating Puerto Rico's experience within a broader international context. His practice integrates conceptual research and formal experimentation from a perspective grounded in the Puerto Rican experience.

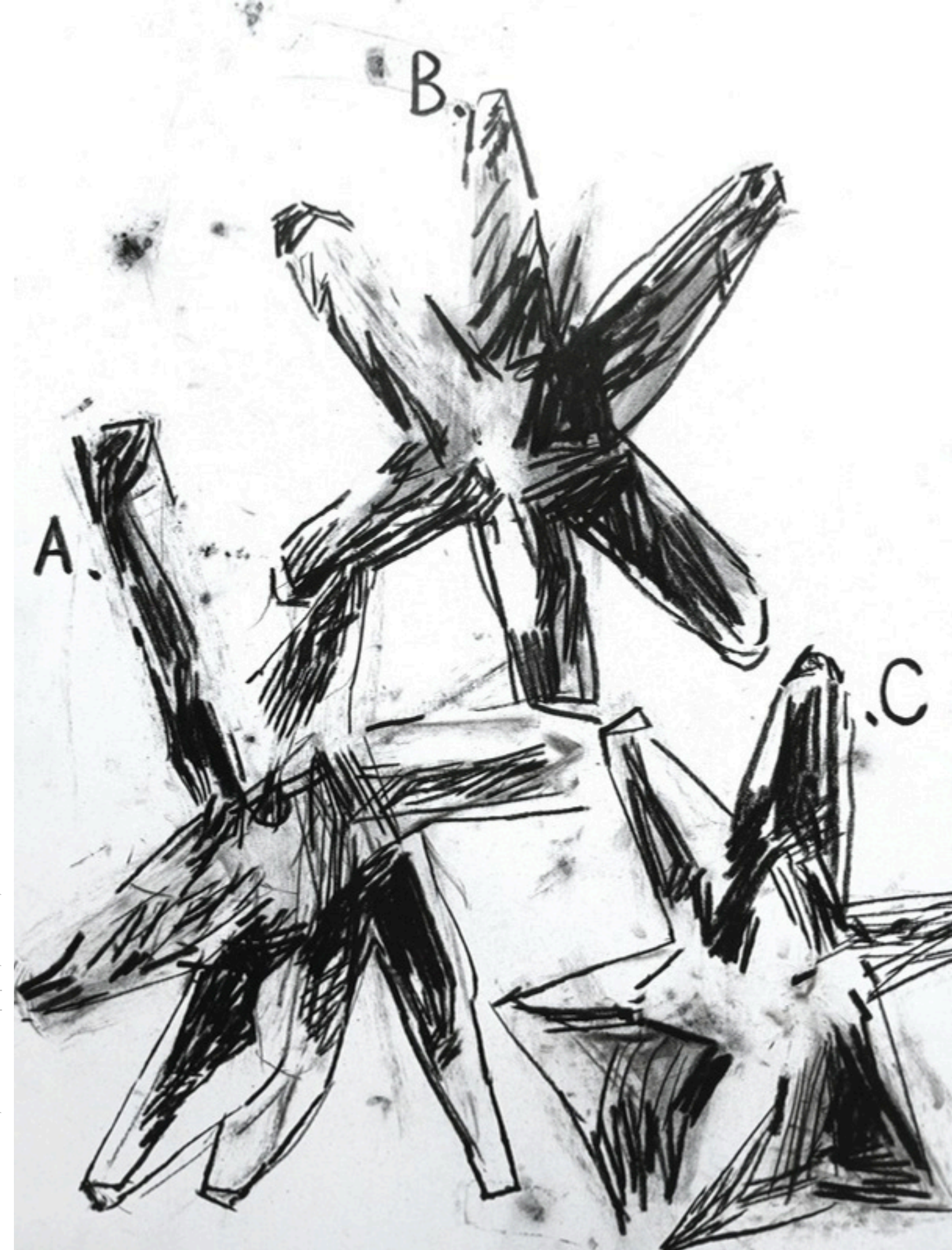
ARTIST STATEMENT

My work emerges from personal experiences and social transformations that have reshaped my relationship with the notions of place and belonging. Hurricane María in 2017, my experience of migration to the United States, and my encounters with workers from different backgrounds broadened my perspective on the similarities and differences that shape our experiences. These encounters inform my interests: migration, isolation, displacement, and the relationships between centers and periphery.

These concerns take shape through a visual language of fragmentation, superimposition, and collage. Painting is at the core of my practice, alongside an ongoing exploration of materials, techniques, and processes that move between figuration and abstraction. I am interested in how images can generate associations and tensions, allowing for multiple interpretations rather than conveying a fixed or predetermined meaning.

In my work, nostalgia is not a longing for an idealized past, but a way of engaging with change, absence, and the uncertainties of the present. I explore what remains, what disappears, and how these shifts alter our perception of both. My experience in Puerto Rico serves as a point of departure, extending beyond its context. The inequalities between centers and peripheries, human mobility, and the loss of familiar reference points are experiences shared across different societies. Through continuous experimentation, I develop visual relationships that hold these tensions open without imposing a single interpretation.

Constelaciones, charcoal on paper, 11 X 14 in, 2024



CÓMO CONSTRUIR UNA ISLA

Curatorial Text

Cómo construir una isla is a solo exhibition featuring Fabián Detrés's latest body of work, which explores the various processes involved in the creation of a new world, in this case, an island. Detrés assumes the role of creator, recalling the supernatural beings and deities that appear in cosmological origin stories across cultures. The exhibition presents the artist's own interpretation of a cosmological origin story, tracing the emergence of the island's primary components, including its geography, flora, and inhabitants.

According to the artist, this body of work emerged from his reflections on the many elements that contribute to the culture of a tropical island, as well as the conditions its inhabitants encounter as a result of island life. Rather than representing an already established place, however, Detrés approaches the island as a point of origin. He considers what island life might look like at its purest moment of inception, before its environment, communities, and identities have fully taken form.

Detrés's creative process centers on three interconnected components: The Islands, which examines the various forms the landmass may assume; The Flora, which explores the emergence of the island's vegetation; and The Characters, which imagines its inhabitants through a range of shapes, expressions, and personalities. Although each component comprises its own series of art works, the categories are never entirely isolated from one another. Instead, Detrés creates works that move fluidly between them, blurring the boundaries between landscape, plant life, animal life, and the human figure.

In *Hombres Planta* (2024), for example, an ambiguous form appears to oscillate between flora and fauna. At first glance, the viewer may identify flower petals surrounding what resembles a stamen, only to encounter a pair of blank eyes at its center. The remainder of the form recalls a reclining figure, yet the cloudy, grainy textures produced through charcoal and aerosol make it difficult to determine precisely what is being represented. This ambiguity appears throughout the exhibition, as the artworks move between figuration and abstraction, resisting fixed interpretation.

The merging of these elements is intentional. Through it, Detrés emphasizes the interconnected and interchangeable nature of the island's components while also evoking the disorder and uncertainty that often characterize origin stories. In the biblical Book of Genesis, for instance, the universe begins as a dark and formless void before God gradually brings the world into being. Even within this process, creation occurs through the transformation of existing matter: man is formed from dust, while woman is created from the body of another living being.

By drawing attention to these transformations, Detrés presents creation not as a linear or orderly process, but as one defined by overlap, mutation, and interdependence. Nothing within this emerging world exists entirely on its own. Geography gives rise to vegetation, vegetation resembles the body, and figures appear to merge with the environments they inhabit. Through this fluid visual language, the artist underscores the complexity of creation and proposes the island as a living world in which every element is continually shaping and being shaped by the others.

Written by **Tatiana Tamargo Arizmendi**

Caos Primitivo, charcoal on paper, 11 X 14 in, 2024



SELECTED WORKS

The works presented in this portfolio were created between 2024 and 2026 and represent a selection of Fabián Detrés's recent artistic production. His practice is primarily developed through series, each comprising a group of works that explores a particular theme or conceptual concern. Although each series maintains its own identity, the works presented here share thematic, technical, aesthetic, and conceptual connections. Most belong to the series *Cómo construir una Isla*, created for the 2026 exhibition of the same name, curated by *Tatiana Tamargo Martínez*. The remaining works expand this selection through other lines of inquiry within his artistic practice.



Hijos de Cañaveral, oil on canvas, 55 X 55 in, 2025





Isla Nena, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)



Cactus, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)



Isola, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)

Aves de arcilla I, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)





Aves de arcilla II, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)

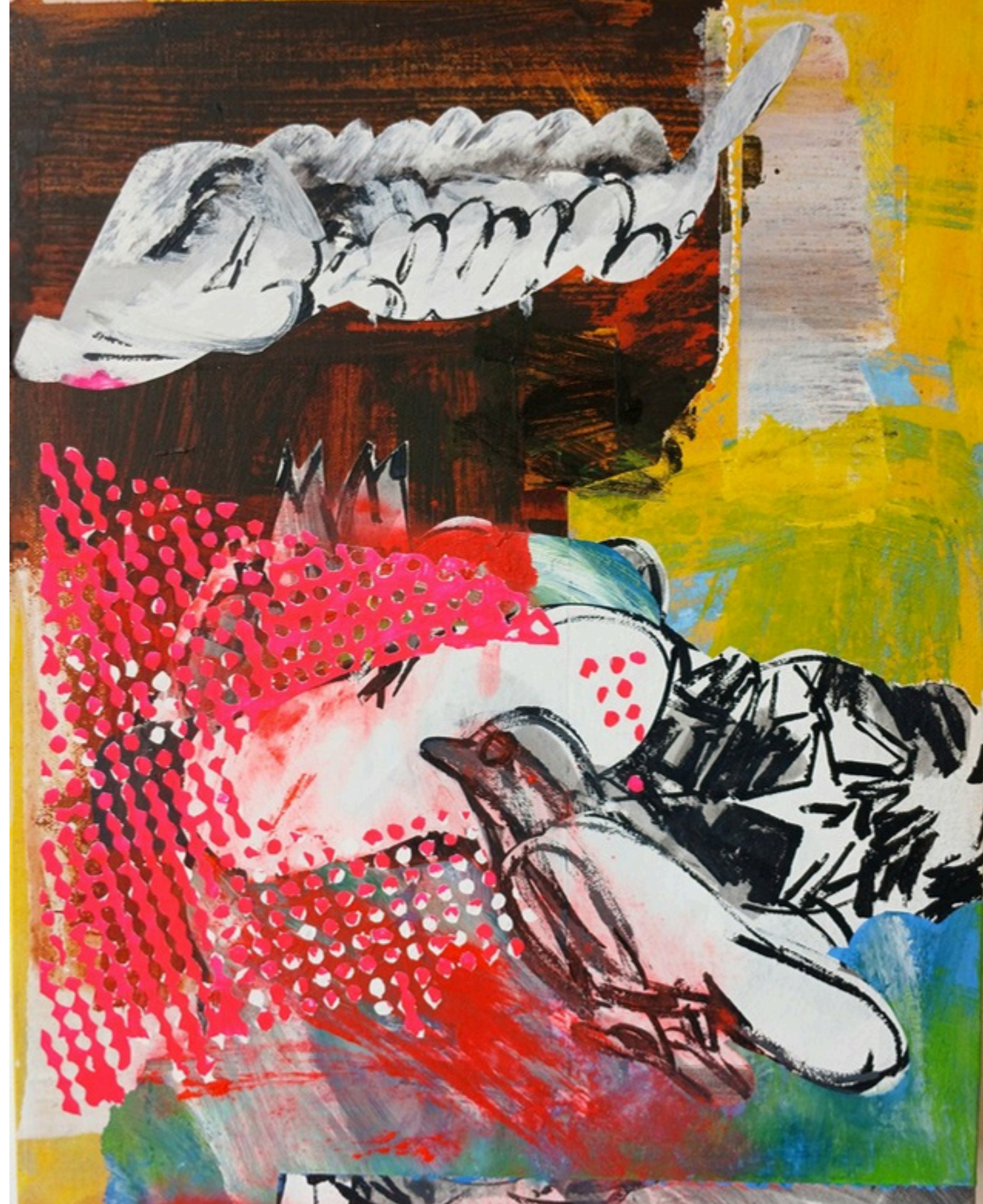
El Espíritu sobre las aguas, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)





Constelaciones, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)

Caos Primigenio, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
11 × 14 in. (27.9 × 35.6 cm)



THE EVER-EVOLVING ARTIST: FABIÁN DETRÉS

Between brushes, images, memories, and a constant restlessness that keeps him from settling into complacency, Puerto Rican artist Fabián Detrés has spent 25 years building a career marked by exploration and evolution. His journey in the visual arts began in 1996, when he enrolled at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico, focusing on sculpture. Due to health issues, he eventually transitioned to painting, the discipline in which he graduated in 2001. His roots, however, lie in a family of hardware-store owners, where he learned the value of hard, consistent work from an early age.

During his years of study, he received the Randy Barceló Scholarship on two occasions and earned the Ramón Oliver Medal, awarded to the most outstanding student in painting. Shortly thereafter, opportunities to travel and study abroad began to broaden his artistic vision. One of these opportunities took him to Spain, where he spent a year on a scholarship in Alcalá del Júcar, a picturesque town in Albacete known for its caves, mountains, and centuries of history.

Although painting became his primary language, Detrés has never confined himself to a single path. He has worked in photography and printmaking, and he has even returned, in a sense, to his sculptural roots through collaborations in monument restoration. His recent projects include the restoration of the Three Wise Men sculptures in Juana Díaz, alongside sculptor Omar Ortiz. He has also undertaken projects related to historical preservation, such as the creation of the digital historical archive of the town of Maricao.

His work, however, continues to evolve. He is currently exploring an aesthetic reminiscent of collage, incorporating images from photographs, magazines, and the internet. A discipline he once rejected has ultimately become a new creative horizon.

Throughout this process, he has found a recurring theme: memory. Detrés observes how nostalgia seems to be gaining strength in a world dominated by technological immediacy. Faced with a reality in which artificial intelligence can offer everything instantaneously, the artist senses a collective need to look back and reclaim what still connects us to our humanity.

This perspective is also deeply tied to his Puerto Rican identity. Raised among magazines such as *Bohemia*, comic books, and a popular culture that shaped his imagination from an early age, Detrés incorporates these references into a body of work that many perceive as closely aligned with Pop Art.

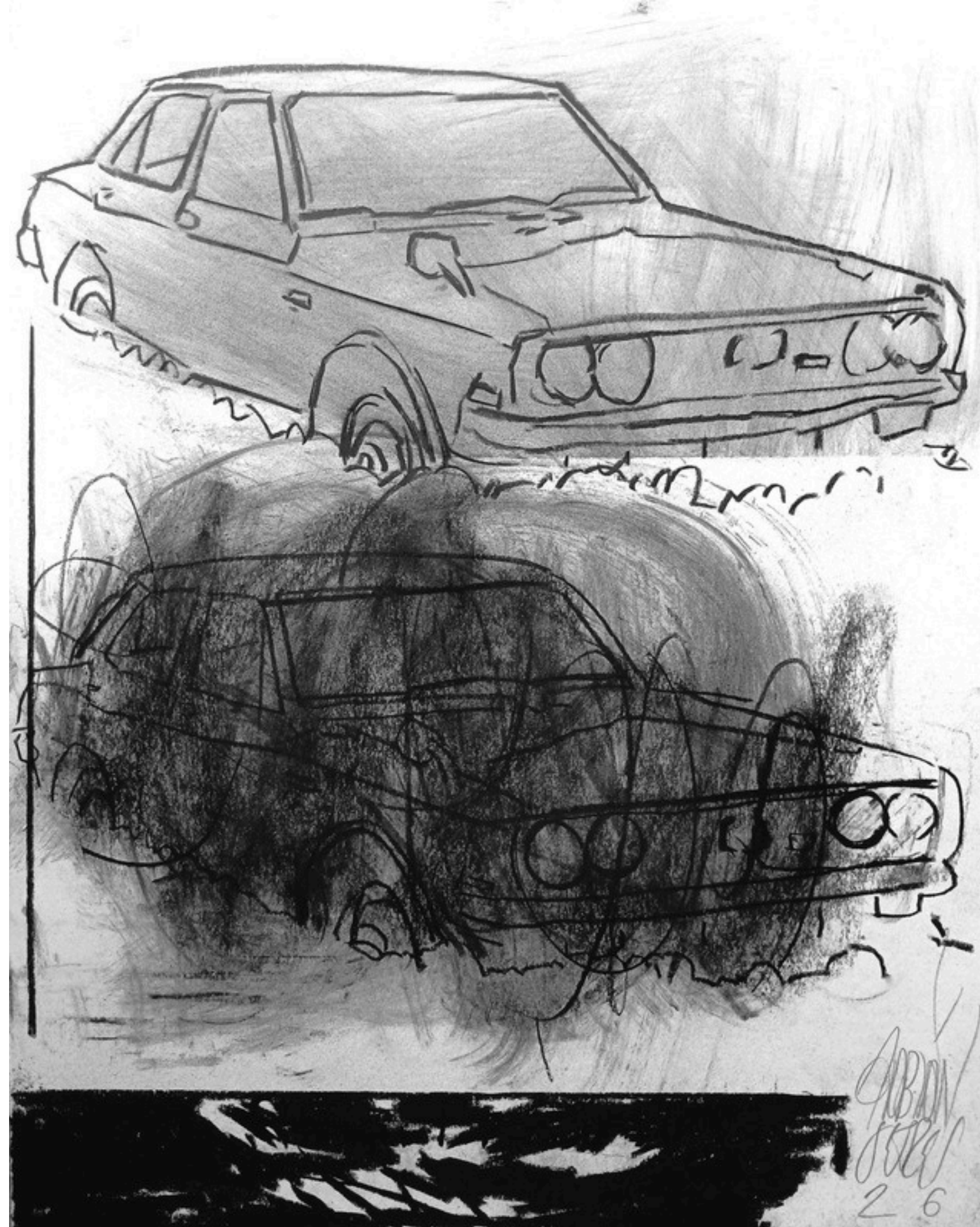
His most recent project, *Cómo construir una isla* (*How to Build an Island*), takes this reflection a step further. In it, he asks himself: If he could create a reality from scratch, what would it look like? Drawing on elements from different sources and combining them into chaotic compositions, he imagines an island before its problems, deterioration, and disarray take hold.

Because, deep down, building an island can also be a way of asking ourselves how we want to preserve our own.

At this point in his career, Detrés is entering a new phase: taking his work beyond Puerto Rico. Although his work has already gained international exposure, he is focused on expanding its reach. The United States and Mexico are among the next markets he hopes to explore, with Europe as a longer-term goal. For the artist, the challenge is to keep his work moving, open doors, and allow his distinctive interpretation of memory, popular culture, and Puerto Ricanness to engage audiences in other parts of the world.

Written by: **Erika M. Santiago** • Interview by: **Sylvia Nicole Pérez**

Hijos del Cañaveral, charcoal on paper, 11 X 14 in, 2024





Oh Garza Dormida, 2025
Oil on canvas
55 × 55 in. (139.7 × 139.7 cm)



El Nido, 2025
Oil on canvas
55 × 55 in. (139.7 × 139.7 cm)



Mary Monte, 2025
Oil on canvas
55 × 55 in. (139.7 × 139.7 cm)

Fauna Local, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
16 × 16 in. (40.64 × 40.64 cm)



En verdes pastos, 2025
Acrylic on canvas
36 × 48 in. (91.44 × 121.92 cm)



THE POSTMODERN MEMORY OF ARTIST FABIÁN DETRÉS

Visiting Fabián Detrés's studio, for those unfamiliar with the area, is a kind of pilgrimage. It takes an artist with a particular sense of struggle, ownership, and tenacity to establish a studio and gallery in his hometown of Maricao and sustain a steady practice of creative work there. The doors at 4 Baldorioty Street shelter works driven by an introspective search for memory. Detrés explores symbols that the casual viewer might interpret superficially, yet which speak to a deeper investigation of memory and the very process by which it is constructed within the artist.

Among his most recent projects, the series *Aleatorio* (2023) emerges as an introspective exploration through symbols and memories assembled by juxtaposing images from popular culture. His bold, consistent palette of bright colors evokes both the tradition of Puerto Rican printmaking and Pop Art. These images share the canvas in a dialectical relationship, compelling a dialogue between spaces, like fragments of thought and scattered memories gradually woven together through time and perception. Detrés reveals his inner visual world and the ways in which images have shaped his sensibilities. He questions dominant narratives surrounding symbols, thereby recontextualizing their meanings in a postmodern vein. Particularly noteworthy is his reinterpretation of symbols associated with the “Old West.”

Memory encompasses different places and temporal spaces. For Detrés, it includes, for instance, the period he spent creating art in Albacete, Spain, where he lived for a year. This experience was made possible by scholarships from the Karrvaz Foundation and III Millenium Scholarships. His memories also include what has been called “labor exile.” In 2017, Hurricane María struck Puerto Rico. As a result, Detrés was compelled to relocate to the United States, where he worked in the Texas oil industry alongside his brothers. During this period, his artistic practice entered a temporal lull, and his artistic production came to a halt. A pause, a parenthesis, opened in his life. Eventually, however, he returned to the island, carrying with him the very practice that defines him: memory.

Having experienced firsthand the realities of diaspora and migration, Detrés draws inspiration from these experiences for his forthcoming projects. In 2020, he created the series *A Shift/C Shift* as a tribute to his brothers. Through the repetition of images, in the vein of Neo-Pop Art—a term coined by Noi Sawaragi to describe the modified resurgence of Pop Art—he creates interactions between elements and explores similarities across different facets of experience, seeking greater clarity and a deeper understanding of memory.

This pursuit is a persistent thread throughout Fabián Detrés's work: seeing a face and rendering it without forgetting it, recalling the shapes and contours of nature, and striving to make sense of them. Among his drawings, executed with a swift hand and remarkable precision, the use of charcoal pastel made from hibiscus flowers stands out.

Detrés is currently working on several projects. One notable development is his exploration of the tradition of printmaking through a screenprint produced with oil-based ink, signed and numbered. This work draws on a tradition with which he became intimately familiar while studying at the School of Plastic Arts of Puerto Rico, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Visual Arts with a concentration in Painting. There, he studied under several prominent Puerto Rican artists, including José R. Alicea.

The screenprint appropriates and recontextualizes the familiar image of Three Stars matches. It was scheduled to be presented and made available for purchase on February 16, 17, and 18 at his exhibition space during the Coffee Festival in Maricao. The event offers an ideal opportunity to discover the work of an artist whose practice is distinguished by its introspective depth.

Article Written by **Jorge Rodriguez Acevedo**

Run because the gun ja ja! (Detail), oil on canvas, 24 X 18 in, 2012



CURRÍCULUM VITAE

Education		Group exhibitions		Doscientos en Uno		Exposición de Grabados del 98		1998		Selected Articles			
Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico (EAP), San Juan, PR													
<i>Bachelor of Arts in Painting</i> Summa Cum Laude	2001	Echoes of the Ancient in Contemporary - Orlando Museum of Art - Orlando, EU		2026	ARWI 3rd International Art Fair - Puerto Rico Convention Center - Isla Verde, PR		2008		Exposición Anual de Pintura - Escuela de Artes Plásticas de P.R. - San Juan, PR		1998	Artistas puertorriqueños exploran hogar y migración en la exhibición nido - Jan Figueroa Roque - El Vocero (PR), enero	2026
		113 Años de Identidad - Museo de Arte de Aguadilla y del Caribe - Aguadilla, PR		2026	Exposición de la Colección Reyes-Veray - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico - San Juan, PR		2008						
		Benito 100 X 35 - I'm Art Gallery - Santurce, PR		2026	Collateral Material - Latitude Modern and Contemporary Art - San Juan, PR		2007		Echoes of the Ancient in Contemporary - Orlando Museum of Art - Orlando, EU		2026	Fabián Detrés: La Buena Fortuna - Erika Santiago - Crónica El Tesoro (PR), mayo	2025
		El Nido - I'm Art Gallery - Santurce, PR		2025	El Caballo en la Cultura Puertorriqueña - Museo de las Américas - San Juan, PR		2007		18va Bienal de Arte de Ponce - Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Ponce - Ponce, PR		2022	La suerte y la buena fortuna según el artista Fabián Detrés - Jorge Rodríguez Acevedo - El Adoquín (PR), abril 14	2025
		Una Mirada a Puerto Rico desde el Arte - Compañía de Turismo - Paseo de la Princesa, San Juan, PR		2025	Cinco Artistas Puertorriqueños at Molaa - Latitude Modern and Contemporary Art, - San Juan, PR		2007		XIII Concurso Nacional de Pintura del Natural Casas Ibáñez - Casas Ibáñez - Albacete, España		2011	Plasma la migración como tema central de su obra - Sandra Torres Guzmán - El Nuevo Día, (PR), marzo 24	2024
		Ecología, Naturaleza, Cuerpo & Tierra - Galería La Quna - Caguas, PR		2025	Pequeño Formato, Grandes Artistas - Primer Piso Gallery - San Juan, PR		2006		Molaa Auction Exhibition 07 - Museum of Latin American Art - Long Beach, California, EU		2007	La memoria postmoderna del artista Fabián Detrés - Jorge Rodríguez Acevedo - En Rojo (PR), enero 31	2024
				2025	Décimo Aniversario 1995-2005 - Sagrado Corazón University Art Gallery - Santurce, PR		2005		2do Encuentro Latinoamericano de Artistas Plásticos - Asoc. de Artistas Plásticos del Cusco - Cusco, Perú		2002	José Fabián Detrés: Versátil-Virtuoso - Manuel Álvarez Lezama - ART Premium (PR) #20	2007
				2025	Certamen/Exposición de Fotografías UNESCO - Plaza las Américas - San Juan, PR		2005		Exhibición de Arte Moderno Contemporáneo Puertorriqueño - Spanish Cultural Center of Miami - Florida, US		2001	Entre Reflejos - Carmen M. Trelles Hernández - Primera Hora (PR) sept. 1	2005
				2024	Apoyarte - Museo de las Américas - San Juan, PR		2005		Public projects and lectures		2025	El Mundo desde Otra Mirada - Carmen G Díaz - El Nuevo Día (PR) agosto 28	2005
				2024	VII Museo de Arte de puerto Rico - MAPR - San Juan, PR		2004		Descentralización del Arte Contemporáneo en PR (Lecture) - Museo de Arte Ramírez de Arellano y Rosell - San Germán, PR		2025	Luz y Reflejos - Jorge Rodríguez - El Vocero (PR) agosto 30	2005
				2022	4 Generaciones de Pintura Abstracta Puertorriqueña - La Casa del Arte - San Juan, PR		2004		Por Amor a la Liga 6 (Subasta) - Liga de Arte de San Juan - San Juan, PR		2005	Luz y Reflejos Evocadoras Imágenes El Vocero (PR) sept.15	2005
				2021	Fabián Detrés & Patrick McGrath, Obras Recientes - West Gallery - Mayagüez, PR		2003		Taxi-Galería Public Art Project - Yellow Media - San Juan, PR		2005	Esotérica la Obra de Fabián Detrés - Pérez Rivera, T. - El Nuevo Día (PR), diciembre 16	2005
				2021	Colectiva Prinardi - Prinardi Gallery - San Juan, PR		2003					Detrés y McGrat en West Gallery - Jorge Rodríguez - El Vocero (PR), noviembre 15	2003
				2013	Exposición Anual de Graduados de la EAP - Museo de las Américas - San Juan, PR		2001					Detrés y la Nueva Figuración - Manuel Álvarez Lezama - El Nuevo Día (PR), diciembre 2	2001
				2010	Exposición Anual de Estudiantes - Escuela de Artes Plásticas de P.R. - San Juan, PR		2001					La Piedra Filosofal en Fabián Detrés - Jorge Rodríguez - El Vocero (P.R.), nov. 3	2001
				2009	Colectiva de Pintura - Wyndham Hotel - San Juan, PR		2000						
				2009	Exposición Anual de Estudiantes - Escuela de Artes Plásticas de P.R. - San Juan, PR		1999						
				2009	Exposición Anual de Estudiantes - Escuela de Artes Plásticas de P.R. - San Juan, PR		1998						

Hombre Planta, charcoal on paper, 9 X 12 in, 2024

Selected collections

- Reyes-Veray Collection
- Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples Collection
- Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA)
- Hernández Castrodad Collection
- Dra. Marina Torres Collection
- E. Reyes Collection
- Castro Barreto Collection



Hombre Planta, charcoal on paper, 9 X 12 in, 2024

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