

andrea soler
beyond the surface

My most recent body of work is inspired by the world that lives in the water beneath the apparent quiet surface of a mangrove swamp.

Protected by a wall of tangled mangroves and murky waters, in the centre of the swamp lives a sheltered wealth of life. The first time I peered into this habitat, the cloudiness of the water only allowed me to distinguish the shapes of dark and alien-looking eggs. These were formed out of the vegetation that gets attached to the underwater mangrove roots — rows and rows of hanging eggs, like a nursery or perhaps a graveyard. What a foreign world to me, unable to distinguish between what was dead and what was alive. After looking more closely, I gradually realized how those dark hanging forms were a microcosm of life, full of living animals and vegetation, giving food to millions of baby fish, which stay in these protected shallow waters until they are old enough to go to the sea. So much life, so close to the surface, so difficult to see.

It's precisely these habitats that interest me, because looking at urban life more closely I'm usually surprised to see how self-absorbed all of us are, preoccupied with our lives and routines. Sometimes it feels like we all live in our own private universe, in which we glide on the surface and only occasionally allow others to see the richness below, just as the mangroves conceal a hidden world beneath the surface of the swamp. In these inner places our life happens.

I had the privilege of witnessing how life bursts beyond the surface of these shallow waters and I felt moved by this world that came to life in front of me, so I decided to make it happen in my own way, with my own elements and language. Recurring elements from my previous painting and printmaking work appear in this series. Tactile and elaborate textures, collage compositions made of fragments, attention to light and shadows and multiple layers of colours.

For me, art is a window through which we can see, almost touch, that which we are made of.

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