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# Nudes, Musicians, and Other Figures Populate America Martin's New Paintings at Joanne Artman Gallery

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2 DAYS AGO

“When someone asks, what are you inspired by, I usually say, ‘what am I not inspired by?’” [says](#) Colombian-American painter and sculptor [America Martin](#). Driven by a mixture of intuition—she once [said](#) her canvases “tell me what to paint”—and planning, she makes bold, vivid works, almost always centered upon human figures. In a new exhibition of



paintings at Joanne Artman Gallery, [How the Sun Goes](#),” Martin presents her vibrant cast of characters in bright, joyful compositions.

Her hometown of Los Angeles, and the vibrant diversity of its population, moves her. When about town, she takes mental snapshots of the people she sees all around her, and then transfers the sights stored in her head onto paper and canvas. She also paints people she knows, transforming both strangers and acquaintances alike into the blocky, heavily outlined, flattened figures populating her compositions. A selection of her most recent paintings—featuring such enduring motifs as female nudes, musicians, and portraits of indigenous peoples—comprise her new exhibition.

“When you’re looking at someone, you know, you can obviously draw what the person looks like. But when you get to see [that] there’s an essence of the person’s character, then that’s the fun for an artist, to [...] try to actually capture

that,” Martin once [explained](#). The visual traditions of [modernism](#) and Colombian folk art inflect her compositions, in which contemporary, early 20th-century, and [pre-Columbian](#) styles and techniques meet.

For example, in the oil and acrylic painting from which her exhibition takes its title, *How the Sun Goes*, the flattened, linear profiles of three women are arrayed, overlapping, across the picture plane. Described in thick outlines, the women’s heads and torsos are shaded in deep pink; their breasts are formed of vigorously drawn concentric circles, and kinks in their hair are suggested by zigzagging lines. Bright yellow dominates the painting’s background, while palm



America Martin

*Ceremony and Yellow Feather*  
Joanne Artman Gallery  
\$14,500

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fronds line its edges. Such sunny colors and its vivacious rendering give this work abundant appeal. It is not important to know exactly who these women are—they are amalgams invented by an artist who finds beauty and interest in people from all walks of life.

—[Karen Kedmey](#)

*“How the Sun Goes” is on view at Joanne Artman Gallery, Laguna Beach, Feb. 5–Mar. 31, 2015.*

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