

# Marcel Alcalá

## Gallo Gallina

March 7 — April 20, 2024  
Floor 2

### Press Release

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Opening reception: Thursday, March 7, 2024, from 6pm until 8pm

Marlborough New York is delighted to present *Gallo Gallina*, a solo exhibition of the Los-Angeles-based artist, Marcel Alcalá. Comprising ten new paintings and a selection of watercolor drawings, *Gallo Gallina* opens on Thursday, March 7, 2024, with a reception from 6pm until 8pm, and will remain on view through Saturday, April 20, 2024, in the second-floor gallery of 545 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street.

In their paintings and drawings, Marcel Alcalá—a Mexican American born and raised in Santa Ana, CA—employs a folk style and bright palette, conjuring scenes that straddle fantasy and reality, humor and tragedy. The exhibition's title, *Gallo Gallina*, refers to roosters who are born with feminine plumage and are used in cockfighting against their masculine-looking counterparts. In time, the phrase has assumed other connotations, used either as a homophobic slur or to describe a person who looks the opposite of their gender assigned at birth. While several paintings in the exhibition depict the actual roosters, Alcalá uses both the literal and connotative meanings of Gallo Gallina to explore themes of spiritualism and masking, threads which run predominantly throughout the artist's practice. Drawing on surrealist and impressionist styles, Alcalá's compositions are at once highly personal yet laden with symbols that allude more broadly to Mexican history, life in Los Angeles, and the queer experience.

For as much as Alcalá taps into the art historical canon, they aim to disrupt typically Western, white, and heteronormative narratives by painting queer people from their community. Despite their oft surreal and sometimes theatrical nature, these figures that inhabit Alcalá's paintings are far from imagined. Each is close and important to the artist, including family, friends, fellow artists, and queer icons, all of whom the artist knows personally. Inspired by the Belgian painter Remy Coghe's 1889 painting, *The Cockfight*, Alcalá renders a similar scene for *An Inquiry into the Femme*, 2024; however, the white, presumably straight and cis, men watching the cockfight are replaced with spectators whom the artist has met over the course of more than a decade, including an adult film star, the creators of Los Angeles' Tom of Finland Foundation, a fellow resident from the Fire Island Residency, and several besties, among others. Similarly, in *The Glittering Bar*, 2024, artists, a musician, a movie distributor, and the iconic performance artist and model, Amanda Lepore, inhabit a composition that reimagines Ricard Canals i Llamb's *In the Bar*, c. 1910. Additional details permeate these tableaux, with objects such as lighters, a bottle of natural wine, and branded clothing affirm the contemporary reinterpretation of their source material.

## Marlborough

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*Their Coronation*, 2023; oil on canvas; 38 × 48 in / 96.5 × 121.9 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Night Gallery, Los Angeles

The exhibition culminates with *Their Coronation*, 2023, depicting two figures driving towards an unknown destination as several onlookers go on about their business, seemingly undisturbed by the oncoming car. One of the riders is rendered proportionally larger than their companion and even the car itself, their blue billowing dress and ornate hair and headpiece suggesting that they are, perhaps, en route to their quinceañera. As the figure turns their gaze from the road to the viewer, they reveal their mustached face (a feature usually assumed to be very masculine). The painting becomes a pseudo self-portrait as the artist subtly renders their own facial features in lieu of what one might expect from a young teenaged girl. From the billowing folds of their dress, the figure emerges like Venus on the half shell—a celebration of one's unmasked self.

Marcel Alcalá (b. 1990) received their BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL. They have held solo exhibitions at Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2023, 2020); Mickey Gallery, Chicago, IL (2019); and Deli Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2018). Their work has been featured in group presentations at Lyles & King, New York, NY (2024, 2022, 2021); Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles, CA (2021); Ballroom Marfa, TX (2019); and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA (2018), among others. Alcalá has also exhibited in numerous institutions, including the Tom of Finland Foundation, Los Angeles, CA (2019) and MCA Chicago, IL (2016). They have been an artist-in-residence at Skowhegan (2022) and Tom of Finland Foundation, Los Angeles (2020). Most recently, their work was featured in *Made in L.A. 2023: Acts of Living*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA and *Moved\Displaced*, curated by Annette Cyr and Rebecca Shippee, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, CA. Alcalá is also a performer and writer. Assuming a derisive alter ego named *Payasa* (the feminine form of the Spanish word for clown), their performance work often tackles topics that feel otherwise taboo—specifically, the artist's thoughts about race and gender politics and their personal experiences with these constructs.