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**ANDREW RAFACZ** is pleased to present *Auto Alejamiento*, an exhibition of new textile-based works from Melissa Leandro, in Gallery One. The exhibition opens Friday, February 28th and continues through Saturday, April 12th, 2025. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

With *Auto Alejamiento*, Melissa Leandro immerses us in a world of beautifully dissonant abstract landscapes tethered by two benches created by the artist and resembling those one would find in a park, facing east and west respectively and placed at the center of the gallery. Leandro creates a contemplative scene, where reflection and self-mediation can occur.

Drawing inspiration from her everyday surroundings, Leandro visually explores a shifting sense of estrangement that has crept into her environs. Specific moments and emotions in the artist's day-to-day routines feel weighted with loss and detachment.

With her use of symbolic imagery and saturated field-like environments, Leandro focuses on perceptible tonal shifts through the use of color. The works in the exhibition utilize weaving, embroidery, cyanotype, hand-stitching, couching, quilting and appliqué. They additionally incorporate objects and materials that hold cultural and familial significance to her.

Leandro's elemental scenery crosses thresholds of the real and the imagined. Blending plein air references with chromatic phenomenon found in nature, her stretched and framed textile works employ methods of dip dyeing and cyanotype. Moments of deep magentas and Prussian blues are revealed through areas of densely composed flora, like the first or last seconds of atmosphere at dawn or dusk.

Emerald and cyan foil embellishes her compositions, creating reflective light and variances in value—emulating notions of shimmering park grass, and the sunlit waters along the lakeshore. Electric orange Coneflowers, hirsute with thread tails, propagate in groups throughout the works in the exhibition. In *Blemished (Manchada)*, the densely woven and electric outline of the flower forms is amplified as the petals appear to pulsate. Layers of embroidery throughout the foliage are stippled and masked in black foil, building up additional layers of intense depth in the composition. The subtle sheen of the foil, like tar, allows the abstract patterning of what's underneath to show through—hinting at the process, yet redacting or rendering the flower's image incomplete at different distances.

*Auto Alejamiento*, which translates to self-estrangement, is an accumulation of threads and residual emotion that are sewn and patched together in this new body of work. Representing life's turning points simultaneously vibrant and wilting and caught in a liminal space— we are brought into Leandro's world of strange observations— of this difficult world we inhabit, and of herself.

# ANDREW RAFACZ

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**MELISSA LEANDRO** (American, b. 1989 in Miami, FL) lives and works in Chicago, IL. She received her MFA in 2017 and her BFA in 2012, both from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Residencies include The Vermont Studio Center, The Atlantic Center for the Arts, The Ragdale Foundation, The Jacquard Center, and the Weaving Mill and was the recipient of the Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation Artadia Award in 2021. Solo exhibitions include Waubonsee Community College (Waubonsee, IL), ANDREW RAFACZ (Chicago, IL), and the University of Nebraska (Omaha, NE). Group exhibitions include ANDREW RAFACZ (Chicago, IL), Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (Chicago, IL), The Peeler Art Center, DePaul University (Chicago, IL), Hyde Park Art Center (Chicago, IL), Soho House (Chicago IL), Dunedin Fine Art Center (Dunedin, FL), Kent State University Galleries (Kent, OH), Pentimenti Gallery (Philadelphia, PA), and The Arts Club of Chicago (Chicago, IL). She has exhibited at art fairs in Chicago, Houston, Miami, New York, and Toronto. Her work is included in numerous public and private collections.