

ON THE COVER

La Luna Como un Garbanzo (The Moon as a Chickpea) by Marcia Salas

Portions of the following are based on an interview with the artist, assisted in translation by Mario Mendez, on May 2, 2023.

September finds summer beginning its gradual departure in much of the country, but this month's cover art comes from a place where the warmth never leaves—Costa Rica. Perhaps because of this, Marcia Salas's painting seems to glow with heat, its smoldering folds and hollows hinting at tree shapes and landscape. A stylized golden horse prances above the embers, and in the upper right, the moon, "la luna," is as small as a chickpea. At least that is how it appears to the artist in the sky where she lives. Horses and horse riding conjure a sense of freedom for Salas, and the moon is another favored motif. She loves inscribing lines of poetry onto the painting's surface to enrich its meaning. Above the horse is written, "Silencio mio que guía mis pensamientos y reflexiones con luz de luna," (My silence, which guides my thoughts and meditations with moonlight). And below the horse, "El beso matutino me hace olvidar el frío de la noche" (The morning kiss makes me forget the cold night). Poetry, freedom, and affection can make an alluring mixture.

Salas was born in Costa Rica, or "rich coast," a small country located just above Panama, braced between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. It is a Spanish-speaking land of rainforests, abundant wildlife, and volcanoes. Her parents said that she could be whatever she wanted to be. Taking them at their word, she had decided to become an artist by the age of 9. Salas says it would have been difficult to achieve without their support. She studied graphic design, painting, and engraving at the University of Costa Rica. The majority of art students in her country, 80%, are women, but professionally successful artists are disproportionately men. Salas says that the situation is changing as women join together into guild-like collectives for mutual support. She is a full-time artist but had to learn business skills to survive and thrive.

Acrylic paints on canvas, as in this month's selection, are a preferred medium, but she also enjoys the use of engraving to

create monotype prints. Monotypes are one-of-a-kind images that are not reproduced or repeated as a series. Paint or ink is applied to a flat surface and then transferred to paper by manual rubbing or application of a press. Engraving is an ancient technique that requires a steady hand and eye. A tool is used to cut into a sheet of wood or metal, removing strips of material and leaving lines and patterns to be filled with pigment for printing. She likes to combine representation with abstract elements. Imagery involving horses, cows and bulls, the moon and trees, but also self-portraits, recurs in her work. Salas's award-winning paintings and monotypes have been exhibited internationally in North and Central America as well as in Europe.

Her favorite European artists include Botticelli, Van Gogh, and Picasso, with Lola Fernández, Gisela Stradtman, and Rudy Espinoza high on the list of Costa Ricans. The common influence among them, ranging as they do from an early Renaissance figurative painter to modern abstractionists, is not obvious. Perhaps these choices simply reflect the eclecticism and generosity present in Salas's creative vision. Her greatest wish is that art provides joy to viewers, especially in these difficult times so filled with social, political, and economic uncertainty. She feels fortunate and happy to live in a country without an army and where a quarter of the land, filled with incredible flora and fauna, is protected in parks. She knows that most people are not privileged in this way and hopes that her art conveys the beauty of the universe despite the troubles that beset the world. Her wish for readers of *American Psychologist* (AP) is that they visit Costa Rica and walk in the tropical forest to experience nature the way she did in childhood. We at AP are pleased to provide this positive and optimistic artist with a platform for her work.

 R. Walter Heinrichs
Art Editor