

## Recent Works and Studies

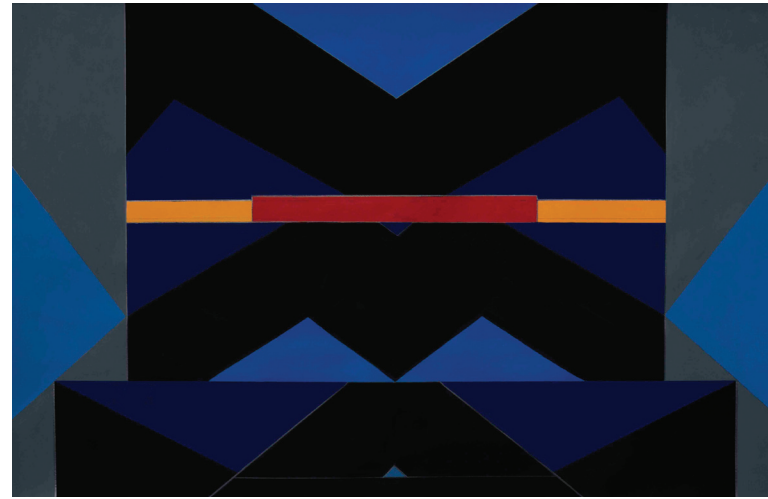
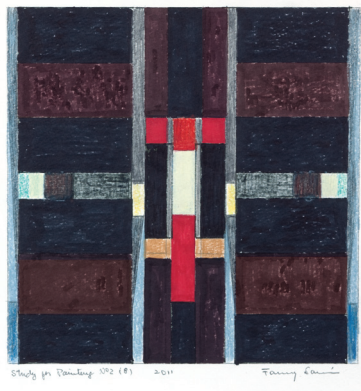
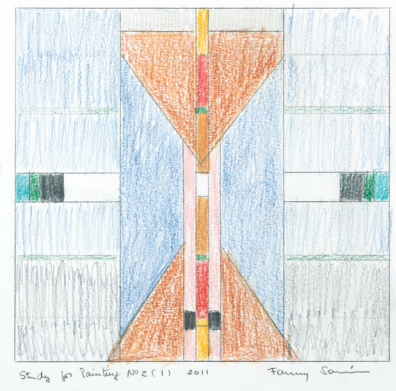
The intensity and duration of Sanín's current process is seen in two complete suites of drawings made for *Acrylic No. 2, 2011* (cover) and *Composition No. 1, 2016* (FIG. 3, back cover). The sense of timelessness in Sanín's finished compositions, whether on canvas or paper, is due in large part to the imperceptibility of the artist's hand. The smooth, flat surface of the paint stands in contrast to the visible gestures and mark-making of Sanín's preparatory works.

In the eleven drawings she made to develop *Acrylic No. 2, 2011*, the vacillating color palette in the early iterations steadies by the eighth study, as does the application of pigment (FIGS. 4 and 5). Sanín pursues innovative combinations of color and form within the geometric parameters she has set for herself. The relentless pursuit of equipoise within her compositions is the driving force behind Sanín's artistic production.

*Virginia Treanor is the associate curator at the National Museum of Women in the Arts.*

Below, left to right:

(FIG. 4) *Study for Painting No. 2 (1), 2011, 2011*; (FIG. 5) *Study for Painting No. 2 (8), 2011, 2011*; Both: Colored pencil on paper, 20 3/4 x 18 3/4 in.; Courtesy of the artist; Photos by Robert Lorenzson



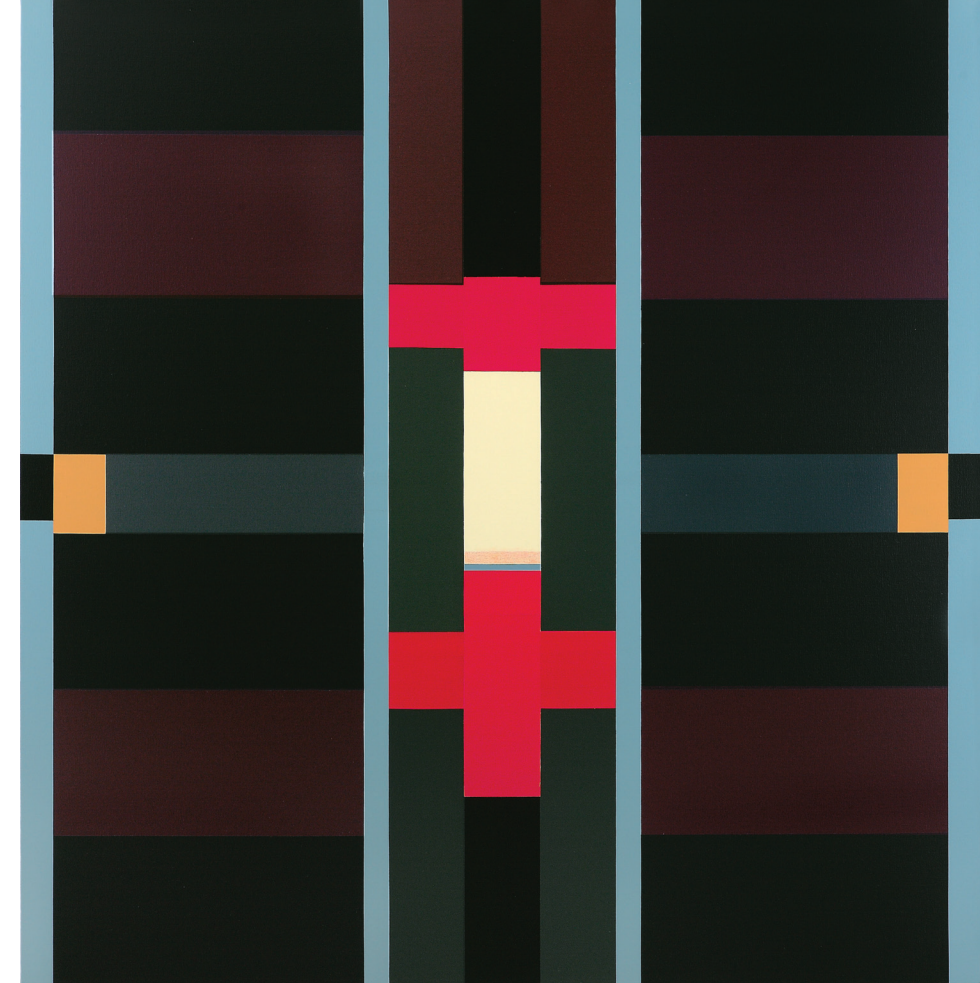
(FIG. 3) *Composition No. 1, 2016, 2016*; Acrylic and pencil on paper, 25 1/2 x 40 in.; Courtesy of the artist; Photo by Whitney Browne

(Cover) *Acrylic No. 2, 2011, 2011*; Acrylic on canvas, 62 x 60 in.; Courtesy of the artist; Photo by Robert Lorenzson

## NATIONAL MUSEUM of WOMEN in the ARTS

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*Equilibrium: Fanny Sanín*, presented in the Teresa Lozano Long Gallery of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, is organized by the museum and generously supported by the members of NMWA.



## Equilibrium Fanny Sanín

July 14–October 29, 2017  
National Museum of Women in the Arts

**F**or nearly fifty years, Colombian-born artist **Fanny Sanín (b. 1938, Bogotá)** has been making **symmetrical, geometric abstract paintings. Based since 1971 in New York City, Sanín was a pioneer in the development of geometric abstraction in Latin America. She was initially encouraged toward abstraction by her teachers at the University of the Andes in Bogotá, many of whom were pivotal in the emergence of abstraction in Colombia. Beginning in the 1950s, artists across Latin America explored abstraction as a way to distance their art from political interpretations, since figurative art was often used as propaganda.**



### Pursuing Abstraction

For Sanín, the 1968 exhibition *The Art of the Real*, organized by the Museum of Modern Art, helped solidify her decision to pursue abstraction. The exhibition studied the shift in American abstract painting and sculpture from expressive, organic shapes and textured surfaces, which dominated in the 1950s, to an emphasis on pure color and minimal forms. Sanín saw the exhibition when it traveled to Paris, and like many of the featured artists, she creates large canvases with areas of smooth, unbroken color.

Sanín's decision to eschew representational painting in favor of abstraction was driven by her need to create from within. Each of her images manifests her relentless drive to give form to a personal and spiritual inner vision. Like a composer who uses tone, cadence, and pitch to evoke a particular mood or feeling, Sanín likewise arranges and rearranges forms, values, and hues to realize the visual harmony she seeks to convey.

Sanín describes the act of developing her compositions as “intense.” Each of her large-scale compositions is preceded by between four and eighteen preliminary drawings, in which she experiments with different arrangements of form and color until she reaches the desired balance. “Drawings,” says Sanín, “are the first and foremost important part of my creation.”

Since the Renaissance, drawing has been regarded as the underpinning of artistic production. Drawings are often valued as works of art in their own right, important documentations of an artist's working process and creativity. Historically, drawings were used to refine representational images—the articulation of human anatomy, the illusion of perspective—but abstract artists such as Sanín also rely on rigorous preparatory drawings to plan their compositions.

**(FIG. 1)** Left: *Study for Watercolor 4*, 1968, 1968; Watercolor on paper, 14 ½ x 14 ½ in. (framed); Courtesy of the artist; Photo by Whitney Browne



**(FIG. 2)** *Gouache No. 7*, 1972, 1972; Gouache on paper, 3 ½ x 6 ¾ in.; Courtesy of the artist; Photo by Whitney Browne

### Early Works and Studies

Sanín's earliest works, like *Study for Watercolor 4*, 1968 (**FIG. 1**), do not have the hard-edged divisions between color fields that are characteristic of her mature style. Instead, the amorphous colors frequently bleed into one another, reflecting her interest in the work of early Abstract Expressionists such as Hans Hoffman (1880–1966). Several small watercolor studies from 1969, executed while she was living in Monterrey, Mexico, demonstrate Sanín's continuing commitment to abstraction in the wake of her education in Bogotá and in London at the Chelsea School of Art and the Central School of Art. However, the fields of color are more geometrically defined than in her earliest work.

Sanín continued to experiment with her arrangements on a small scale in the early 1970s with bands of color, sometimes collaging strips of painted paper to achieve the desired harmony (**FIG. 2**). Using these strips like building blocks enabled Sanín to endlessly rearrange colors and experiment with different configurations, giving these small studies a distinctly constructed look. These early works in line and color are the geneses of the expansive compositions that Sanín creates today.