

María Mercado

# Dualities of the soul

In the fascinating fabric of existence, an eternal dance of contrasts unfolds, accompanying us with every step. With great enthusiasm, I present to you my exhibition "Dualities of the Soul," an artistic journey inviting exploration of the symbolism of the number two, connoting the need to find a middle ground between opposing forces to attain a state of balance and serenity.

Each piece unveils the magic of symmetry, revealing an intrinsic harmony within duality. Two figures reflecting each other immerse us in introspection where similarity coexists with difference, and the past weaves its threads with the future in delicate equilibrium.

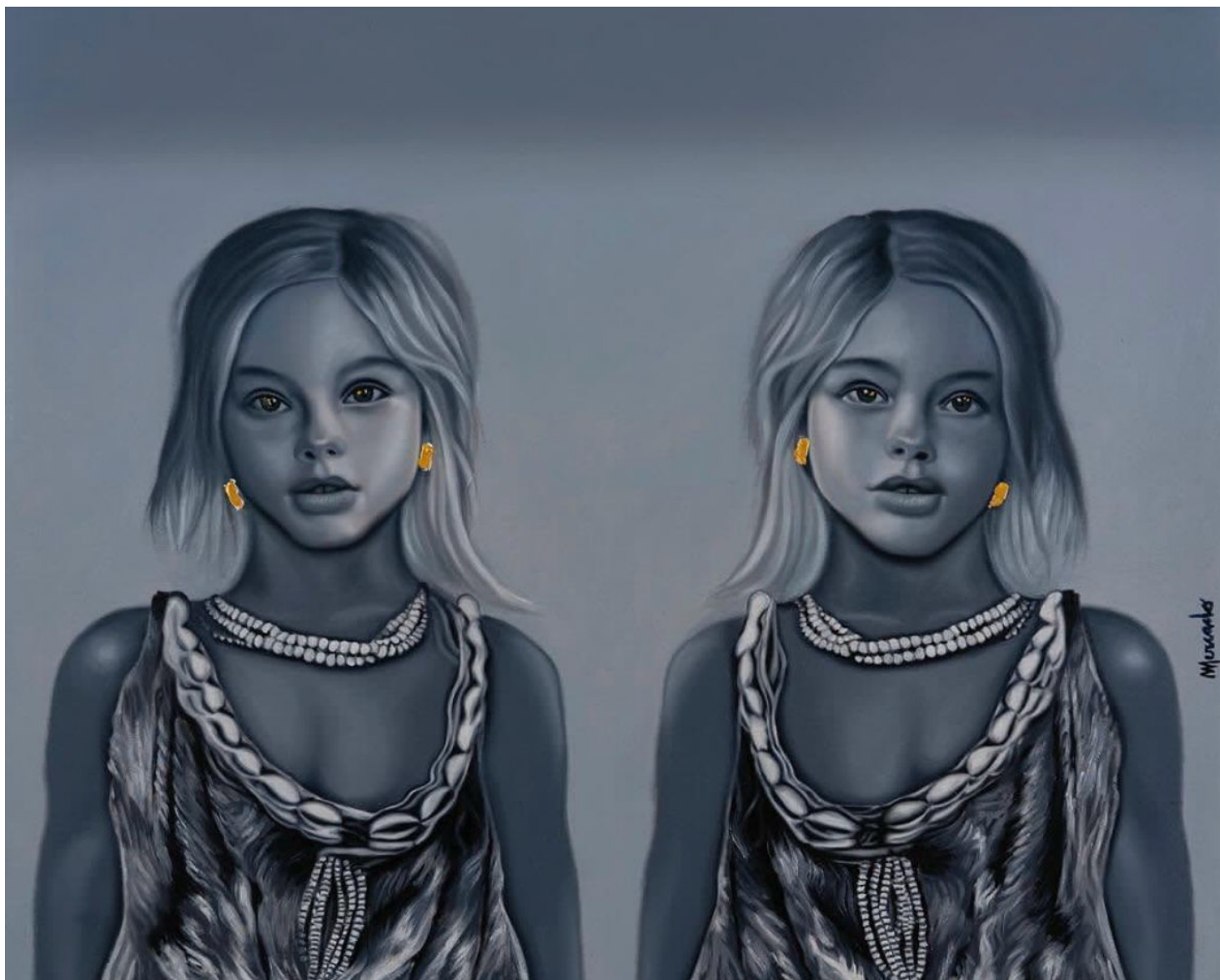
The present, symbolized by the white space that separates the two figures, becomes a canvas of possibilities, occupying minimal space, much like the present, ephemeral and instantaneous. In this void, a philosophical reflection on the now emerges, reminding us that our present decisions shape the very fabric of our existence.

The women inhabiting these creations are living testaments to the cultural richness of Colombia. From vibrant Afro-Colombian roots to the grace of the Palenqueras and the serenity of our women, each brushstroke celebrates the diversity enriching our land. In their attire, the glow of gold symbolizes natural riches and the empowerment rooted in feminine strength.

Through oil paintings, these works capture the essence of Colombian women, narrating their stories and highlighting their role as guardians of cultural heritage. Each golden bracelet and necklace pays homage to the fertile land, reminding us that, as women, we carry the richness of our identity with dignity.

The duality of the soul involves recognizing and embracing the multiplicity of experiences and emotions shaping the inner complexity of an individual's existence. This duality may manifest in the internal struggle between opposing forces and the harmonization of diverse elements to achieve emotional and spiritual balance.

"Dualities of the Soul" invites you to immerse yourself in the dialogue between past, present, and future, exploring the richness of duality and celebrating the unyielding strength of Colombian women. We extend a warm invitation to this artistic journey, where each stroke serves as a reminder that true harmony of the soul is found in diversity.



Size: 47.2 inches x 39.4 inches (120cm X 100cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

Under the captivating title "Innocence in Grays," I present a piece that awakens duality in every observer, challenging the conventional perception of innocence and the transition to maturity. As one pauses before this canvas, the penetrating gaze of the two figures unleashes a luminosity that seems to illuminate their entire surroundings.

In my artistic exploration, I have deliberately chosen shades of gray, not only as a stylistic choice but also as a visual metaphor for the complexity of Colombian identity. The girls, adorned in African attire, embody the richness of the cultural history that defines our nation, serving as a reminder of our blend of influences and roots.

The carefully woven ambiguity between childhood and adulthood invites personal reflection, as the luminous gaze of the figures projects a light that highlights the dualities present in each of us. Duality becomes a guiding thread, where similarity and difference coexist, revealing a femininity that melds strength with delicacy.



## The fire that protects me



Size 47.2 inches x 39.4 inches (120cm X 100cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

Under the evocative title "The Fire that Protects Me," I present a singular artwork that transcends time and ignites the imagination. At the core of this painting, two contemporary women, symmetrically aligned back to back, suggest a connection beyond the visual; they could be twins, but closer inspection will reveal captivating distinctions.

These women not only represent different temporal moments but encapsulate a unique duality: one embodies the reflected essence of the past, while the other projects a futuristic vision of that same feminine essence. The space between them symbolizes the present, although a subtle curtain seems to veil the now with the future, indicating the woman's tendency to wander between her past history and future aspirations, sometimes neglecting the present moment.

In an effort to focus attention on the present, the woman of the current moment wears modern red glasses, an accessory that not only adds a contemporary touch but also symbolizes the need to visualize the present moment with clarity. The fiery red background not only offers a vibrant visual stimulus but embodies the passion that drives life.

The striped blankets on the ground are a tapestry that tells stories of paths already traveled, a testament to experiences lived and overcome. "The Fire that Protects Me" is not just an artwork; it is a visual statement that invites exploration of the intricate relationship with time and encourages embracing each moment with the clarity provided by the glow of red glasses. This acquisition will offer a unique perspective on life and its eternal kaleidoscope of meanings.



## Afro-Colombian women in strength



Size: 47.2 inches x 39.4 inches (120cm X 100cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

Two Afro-Colombian women stand with an air of strength and determination. Their unwavering gaze is fixed on a point in the distance, showcasing their resolute mindset and a clear sense of direction. They are painted in a bluish-gray hue, evoking a sense of elegance. Additionally, they wear prominent gold-painted necklaces and bracelets, symbolizing the wealth of gold in my country, Colombia. Both women exude a quiet power, their presence commanding attention.

Their facial expressions reveal a sense of determination and focus, reflecting their unwavering commitment to their chosen paths. Their eyes, filled with determination, project a deep sense of purpose, conveying the unwavering resolve that lies within them. Their presence commands respect and admiration, inspiring others to embrace their own convictions. The surroundings serve as a reminder of the challenges they may face, but also as a testament to their resilience and unwavering commitment to move forward.



Size: 47.2 inches x 37.4 inches (120cm x 95cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

This artwork delves into a realm beyond artistic expression; it unfolds an emotional odyssey into the echoes of childhood and familial roots. The canvas breathes life into the image of a woman, reminiscent of my Colombian coastal mother, who, in her youth, embraced the embrace of nature and the company of animals on a picturesque farm.

Within the duality of existence, I've contemplated the shared similarities and connections, portraying this woman in parallel with a symmetrically resembling figure that stirs feelings of nostalgia and profound affection. Each brushstroke pays homage to the golden days of youth, where livestock and nature were companions, and the world unfolded in wonder.

The warm and gentle color palette reflects the warmth of those cherished memories, while the carefully orchestrated symmetry symbolizes the undeniable connection between generations. The depiction of this woman, exuding innocence and vitality, seamlessly melds with the similar figure, creating a visual narrative that transcends the canvas and touches the core of the viewer.

'The Purity of Being' is not merely an artistic representation but a tangible reminder of the roots that shape our identity. Through this artwork, I celebrate the eternal love for a woman who bears a striking resemblance to my mother, capturing the purity of childhood, the essence of connection to the land, and the participation in a story that transcends the confines of time.



## The Sun Grants Me Temperance



Size: 51.1 inches x 37.4 inches (130cm x 95cm)  
Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

This artwork is a visual ode to the extraordinary beauty of Colombian landscapes and the richness emanating from this land. Two children, depicted with their backs to the viewer, stand against a dazzling golden background, a hue that highlights the breathtaking beauty we sometimes witness in Colombia.

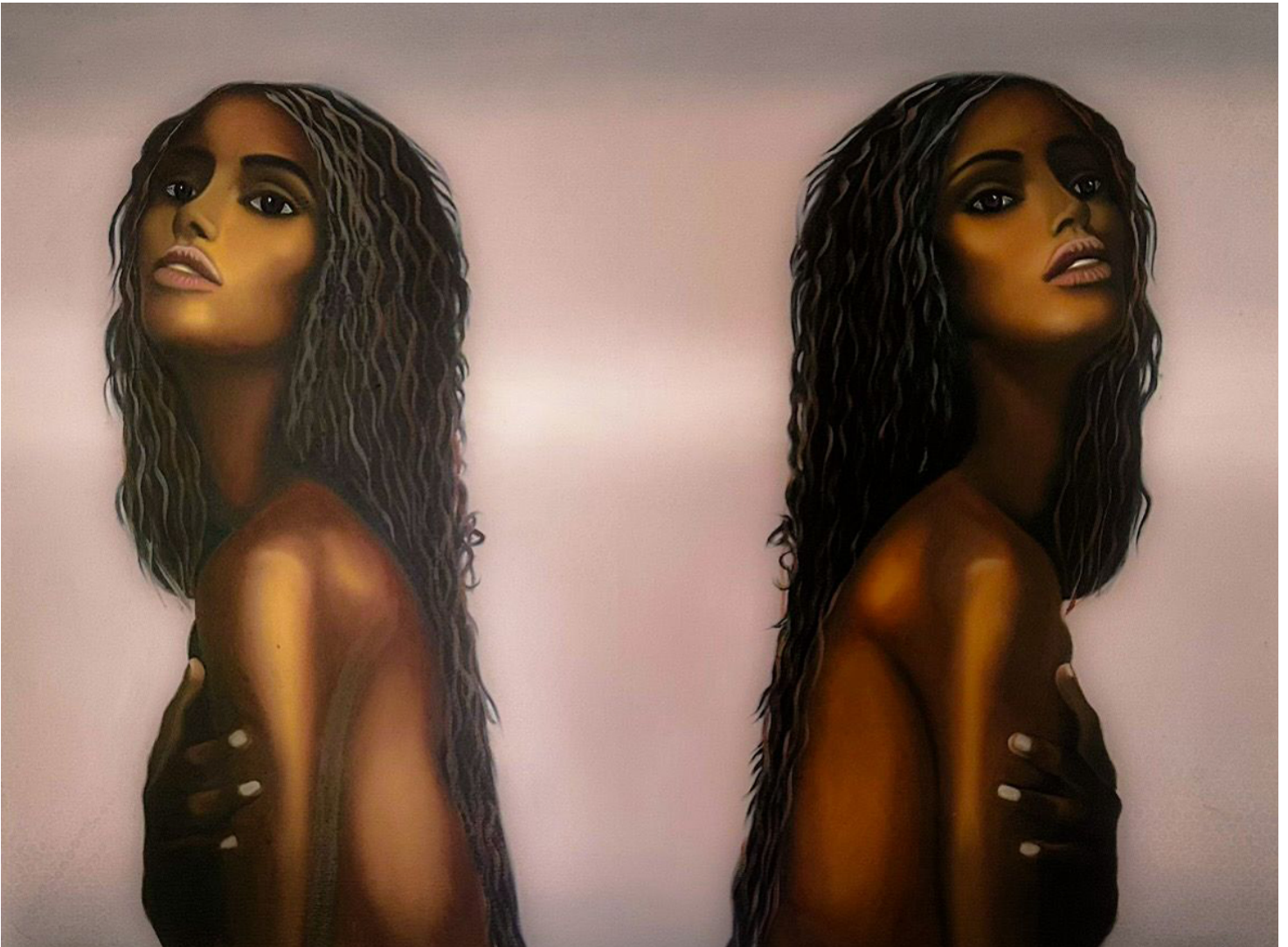
The golden backdrop not only serves as a dazzling reminder of the country's extraordinary natural beauty but also as a symbol of the treasure and wealth that Colombia holds. This radiant tone reflects the abundance of the land and the promise of a bright future that stretches before the children.

The two children, with their upright and confident gazes forward, embody the security and hope that come from their connection to the surroundings. Confidence in the future emanates from the sense of security provided by the radiant landscape, conveying a message of optimism and prosperity.

In essence, "The Sun Grants Me Temperance" is more than an artistic representation; it is a visual celebration of the majesty of Colombia and a statement about the confidence in the future that arises from the connection with the country's natural wealth.



## The Authenticity of Being



Size: 47.2 inches x 35.4 inches (120cm x 90cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

"The Authenticity of Being," this masterpiece is a sublime expression that captures the pure and genuine essence of coastal identity. Two women, beautifully modern and captivatingly gorgeous, gracefully embody all the distinctive features of Colombian coastal women. Their faces radiate with features reflecting the diversity and richness of coastal heritage: lush, curly hair paying tribute to natural beauty.

The pale purple background casts a captivating contrast, further highlighting the authenticity emanating from the central figures. This tone evokes a sense of mystery and depth, providing a perfect canvas for the protagonists to shine in their own light.

"The Authenticity of Being" goes beyond being a mere visual representation; it is a striking reminder of the beauty that arises when we allow ourselves to discover and embrace our true essence. The two women, in their modernity and grace, become emblems of divinity found in authenticity, suggesting that by fully exploring and expressing who we are, we ascend to the status of goddesses.

Each carefully applied stroke on this canvas not only celebrates authenticity but also invites those who contemplate it to embark on their own journey toward authenticity, recognizing the unique beauty that each individual contributes to the tapestry of existence.

## Arch of perfection



Size: 45.2 inches x 35.4 inches (115cm x 90cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

This artwork stands as a central and meaningful piece in the "Duality of Being" collection. In this series, where duality manifests in parallel forms and twin figures, this particular piece stands out for its focus on the symmetry of the human body.

The representation of two feet, nearly identical and symmetrically aligned, serves as a visual reminder of the inherent duality in our physical existence. Profound reflection is sparked when contemplating how our own bodies consist of two parts, two feet, two hands, and two arms, all symmetrically alike but never exactly the same.

This artwork encourages consideration of how, despite the evident duality, each individual is unique and different. The similarity of the figures reflects the universality of the human experience, while the subtle differences highlight the singularity of each being. In the context of the collection, "The Arch of Perfection" underscores the duality in our physical forms and prompts reflection on how we assimilate and embrace those dualities in our own unique existence.





Size: 47.2 inches x 39.4 inches (120cm X 100cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

Under the title "double meninas," I present a piece inspired by the renowned Meninas of the master Velázquez, one of my favorite works. In the context of my collection "Dualities of the Soul," I have chosen to immortalize these two exceptional girls who are part of that timeless masterpiece. The two Meninas, intertwined hand in hand, capture the essence of innocence but also reflect the imposition of elegance and the conception of women in that era. The painting evokes the practice of dressing girls like queens from an early age, where elegance flowed like a river, turning women into the very manifestation of societal expectations.

This artwork delves into the intrinsic duality of childhood, showcasing childlike purity alongside the layers of sophistication imposed by society. The girls, though hand in hand in a gesture of unity, also reveal the complexity of the burden they carry, symbolizing the contradiction of an era where innocence and elegance coexisted in a delicate dance.

The color palette reflects the opulence of the time, while the carefully balanced composition pays homage to Velázquez's original arrangement. "double meninas" is more than a painting; it is a visual journey through time and society, where the girls become silent witnesses to the expectations placed upon them. This artwork, framed by duality, invites reflection on the evolution of the perception of women throughout history.





Size: 47.2 inches x 35.4 inches (120 cm x 90 cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

"Contrasts of the Coast" emerges as a visual testament to the resilient and multifaceted history of Colombian coastal women. In this intricate canvas, the turbans adorning these women's heads are not only symbols of tradition and resistance but also silent bearers of everyday stories that have endured over time.

Behind the elegance of the turbans hides an ancestral practice, an act of love and survival. Coastal women, facing the harshness of daily life, used these turbans as more than a fashion statement. Among the carefully crafted folds of fabric lay the essence of motherhood and concern for their children.

In the history of these women, the turbans became shelters for provisions, places where they hid food to nourish their babies. In an act of ingenuity and maternal love, they found in these textiles not only an expression of cultural identity but also a practical solution to confront daily adversities.

The palette of vibrant colors reflects the cultural richness and diversity that characterizes the coastal region. The choice of warm and luminous tones transports us to sunny landscapes and beaches bathed by the Caribbean, creating a surprising contrast with the harsh reality that coastal women have faced over time.

Thus, "Contrasts of the Coast" becomes a work that not only celebrates the strength of coastal women but also honors the resourceful tactics they employed to ensure the survival and well-being of their families. Each turban tells a story of resilience, sacrifice, and the courage of women who have woven the fabric of coastal history with their own hands.





Size: 47.2 inches x 39.4 inches (120cm X 100cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

This painting portrays a fascinating duality of being through the depiction of two identical women facing away. The posture and physical similarity of both women evoke the idea of a deep connection and a reflection of the same essence. The choice to show the women from behind invites us to reflect on the hidden and mysterious aspects of our own nature. At times, there are parts of ourselves that remain in the shadow and can only be discovered through introspection and inner exploration. The two women, though visually identical, can represent different aspects of our personality, such as the duality between strength and vulnerability, serenity and passion, or reason and intuition. The artwork challenges us to explore these dualities and find a harmonious balance between them. The red shawl worn by the women symbolizes their inherent strength, as they are covered in a blanket of determination. This powerful attribute stands in contrast to the serene blue and gray background, which evokes a sense of tranquility and calmness. Through the visual representation of two identical women facing away, the painting prompts us to contemplate our own internal duality and recognize that we are complex beings with multiple facets. It encourages us to embrace and accept all of our dualities and seek harmony and integration of these different parts in our daily lives. This painting of two identical women facing away confronts us with the inherent duality within our human nature, inviting us to explore and embrace the different facets of our being to achieve a deeper sense of balance and fulfillment.



## Security of Upbringing



Size: 47.2 inches x 39.4 inches (120cm X 100cm)

Materials: oil, paste and acrylic

this artwork stands as a profound visual exploration, where each converging element is meticulously orchestrated to convey a message rooted in authenticity and a connection to one's roots. The woman's upright posture frames an innate sense of security, a visual testament to the confidence that arises when one delves into authenticity and draws nourishment from the roots of their personal history.

This painting transcends mere visual representation by unraveling the complexity of cultural identity. The woman, born in Colombia, embodies the richness of cultural blends, carrying with her a mosaic of heritages that shape her being. Each brushstroke captures the essence of a story intertwined with the roots of the country, a visual narrative unfolding before the viewer.

As one contemplates this artwork, the self-assured woman becomes a beacon emanating influence on those who observe her. The security of her upbringing, rooted in authenticity and a connection to her roots, resonates powerfully, prompting reflections on one's own identity and the importance of embracing cultural diversity.