

Vancouver Artgallery



FIRELEI BÁEZ

SELF-GUIDED FAMILY TOUR

WELCOME TO THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY.

As you move through the Gallery, please remember to:

- Walk not run;
- Look closely but don't touch the art or the walls*
- Stay together with your family

*Please note you CAN touch the large portal installation in the 1st Floor Rotunda.

We are grateful to live, work and play on the ancestral, traditional, unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Unceded means that the land was stolen; it was not given away or exchanged in a treaty.

Firelei Báez, *Untitled (Temple of Time)*, 2020 (detail), oil, acrylic and inkjet on canvas, Wilks Family Collection, Courtesy the Artist and Hauser & Wirth, New York, Photo: Phoebe d'Heurle, © Firelei Báez

This self-guided tour starts at the top of the stairs on the 2nd Floor and moves in a clockwise direction.

Firelei Báez is an artist who was born in the Dominican Republic and now lives and works in New York. She creates large, colourful paintings and drawings as a way to tell stories and challenge ideas about history.

She is often considered a time traveller who uses her paintings as a way to reimagine the past and the future. Let's see how she does that!

STOP 1: MADELEINE AND PORTALS

Begin by looking at the work in front of you, called *Madeleine (Rupture rupture maroonage)* (2022).

What do you notice about the painting's shape?

It is an arch shape. Firelei Báez calls it a portal. Do you know what a portal is? A portal is a door or gateway that invites us to enter into another world or time and imagine the possibilities that could exist there. In books, portals often transport characters to the past or the future.

Look to the right. Then, look to the left. What do you notice about the doorways in the room?

They are shaped like portals as well! The Gallery created these doorways especially for this exhibition.

Challenge: As you go through the Gallery on this tour, count how many portals you find along the way. You'll get the answer at the end of the tour.



Let's go through the portal and discover more about Firelei Báez's work!
Turn right into the next room.

STOP 2: EARLY WORK

Firelei Báez makes large paintings and drawings but also adds fine details to her work.

Activity:

Walk around this room and choose one work.

Look at it from far away. What are three details you notice?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Now, move up close. What are three details you notice when looking up close?

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



Move down the corridor, past the high wall gallery, to the next stop.

STOP 3: PATTERN ROOM

Firelei Báez uses a lot of pattern and symbols in her work. Can you find the following symbols:

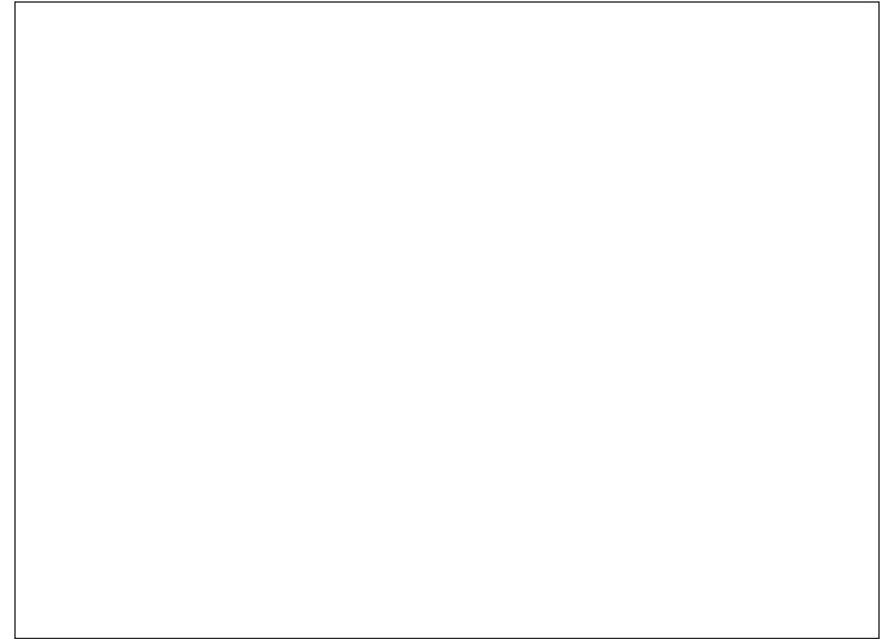
A Fist A representation of power and protection.

A Tignon A headwrap worn by Black women in the 1700s. At this time, the government forced Black women to cover their hair. The women not only followed the law but decided to create beautiful head wrappings as a symbol of resistance to these unfair laws.

Panther A symbol of Black power.

Hair A representation of freedom and the power of Black women.

Now, choose one work. Look closely at the pattern and symbols, and then draw your own version of the work in the space on the next page:



Turn right into the next room.

STOP 4: COLOUR BURST

Look at the painting with the colour burst with legs, called *Adjusting the Moon* (*The right to non-imperative clarities*): *Waxing* (2019–20). What do you see?

What colours do you see? What is the shape of the painting?

Activity

Pretend you are holding a paintbrush in your hand. If you were painting this piece, where would you start? What would your brushstrokes be like?

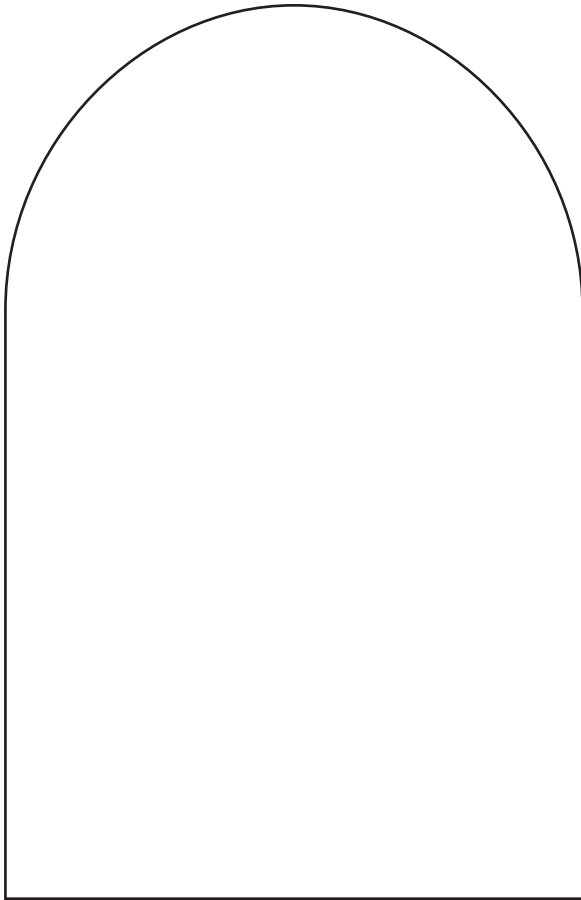
For Firelei Báez, the colour bursts represent a shield, which allows the person behind it to be themselves. The colour burst allows them to control when and how they are seen. In this way, it gives them power over their own lives. Báez is reimagining a new future where people are free to be themselves.

Activity

Draw yourself in the portal. (It can be a stick person. That's okay!) Then, draw lines to create your own burst.

What is your starting point? What parts of your drawing did you cover? What parts do we still see? Did you use straight lines for your burst? Wavy lines? Maybe zig zags? This is your drawing, so you get to decide.

When you go home, feel free to add some colour to your drawing!



Move to the next room into the blue installation.

STOP 5: THE BLUE INSTALLATION

Let's experience the installation *A Drexycyen chronocommons (To win the war you fought it sideways)* (2019) with our senses. Begin by taking three deep breaths.

Look up. Look down. Look to the left. Look to the right.

Write down 3 things you see:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Write down 2 things you hear:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____

Write down 1 thing you smell:

- 1 _____

What does this space remind you of? What is one word to describe your experience in this space?

As a child, Firelei Báez moved homes many times. She often made pillow forts as a creative outlet and would use her imagination to create a safe space. This installation is inspired by the ocean.



Exit out of the installation.

This brings us to the end of the self-guided tour. How many portals did you find?

The answer to how many portals there are in the exhibition is **10**.

Thank you for participating! Enjoy the rest of your visit to the Gallery.

Firelei Báez is organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston and curated by Eva Respini, Deputy Director & Director of Curatorial Programs, Vancouver Art Gallery (former Barbara Lee Chief Curator, ICA/Boston), with Tessa Bachi Haas, Assistant Curator, ICA/Boston

Organized by:



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