

ARTFORUM



Ricardo Brey, *Rose of Jericho* (detail), 2013–14, mixed media, dimensions variable.
NEW YORK

Ricardo Brey

ALEXANDER GRAY ASSOCIATES
510 West 26th Street
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Ricardo Brey's exhibition here, "*Doble Existencia / Double Existence*," bridges the gulf between language and materials through a kind of alchemical hybridity. Installed on the gallery's first floor is a video of gloved hands emptying out the contents of a black archival box, which calls to mind Marcel Duchamp's portable *Boîte-en-valise*, 1935–40. A similar box appears upstairs in *Rose of Jericho*, 2013–14. The container, splayed open atop a plinth, reveals ornately wallpapered insides: one an imitation woodgrain, the other a muted pattern of baroque florals. It also features an accordion book of diagrams and a plastered stack of rags, among other items. Encased in glass at the center of this sculpture is the titular resurrection plant. Brey repurposes castoffs and turns them into temporally resilient vessels entangled in cultural and spiritual memory.

A dream, 2018, is visually multilingual. In it, bundled grasses hang next to renderings of foliage, while a mirrored letter “S” reflects the viewer’s face, activating the work’s poetic text: “Y las estrellas del cielo cayeron sobre la tierra, como la higuera echa sus higos cuando es sacudida por un fuerte viento,” or “And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a great wind.” Brey’s amalgamation of iconographies from bygone civilizations, to quote postcolonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha, “problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity.” *You Can’t Escape From What You Are*, 2013, a sculpture that resembles a progression of mutated cells, is made up of a mangled trumpet and the head of a metal duck, which collide into a riot of crystals and rope. A sister work is *You will never guess what comes next*, 2018, where a solar system is replicated in the form of a bicycle wheel with beads strung through its spokes. Like a reconfiguration of Lenape, Chinese, and Hindu creation myths, it carries a small bronze turtle, bearing the weight of a new world.

— Ellie Botoman