

# ARTFORUM



View of "Maria Gaspar: Brown Brilliance Darkness Matter," 2016.

CHICAGO

## Maria Gaspar

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEXICAN ART

1852 W. 19th Street

March 25–July 31, 2016

In the installation *Brown Brilliance Darkness Matter* (all works 2016), a maze of curtains suspended throughout the gallery periodically opens upon tableau of stoneware ceramic sculptures set atop custom variations of bright

turquoise Acapulco furniture. Tropes of domestic spaces give way to further explorations of interior headspaces, as Maria Gaspar explores the ways that a museum's collection and archive might be incorporated into one's inner life. The translucent curtains are digitally printed with collages that weave images owned by the museum with photographs of the artist's family and from her personal life, resulting in grids of shifting gray tones out of which the occasional face peers. The ceramics glazed in brown interpret the institution's holdings from across history, ranging from an ancient Mesoamerican head fragment to several references to Arturo Romo's 2005 "Crystal Brilliance Manifesto."

Mining the museum, in much the same fashion as Fred Wilson has done since 1992 in order to suggest alternatives to canonical histories, Gaspar works within a particular establishment that has, since its founding more than thirty years ago, taken as its mission an engagement with race, heritage, national identity, and social justice. Her responses to its objects and images—accompanied by a series of docent performances in which she has invited other artists and cultural workers to blend personal storytelling into historical accounts—serve as reminders that identity categories, such as Latino and Hispanic, are never monolithic, always veering into abstractions and productive problems of legibility.

— Matt Morris