



## In Picnic, still life paintings make an argument for pleasure and enjoyment

Fundación La Nave Salinas in Ibiza celebrates its 10th anniversary with an exhibition of newly commissioned contemporary still-life paintings by American artist, Pedro Pedro.

by [Srishti Ojha](#) | Published on : Sep 30, 2025

At the edge of Ibiza, a stone building faces the impossibly blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Inside, turf grass covers the floors, recalling barefoot wanderings in nature and oft-heard online cries to ‘touch grass’. On the wall, paintings rendered on sprawling canvases echo this call, with their depictions of picnic blankets crowded with a cornucopia of treats. Cheeses, fruits, wine, flowers, cakes and pastries are rendered in sumptuous, warm colours, surrounded by the accoutrements left by out-of-frame picnic-goers. This is Picnic, a solo exhibition by Los Angeles-based artist Pedro Pedro, commissioned by the Fundación La Nave Salinas in Spain to celebrate their 10th anniversary. La Nave is a non-profit organisation located in the salt pans of Ibiza, dedicated to making contemporary art accessible to the island’s community. Founder Lio Malca and director Isaac Malca spoke to STIR about designing the exhibition, “[The view] brings us a recurring challenge year after year...to come up with an exhibition strong enough to stand alongside the magnificent view of the Mediterranean that visitors encounter right before stepping into La Nave.” Pedro’s joyful outdoor paintings became the perfect complement to the gallery’s ambient approach.

**In Pedro’s work, pleasure isn’t the hedonistic, amoral temptation the vanitas masters feared; rather, it is essential for savouring the present moment and expressing gratitude for it.**



Fundación La Nave Salinas, Ibiza Image: Courtesy of Fundación La Nave Salinas

The contemporary artist's paintings draw from the 'vanitas' tradition of still-life painting and their playful compositions brim with references to art history. Vanitas paintings were popularised mainly by Dutch painters in the Baroque period as allegorical art meant to remind viewers of the inevitability of death, the transience of life and the futility of pursuing earthly pleasure. Through foreboding symbols like clocks, skulls and wilting flowers, the masters of this genre of painting pushed viewers to 'remember you must die', a theme encapsulated in the Latin phrase *memento mori*.



From *memento mori* to *memento vivere* Image: Courtesy of Fundación La Nave Salinas

In *Picnic*, Pedro flips this script, adapting the wisdom for an age of ceaseless, bleak news cycles, rising pessimism and climate anxiety. Pedro urges viewers to *memento vivere*—to remember to live.



The American painter lives and works in Los Angeles, creating still-life paintings that capture the set dressing of modern life. Before 2016, Pedro's work focused on imagined deities with many heads and genitals painted on muslin scrolls. His move that year from New York to LA precipitated his shift towards still life painting and the style he is now known for. Pedro's characteristically saturated colour palette, precise shapes and gradients, fantasy lighting and perspective are in full force in *Picnic*, which includes some of his most ambitious works to date. He paints on unprimed linen with textile and acrylic paint to achieve bold colours, a technique he developed during his 20s when he began painting while recovering from a surgery and still favours today.



Blanket with Cherry Pie, Oysters, Lilies and Handbag, acrylic and textile paint on linen, 2025, Pedro Pedro Image: Courtesy of Fundación La Nave Salinas

Pedro's paintings all seem to be in *medias res*, with the activities of the picnic-goers evident to sleuths examining the objects they brought and left in their wake. *Blanket with Cherry Pie, Oysters, Lilies and Handbag* (2025), for example, captures the spontaneity of the depicted moment by showing a fallen wine glass and a chocolate eclair dripping its contents onto the blanket, an overstuffed, spilling handbag and lingerie flung onto oranges and grapes. *Basket with Bananas, Watermelon, Knife and Flowers* (2024) is a more traditional still life, except for the knife caught halfway through cutting a watermelon into thick slices. The fruits are unfathomably ripe, the desserts luminous and the glassware almost crystalline in its reflectivity. The pinks, oranges and yellows leap off the canvas, giving the paintings a summer-hot glow. This exaggeration is a stylistic choice but also a way of capturing the already dreamlike nature of a picnic.



Installation view of Picnic Table I, II and III, acrylic and textile paint on linen, 2025, Pedro Pedro Image: Courtesy of Fundación La Nave Salinas

The sensual, bulbous forms of his works recall the work of Colombian artist Fernando Botero, while the more recent focus on desserts draws inspiration from the American art of Wayne Thiebaud, a favourite of Pedro's. Meanwhile, the mid-century furniture and items scattered throughout are a nod to the 1950s, when the pace of life was not dictated by algorithms and push notifications and time for nature, community and a leisurely meal was not so difficult to find. The paintings centre the picnic on backgrounds of flat colour, further removing the moment from its surrounding reality and suspending the moment in time.



Viewers become part of the picnic at Fundación La Nave Salinas, 2025 Image: Courtesy of Fundación La Nave Salinas

This suspension of time and reality is what Pedro seeks to convey and recreate for viewers through the picnic, which he terms 'a compact utopia' in the exhibition note. Under late capitalism, the senses, nature and community all take a backseat to the mechanical demands of everyday life and the struggle for productivity.

The picnic is not intended to represent an escape from life but a stalwart against its deadening effect on the senses, an occasion for community and connection and a moment of repose that strengthens one's ability to face the demands and injustices of the world.



Picnic foregrounds pleasure, community and repose Image: Courtesy of Fundación La Nave Salinas

In Pedro's work, pleasure isn't the hedonistic, amoral temptation the vanitas masters feared; rather, it is essential for savouring the present moment and expressing gratitude for it. While the exuberance of Picnic might seem divorced from often grim political realities, it is a carefully considered response to them, a balm for the overwhelmed and burnt out and an appeal to memento vivere.

'Picnic' will be on view at the Fundación La Nave Salinas from August 16 - October 31, 2025.