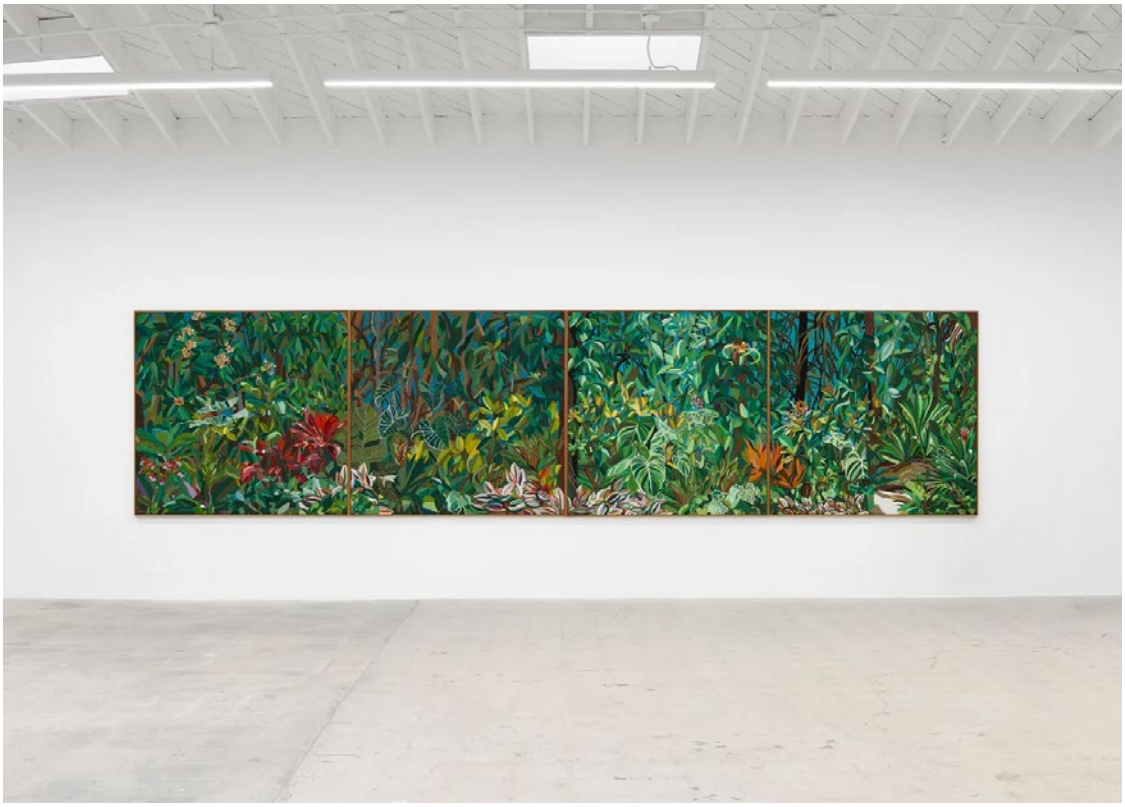
Language / Arts

Mucki Botkay's Imaginary Windows at Anat Ebgi Gallery

Written by: Tara Anne Dalbow
July 22, 2026



Mucki Botkay *Alvorada na mata (Dawn in the forest)*, 2026, hand embroidery with beads on canvas.
Image courtesy Anat Ebgi Gallery.

Layered planes in restless shades of green unfurl into a mountainous landscape, extending toward a rose-tinged dawn in the opening composition of Mucki Botkay's *Imaginary Windows* at Anat Ebgi. At first glance, the flat shapes and iridescent surface of Untitled (2025) resemble a painting or perhaps a panel of stained glass. Only with your face inches from the frame does the glimmering vista dissolve into thousands of tiny glass beads stitched across the four-foot canvas.

Across more than a dozen embroidered works, the Brazilian artist's U.S. debut challenges the relationship between piece and whole. Threads and hand-colored beads cohere into resonant images that transcend the sum of their constituent parts; here, relation stops nowhere. The structural interdependence of her embellished canvases parallels that of her central subject: the coastal rainforests and mangroves encircling her native Rio de Janeiro. Every leafcutter ant and bloom of bark-dwelling lichen is as essential to the ecosystem as the next, just as each chartreuse cylinder, pearlescent peach sphere, and spun

thread shapes Botkay's verdant tableaux. To see them stitched together is to consider the entanglement of an individual and their environment.

Mucki Botkay *Untitled*, 2025, hand embroidery with beads on canvas. Image courtesy Anat Ebgi Gallery.

The diversity of beads—their sizes, shapes, shades, and degrees of opacity—affords the works their dynamism. Matte finishes beside translucent ones deepen the shallow field. Pale, cool tones press against richer, more vibrant shades, animating the picture plane: leaves flicker in imagined breezes, mottled light quickens the understory. This agitation enlivens the copper-and-gunmetal-gray serpent in *Untitled* (2025), as it writhes free of sloughed skin, flashing between fulsome, flowering vines.

Successive passages stitched in divergent directions create textures ranging from knotty to glossy, melding optical and tactile sensation. It's tempting to reach out and press the waxy, oblong foliage of a rubber tree between thumb and forefinger, especially in the monumental *Untitled* (2026) commanding the gallery's front wall. Its built-up surface verges on bas-relief dimensionality, inviting the viewer to step through the frame and into the thicket. Metallic beads glint between tangled trunks; an umber sphere, suspended like a setting sun, draws the gaze beyond intersecting branches even as the beadwork projects outward toward the viewer.

Mucki Botkay *Untitled*, 2025, hand embroidery with beads on canvas. Image courtesy Anat Ebgi Gallery.

Botkay similarly gives space and light a material presence in her botanical still lifes. The beads forming the blossoms continue across the picture, granting their surroundings the same physical density as leaf, petal, and vase. In *Caravaggio's Secrets*, theorists Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit argue that art need not restore a "fantasmatic wholeness" but may instead reveal that "nothing escapes connectedness, the play of and between forms." In *Begonias* (2024), a technicolor bouquet in a crystalline vase appears embedded within a milk-white ground. Botkay's meticulous rendering of each variegated striation, delicate venation, and ruffled edge gives every emerald, fuchsia, mauve, crimson, and citron stem an irreducible particularity.

The importance of this material variation becomes clearest in the more homogeneous compositions. In *Mangue 3 (Mangrove 3)* (2023), the predominance of large, rounded beads with a uniformly burnished sheen compresses the space. The surface remains sumptuous, yet it lacks what D.H. Lawrence might have called 'shiftiness' that makes the strongest works feel briefly permeable.

Mucki Botkay *Untitled*, 2025, hand embroidery with beads on canvas. Image courtesy Anat Ebgi Gallery.

Even so, none of Botkay's canvases is the result of a single hand or uniform gesture. She collaborates with a network of artisans in Brazil who realize, stitch by stitch, her elaborate visions. No individual maker, any more than any single bead, accounts for the finished image. Their cumulative labor finds a visual analogue in another untitled work from 2025 depicting the cross-section of an ancient trunk, its rings radiating outward season by season, each distinct yet inseparable, held one within another.