

is "forever" frozen, cast in bronze. Fragments from formerly celebrated pedestals contain stories in their fractured matter that will be "forever" subverted/disassembled. "Cultural sediments accumulated piece by piece, gradually render an incomplete landscape of what we are, of what we could have been."

MARCELA QUIROZ

Ana Bidart and Armando Rosales ESPAC, Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo

The game of distance doubles when there is enough separation for contact to be impossible, but enough closeness to listen to the whispers of a corresponding voice seeking a shared horizon. This condition is present in the exhibition titled "Double Distance" by artists Ana Bidart (Uruguay, 1985) and Armando Rosales (Venezuela, 1987) shown at the ESPAC, Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City, under the curatorship of Esteban King. Through works of painstaking spatial sensitivity and a rigorous reading of the context, both artists show the result of inquiries that have been accompanying their production for the last five years.

That the body is the medium for the perception of space and that movement is fragmentary, are still precepts that can be taken advantage of. Bidart and Rosales demonstrate it through gestures that recall the mutability and fleeting nature of instants. They explore ways of understanding the exhibition space, not to radically subvert its logic but to show us the phenomenology that inhabits it and that can be used in the visual fields.

Upon being opened, a door lifts a small bag with blue pigment that falls back to the same spot when the door is closed, creating a drawing in the middle of the floor. The opening in the ceiling that covers the patio of the gallery offers precise instructions that must be executed by those working there every time an alarm goes off in their cellphones. Semidarkness takes over the exhibition from time to time to reveal the dim flood of light streaming from a window created for the show in

one of the walls. Or the sheet of paper incessantly moved by the wind on the edge of one of the indoor façades that opens onto the patio of the gallery. All of these situations are subtle gestures that establish the context for those participating in this "time suspended between two voids" as they walk through the exhibition.

The work by Ana Bidart has intelligently oscillated between the subtlety of the immaterial and full awareness of the phenomena that intersects life at its multiple intervals. Some of the actions that are a constant in Bidart's work are: revealing the flow of sunlight on architecture through drawing, measuring the wind and taking advantage of its effect to create situations in indoor spaces, assuming drawing as a way of interpreting sounds and distances, and perceiving time in order to externalize it through coordinates and minimal gestures. Her processes usually explore possible systems of rules that are then transgressed in favor of random operations, of understanding and reaffirming the continuous presence of drawing in the space. Trained as an industrial designer, Bidart has focused on revealing the image of that which is imperceptible: a suggestive translation of codes. Her participation in this exhibition shows the maturity of several ideas that emerged during her residency at Flora ars+natura (in 2018) and gave way to pieces like *Hoja de sola* (Exhibition Room Sheet, 2019) and *Peso total* (Total Weight, 2018).

Armando Rosales, for his part, has developed solid work. His inquiries invoke the body and the way it inhabits the exhibition space (with the resulting exercises of power that are hidden there), the use and flow of materials in specific places and their appropriations and circulation, the poetic of his assemblies, and the tension between extreme situations in social and political contexts transferred into the affective realm. Other aspects equally important in the development of his work are his closeness to the editorial field, music, and the management of autonomous spaces. A graphic designer by trade, he usually conceives his interventions as visual compositions on the architecture, often revealing relationships and mechanisms of power. In this manner, his clear inclination towards sculptural work allows his work to easily change in scale, suddenly going from object-based productions to brilliant transitions into architectural interventions. Sometimes self-referential, his process exhibits traces of the fragility of the body that eventually succumbs to exertion and bursts, wears out, deteriorates. It is the sculpture-based reading of an impending collapse.

These two artists share a background in design, both attended the SOMA educational program, come from South American countries, and have a common interest in the imperceptible experiences that occur in the space. The two measure, alter, and channel concrete or intangible elements, and understand the circumstances of the places in which they execute their works to reveal hidden elements or to challenge viewers. From the beginning, the curatorial proposal involved Bidart and Rosales working on open dialogue with some of the works from the ESPAC collection also on display. Another curatorial element included the publication of three accompanying booklets: a small catalog, and two other publications containing independent proposals by each of the artists as extensions of the exhibition. Distance appears to split in the presence of two artists questioning multiple temporalities, with two stages conceived for the exhibition of works that briefly converge on the same line of inquiry before splitting in two again. Therefore, in this instance, it could be said that distance is also an essay on synthesis. It separates and brings together again. It allows the condensation of processes to generate new tangents for anticipating a probable future.

JORGE LOPERA

Ana Bidart and Armando Rosales. *Distancia doble* (Double Distance), 2019. General view of the exhibition. Courtesy of ESPAC, Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo



MIAMI / FL

Marcelo Bonevardi Lowe Art Museum

In this mini-retrospective of the remarkable work of Argentine artist Marcelo Bonevardi (1929-94), it is immediately apparent that a unique personal vocabulary has emerged in response to the dominant trends of mid-century Latin America and New York. After moving to New York in 1958, Bonevardi absorbed, and rejected, elements of Minimalism, Geometric Abstraction, and Constructivism to create complex compositions made of a variety of materials in his own versions of the trends. Infused with a personal lexicon of symbols and visionary spirit, the works express a fascination with mathematics, architectonic constructions, astronomy, rituals, and metaphysics, and ancient art, among other intellectual pursuits. Further distinguishing his art from those of his contemporaries, is his masterful command of drawing and the formal elements of art-making that result in works that are as dramatically composed as they are elegant. A background in architecture informs his process, while each work goes beyond a mere constructivist description that implies a strictly geometric formation based on architectonic subsets, often with little narrative context. For the Latin American Geometric Abstractionists and Constructivists especially, their work was almost strictly about mathematically structured compositions. Bonevardi uses constructivist systems to configure shapes taken from mathematical reality and translate them into a more symbolic schematic drawn from his knowledge of timeless sources of ancient art with its own ideogrammatic language, combined with references to life experiences that haunted his homeland. Akin to the work of Uruguayan master Joaquín Torres-García who included the intrinsic message of ancient art forms, the indigenous languages of the Americas in particular, with a genuine appreciation for their cultural and religious connotations, Bonevardi also created works informed by his own studies of their significance. There is never an indiscriminate appropriation of the motifs and elements of indigenous and ancient art, from the mythical to the astronomical, but their inclusion to elevate the abstract shapes and forms into new architectural structures that are basic to his unique and personal creative process.

The exhibition installation ingeniously takes advantage of the encyclopedic collection of the Lowe Art Museum, a university museum that proudly exhibits works that span 5000 years in the history of art. Before entering the main galleries of the exhibition, visitors are introduced to Bonevardi with a monumental shaped canvas. *Entablature II* (September 1986) serves as a preface to his method of construction and his incorporation of symbols, circles, repetitive patterns, and other arrangements that echo the historical objects in the museum's permanent collection, creating a dialogue between the old and the new that is particularly relevant to the artist's work. Then the visitor is invited to walk into the Kress Collection of Renaissance Art, where one of Bonevardi's most fascinating works, the *Annunciation* (July 1980), is installed among a selection of the museum's Early Renaissance religious works. The collection includes *The Annunciation* (Italy, 1370/73-1452) by Bicci di Lorenzo, *The Annunciation and the Journey to Bethlehem* by Guidoccio Cozzarelli (Italy, 1480-90), and *The Annunciation* carved into a marble arch (1461), all in direct conversation with Bonevardi's architecturally structured works. Clearly revealing the artist's attraction to the subjects of ritual, spirituality, and metaphysics

as part of a universal language that transcends time and place, *The Annunciation* is a small work. It is accompanied by drawings and ephemera that help to elucidate his conceptual process of abstracting the key aspects of a traditional Annunciation image. Described in the essay by Terence Riley in the enlightening catalog that accompanies the exhibit as an "assemblage of assemblages," the word assemblage not only denotes the structure of work done with acrylic and charcoal on newsprint and cardboard and combined with painted wood elements, but also the formation of signs used to re-create and re-interpret this most revered subject into the simplest most basic narrative: the Madonna, Angel Gabriel, the traditional arched interior, the mystical announcement. The work is enigmatically reduced to basic geometric shapes: the oval is Mary; the Angel is a simple rectangle with wings rendered as colored bands. This same mystical and symbolic assemblage of materials and language is repeated in other works that focus on spirituality, including *Talisman* (1969) and *Trapped Angel I* (1979), so the various parts become recognizable elements in his oeuvre and evidence of his preoccupation with the subject.

The main galleries of the exhibition are divided into recurring themes that feature monumental works, drawings, objects from the artist's studio, and a collection of newsprint and other materials, all of which enhance our understanding of his conceptual process. Large assemblages, such as *Astrologers Table III* (January 1965) demonstrate Bonevardi's skill with compositional balance and quiet reverence, while referring to ancient altars, walls, and windows reminiscent of the Incas, a civilization that intrigued him. There are

Marcelo Bonevardi. *Entablature II*, September 1986. Acrylic on stitched burlap and pigmented stucco over wood construction, polished wood carving, 66 1/4 x 34 1/2 in. (169.5 x 87.5 cm). Private Collection



sections on Celestial Navigation, Heads, Skins and Screens, Habitats and Cages, echoing the breath of Bonevardi's influences and a range of works that may also be understood as a reflection of the times. Among his fascination for the astrological and mythical, he presents the haunting reminiscences of disaster in shadowed images laden with hooks and other menacing devices of torture that are a personal response to the frightening events that took place during Argentina's (and other Latin American countries') military dictatorships in the 1970s-80s.

In this exhibition, Marcelo Bonevardi's painted and shaped constructions and assemblages introduce one person's intellectual pursuit of geometric forms within architectural spaces, always replete with deep conceptual meaning that pronounces the magical intersection between form and space.

CAROL DAMIAN

Carola Bravo Bernice Steinbaum Gallery

Inspired by Jacob Lawrence's work, which refers to the mass mobilization of African Americans who migrated from the rural south to the urban north in the United States at the end of the First World War (1940-1941), Carola Bravo addresses issues such as migration, exile, and assimilation. Bravo, born in Venezuela and living in Miami, makes a conceptual work based on her own experience in which she refers to geographical displacement, voluntary or forced, which implies sacrifices and entails economic, political, social and psychological consequences.

The exhibition *Inhabited Geometries: New Video Works* presents five video installations explicitly made for Bernice Steinbaum's gallery space.

The idea of the exhibition arises from the reading of Gaston Bachelard's book *The Poetics of Space* and the interesting corners of the gallery's space. As the artist explains, "Bachelard talks about the spaces that make us feel in a home and that are intimate and close such as corners, windows, drawers, closets, all the spaces where we store things, where we have part of our memory." It fur-

ther clarifies that "each installation has a small text related to what is being viewed."¹

The exhibition begins with a video installation based on the work *Identity Canon* (2016). In a new version, Bravo draws the interior of a closet with a great sense of line and perspective. The two-dimensional drawing acquires new proportions through the presence of three objects—a sack, a Santa Claus' head and a toy zebra—but above all, by the video projected on a screen that constitutes the central point of the work. In it, Bravo appears dressed in white observing an image of herself inspired by the famous drawing *The Vitruvian Man* by Leonardo Da Vinci (1492). The precision drawings' lines, which hints at her training as an architect, and the rich superposition of plans and ideas in the same work, serve as a starting point for the pieces she presents in the adjoining room.

The installation titled *Dreamer of Corners and Books* (2018) presents a library drawn with black lines on the gallery's white wall. On the side, a video-projection shows the artist entering the wall's space. The play of planes becomes even more complex by reflecting this image in a mirror, generating a new virtual space. In addition to working with different levels such as space, movement, and sound, Bravo plays with multiple realities: she shows herself entering the space that symbolizes the library, drawing on the wall, and reflected in the mirror. All spaces, real and virtual, are handled with great success formally and conceptually.

In the next installation, *Geometry of Echoes* (2018), she uses similar elements more abstractly. Inspired by a quote by Bachelard, the piece refers to the home not only as an architectural construction but also as a symbol of memory and history. Bravo places a metal rod in the corner creating a solid line that serves as a vanishing point for the composition of real and virtual lines that come out of it. The real lines are drawn on the walls, and the virtual ones appear as the artist draws on the video projected on the wall.

According to the artist, "one of the most important signs of the human being, of our existence, is to define the space where we live, where we are. When you, as an immigrant, decide to leave, you are completely rooted out, you take the roots, and you have to decide what to take and what to leave because you cannot take everything.

We bring the best of ourselves because the rest we have to leave. Everything that is not valuable, everything we are not, we leave behind. You bring your essence. In the new country, in order to belong again, we must integrate ourselves and connect. In a space like this, and with my work in general, I feel like a spider. Throwing lines to the corners and trying to hold on to them, so I do not fall. Those lines connect me with everything that surrounds me."²

In the following installation, *The House of Memory* (2018), the objects are particularly significant. A bench, a suitcase, and two tablecloths symbolize physically and metaphorically what she has decided to take, not only in terms of the objects but also in terms of memories and even illusions. Finally, Bravo shows the video *The Warm Nest* (2018) accompanied by the poem by Jean Caubere that has the same title. In the poem, the author talks about the old home, which on the screen is represented by a large nest being painted by the artist's hand. In the end, the artist is shown as a silhouette on one side of the scene, making it clear that each of the works presented in the exhibition is a testimony of her own history.

NOTES

1. Carola Bravo, Guided visit to the exhibition, Miami, January 2019.

2. Ibid.

FRANCINE BIRBRAGHER PHD

Rafael Domenech y Ernesto Oroza Fredric Snitzer Gallery

In Cuba, there are two popular expressions associated with "la mata" (the shrub): "Go to the shrub" and "That falls out of the shrub." The first refers to always going to the origin, the root of an issue and/or problem, while the second refers to something that obviously does not need explanation. Thus, "la mata" has become a sort of panacea or philosopher's stone in the popular Cuban heritage: the origin, core, and solution of a problem.

La Mata (The Perennial Sprout) is the title of the exhibition presented at Fred Snitzer Gallery, in Downtown Miami. La mata... is a collaborative installation by Ernesto Oroza (Havana, 1968, lives and works in Miami) and Rafael Domenech (Havana, 1989, lives and works in New York). What these two well-established artists have in common is a concern with the environment, expressed in their use and resignification of the constitutive and the disposable matter of urban culture. It is precisely this interest in the interstice between production, recycling, and creation that leads to this installation of immersive character.

Motivated by the productive processes and materials that shape the urban environment, Domenech and Oroza take industrial vinyl or PVC—one of the modern industry's most versatile and widely used substances—as their raw material, and Hialeah as their starting point. Florida's sixth-largest city and the urban enclave with the highest proportion of Cuban-American inhabitants in the United States (more than 70%), Hialeah is an industrial and service town, where the demands of the industry and the *savoir-faire* of a community proud of its traditions and roots merge.

Morphologically, Oroza's and Domenech's installation assumes the typology of the fruit tree, understood as the metaphorical beginning of Hialeah's industrial and commercial culture. Visitors move under a canopy of filtering light, made from a large number of colorful vinyl lamps—all unique—that hang from a tangle of cables/branches, like fruit ready to be picked. For those who know,

the complex, at times haphazard mess overhead is also a *clín d'oeil* (wink) to the electrical-cable snarls often improvised in Havana as a survival strategy.

Inside the warm, welcoming room, visitors must navigate between the various elements, hand-painted with geometric motifs. All the materials come from the local industry: vinyl, plastic, LED lights, electrical wires, and stainless-steel rods. Together they generate a kind of living, mutating grid with an ethical-aesthetic substratum.

La mata (The Perennial Sprout) must be situated within the vast tradition inaugurated by the Arts and Crafts movement in the late Nineteenth Century.

Born as a reaction to the first industrial style marked by the delirious and relaxed eclecticism, the Art and Craft proposes to rescue the artisan in the face of growing mechanization and mass production. At the same time, it advocates the coexistence between art and craftsmanship and the notion of aesthetic production that rejects the vacuous concept of beauty *per se*.

La mata looks like a metaphor and a tribute to the work by John Ruskin *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1851), where sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, obedience, and memory go hand in hand. Proposed, where the playful, the functional, and the ecological are inscribed within the flourishing contemporary neoartisanal trend.

JANET BATEY

NEW YORK / NY

Mariana Castillo Deball New Museum and kurimanzutto

The two younger generations of Mexican female artists and architects pose a diversified and exciting panorama. Not only they do not detach themselves from their origins, but they also reveal them in languages of a broad global spectrum, in terms of the plurality of the

Mariana Castillo Deball, *No Solid Form Can Contain You*, 2010. Fiberglass mold from an original Coticue, 98 7/8 x 59 1/4 x 59 1/4 in. (250 x 150 x 150 cm). View of the exhibition at the New Museum. Museo Amparo collection. Courtesy of Museo Amparo, Kurimanzutto, and the New Museum.



Carola Bravo, *Moving Identity Canon*, 2016. Video-installation. Variable dimensions



Rafael Domenech and Ernesto Oroza, *La Mata (The Perennial Sprout)*, 2019. Installation. Courtesy: Fredric Snitzer Gallery

