

**Adriana Herrera.**

## **ALUNA Art Foundation Presents Creation At Art Palm Beach**

The curated project is part of the FOCUS section dedicated to Latin American Art

Participant artists: Stella Bernal de Parra, Muu Blanco, Karim Borjas, Humberto Castro, Jorge Cavelier, Sonia Falcone, Fernanda Frangetto, Alberto Gómez, Marcela Marcuzzi, Lydia Rubio and Gladys Triana. The word "creation," "the act of creating or making something exist; created thing, that which is created," comes from the Latin *creatio*: "a creation, a production." In the Book of Genesis, it is equivalent to the formation of heaven and earth, and everything they contain. But its meaning also encompasses the invention of culture: everything that human beings, makers created "in the image and likeness" of God, make with their own art and skill. We are not just *Homo faber*: we are the species that creates by imaging, adding to what already exists something that was not there before, or, paradoxically, razing the world. The creation-destruction duality transcends cultures and religions, and ultimately refers to human responsibility. Creation gathers a set of works in different media by Latin American artists, reflecting on the way we get in touch with the created world that is our environment. In these works as a whole we may find, as in the days of Genesis, the appearance of light, water, skies, land, vegetation, moon, sun, stars, animals, male and female, but above all, the dilemmas of freedom in the face of natural and artistic creation in this land outside of Eden.

Sonia Falcone (Bolivia, 1965) painted *The Creation* (2009-2020) to evoke the Book of Genesis as a "mandala" or sacred circle. The light of the first day—which marked, through its separation from the night's darkness, the beginning of time—is represented by a white central circle around which new circles emerge, formed by triangles of tenuous colors. Their material intensity increases as the dimensions of the work expand, but each seventh day is marked by a circle of golden triangles. A second visual perception is provoked from the whole as optical intersections irradiate the astounding geometry of the world. The work seems to reverberate. But the irruption of chaos in the form of a scratch made by human hands happened during an itinerancy move. Falcone assumed the wound, restoring it and asserting that, strangely enough, it was a way to complete one of her rare works that did not contain, below the surface, an allusion to the collective pain brought about by the destruction of the common home that is the planet. *The Creation* originated a series of iconic worlds, like *Color Fields*, 2012, a geometric installation with colorful cones formed with mineral salts and aromatic spices celebrating geographic and cultural diversity around the world. The piece has traveled extensively after its display in the 55th Biennale di Venezia, and one version was acquired by the Nevada Museum of Art after being exhibited in *Unsettled*, 2017, organized by JoAnne Northrup, with Ed Ruscha as collaborating curator.

Fernanda Frangetto (Brazil, 1976) constructs the gesture of raising water with beeswax. Following the fluid motion of her own hands, she molds their curled marine shapes in pursuit of "the art of a tri-dimensional stroke." Sculpted in bronze, the waves sustain the living fluidity of this element whereupon the Spirit of God moved before anything else existed. In her sculptures, she gives different tonalities to the waves, through plating processes, alluding to the contrast between the life-giving ocean and the seas polluted by human madness that have caused an infinitude of organisms to succumb. Her raised waves are a language that closes the abyss that separates us from nature.

The earth appears in the work of artists that have kept in their paintings an unwavering relationship with the landscape. Jorge Cavelier (Colombia, 1953) believes that the landscape exists because there is an observer beholding it. In his circular forests, cut with laser on metal, the groves are infinite and the emptiness in their center locates the vision of an awakening: we are all invited to return to the experience of beauty evoked by John Keats in his famous poem: "Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing/ A flowery band to bind us to the earth." Each circular forest is formed by a double set of metallic groves suggesting the visual possibility of rotation or change. They possess neither obverse nor reverse as such, and to see the totality of each image the spectator must move around them. His paintings carry with them not only the vision of the natural world that dazzled him in his childhood, when he got up to see the countryside awakening, "as if it had just been created," but also the teachings of such masters as Turner, Monet, or Klimt, whose techniques allowed him to create, instead of geographically referential sceneries, "contemplative atmospheres." It is a landscape inseparable from the ontological territory of being and the self-reflective process of artistic creation.

The work of **Lydia Rubio** (Cuba, 1946), also a profound connoisseur of art history and techniques, is inseparable from the landscape, a "forbidden" genre, as she explicitly writes in a work, but deeply inscribed in conceptual exercises. Creation features a polyptych of six paintings featuring skies, waters, land, and vegetation. Each one is identified with a letter from the alphabet, in such a way that they can be displayed in different combinations, forming two Spanish words: "imagen" (image) or "enigma." The latter "is written the same way in many languages," she claims. In the diptych Series Savannah, # 1 and 2, 2014, fragmented panoramas are inscribed in a changing format. It is not only the circle-square sequence or vice-versa, disposed in an order opposite to the title (2-1), suggesting the possibility of changing the sequence and interrupting continuity, but also an inquiry into the relationships of the contained and subtracted that points back to the landscape as a territory of thinking.

From Stella Bernal de Parra (Colombia, 1933), one of the great pioneers of textile art in Latin America, Creation includes the masterly Eclipse Solar, 1980. The hanging piece, one of the first to incorporate copper "lines" to the wrap, represents in its double face day and night. It has been weaved in such a way that segments of very fine, frayed cloth emerge from the interior of the virgin wool, creating translucent sections. Besides the beauty of her structural design, Bernal de Parra manages to bestow a kinetic quality on the textile: depending on the spectator's position, the circular form, built by the copper warp interlaced with the wool, simulates either a full moon or the sun—if looked from one side or the other—for it is either darkened or enlightened. The work pays homage to humanity's arrival on the moon, but also evokes the sacred relationship with the cosmos of ancient pre-Columbian cultures.

In the installation, Moon Phases, 2017, Marcela Marcuzzi (Argentina, 1970) proposes a journey to the lunar landscape that requires a magnifying glass to appreciate the details of the unknown topography, which science once envisioned as the Lacus Somniorum (Lake of Dreams). She knows that the lake is actually a plain located in the northeast of the visible side of the Moon, but she also knows that landscapes are a history of sightings. Although her drawings on cotton paper are inspired by actual satellite images, she takes the liberty to insert fantastic images related to the imaginary moon that nurtured remote mythologies. Fragments of sand, delicate interventions with drawings, and gauzes and other wraps, Swarovski crystals, sand, and even sewn photographs, recreate an iconography that encompasses the real Moon as much as the artist's subjective poetics in a polyptych with eight boxes treasuring the lunar phases. Also circular are the organic forms conforming the complementary series Boundaries (inspired by

micro-universes). Marcuzzi plunges into the representation of cellular organisms, astonished by the biological mystery of life they represent as much as by the fact that they can mutate and destroy it. "It is an immersion —she states— into the liminal area that separates opposites: sanity from madness, life from death, creation from destruction." She intervenes its forms conjugating science and art while meditating on its parallelism with human frailty. The extremely delicate poetics built with transparent gauze, a ductile material related to wounds and healing, or with fragile threads piercing the surface when she sews or adheres fragments, is driven by a meditation on the corporeity that constitutes us. Her work is, of course, an inquiry on the ultimate questions. "I am interested in the visceral as much as in the revelation. By approaching the macro and the micro I speak of God and His creation," she points out.

On the other hand, in *Yellow Garden I* and *Yellow Garden II*, 2019, Humberto Castro (Cuba, 1957) paints the shading, red bodies of a man and a woman, alone and naked—one on each side of the diptych—in a garden that is not Eden but remind us of it. Or rather remit us to the lost paradise of Eastern and Western mythologies—in the Sumerian Gilgamesh, the fruit of the tree of life is stolen by the snake—like, for instance, in *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, 1928, by Thomas Cole. These new Adam and Eve by Humberto Castro have wings like angels, but are barely beginning to learn how to fly. The garden stretching on a vast yellow horizon is displayed without trails and the sprouts in the painting are intertwined with thorns. Not having found yet the secret of levity that would allow them to fly, they are surrounded by flowers, while in the feminine garden, where there is a dark bird which does not fly either, there are flowers as well as fruits as a remembrance and promise perhaps of an Eden of their own. The landscape in this new imaginative figuration has a double temporary condition: it inserts the archaic in the reflection of interiority in this land where nothing is as unknown as the human being.

A section of the curatorship is explicitly related to the representation of hands. In Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, God's stretched hand bestows the sacred beginning of life by touching the first man. But the hand of this newly created Adam is that of the artist himself, marked by the arthritis with which he fought while painting this immortal fresco. Drawn or painted countless times in art history, from rock art onwards, hands represent the power to create despite our being exposed to pain. They also refer to the healing or destruction that could be provoked by contact with the environment, or by touching the "tree of life," as Diego Rivera wrote in *Las manos del doctor Moore*, 1940.

Following a tradition dating back to Hieronymus Bosch, Tiziano and Caravaggio, among others, Karim Borjas (Venezuela, 1959) unties in his photographic installation the hands of *Ecce homo* (Christ presented to the crowd by Pilate), identifying them with those of the artist, stained with paint and adding a mythical, playful vital resource: an actual red thread. The piece, belonging to the Series *El lado oscuro del Eden* (*The Dark Side of Eden*) alludes to the human act of stretching this thread and choosing the bearing of either fate or an oeuvre. In a series of small-format photographs signaling her transition from painting to this medium, Gladys Triana (Cuba, 1934) portrayed her hands in the manner of a diary in planes referring to her environment. Though she inhabits the metropolis, she chose an image of greenery: the plants created before us. The world is already written, but she holds a white pencil to re-draw it. The trace of points left on the image of the natural world is a conscious statement that the landscape is a relational space in which we inscribe what we are. Also, visible and powerful are the hands of the indigenous musician portrayed on wood in *Sin título* (*Los sonidos del silencio*) by Alberto Gómez (Colombia, 1956). The eyes shut and the fingers playing an unseen instrument open our internal senses to the force of human creation. *Muu Blanco* (Venezuela, 1964) has been making a

gestural diary, a series of abstract micro-paintings on which he loosely draws with markers on photographic paper lines that are as delicate as they are vital. He installed that painted journey in sheets on the wall as an exercise of creative reaffirmation of the power of the soft and subtle in uncertain times. In our hands is the responsibility of imagining the next day of creation—after all, we are co-creators of the world we share.

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