

TERREMOTO

Una mirada mas allá de lo cristal

María Elena Ortiz en conversación con Hulda Guzmán

Curator María Elena Ortiz—co-editor of this issue—talks with artist Hulda Guzmán to point out different aspects of Surrealism that echo in her artistic practice. Together, they underline that the oniric and the uncertain can still cope with the hegemonic imaginary that blur the intimate.



Hulda Guzmán, *anne in her bath*, 2013. Acrylic on cedar plywood, 120 x 120 cm. Image courtesy of the artist

A Gaze beyond the Crystal

I began this conversation with the Dominican artist Hulda Guzmán in an attempt to satisfy my intellectual desires, aiming to contextualize her work in relation to a surrealist history of the Caribbean, a subject that fills me with inspiration. However, our conversation took us into more philosophical realms that revolve around human experience: moments, feelings, or energies that, despite being physically sensible, are not *naturally* perceptible to our eyes. Even though I still have much to research about the relationship between Suzanne Césaire, Lydia Cabrera, André Breton, and Hector Hypolite, among others, my conversation with Hulda reiterated the multiplicity of our lives, the very thing that surrealism proclaims—namely, the existence of human experiences that cannot be explained by logic or reason, aspects that permit new insights into the role of artists in terms of creating visual spaces for said experiences.

María Elena Ortiz: This issue of *Terremoto* is dedicated to images that eschew the voracity of the capitalist gaze. In the case of your work, which deals with dreams and fantasies, images act as spaces of knowledge that lead toward an exploration of the relationship between imagination, narrative, and the production of images. How do you interpret these dynamics?

Hulda Guzmán: I think that as a species we have forgotten that imagination is the basis of creation. Whether we are aware of it or not, “manifesting” derives from our imagination. Through it, we can create the best scenario for ourselves, and fear is the limitation of our imagination.

In regards to the production of images, imagination is often limited by hegemonic ideology. Within the current system of contemporary art, we are aware of this order—or at least we pretend to be—and artists are obliged to act in compliance with this concept. It makes us accountable for the art we create. I do wonder if art has the ability to help support a counter-ideology. How do you describe in words the unfathomable? In this sense, art is an excellent medium, and probably the only one aside from spiritual practices, that allows us to communicate and channel those things that are difficult to explain in words.

In contrast, I believe that the intellect is a processing system, delimited by Western constructions of space and time in relation to capitalism’s technology. Reason must recede so as to give way to the ultra-subconscious thought, or as I call it, ultra-conscious thought.

MEO: It is important and urgent to become a counterweight to the dominant social ideology through insurgent images that stand up to the imaginative control that corporate interests and the market articulate—those which favor the creation and circulation of certain images that seek to perpetuate the production and accumulation of capital. That said, when I look at your paintings, they remind me of dreams or prints from occultism, a practice that understands our existence in relation to the extra-sensorial and the multidimensional as a means of escaping said control.



Hulda Guzmán, *dynamic relaxation*, 2013. Acrílico sobre triplay de madera roble, 120 x 120 cm. Image courtesy of the artist

In Jungian psychology, the *shadow* refers to an unconscious aspect of personality, an aspect with which the conscious ego cannot identify itself. Because people tend to reject or remain ignorant of the less-desirable aspects of their personalities, this obscurity turns widely negative. “Everybody carries a shadow” said Carl Jung, “and the less it is embodied in the individual’s life, the blacker and denser it is.” It creates a veil of illusion between the ego and the real world, and it is here that we find ourselves stuck as a society. Particularly interesting to me in Jung’s book *The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature* is the idea that the shadow contains not just the destructive aspects of personality, but also its powerful abilities, potent and creative.

We must become aware of all these dark aspects in ourselves and honor them in order to integrate them into our lives. Failing to do so, the individual becomes weak and disparate. One can serve two internal purposes without dispelling energy or force. The shadow should become a part of our conscious personality. First, one should accept and take seriously the existence of the shadow. Then, one should consciously take note of its qualities and intentions. This process is only possible through an awareness of our moods, fantasies, and impulses. If we can find a way of negotiating with our shadow and allowing it to live within our conscious personality instead of suppressing it, we will gain not only a sense of confidence in our individuality, but also a deeper knowledge of what it is that we really want in life. The shadow is the door that leads to the Self.



Hulda Guzmán, *the haircut* from the series *be kind to your demons*, 2018. Acrylic gouache on wood veneer on cedar plywood, 34.5 x 63 cm. Image courtesy of the artist

MEO: In relation to the Caribbean, when you mention the shadows, I think of everything that has been systematically hidden beneath interpretations that reduce the plurality of our histories as an archipelago. Such is the case of the native Tainos, the last precolonial inhabitants of the Bahamas, the Greater Antilles, and the northern Lesser Antilles. What is happening in *fiesta en el batey* [Party in the Batey¹] (2012) in this respect?

HG: In *fiesta en el batey*, the viewer is invited to explore the image and linger on the details of the Taino narrative that has been dispersed throughout the panorama. This painting depicts a scene of an imagined reality in which the native Tainos were not driven to extinction. They are shown making *casabe*,² eating crabs, drinking, dancing, bathing, resting in hammocks, playing music—in a nutshell, everything that they did before the colonial invasion. The only difference is that I have situated them in the new millennium with all-terrain vehicles and immersed in modern architecture, organic and ambivalently conscious that they are searching for harmony between the human habitat and its natural environment.