

Opencast

Elizabet Cerviño

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The mining of minerals and stones has many negative connotations and is the source of much political and geographic upheaval. It is a reflection of the human impulse to exploit the land we roam; to place immediate economic and political interests above long-term environmental and communal planning. The global industrial construction complex means the creation of further obstacles that we have to simultaneously look to solve. But to those that find themselves in close proximity to their strange and imposing existence, the quarries and pits left behind by opencast mining become a force on themselves.

These manipulated surfaces begin to take on a different life form. The land becomes its own architectural structure that oscillates between the natural and superficial. An uncanny landscape of nature in dialogue with industrialisation. Mountains and rocky virgin lands become sharply cut benches reminiscent of ruins of mythical proportions with colours and shapes that develop their own language. They are storytellers of what lies beneath the soil and the source material for what we build and distantly call our environment, but they are also a direct link to who we are as humans.

In Opencast, Cuban artist Elizabet Cerviño applies this juxtaposition to create a body of work that does not look to exploit nature but rather commune with it. Through processes like oxidation; the use of virgin linens; rust, and copper; along with the overlaying and mixing of colours, she creates and provides a transcendental and poetic lens to human nature and our relationship to our environment. Through performance, she looks to break away from the traditionally essentialist nature/culture duality by appealing to a more holistic understanding of the world. This exhibition presents works that force us to confront preconceived notions and our understanding of darkness and light, and with this, Cerviño is not pessimistic but rather contemplative and caring in her interpretations through her minimalist approach.

While it may seem contradictory to see brightness in shadow, this juxtaposition lies at the centre of Elizabet Cerviño's practice. This body of work is representative of the Latin American art tradition and culture: An ability to find light in the dark, poetry in the gloom, richness in emptiness and create on the basis of a synergy produced by these seemingly distinct states of being. It geographically refers to a region of the world that is often exploited for its natural resources. It is no coincidence that the nature of her work directly relates to its source material. But it is also because of the origins of this material, by which she is able to demonstrate a universal and internal human conflict; the nature of our ambivalence.

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Elizabet Cerviño (b. 1986 in Manzanillo, Cuba) studied at the Real Academia Española, Rome, Italy (2017) and has received recognition by Brever House, The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (2017); Unlimited, Brooklyn, New York; Cuban Arts Foundation; Finalist 1st Edition of the International Cuban Art Award; Young Artist of the Year Category, Farber Foundation, Cuba-USA (2015); Nominated for the 2nd Edition of the Maretti Award, Cuba-Italy (2014); Henry Moore Foundation; among others. She's had solo exhibitions at Chasquidos, Pabellón Cuba, Havana (2019); Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy (2018); La Columnata, Callao, Perú (2017); Galleria Continua, Havana (2017); among others. Her work has been part of collective exhibitions at the National Museum of Fine Arts of Havana; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, USA; Cranbrook Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Detroit, Michigan, USA; Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales, Havana; Pabellón Cuba, Havana; Galleria Continua, Havana, Italy, France; Norwegian Embassy in Cuba; Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, New York, USA; Odeon Foundation, Bogotá, Colombia; Green Gallery, Dubai; South South, Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa; among others. Elizabet Cerviño lives and works between Havana, Cuba and Tampa, Florida.