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CAROLINA CAYCEDO: FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER

December 12, 2020 - March 21, 2021



This winter, the **Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago** presents the first museum survey exhibition by **Carolina Caycedo**, a London-born Colombian artist whose engaging work shifts our perspective on land and waterways, from seeing them as resources to be extracted, to viewing them as spiritual life forces that connect communities beyond borders. Inspired by Indigenous and feminist philosophies, Caycedo incorporates hands-on fieldwork with Indigenous and rural communities into her artistic practice. She is recognized for works that take on large-scale developmental projects, like the construction of dams and the privatization of water, and their effect on riverside communities whose livelihoods depend on artisanal, small-scale fishing and mining. *Carolina Caycedo: From the Bottom of the River* surveys the last ten years of the artist's work, highlighting her multidisciplinary artistic practice that ranges from drawing, photography, and sculpture, to performance art and video. The exhibition is organized by MCA Curator Carla Acevedo-Yates and is on view from December 12, 2020 to March 21, 2021.

Caycedo's work explores humanity's interaction with nature and its role in shaping environments and the communities that inhabit them. The exhibition prominently features her ongoing work *Be Dammed*, a project comprised of videos, performances, installations, and artist books that critically examines the conversion of

public bodies of water into privatized resources by transnational corporations. *Be Dammed* reveals the devastating effects of these infrastructure projects on local populations, particularly in Latin America. Another highlight is *Cosmotarrayas*, a colorful series of hanging net sculptures made from fishing nets, and other objects gathered from her fieldwork, that are portraits of the universe of the people and places affected by the construction of dams and mines.

Caycedo often works on the front-lines of social and environmental justice as a member of the Ríos Vivos Colombia Social Movement as well as the Los Angeles Tenants Union. She builds ongoing, caring relationships with people, places, and other living things, gathering materials and stories to make her work. She uses banners to disclose the social and political commitments of her practice, that serve as both artworks and calls to action. In the show is a selection of brightly colored banners inscribed with the artist's personal statements and appropriated slogans from banners used in protests, with bilingual titles such as *La Crisis es una Manera de Gobernar (The Crisis is a Matter of Government)* and *Trust Each Other*.

Feminist perspectives play a crucial role in Caycedo's life and practice. Several works pay tribute to women's networks of solidarity and resistance against patriarchal structures, such as *Mujeres en Mi (The Women in Me)*, that traces Caycedo's artistic genealogy through garments donated by women friends, colleagues, and family members. Another work, *Feminine Lineage of Environmental Struggle*, presents portraits of more than 150 female environmental defenders from around the world.

With bilingual labels for artworks and video transcriptions in Spanish and English, *Carolina Caycedo: From the Bottom of the River* also includes two video works *Spaniards Named her Magdalena, But Natives Call Her Yuma* and *Apariciones / Apparitions*. The latter work features Black, Brown, and queer dancers inhabiting the colonial spaces of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Inspired by the spiritual rituals associated with the Afro-Brazilian goddess Oshun, the dancers spin, vibrate, and embrace under *arrayas*, the artisanal fishing nets Caycedo uses to make hanging net sculptures. After shooting the performance, Caycedo transformed one of the nets into the sculpture *Ósun*, also on view, as an offering to the goddess.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Carolina Caycedo is a London-born Colombian artist, living in Los Angeles. She participates in movements of territorial resistance, solidarity economies, and housing as a human right. Her work contributes to the construction of environmental historical memory as a fundamental element for non-repetition of violence against human and non-human entities, and generates a debate about the future in relation to common goods, environmental justice, just energy transition, and cultural biodiversity. Caycedo has held residencies at the Huntington Library in California, DAAD artists-in-Berlin program, among others, and has received funding from Creative Capital, California Community Foundation, Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, Harpo Foundation, Art Matters, Colombian Culture Ministry, Arts Council UK, and Prince Claus Fund. Recent solo museum shows include *Cosmotarrayas* at the ICA Boston, *Care Report* at Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, Wanaawna and *Rio Hondo and Other Spirits* at Orange County Museum of Art. Her work has been included in Art Basel, 45 Salón Nacional de Artistas Colombia, and the Chicago Architecture Biennial.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition, with an essay by exhibition curator Carla Acevedo-Yates regarding the themes and inspirations behind Caycedo's work. It also features essays by Pilar Tompkins Rivas and Wayuu filmmaker David Hernández Palmar.

AUDIO EXPERIENCE

The exhibition features an audio recording of the artist speaking about the movements, moments, and ideas that inspire her practice, including a deeper look into the work that the exhibition is named after, *From the Bottom of the River*. The audio experience is available online and is recorded by Caycedo in both English and Spanish.

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Image credit: Carolina Caycedo, *Still from Apariciones / Apparitions*, 2018. With: Marina Magalhaes (Choreography), Isis Avalos, Samad Guerra, Celeste Tavares, Bianca Medina, Jose Aviles, and Natali Miciche. Commissioned by The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, and the Vincent Price Art Museum. Courtesy of the artist.

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies. Museum capital improvements are supported by a Public Museum Capital Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District. The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue, one block east of Michigan Avenue. The museum and sculpture garden are open on Tuesday and Friday from 10 am to 9 pm, and Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm. The museum is closed on Mondays. Tuesdays are Community Free Days with free admission for Illinois residents. The museum has a suggested general admission of \$15 for adults and \$8 for seniors. Admission is free for all youth 18 and under, members of the military and veterans, and MCA members. Information about MCA exhibitions, programs, and special events is available on the MCA website at mchicago.org or by phone at 312.280.2660.