

Artist Interviews

Will There Come Soft Rains? with Carolina Caycedo

1. What does the idea of a non-human world mean to you? Do you see it as an inspiring artistic proposition or as a real possibility for the near future?

It's a world where we understand that processes of representation and of production of knowledge are not exclusively human. A non/human world is a pluriverse where many worlds are possible, instead of a Universe where everything is determined by the white male colonizer human experience. In many places of Latin America the post human evidences itself today, the fact that the earth is a subject with rights as determined in the constitutions of Bolivia or Ecuador, or that in Colombia the Atrato River has also gained legal rights, are more institutional manifestations. But if you look at the everyday of indigenous and rural communities in the Andean regions, and the Amazon Basin, amongst others, you will find post human worlds, where water, rocks, stones, emeralds, fish, corn and other non/human spirits are considered social active agents in the everyday socio-politics of the community. The Colombian sociologist Arturo Escobar calls this 'Pensamiento de la Tierra' (Thought of the Earth), it manifests through a vast array of popular movements across the continent that are based on their unique and constitutive relation to localized nature and to their territories. For these communities, the rivers, the mountains, even the forest are like family, and they take on active roles in the collective efforts of territorial resistance against extractivist industries. For example, a river can overflow to halt the construction of a dam, or the ground can tremble to complicate a mine operation. So actually I think that there are non-human worlds happening today, they have been happening for millennia, but colonial and extractivist structures have made a great deal to erase them.

2. The exhibition is based on a narrative that defines a specific context for the artists and visitors as well as for the additional education program. What implications do you think could come up by exhibiting your work in this setting? Do you think it could generate new readings of your work?

The exhibition proposes a futuristic perspective on my work, which excites me. My work focuses on certain case studies that are unfolding as I write, so even for me, to allow myself to take a step forward and look back to what we call the present, opens a space to imagine aspects of the work and about the specific scenario I am looking at, that I wouldn't been able to see if I didn't take that leap into the future.

3. What role does social, ecological and economical sustainability play in your artistic practice?

I am weary of the word sustainability. Right now its in full furor, even in the cultural arena artists and institutions talk about developing 'sustainable' practices. But it is a concept coopted by green washed markets to hold in place, and make us feel better about predatory and destructive patterns of desire, production and consumption. I prefer the word sustenance, I think my practice has to do more with nourishment and support.

4. On which level do you think could art contribute to social and ecological changes?

Artists have the ability of challenging coopted concepts and language such as sustainability, progress, development, and growth. We can become strong allies of people in resistance, bringing into grassroots movements our expertise and skills in constructing and deconstructing images; engaging in visual activism by uprooting oppressive images of nature and landscape, and putting emphasis in power relations that have historically mediated the relation society/nature.

5. During the last decade the liaison between art and science has been a topic frequently discussed. In this context art was often considered to be a successful tool for the production of alternative forms of knowledge. How do you evaluate this idea?

I think there is a lot of potential in cross disciplinary and intersectional practices, it's actually the matrix of critical thought. We

can definitely work together towards a new paradigm about human being, life, society, culture, and nature. However, I am not interested in apolitical, merely scientific studies or approaches to environmental issues, as well as I am not interested in producing scientific art. I mean there is a lot of tension between scientific innovation and social equality. As an artist I align myself more with the science of the people, or accumulated knowledge, that stems out of a profound connection and relationship with one's ecosystem, and that is transmitted thru generations. In that sense I am closer to a more Latin American genealogy of political ecology, where intellectual mingling create lively movements that struggle against environmental injustices, and work towards a more diversely robust construction and perception of knowledge.

6. What is one of your favorite YouTube videos that deals with a certain aspect of the exhibition (e.g. the non-human scenario, environmental factors or sustainability)?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXz4XPuB_BM

I love Abuela Grillo (Grandmother Grasshopper) a simple and beautiful animation about water privatization and the power of collective organizing.