

Daniela Ortiz

The Rebellion of the Roots

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àngels barcelona

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Daniela Ortiz

Hechizos sobre el presente

Miguel López, december 2022

In recent years, Daniela's Ortiz works have incorporated pedagogical models and languages, such as children's books and puppet shows, which allow her to show her respect and gratitude to the knowledge that emanates from the community, plants, territory, and spiritual beings. This exhibition brings together a group of recent works that appeal to the affective dimension of oral memory and to the kind of listening skills that are not purely rational but physical.

Her relocation to Cusco –the place where she grew up– in 2020 strengthened her bond with the warmth of manual labor. After being away from Peru for more than a decade, the artist wanted to reconnect with non-Western forms of artistic representation – popular, peasant and indigenous aesthetics. Her series **La Rebelión de las Raíces** (*The Rebellion of the Roots*) is heir to the religious tradition of painted ex-votos: metal or wooden plates where an image and a text are captured to fulfill a vow. Condensed into three or four vignettes, her series connect multiple times and geographies.

In her ex-voto paintings, the artist not only imagines forms of justice in the face of a history of extraction, slavery, and confiscation of property by the West; her paintings are also a form of exchange between the earthly and the sacred. Her pleas have a propitiatory character, as if she were speaking to higher forces capable of changing life's course. This ritual dimension even appears in the musical rhythm of her texts in the paintings. The plants –protagonists of her stories– provide an idea of healing that is not limited to the liberal vision of curing the individual body, but calls for the urgency of restoring a fractured ecological and social balance.

Another of her works on display is **The Weeping Woods and the Okapi Resistance**, a puppet show commissioned by the Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels. Intended to be presented for an audience mainly composed of children, the play stars an okapi – a mammal that lives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – and other animals from seven monuments in Brussels. The story connects episodes ranging from the evangelization in Abya Yala to the invasion in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to expose the condescension and authoritarianism of white colonialism masked in false policies of humanitarian protection, philanthropy and solidarity. It is quite revealing that this theatrical piece was presented in front of a monument that recounts Belgian colonialism in Congo. In contrast to the patriarchal grandiloquence of this enormous sculpture, her delicate puppets offer a symbolic redress through play and tenderness.

The craftsmanship and vibrant colors of its pieces are profoundly seductive: they remind us of the magical and political qualities of beauty. Her paintings underline the revolutionary dimension of the roots, leaves, larvae and fruits to overthrow the representatives of colonial power. Her puppet show expresses the power of an alliance between animals, spirits and human forces capable of opening new paths of liberation. Daniela Ortiz's works not only open new doors to enter history, they also cast spells on the present.

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BIO | Daniela Ortiz (Cusco, 1985). Through her work, Daniela aims to generate visual narratives where the concepts of nationality, racialization, social class and gender are critically understood in order to analyze colonial, capitalist and patriarchal power. Her recent projects and research address the European migration control system, its link to colonialism and the legal mechanisms created by European institutions in order to exercise violence against migrant and racialized populations. She has also developed several projects addressing the Peruvian upper class and its exploitative relationship with its domestic workers. Recently her artistic work has refocused on the visual and hand-made by making works in ceramics, collage, drawing and formats such as children's books, with the intention of moving away from the Eurocentric conceptual aesthetic. In addition to her artistic work she is the mother of two *wawas*, one who is four years old and the other just a few months old, she gives talks, workshops, and participates in various debates and campaigns against the European migration control system and institutional racism.