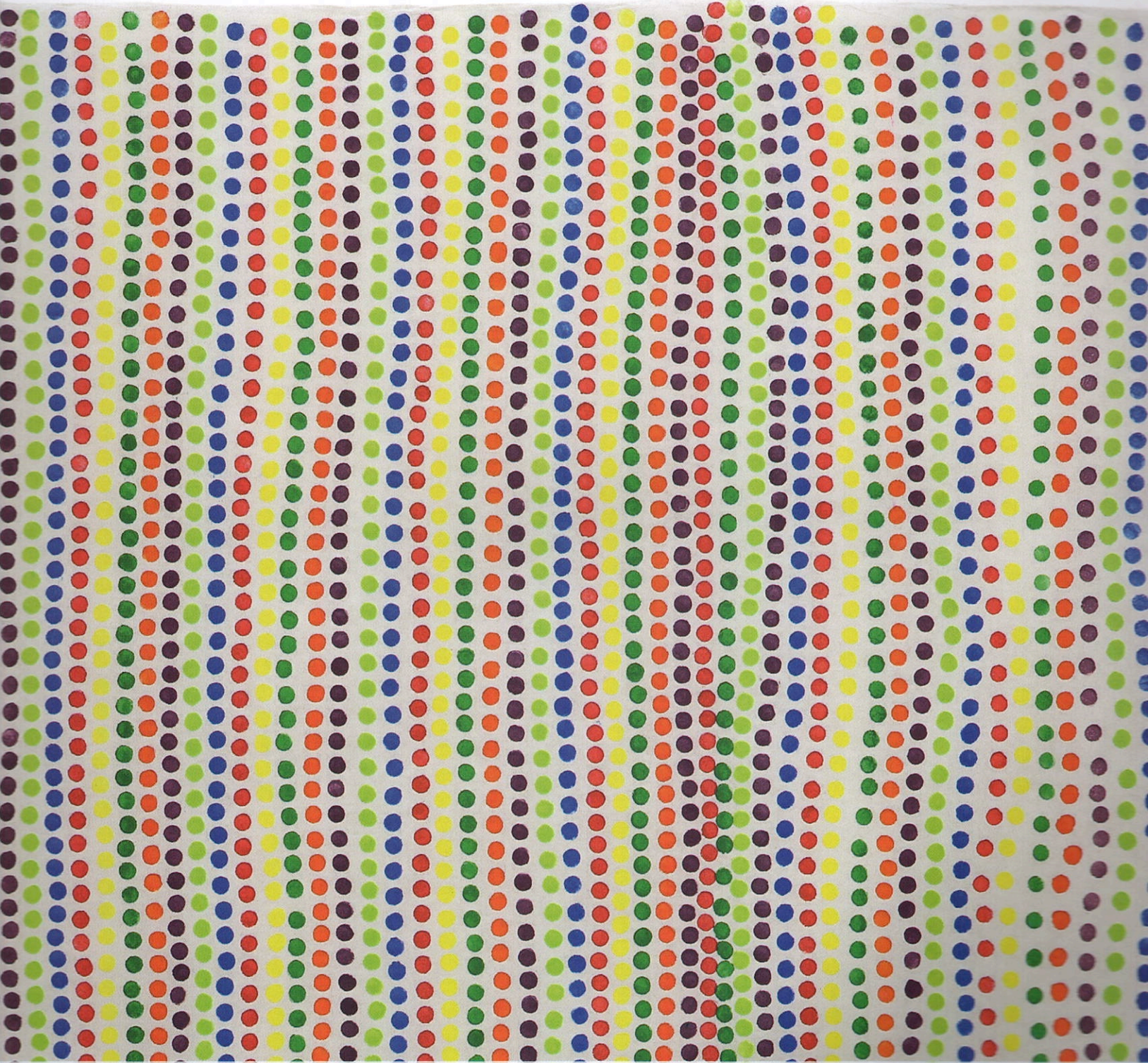
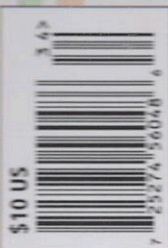


ArtNexus



Heroanawë Hakihiwë

omages to Soto and Cruz-Diez | Gonzalo Fuenmayor | Daniel Canogar
agali Lara | Isabel Aninat | Metaphor in the Art of Metamodernity
ão Paulo and Paiz Art Biennials | Doris Salcedo | Francis Alÿs | Tomás Saraceno
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very large, up to 270 x 240 cm in the case of *Time* (2023). Here, topography imagines time as a weaving, as a knot that overflows the boundaries of the painting or those of the Earth. Two semicircular orange shapes mirror one another and contract in the upper section of the painting, existing over and behind blue fragments that are like segments of water, of grass, or of a hill that does not end at the far right or left edge of the canvas. But this voluminous knot that dislodges itself from the two-dimensionality of the painting is also covered in the artificiality of neon colors. The time of the Anthropocene follows a linearity of destruction, but the time of that water, that grass, and that hill resists in a knot that hangs on tightly, refusing to let itself disappear.

In other examples in smaller formats, such as *Montaña de agua* (*Water Mountain*) (198,1 x 181,9 cm), also from 2023, Herrero presents us with a shape that brings to mind *Pan de Azúcar*, his painting of Brazil's iconic topography from more than decade ago. Yes, Herrero's archive has to do not only with what he sees and remembers, or with memories of his travels, his experiences and his knowledge of landscapes, but also with his own creations, of better yet, with the shapes that fill his imaginative repertoire. In this case, the mountain, as the title informs us, is no longer a granite and quartz monolith, but water. Water solidifies, it dries out perhaps, in a critique of centuries of capitalism and the accelerated the pace of the destruction it wreaks today on the environment, on the water with its living being, on life itself. At the same time, by titling his work first in Spanish and then, in parenthesis, in English, Herrero situates his identity in Hispanic Latin America, along with the origin of his memories and, in consequence, of his mutating topologies. We can conclude that Herrero critiques the Anthropocene catastrophe from Costa Rica in relationship with the world, and vice versa, all the while imagining a future of greater ecological justice, bringing together content and form in his painting, and joining eco-critique with aesthetics.

FLORENCIA SAN MARTÍN

Priscilla Monge

Hutchinson Modern & Contemporary

In *The Archived Body*, Priscilla Monge's first solo exhibition in New York, the artist presents recent works accompanied by a selection of early pieces that allow us to see how, throughout her career, there has been a continuity in her "exploration of the indescribable." The title includes two concepts that have been fundamental in her conceptual work: the body and the archive. The body as a possessed, violated, or forgotten organism, and the archive not only as a container of information but as a control and recognition tool. The show's name also illustrates a measured use of the word and its weight in her work.

The exhibition begins with an iconic photograph from the 1990s, *Trousers (Bloody Day Series)* (1997), depicting pants made from sanitary napkins stained with menstrual blood on a red background. According to Monge, "From 1994 to 1996, I designed and made pants with my mother with sanitary napkins in different shapes and models. They were always exhibited as objects, but in 1997, I did a performance in which I walked through the streets of the city of San José wearing one of these pants that progressively absorbed my own menstrual blood. A garment generally used to protect or hide completely changed its function just by altering the material. It no longer

served to hide or protect. It spoke of what is not spoken, of centuries of taboos associated with menstruation, with dirty or impure women who themselves became taboo. I was dealing with upbringing and my own bodily boundaries."¹

Priscilla Monge began working in the early 1990s when Central America was just emerging from years of war and violence. This affected her work significantly. She always felt uncomfortable with the "neutral" position of her native Costa Rica in the face of conflicts that took place in neighboring countries. During the pandemic, she took up this topic again and began investigating the region's armed conflicts: "I used the internet to investigate. I found testimonials from survivors testifying before Truth Commissions, news from the time, and a series of terrifying images that the algorithm suggested."²

Based on this research, she produced the series *Los malos paisajes* (*Bad Landscapes*, 2021), a hundred Polaroids scratched with graphite in which the images are completely covered. She only reveals texts belonging to testimonies of survivors of the massacres that serve as captions for the photos. The artist questions, as Susan Sontag does in her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, who has the right to see these images of pain? Maybe that person can do something to alleviate what it's seen. Rereading Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* reminded her that photographs are inextricably linked to death, a flat death. During the pandemic, she lost three of his pets. By burying them in her garden, it also became a cemetery, reaffirming the landscape's complexity and nature's capacity to hide or cover.

The song *Strange Fruit*, sung by Billie Holiday in 1939 and based on a poem written by Lewis Allan (n. Abel Meerpol) criticizing the lynching of an African American man, inspired her to create the ceramic series *Strange Fruit* (2023), works that look like notebook pages on which he writes verses and makes drawings alluding to

Priscilla Monge. *Cállese y cante / Shut Up and Sing*, 1997-98. Metal, wood, boxing helmet, and music box. 10 x 7⁶³/₆₄ in. (25.4 x 20.3 cm). Courtesy: Hutchinson Modern & Contemporary



the lyrics of the composition. These are on display in the gallery in contrast to another early work, *Cállese y cante* (*Shut Up and Sing*, 1997-98), made with a black leather boxing helmet mounted on metal and wood and a music box that is activated by a hand crank placed on the hole that corresponds to the mouth. The piece, which was part of the installation presented at the Sixth Havana Biennial (1997), refers to the hidden identity of the boxer whose face is protected by the mask and to the expression “cantar” (to sing), used in Latin America when someone who is questioned by the police and who want a confession. In this context, the act of singing becomes a vehicle for physical violence and psychological abuse. It should be noted that the installation was conceived to be exhibited in La Cabaña. In this place, during the first days of the Cuban Revolution, prosecutions and executions of supporters of the overthrown regime were committed and later converted into a prison. In Havana and the exhibition in New York, the viewer had the opportunity to activate the music box and, when listening to the melody, metaphorically hear the voice of an anonymous being.

Physical violence and psychological abuse are also present in the *Pensum Series* (1999), a series of ten school blackboards written with white chalk with phrases such as “I must not bleed,” “I must not sleep,” “I must not hide in the closet,” and “I must not lose my sanity.” The blackboards are a repetitive element in Monge’s work, as are the school desks represented in the drawings entitled *School Desk Drawings* (2021-2022), which can be associated with an authoritarian educational system and “with a linear language that is very different from art or dreams, which are freer. In the artwork, an activity such as admonishment ceases to be a school punishment to symbolize a penance that involves women or denounces child abuse, among others.”³ Blackboards, desks, and notebook sheets become denunciation tools by serving as support for texts such as “I shouldn’t let dad touch me” [*Pizarra* (Blackboard), 1999] or “Representing death is a failure” (*Representing Death is a Failure*, 2021-2022).

Death and the images that document it are also latent in *The Archived Body* (2022-23), prints on Polaroid photographic paper intervened with oil in different shades of red. “These paintings enter another dimension of violence. Here, I speak of fractured or wounded bodies in literature.”⁴ Words written by hand as a photo caption refer not only to war conflicts but also to wounds in general, to illness in literature, and to the female characters that inhabit it.

The texts, in some cases crudely descriptive and in other critical and even sarcastic, play a fundamental role in her work, as can be seen

in two pieces engraved in marble as epitaphs entitled *Art is Haunted* (2022) and *Poetic Justice* (2022). The latter raises the possibility of a deserved retribution for so much suffering.

Faced with a violent and heartbreaking reality, Priscilla Monge proposes the healing option in the video titled *Superficies curativas/Healing Surfaces* (2022). If, according to psychoanalysis, speaking allows healing to the extent that the artist makes a public statement through art, that healing extends to other people. The small storytelling in the video enables her to go beyond her own experience and express the pain of others. It is up to the viewer to assume an attitude of empathy or to remain “neutral” or oblivious to the pain of others.

NOTES

1. Priscilla Monge, interview with the author, 2023.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

FRANCINE BIRBRAGHER-ROZENCWAIG, PHD

Ariamna Contino & Alex Hernández-Dueñas

Nunu Fine Art

Nunu Fine Art, established in Taipei since 2014, opened its new New York location in April of 2023; the inaugural exhibition was *Reverse*, by the Cuban artists Ariamna Contino and Alex Hernández-Dueñas. The show featured multimedia works resulting from a cross-sectional investigation that combines ethnographic tools, sociology, and the statistics-informed production of scientific data. These explorations and intersections make reference to the ideas behind one branch of Concrete art in Argentina, the “Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención”, as published in the *Manifiesto Invencionista* (Inventionist Manifesto) of 1946: “The artistic era of representational fictions comes to an end. Man becomes more and more insensitive to illusory images. This is to say, he progresses in his integration into the world. The old phantasmagorias no longer satisfy the new man’s aesthetic desires, shaped by a reality that demands his total, unreserved presence.”

In that sense, the exhibition at Nunu Gallery can be conceptualized as “total cartography” where the landscape is read through the lens of a critical interest on the use of scientific information in order to introduce hard data into it. Hernández and Contino use those sources

Ariamna Contino & Alex Hernández-Dueñas. *Laboratory documentation*, 2023. P 1-7. Pigment ink print and hand cut paper on hahnemühle paper. 11³/₄ × 15³/₄ in. (29.8 × 40 cm). Courtesy of the artists and Nunu Fine Art

