Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Lucita Hurtado: I LIVE I DIE I WILL BE REBORN at LACMA, to May 3, 2020

Allon Schoener · Wednesday, February 26th, 2020



Lucita Hurtado with Allon Schoener, LACMA, February 15, 2020

Allon Schoener with Lucita Hurtado, February 13, 2020

Art criticism is supposed to be impersonal. However, I am going to violate the rules!

Still vigorous, charming, and creative, Lucita Hurtado is 100 years old. Not to detract from her longevity, it is worth noting that a new paradigm is emerging of people in their nineties and beyond who continue to be as creative as they had been at an earlier age. Beat icon, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, published a new novel on his 100th birthday. Centenarians are the nation's fastest-growing age segment. The number of 100-year-olds is expected to hit six million by 2050.

I first met Lucita Hurtado in San Francisco around 1950. I was a curatorial assistant at the San Francisco Museum of Art (Now SFMOMA). Lucita was the wife of Wolfgang Paalen, an Austrian artist and leading member of the DYNATON group, four artists based in San Francisco who attempted to develop a new philosophical approach to art. Subsequently, she divorced Paalen and married Lee Mulican, another member of the DYNATON group and moved to Santa Monica. Their son, Matt, is an LA based artist.



In the 1950s, Lucita was one of the most beautiful and exotic women whom I had ever seen. Man Ray's portrait of her testifies to my evaluation. She was Venezuelan and manifested the appearance of an indigenous princess. Although we knew each other socially, and I knew that she was an artist in her own right, in my recollection, her work was treated inconsequentially. At that time, there were a few, not many, women artists. The art scene in the 1950's was a man's world.

Throughout her career, she had been associated with many artists of major stature, among them Rufino Tamayo, Isamu Nogouchi and Marcel Duchamp. Tamayo was the first artist whom she met and later became her mentor. Nogouchi introduced her to Wolfgang Paalen whom she later married. Marcel Duchamp came to a friend's house in New York where Lucita was staying. She came to meet him in bare feet and he began to massage her feet!

From Los Angeles, the exhibition will go to the Museo Tamayo in Mexico City. The Director and Deputy Director of the Tamayo Museum see some parallels between Tamayo and Hurtado in their shared interest in cosmological phenomena.

The LACMA exhibition originated at the Serpentine Galleries in London and was brought here in

tact. The excellent exhibition catalogue, *I Live I Die I Will Be Reborn* was prepared by the Serpentine Galleries and reveals what a fabulously interesting and eventful life that Hurtado lived. She has always been interested in the natural environment saying that she considers herself to be related to trees. *W*hen I entered the third floor gallery of Renzo Piano's Broad Exhibition Building at LACMA, I was blown away by the beauty and versatility of her work. What I found was a seventy year retrospective of a prodigious imagination which created mostly abstract non-figurative images of incredible variety and vitality

If one's life can be considered to be a work of art, Lucita Hurtado has achieved that objective.

Untitled, 1970

Mascara, 1975

Untitled, 1951

This entry was posted on Wednesday, February 26th, 2020 at 12:16 pm and is filed under Visual Art
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.