

City SALTS: Box (see exhibition map)

Opening Saturday, 4 November 2024, 6 PM
Exhibition until 28 February 2025
City SALTS, Hauptstrasse 12, 4127 Birsfelden/Basel



OFRENDAS – Estefanía García Pineda and Edinson Quiñones Falla

Curated by Mario Kreuzberg

Our guest curator duo Mario Kreuzberg (Manuela Morales Délano und Charles Benjamin) presents their last exhibition for SALTS together with Colombian artists Estefanía García Pineda (b. 1991) and Edinson Quiñones Falla (b. 1982) who are part of the collective Mingas de Pensamiento Prácticas De-coloniales. For Quiñones, Art is synonymous with healing, his research focuses on making visible what seems invisible and legal what is illegal. His artistic practice includes personal, collective, family, and territorial healing processes. Pineda is an artist and curator from Montelíbano. She has accompanied social processes linked to memory, environment, activity mining, and the development of territorial processes; her work has been focused on symbolic relief and aesthetic bets that become identity constructions, through creative processes and art.

*Das Kurator:innenduo Mario Kreuzberg (Manuela Morales Délano und Charles Benjamin) präsentiert seine letzte Ausstellung für SALTS, zusammen mit den kolumbianischen Künstler:innen Estefanía García Pineda (*1991) und Edinson Quiñones Falla (*1982), beide Teil des Kollektivs Mingas de Pensamiento Prácticas De-coloniales. Für Quiñones ist Kunst gleichbedeutend mit Heilung; sein künstlerisches Schaffen fokussiert sich darauf, das Unsichtbare sichtbar und das Illegale legal zu machen. Seine künstlerische Praxis umfasst Heilungsprozesse auf persönlicher, kollektiver, familiärer und territorialer Ebene. Pineda ist Künstlerin und Kuratorin aus Montelíbano. Sie begleitet soziale Prozesse, die sich mit Erinnerung, Umwelt, Bergbauaktivitäten und territorialen Entwicklungen beschäftigen. Ihr Werk konzentriert sich auf symbolische Aufarbeitung und ästhetische Ansätze, die sich in Identitätskonstruktionen verwandeln – durch kreative Prozesse und Kunst.*

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The medicine that inhabits memory and commitment to life
A text by Edinson Quiñones Falla

Talking to a grandmother around a fire in the mountains of Greater Cauca, she told me three things that for a long time were silenced in me. Little by little, in this journey towards the indigenous navel that we are and I am, her lessons have become clearer. The first of them was that memory lives in what we do. We are fast passengers in the time of the territory, but the actions that have given us the line of how one lives have filtered into the practices that grandmothers and grandfathers still carry out: first students of Mother Kiwe. The second lesson is that there will always be those who deny the territory, who say that it is the past, which stops us in the unbridled progress that guides Western culture. Finally, we return to the earth, to memory, that in the practices reflects territory; it sows and is reborn. Its memory dwells in what we breathe and eat, in what we do to take care of life and the territory. This is how the coca's journey begins in this writing.

In my childhood in the town of Bolívar, Cauca, my father gave me spinning tops, baleros, and yoyos made of wood. For a long time, I received them and played with them without knowing their origin. Then, accompanying my dad, I learned that they were the parts of the coca leaf trunks that remained after the eradication carried out by the army and the state. Their methodology was simply to cut the stem; my father collected them, and from there, he made my toys. Of course, he was linked to the work of the popular social base around drug trafficking. He was one of the peasants who worked on large farms as a coca leaf raspachin, or as they were called in their time, bolsiverdes.

That memory was reactivated in 2012, already in adulthood. We traveled with the family to Bolívar, where we regularly visited my dad's relatives and friends from that town. A huge coca bush always caught my attention. I must add that I have always had a special affinity for bushes; my attention is focused on calculating their age, the possible care of the plants, and the feelings between plants and women, especially seniors. I visited a particular one, or rather one bush, but not up close; I knew it belonged to a neighbor in Bolívar. She had the largest coca plant I had ever seen, but I never had enough impulse to talk to her about the plant. On this last trip, I passed by that place again, and the tree had been cut down. It was then that I wanted to ask the lady why she had done it, but at her house, I found her grandchildren, who told me that their grandmother had died and that they were the ones who had decided to cut down that huge Mama Coca. My impulse, marked by the silent memories of the Mayora, combined with sadness and a bit of anger at the cut and for not having memories of the words of her original custody, was enough to ask them for the cut plant as a gift. Among my ideas, I wanted it to be a piece that preserved as much of the central stem as possible, which originally measures 1.20 meters with a circumference of 15 or 17 cm, along with the bark.

What I felt most was that I could meet that condition with a bat of official American measures, a unique piece of 1 meter long and 10 cm in diameter. It was the idea in a single piece that respected the original dimensions—a toy like those of my childhood. What was a coca leaf tree became the memory of the Mayora, the pride of the new generations in the face of nature and their efforts to preserve it, and now she gave it to my father. In its realization, I very judiciously collected the sawdust and the bark, searching for ideas in my heart to shape them in the future, but those are topics to share in another conversation. The wood, because it was still fresh and green, had cracked. That crack, like a wound healed with mambe, which is an Amazonian medicine that has accompanied me, consists of a healing word, ground coca leaf, and yarumo ash. My vision was that if the trunk had been transformed into a bat, it would continue to have the leaf in its body.

Time is also leaving its traces; the original white it had has turned into a pink tint. The piece brings together, on the one hand, memory, play, farewell, transfiguration, and medicine. But in another context, in my dwelling in the marginality of the White City, a bat, although it refers to a sport, is also seen as a weapon in popular neighborhoods. A plant that provides the leaf that is food and medicine can also, in another context, be a powerful object that can take life. In my eyes, held by two representations of the original plant, it is evidence. There is nostalgia for its new journey, but it serves as the pillar for the materialization of a dream. In the NASA tradition, dreams are advice to be realized. During the construction of the Popayork artistic residence, I dreamed that we had to be accompanied by a house of thought. I dreamed of sitting in front of a fire in the middle of three huge stones, and there a maloka protected us. I always wanted to do it, but whoever understands a little about the indigenous way and some of their infinite forms of spirituality will understand that destiny happens when it happens; everything has its time and its way.

Then the bat and the interest of the Bank of the Republic arrived to define the mode, its time, and its way. Of course, the nostalgia for its journey reaches all the cells of my body, and that letting go was also harmonized by the elders who accompany me. Taita Lorenzo Tunubalá, a traditional doctor from Misak, lends his energy and spirit for that ceremony. I told him everything that happened, also that on the day of the conversation and negotiation with the representatives of the art collection of the Bank of the Republic, it rained in Popayork in an unusual way for that time of year. Immediately after the conversation ended, sowing the transformation of the bat into the idea of Maloka, a sun appeared after the storm, which is not normal. It was a sign of approval from the territory, but also indicated that the piece should not be delivered without further ado; a farewell ceremony had to be held to open it and give it a good way. In those who can see it, not only should they see a bat, but in their sensitive experience, they should feel in their hearts that it is medicine. The bat will walk, but its memory sustains the commitment. It will be transfigured again into a house of thought that, according to the guidance of the greatest spiritual leaders of the MINGA collective, will be inhabited by tulpas (stones) from the three tulpas (mountains) of the great Cauca: the Sotará Volcano, grandfather of the Yanakuna people; the Puracé Volcano, grandfather of the Misak people; and my people, the Nevado del Ruiz, ancestor of the Nasa people. The law of origin of the Nasa Fire will be sown, the sowing of the grandfather fire that will continue to guide the steps of Edinson Quiñones, of the Minga Decolonial Practices Collective, of the Popayork Residence, and the territorial, social, cultural fabric that we are: the Gran Cauca and its mountains.