

2013) takes the form of a construction beam, but is made of books. On one side, the titles are visible: *The History of Corruption in Peru*, *Peruvian Drug Legislation*, *Justice of the Peace in Peru*, *A Proposal for the Reform of the Peruvian State*, *Extractivisms*, and *Economic Geography of Peru*, among other volumes dealing with the country's issues. On the other side, the books have been carved, and due to the differences between their covers and the shades of the pages, a sort of stratigraphy reminiscent of a geological profile has been created. Here, construction (the beam), discourses on local issues (the books), extractivism (the carving process), and geography (the cliff-like shape that emerges) converge.

Beyond identifying the thematic concerns that run through Ishmael Randall-Weeks' work and correspond to his life's trajectory, the exhibition's journey throughout two decades of work allowed us to recognize the artist's great formal and technical sophistication, which in turn enable him to critically articulate different places, cultures, and even times.

MAX HERNÁNDEZ CALVO

LISBON / PORTUGAL

Ilê Sartuzi

Pedro Cera

Let us start the review of *Vaudeville*, Ilê Sartuzi's first solo show in Portugal and his debut in Lisbon and soon to be Madrid-based Galeria Pedro Cera with the acknowledgment of the importance curtains

Ilê Sartuzi. *Skeleton Dance*, 2023. 3D printed resin, strings, wood, arduino, transducer speaker, servo motors, and curtain. Variable dimensions. Skeleton $19 \frac{3}{32} \times 9 \frac{1}{16} \times 7 \frac{3}{32}$ in. (48.5 x 23 x 18 cm). Photo: Bruno Lopes. Courtesy: Pedro Cera, Lisbon and Madrid



have gained over the years in contemporary art. Curtains have the uncanny ability to be both a tool and a rhetorical device: they hide and they reveal, they set the tone and create a rhythm, they conjure the magic of the stage and aliveness, as well as that of moving image from days long gone, when projected light was a technological marvel. They elicit a shared space, a sense of communal viewing and belonging. They trace a border between fact and fiction, or they try to, if that binary still holds any value today. They partition a space, allow for privacy, and set the imagination off. No wonder artists have been drawn to the endless possibilities that a hanging piece of fabric, velvet preferably, allows. It comes as no surprise then, that a show titled *Vaudeville*, is ripe with as many iterations of the velvet curtain as one can imagine.

But let's make a quick intermission in our reasoning and think about *Vaudeville*, the theatrical genre of variety entertainment, not the exhibition being reviewed, for a second: it developed in 19th century France and was originally a comedy without psychological or moral intentions, based on a comical situation - a dramatic composition or light poetry, interspersed with songs or ballets. It wasn't meant to make you think. Instead, it provided an escape from daily life, from the harshness of Industrial era Europe. It was meant to make you laugh. Humor was key in vaudeville theater.

While Sartuzi's exhibition goal is not to make you laugh, humor is also a central premise. When entering the exhibition the visitor encounters a series of pieces which are better understood as if they were thought of as a set of separate, unrelated acts grouped together on a common bill, like in any good old vaudevillian presentation. For instance if you look slightly to your left you will encounter *Four Curtains* (2023), a sculpture in which four small velvet sculptures open and close, automatically, showing or hiding a small space that they define. That space is empty but the anticipation of viewing what lies inside creates a tangible yet somewhat irrelevant tension which only gets resolved by the anticlimactic reveal of... nothingness, and the apparent waste of our time. Behind it lies *Skeleton Dance* (2023), a 3D-printed, dancing skeleton sculpture, which borrows its name from the eponymous Disney animation from 1929. In Sartuzi's sculpture, the original soundtrack comes out of a speaker placed in the automated marionette-like wooden structure holding the figure. The interspersed rhythm of the sound and the squeaking noise of the motor and the strings holding its bones generates a sort of chaotic, anxiety ridden energy that fills the exhibition space, creating another tense moment, which is regularly broken by several absurd monologues we can only assume are meant to be the skeleton's own discombobulated musings.

The last act in the show, the closing of the curtain if you will, is presented by a pairing of two pieces. *Laughing Chair* (2023) is exactly what its title suggests, a laughing chair. Sartuzi turned an old cinema chair into a well-humored object by training an AI to produce a sound that resembles human laughter. The chair's status within the exhibition space is intentionally ambiguous, another tense moment: shall we sit on it and watch *Ghostbuster* (2023), the film being projected in front of it. In the film something strangely appealing is happening on the flat TV screen: a haunting, mesmerizing presence dances before our eyes and in front of curtains that never open. There is no behind the curtains, what we see is what we get: a spectral entity, a ghost that attempts to entertain us. Or the old cinema chair. Most likely the latter as it keeps on laughing at the dancing ghost's act. Then we realize: we are just bystanders of this *Vaudeville* show. The audience is the show itself, it watches itself

as it performs in a sort of tautological device. We are not needed, nor required. There is no tension, actually, we are just not the target audience of this spectacle. The show, as the world in the near future, will most likely go on without us.

LUÍS SILVA

MADRID / SPAIN

Natalia Castañeda

Museo Nacional de Antropología

Artist Natalia Castañeda (Manizales, 1982) presented the solo exhibition *Raíces y futuro* (Roots and Future), a project curated by José Jiménez and co-organized by the Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo (MEIAC). The exhibition was displayed there from October 28, 2022, to March 12, 2023, and continued its journey to the Museo Nacional de Antropología de Madrid (MNA) from March 24 to June 11, 2023. *Roots and Future* is part of the program “Critical Visions: Art and Anthropology” and is the fifth exhibition in the cycle titled “Ibero-American Expression.”

To understand Natalia Castañeda’s work, the first thing we must grasp is that her approach to nature through artistic means is multifaceted and involves a profound human scale. The artist approaches her surroundings from shared vulnerability and the immense respect and admiration she holds for nature. In the artist’s words: “This is an exhibition project that compiles my recent explorations of fragile and minimally intervened ecosystems, reflecting both poetic possibilities and radical changes (...) I stop to observe the perimeters that reveal geological, tectonic, and volcanic movements, human and non-human interventions.”

Raíces y futuro (Roots and Future) also allowed an approach to different elements of nature from a scientific, cartographic, and narrative perspective, supported by a scientific team.

Throughout the exhibition, Castañeda engaged the audience, raising essential questions about our existence, defined in three realms:

Natalia Castañeda. View of the exhibition *Raíces y futuro* (Roots and Future) at the Museo Nacional de Antropología. Installation: *Devenir Pierre / Convertirse en piedra* (Becoming Stone), 2019. Video: *Mirar adentro* (Looking Inside), 2018. Courtesy of the artist



Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? The pieces in the exhibition encompass various formats: painting, drawing, sculpture, installation, and video.

At the beginning of the exhibition, there are beautiful notes: 360-degree foldable panoramas with the robust silhouettes of the imposing mountains she visits. Natalia Castañeda recounts how during different expeditions, she has peacefully stayed at the foothills of the mountains to detail them in her notebooks. She also shows us installations with pieces molded in ceramics, replicating, with a noble material, plastic objects and packaging. In Natalia’s words, it’s a “domestic landscape,” contrasting the malleability of the material against the hardness of industrial and ordinary waste, and serving as a record and memory of daily actions. The exhibition also included the installation *Convertirse en piedra* (Becoming Stone), a cabinet of curiosities consisting of plastic fragments, earth prints, and found objects, described by the artist as “tactile records.”

Raíces y futuro (Roots and Future) constituted a mapping that delved into archaeology, geology, poetry, and naturally lead us to a concern about the future, stemming from ecological awareness. When we become aware that we are not the measure of all things and understanding the impact of our presence, realizing that the minerals flowing in our blood compress the rocks, we come to understand that we are one with the flow of the river among the pebbles rounded by time.

Natalia Castañeda presented the sculptural and participatory installation *El río* (The River), which encompassed the stages of creation and transformation of this body of water. Visitors were invited to intervene in the different plaster droplets that form the river, leaving their traces, redrawing its flow, and imbuing it with stories of collective authorship. With this powerful metaphor, Castañeda urges the public to be aware of the impact and transformative power of humans on nature. The installation in the room continued to grow, and with the assistance of the MNA mediation team, visitors became immersed in awareness, filling *El río* (The River) with their contributions.

Throughout the exhibition, we constantly heard Natalia Castañeda narrating her works, a journey imbued with subjectivity. The sweet thread of her voice guided us through the sublime scenario that opened before her when she stood face to face with the snow-capped mountains of central Colombia. *Entre el volcán y la vertiente* (Between the Volcano and the Slope) is a two-channel video installation that shows the record, with a handheld camera, of her journey over seven years through these places, subjectively bringing us closer to the mountains. Castañeda speaks to them, asking about their time. The sound design for the film is done by Sergio Castrillón, a musician and composer from Manizales, now based in Helsinki.

Mirar adentro (Looking Inside, 2019) is a video that establishes correspondences between pre-Hispanic figures from the archaeological collection of the Universidad de Caldas, taken out of context, eliciting new (fictional) readings from the present with a different purpose.

As a conclusion to the exhibition, and in response to the third question, “Where are we going?” was a body of work that Natalia Castañeda dedicated to glaciers. In the artist’s own words, she aims to “map the extinct.” The video-essay *Cuerpo glaciar* (Glacial Body, 2022) starts from experimentation in editing and addresses these icy titans, survivors of the Colombian landscape. We can also see interventions by scientists alternating in the editing. *Cuerpo glaciar* (Glacial Body) is a collage of reasoning, which can be inferred as a precursor to her most recent piece: *Cuerpos glaciares, ancestros hídricos de una extinción futura* (Glacial Bodies, Water Ancestors of a Future Extinction), presented in August 2023 at the Galería Santa Fe. The artist brings us,