

Park View

Luchita Hurtado
Selected works, 1942 – 1950

November 12, 2016 – January 7, 2017

Park View
836 S. Park View Street #8
Los Angeles, CA 90057
USA

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Park View is pleased to announce “Luchita Hurtado: Selected works, 1942-1950,” its first solo exhibition with the Los Angeles-based artist (b. 1920 in Maiquetía, Venezuela). The exhibition opens on November 12 and will run through January 7, 2017. An opening reception will be held on the day of the opening from 12 to 6pm. Reintroducing a nearly eighty-year history of artistic production by surveying some of her earliest output, this marks the first display of Hurtado’s work in decades.

Comprising graphite and ink drawings, crayon and watercolor paintings on board and paper, and oil paintings on canvas, the exhibition seeks to contextualize Hurtado’s post-Surrealist oeuvre of that era within the artistic scenes and World War II political climate that she worked. Hurtado’s earliest artworks actively straddle figuration and abstraction, and later on begin to embody a nearly abstract style, where the human body and surrounding matter becoming increasingly indistinguishable. Inspired as much by Automatism as by pre-Columbian artifacts and monuments, her works blend together a unique energy, one impacted by the disaster of the war, that encounters and depicts the spirit world and states of higher consciousness through the lens of primordial landscapes.

Hurtado immigrated to New York City as a child, where she attended Washington Irving High School and the Art Students League. She began her career as a fashion illustrator for Condé Nast and a muralist for Lord & Taylor, honing her wiry line as a draftswoman in a professional environment and soon falling into an artistic scene that included Isamu Noguchi, Wilfredo Lam, Man Ray, and Rufino Tamayo, among others. Hurtado married the Austrian artist Wolfgang Paalen in 1945 and began to travel back and forth between New York and Mexico City. There, her personal and artistic activity centered on the post-Surrealist Dyn group, founded by Paalen with the artists Alice Rahon, Eva Sulzer, and Edward Renouf. Dyn sought to break away from André Breton and the Surrealists, seeking a new aesthetic and cultural order that looked to ancient Mesoamerican culture as its guide with its pre-modern blend of art, science, and religion.

Paalen and Hurtado left Mexico City to join the artists Gordon Onslow Ford, Jacqueline Johnson, and Lee Mullican in Mill Valley in 1947. Her social activity there revolved around the Dynaton Group, founded by the three men, whose artistic activity mixed Surrealism, ancient cultural artifacts of the Pacific Northwest, and eastern religion. The affiliation culminated in an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art by the same name in 1951. In 1954, Hurtado left San Francisco for New York, Caracas, and Taos, finally meeting Lee Mullican again in Santa Monica, where she resides to this day. Hurtado is Mullican’s widow and the mother of the artist Matt Mullican and writer/director John Mullican.

Hurtado’s earliest works, produced between New York and Mexico City, blend quick, impressionistic sketches of the body with scientific illustrations of flora via ink and pencil drawings. Each contains overlapping drawings that generate dynamic, fluttering movement on the page. Later in the decade, Hurtado moved away from this more overtly figurative style and towards more complex compositions that intermingle figure and ground through a distinctive technique employing wax crayon, acrylic, ink and watercolors. These works depict a kaleidoscope of color and perspectives, all centered on recurring groups of dancers situated in encrusted environments broken up by geometric shapes. Hurtado drew these totemic dancer figures for years, and only later rediscovered them both in nature and archaeology, seeing its shape on the back of a butterfly in Venezuela and in the Lascaux Caves. Sinewy and elongated, with arms poised up above, the artist, in her words, remarked, “They must have been the shadows of the cave dwellers as they entered.”

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