

Ana Mercedes Hoyos: Los Fragmentos

1 Dec 2023 - 13 January 2024



UNTITLED (2004)
ANA MERCES HOYOS

Huxley-Parlour are pleased to announce the first UK solo exhibition by acclaimed Colombian artist, Ana Mercedes Hoyos. The exhibition, *Los Fragmentos*, will present twelve works on canvas, made between 1988 and 2014, which focus on the artist's prolonged engagement with the still-life genre.

Hoyos emerged, alongside her contemporaries such as Luis Caballero, Beatriz González and Bernardo Salcedo, at the vanguard of Colombia's cultural scene in the fractious political milieu of the 1960s. Taking inspiration from disparate movements such as Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, which had developed in the West in the previous decade, Hoyos and her peers sought to revolutionise the plastic arts in their own country, re-inventing along the way these movements' visual languages, inflected by Colombian history and culture.

This approach is elaborated perhaps most clearly in Hoyos' still-lives. Drawing on the graphic style of Pop, and the fractured perspective of Cubism, the artist's luscious works on canvas re-examine the Baroque traditions of Francisco de Zurbarán and Caravaggio. In Western art history, still-lives or Dutch vanitas were often studies in allegory, seeking to portray the worldliness or learned sensibilities of their wealthy patrons. Objects of exotic fascination, citrus fruits and ephemera were self-consciously arranged in opulent displays of wealth and power, indirectly pointing to mercantile enterprise, the transatlantic trade of goods and people, and the cruel machinery of slavery.

Hoyos confronts these histories, rooting her still-lives within Colombia's geographies and local culture. The artist turned towards the still-life genre in the 1980s, drawing inspiration from the practices and customs of the small coastal village of San Basilio de Palanque, which she first visited in 1986. Historically a refuge for freed and escaped slaves the village, to which Hoyos frequently returned, is steeped in the traditions of Colombia's African populations. In particular, the women vendors who

walked the sandy beaches carrying their bowls laden with papayas, watermelons and pineapples influenced Hoyos' compositions and way of seeing. Eschewing the darkened interiors and ambiguous settings of historical Western still-life painting, Hoyos' still-lives are filled with light and signal to their sites of inspiration. *Untitled, 2004* presents a closely-cropped view of a large metal bowl of mixed fruit, the rolling tide of the San Basilio coastline visible on the horizon; other works in the exhibition include details of beach umbrellas that line the shore, and glimpses of the bodies of the vendors.

The artist used the term 'naturaleza viva', a play on the Spanish term for still-life ('naturaleza muerta'), to describe her works. Rather than frozen moments, Hoyos viewed them as paintings full of movement and action, both past and future: the fruits appear neatly sliced, markers of previous consumption, while in many of the canvases the knife lies poised in the bowl, ready to make another cut. Though fragmented into rough geometric forms and vibrant planes of colour, Hoyos suggests a ripe fullness and monumentality in her work. Contrasting the painting's brightness with their robust physicality, Hoyos conveys the vitality of her compositions and the peoples and cultures they depict.

Los Fragmentos is testament to Hoyos' enduring innovation and influence as one of Colombia's most pre-eminent artists, as revealed through her re-invention of the still-life.

Ana Mercedes Hoyos (1942–2014) has been the recipient of numerous international awards throughout her career, including an award at the National Artist's Salon in Bogotá for her *Ventanas* series. Hoyos' work has been the subject of over 50 solo exhibitions throughout Europe, Asia, the United States and South America. Her works are held in permanent collections including at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Fuji Art Museum, Tokyo, the Ibercaja Collection, Spain, and the Museum of Modern Art, Mexico City. Hoyos will be the subject of a major retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Bogotá, Colombia in late 2024.

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HUXLEY-PARLOUR
3–5 Swallow Street, London W1B 4DE

Opening Hours Monday to Friday, 10:00am – 5:30pm
Saturdays, 1:00pm – 5:30pm

Entry is free

More information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com