

of décor for greater aesthetic harmony. But the imposition of these images of colors with Botticelli's image generates a dialog with the viewer. In her diptych *Buenos Días Roy*, Sánchez used Lichtenstein's *Alka Seltzer*. In the circular painting to the left, the glass of Alka-Seltzer is identical to Lichtenstein's, but Sánchez has added bubbles of different sizes above the glass to make it seem more real. In another circular painting we see the face of a woman: Botticelli's *Spring*; Sánchez mixes the past with the contemporary. The Alka Seltzer painting has a square Op Art background that generates the sensation of motion, while in the painting with the Botticelli image there are three geometric shapes, two white and one black, against a dark purple ground. Obviously, this makes the latter painting more static and gives the former a greater sense of life and dynamism.

In other series, Sánchez has painted James Dean, Elvis, Yma Sumac, and over three years she painted Marilyn Monroe with candies, cats, roses, pearls, flowers, etc. With this exhibition, Sánchez demonstrates that art remains fresh, and that her work is an experiment every time she brings it out for display.

NOTES

1. Interview with the artist, July, 2014
2. Idem.

Augusto Chimpén

LONDON / ENGLAND

Lucía Pizzani

Beers Contemporary

Lucía Pizzani's current exhibition in London 'The Worshipper of the Image' takes its title from British author Richard LeGallienne's Victorian novel. It tells the story of a man obsessed by the beauty of a woman's funerary mask bought in an antic shop that becomes a deadly curse, forever changing the fate of its owner. The ambivalent account of the relation between beauty and love and desire and death connects with a couple of scientific and social breakthroughs of the turn of the century: Freud's study of female hysteria published in 1895 and the spread of the suffragette's international movement, which led to acknowledging women's subjectivity.

Departing from this and other sources, Pizzani's new body of work addresses an array of conceptual concerns encompassing the ephemeral nature of life, represented

by the transformation of the unattractive cocoon into a butterfly, the most graceful of creatures, as well as the visibility-invisibility of the female body, the history of feminism and biology.¹

Her experimental approach to photography, which she explores by using 19th century methods of image production such as imprinting images on wet aluminium plates with collodion, are both an homage to the history of mechanical reproduction and an attempt to achieve a rich visual materiality. Such spirit of experimentation is also patent in her video and ceramic pieces and produces an ensemble of poetic evocations that convey admirable technical skill and a sound elaboration of ideas.

The ceramic sculptures delicately glazed with luminescent effects evocative of butterfly wings or orchid petals from the series *Capullos* (Cocoons) were exhibited previously at Oficina #1 in Caracas. They appear as equivocal organic forms recalling uncanny insects, or even the voluptuous fleshiness of genitalia. Both ceramics and the installations of African fabric sculptures are made to measure: the body is the template. Given Pizzani's sustained development in the field of performance and video to explore the possibilities of the body as sculpture, her physical imprint is present metaphorically on this occasion by means of scale. Following such logic, the ceramics are capable of nesting in our hands, and one can equally make up a person hiding inside the fabric envelopes. These cocoons hanging on the wall and holding the promise of reincarnation are also present in the photographs, where they become shrouds for intriguing creatures posing as members of an unknown tribe. These poignant images originally produced in small format plates, after following a digital blow up process, acquire undertones of ethnographic vintage prints. Such as it occurred with the recurrent reference to vessels in her practice, and specifically in the recent series of photographs *Cuencos* (2013) the connections between cocoon-butterfly and depictions of the inside and outside of the body are carefully articulated.

The cycle of life and death of the butterflies, a fascination of the artist connected with her studies in biology prior to embarking in her artistic career, is spelled out in a diversity of mediums. Additionally, it was the last image of LeGallienne's novel that triggered the ideas behind these works. In

it, the author describes a moth - *Acherontia atropos*, commonly known as 'night butterfly' - whose wing patterns depict a sinister skull, coming out of the funerary mask's open lips. It is in the power of this image of death revealing beauty where the works are anchored.

The video and photographic prints *Nocturna* (2013) employ yet another Romantic source: the mesmerizing performances of pioneer avant-garde dancer Loie Fuller captured in film by Segundo de Chomón (pondered as the Spanish Georges Méliès). In the prints shown in the exhibition, Pizzani herself takes Fuller's *Serpentine dance* as a departure, cloaked in a black-winged tunic and staring at the camera with the gravitas of a silent movie heroine: a dark butterfly ready to fly. In the video, her cloaked body becomes a canvas where the history of female creativity is willingly projected, marking it as a moving tattoo.

Freud discarded the definition of hysteria (from ancient Greek: *histera*=uterus) as the expression of female emotional distress connected to a 'pathological' womb. His interpretation of the condition's symptoms was found in the repressed expressions of psychological stress produced by unfulfilled desire. This position put the blame on a rampant misogyny that relegated women's emotions and needs to the realm of the abnormal.

A flaming desire and the flow of creative psychic energy are at the core of this allegorical metamorphosis encapsulated in Lucía Pizzani's exhibition: a hopeful exercise of freedom ready to take off.

Lucía Pizzani. Cocoon A9, 2013. Stoneware with multilayered glazing. 6 ½ x 6 ½ x 5 ½ in. (17 x 17 x 14 cm.).



NOTE

1. All the works in this exhibition were made during a residency at Hangar Barcelona, an opportunity that followed her being awarded in 2013 the prestigious XII Premio Eugenio Mendoza in her native Venezuela.