

## BEATRIZ GONZÁLEZ

### *Funebria*

Aug. 28 - Oct. 2, 2021 (Rämistrasse)

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication to be ordered through the gallery.

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to announce the solo exhibition *Funebria (Funeral)* by Colombian artist Beatriz González (\*1932 in Bucaramanga, Colombia; lives and works in Bogotá) at our Rämistrasse location. *Funebria* is the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery. The presentation will include works from Beatriz González's most recent creative period weaving a web of references around tragic events in recent Colombian history. Central themes from her oeuvre, such as memory and Colombia's collective memory, will be explored and developed further in a broad range of techniques in the medium of painting. On display are eight new paintings, a sculptural piece of furniture, a newly conceived wallpaper (digital print on paper), an installation (serigraphy on plastic), and several works on cardboard and paper.

Over the past six decades, Beatriz González has developed a strong artistic vocabulary that makes her one of Colombia's most influential artists today. Since the beginning of her career, her works have been interwoven with the reality of her home country, which is marked by instability, corruption and violence. Constant armed conflicts, including a ten-year civil war called *La Violencia* (1948 - 1958) and then the 52-year armed conflict between the Colombian state and the guerrilla movement led by the FARC (1964 - 2016), have had a lasting impact on her perception of society. With the title *Funebria*, Beatriz González ties in with a series of subjects around the politically charged figure of collective mourning, which have increasingly found their way into her work over the past twenty years. In the context of different narratives, the figure appears as an abstracted, black silhouette or as an allegory with simplified female features and runs like a connecting thread through the works in the exhibition.

Eponymous is a series of six paintings in oil on canvas showing dark, shadowy figures in a rural setting digging rectangular pits in the ground. In the key work *Angelus local (Local Angelus, 50 x 120 cm; see invitation card)*, the centrally placed figures and the gaping black opening at their centre contrast with the lush mossy green of the fertile-looking plain. A pale blue stripe at the top of the picture marks the distant horizon. In works such as *Cavar: presente de indicativo (Ditch: Present Indicative)* and *Procesión mortuoria (Procession of Corpses, both 50 x 80 cm)*, the subject is taken up and retold as if in a shadow play against a colourful backdrop. The anonymous figures seem to be moving, carrying spades and hoes and looking like farmers preparing their fields. Simple outlines and generously applied areas of colour in rich green, earthy red or mustard yellow dominate the composition.

What appears at first glance to be an everyday rural scene is a subtle reappraisal of a series of tragic events that have gained increasing attention in the national and global press since the signing of the peace treaty between the Colombian state and the FARC in 2016: in the course of the armed conflict, there have been repeated unexplained deaths known as "falsos positivos" (false positives). Civilians were kidnapped by the military and murdered as supposed opponents in order to fake success in the fight against the guerrilla troops. Many of the missing persons have not been found to date. The peace process initiated since 2016 is increasingly putting the victims of the conflict and their right to truth at the centre of the press and public attention.

In Beatriz González's work, it is an approach towards the truth that silently reminds the viewer to remember. Her paintings create a pictorial world of aesthetic beauty that, only on closer inspection, speak of the tragic losses. Each work is like a poetic metaphor for the emptiness left by the missing. As in almost all her series of works, as it were, the artist plays with repetition. While the silhouettes in the individual works are repeated in new combinations each time, their outlines in works such as *Panorámica agreste (Wild Panorama, 50 x 200 cm)* or *Boceto libreta funebria (Funeral Sketchbook, oil on paper, 23.5 x 107.5 cm)* are reduced to such an extent that they almost become a geometric pattern. The principle of repetition is intensely heightened in the wallpaper *Panorámica agreste (Wild panorama, wallpaper, digital print on paper, variable mass)*, transforming the silhouettes into iconic symbols in the viewer's memory.

Similarly, the silhouettes of the *Cargueros (Corpse Bearers)* are repeated in the installation of *Cinta Amarilla (Yellow Ribbon)*. The work refers to Beatriz González's site-specific installation *Auras Anónimas (Anonymous Auras, 2007-2009)* in Bogotá's Central Cemetery, where 8'957 serigraphs of the same motif cover the niches of the columbaria. The niches had previously been emptied by the city, as the cemetery was to be demolished. *Cinta Amarilla* is a reference to the yellow barrier that currently surrounds the columbaria due to their poor condition and stands as a symbol of a lurking threat. The small-format paintings on cardboard, such as *Da-ve-y-va I (Give-look-and-go I, 37 x 23 cm)* or *Estudio Cinta Amarilla III (Study Yellow Ribbon III, 25 x 35 cm)* take up the motif and merge it with the digging silhouettes to create a new reality.

The two paintings *Proyecto Telón de Guerra y Paz I - Guerra (Curtain Project War and Peace I - War)* and *Proyecto Telón de Guerra y Paz I - Paz (Curtain Project War and Peace I - Peace)*, each 100 x 160 cm) are representative of the concepts of "war" and "peace", the juxtaposition of which has become a defining moment in the Colombian zeitgeist since 2016 (peace treaty). Both works are based on concrete events in Santa Marta in the province of Magdalena and take their inspiration from the local press. The work that is representative of "War" (Guerra) shows four female bodies floating in an abstracted river between landscape and interior. They are the lifeless figures of four young women found after a tragic attack on a brothel near the Rio Manzares. The strong brushstrokes and heavy, luminous colours are in contrast to the softly applied pastel shades of "Peace" (Paz). The work shows a group of the indigenous Wiwa community happily playing music, celebrating the recovery of lost land in the Santa Marta area near Antioquia.

Closing the circle of narratives, Beatriz González takes up the allegorical figure of pain in her work *Duelo por desaparecidos (Mourning the Missing)*, 80 x 169.5 x 38 cm), which she first introduced with groups of works such as *Las Delicias (Pleasures)* from 1997 or *Dolores (Pains)* from 2001-2002. Formally, the work is linked to a group of works with domestic objects as image carriers, with which the artist humorously commented on the striving for status symbols of the Colombian bourgeoisie in the 1970s. At that time, the artist combined second-hand, popular pieces of furniture with adaptations of classic European masters. For example, in the work *Peinador Gratia Plena (Dressing Table Gratia Plena)*, 1971), in which she replaced the mirror of a simple Art Deco dressing table with her reduced version of Raphael's *Madonna della seggiola* (1513-14). In *Duelo por desaparecidos*, the ironic undertone gives way to an iconic moment of mourning. Embedded in the dressing table, the depiction takes up residence in the bedroom as the most intimate room of a private household. It is a sensitive approach to collective mourning in the face of the political turmoil in her home country, and that is closely linked to the Colombian national identity.

Beatriz González's works are exhibited in leading institutions worldwide. Most recently, the Pérez Art Museum in Miami presented a retrospective curated by Mari Carmen Ramírez and Tobias Ostrander, which subsequently travelled to the Museum of Fine Arts Houston (both 2019) and the Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia of the Banco de la República in Bogotá (2020). A solo exhibition curated by María Inés Rodríguez was presented from 2017 - 2018 at the institutions CAPC Bordeaux, Museo de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid and Kunst-Werke, Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin. In 2017, three of her works were shown at documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel. Currently, works by Beatriz González are on view in the group exhibition *Another Energy* at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (until September 26). Major group exhibitions in recent years include *Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960 - 1980* at MoMA, New York, and *The World Goes Pop* at Tate Modern, London (both 2015). González's works are represented in the collections of the following institutions (selection): MoMA - Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate Modern, London; MFAH - Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museo de Arte Moderno, Bogotá; Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá; Museo de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; De Pont Museum, Tilburg; Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt am Main.

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