

## Women in the Havana Biennial—3 Top Picks

*As the Biennial continues, we spotlight 3 shows with distinctive points of view—by or curated by women*

By **Cuban Art News** - May 8, 2019

The 13th Havana Biennial includes a number of shows and installations around the city. Here, we focus on three standout presentations: an installation by Glenda León and exhibitions by curators Elvia Rosa Castro and Magda González Mora.



*Installation view of Glenda León's "Mecánica Natural / Natural Mechanics," 2019, in Nave Línea y 18  
Courtesy Estudio Glenda León*

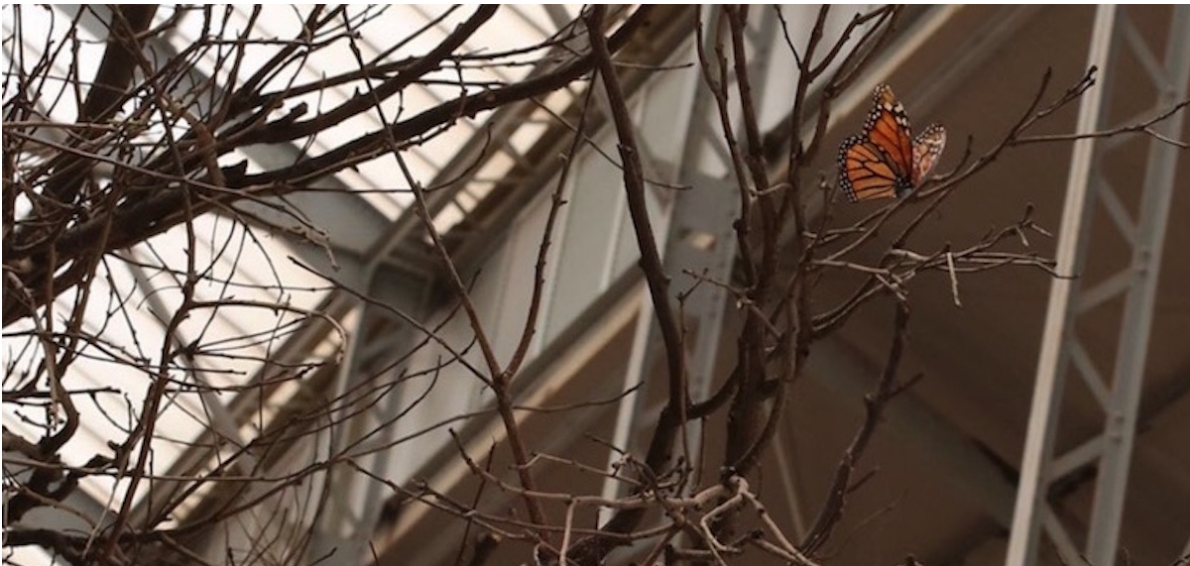
In Vedado, Nave Línea y 18 is an enormous industrial building originally used as a tram terminal and later as a bicycle factory. It is currently undergoing renovation, reportedly to serve as a center for artisanal art.

But the building also makes an admirable site for large-scale art installation, as demonstrated by *Mecánica Natural / Natural Mechanics*, a work by Glenda León.



Installation view of "Mecánica Natural / Natural Mechanics," 2019, by Glenda León  
Courtesy Estudio Glenda León

*Mecánica Natural* consists of two groups of dead trees, divided by a wide aisle. On one side, a tree appears to have crushed a rusted-out car. It's a scene of devastation, but one in which nature is subtly winning—as shown by the addition of a lone monarch butterfly clinging to a tree branch.



Close-up detail of Glenda León, "Mecánica Natural / Natural Mechanics," 2019  
Courtesy Estudio Glenda León

On the other side of the installation, humankind—presented as endless processions of tiny toy cars—appears to have the upper hand.

With its two halves, *Mecánica Natural* exposes "the tension between the potency of natural occurrences—the hurricanes, for instance, so familiar to Cuba—and humans' constructed idea of nature," writes Ilaria Conti in an exhibition essay.



Detail of "Mecánica Natural / Natural Mechanics," 2019, by Glenda León  
Courtesy Estudio Glenda León

The antlike lines of toy cars, she says, represents more than human industry overwhelming the natural world. "Ants thrive in eusocial communities with collective rules that shape their relationships with other living beings," Conti writes. "At the heart of this stands what Andean Indigenous communities nurture as *vincularidad*: the awareness that all living things are interconnected, that one's well-being is deeply related to that of others. It is a form of ecological empathy crucial to all biotic systems."

At D'Nasco Studio in Central Havana, *A Stone in a Shoe* brings together more than a dozen artists and collaborative teams in what curator Elvia Rosa Castro calls "a show that has to be read almost literally."

**A STONE**  
*in a shoe*

**Amanda Alonso**  
Evelyn Aguilar  
**Luis Camnitzer y Ediciones Asterisco**  
Rafael Domenech y Rirkrit Tiravanija  
**Adonis Flores**  
Aimée García  
**Luis Gómez**  
Pablo Helguera  
**Ricardo Miguel Hernández**  
Cristóbal León y Joaquín Cocina  
**Leonardo Luis Roque**  
Carlos Montes de Oca  
**René Rodríguez**

**Bienal de La Habana**  
**Abril, 2019**

**Una curaduría de Elvia Rosa Castro**  
Lugar D'Nasco Studio. Espada 214,  
c/ San Lázaro y Jovellar, Centro Habana  
**Inauguración 13 de abril, 11 am**  
Productor Jorge de Mello  
Diseño Héctor S. Martínez



*Courtesy Elvia Rosa Castro*

The phrase “a stone in the shoe,” Castro writes, “speaks of something uncomfortable.” For this exhibition, she adds, “social responsibility, ethics, and the critical self-consciousness of art constituted the ‘guide’ for the selection of works and artists, which turns out to be a mix of artists well known in the global circuit and younger ones less known and emerging.”



Leonardo Luis Roque, "A la espera de la conquista" (Awaiting the Conquest), 2019  
Photo: Cuban Art News



Detail of Leonardo Luis Roque, "A la espera de la conquista" (Awaiting the Conquest), 2019  
Photo: Cuban Art News

Works on view include Leonardo Luis Roque's installation *A la espera de la conquista*, and works from Ricardo Miguel Hernández's *Cuando el recuerdo se convierte en polvo*, a series of manipulated photographic images from 2018–19.



A work in the series "Cuando el recuerdo se convierte en polvo" (When Memory Turns to Dust), 2018–2019  
Photo: Cuban Art News

Aimée García presents works in her series *Sinónimos de coerción*. With phrases like "That one is the one," "We dream under the same sky," and "What we need is dynamite," Rafael Domenech and Rirkrit Tiravanija turn hanging lamps into provocative messages.



Works by Rafael Domenech and Rirkrit Tiravanija in the series "Meditating in the Eye of the Storm," 2018  
Photo: Cuban Art News

René Rodríguez, Carlos Montes de Oca, and Luis Camnitzer are among the other artists in *A Stone in a Shoe*. For images of their works and more images from the exhibition, see today's post on the Cuban Art News Facebook page.

At Arsenal Habana in Habana Vieja, *Ad infinitum* presents art by "a group of uncontainable women," writes curator Magda González Mora.

The exhibition's objective, she writes, "is to analyze the relationship between three elements, very different but at the same time intimately connected: power, pain, and recovery."



Claribel Caldeirus, "Los Niños de la Patria" (The Children of the Nation), 2019  
Photo: Cuban Art News

In *Los Niños de la Patria*, Claribel Caldeirus manipulates a photographic image taken at an orphanage. González Mora describes the work as "reconstructive documentation," in which the image is embroidered to infuse it with new energy.

"These new lifelines lighten the spirit," she writes, "and, without improperly appropriating others' wounds, offer a unifying empathy that advocates collective recovery."

Sandra Pérez Lozano started out studying the development of violence, but turned to investigating "the analogous mind, concepts, memories, and projections—not through a figurative visuality," she added, "but rather from an abstract visuality."



Sandra Pérez Lozano, "Sin título," 2019  
Photo: Cuban Art News

María Magdalena Campos-Pons's 1991 video *Rito de Iniciación / Baño Sagrado* is part of the show's second section, which promotes meditation and healing.



"These works seek freedom of expression through rituals or through the affective memory that is strengthened by the use of objects or active substances," González Mora writes.



*A still from "Rito de Iniciación / Baño Sagrado," 1991, a video by María Magdalena Campos-Pons  
Photo: Cuban Art News*

The show's third section actively explores issues of gender equality through participative works in Arsenal Habana's kitchen and bath.



"Resistir & Luchar," 2019, the installation by Clandestina (Idania del Río and Leire Fernández) in the kitchen of Arsenal Habana  
Photo: Cuban Art News

The kitchen project, *Resistir y Luchar*, by Clandestinas (Idania del Río and Leire Fernández), consists of glasses bearing printed messages, stacked up next to the sink. The glasses are actively used in offering drinks to visitors, "defining the value of use that characterizes the Clandestina brand," the artists write.

For more images of the three shows, see [today's photo album](#) on the Cuban Art News Facebook page.