

Press Release

Luchita Hurtado. Yo Soy

29 June – 5 October 2025
Hauser & Wirth Downtown Los Angeles
South Gallery



'I did many self-portraits. And then at one point I decided I would use letters, and I did...I started with a portrait that said, 'I am.' And I decided that was as much me as my real face and figure.'

—Luchita Hurtado

Los Angeles... Over the course of her eight-decade career, Venezuelan-born, Los Angeles-based artist Luchita Hurtado (1920 – 2020) committed to a lifelong journey of personal and artistic evolution defined by ceaseless experimentation. The first exhibition devoted to the artist at Hauser & Wirth in Los Angeles, 'Yo Soy' (I Am) will bring together paintings and drawings from a pivotal moment in Hurtado's career: Inspired by the surge of feminist activism in LA, the artist held her first solo exhibition at the Woman's Building in February 1974, debuting her Linear Language series of expressive, geometric word paintings. A half century on, 'Yo Soy' revisits that landmark presentation and includes never-before-seen works from the series it introduced. Through her vibrant, abstract canvases—some cut up and meticulously resewn—visitors will be able to experience the depth of Hurtado's exploration of pattern, mysticism, the earth and the cosmos.

The 1970s were a period of intense productivity for Hurtado. Living in Santa Monica Canyon with her own studio and her children now grown, she found herself at the heart of a burgeoning women's movement in Los Angeles, a collective awakening that profoundly shaped her artistic identity. As an original member of the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists, Hurtado later cited a seminal meeting of local women artists in 1971, organized by Joyce Kozloff, as a turning point in both her artistry and activism. There, Hurtado introduced herself to the group using her married name, 'Mullican.' Her friend, the printmaker June Wayne, interjected: 'Luchita what?' The prompt led the artist to reintroduce herself as 'Luchita Hurtado.'



This fabled account of self-renaming laid the foundation for Hurtado's Linear Language series, which began with a self-portrait that featured the abstracted word 'Yo.' Hurtado created the subsequent works in this series between 1972 and 1974, in a process that relied upon speed of action in merging language with graphic patterns and textiles. Describing the technical innovations her series inspired, the artist explained:

'To achieve quickness, the evenness and length of stroke I needed on large canvasses, I rigged up bottles with nozzles that became the brushes I needed. [...] I painted large paintings, all messages, some right side up, some on their side, some cut, set apart, as life does, and sewed together again. Some were in layers, one atop the other.'

Among works on view in the exhibition is 'Self Portrait' (1973), in which bold red, yellow, black and silver lines traverse every direction within sewn panels of varying sizes. Beneath the work's intricate design lies the words—'I Live I Die I Will Be Reborn'—that four decades later would serve as the inspiration for Hurtado's 2019 retrospective at the Serpentine Galleries. In another piece on view from the original Woman's Building exhibition, deep blue and purple patchwork obscures the title 'Earth & Sky Interjected' (1973)—a work that likewise provided the title for a later exhibition, Hurtado's 2024 – 2025 survey at the Harwood Museum of Art in Taos, New Mexico.

'Yo Soy' also will present a selection from Luchita Hurtado's archive, including original exhibition and artwork documentation, along with ephemera from organizations such as the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists, Womanspace and the Woman's Building.

About the Artist

Born in Maiquetía, Venezuela in 1920, Luchita Hurtado dedicated her practice to the investigation of universality and transcendence. Though personally connected to a vast network of internationally renowned artists and intellectuals—including Mexican muralists, Surrealists, members of the Dynaton movement, feminists and artists

in the Chicano/Latino art scene—Hurtado remained an independent and largely private, but highly prolific, creator. Her exhibition at the Woman's Building in 1974 was the only solo presentation of her work prior to her mid-90s, with her first institutional survey at the age of 98.

Hurtado's body of work cohered through an examination of self-affirmation, introduced in her early period from the 1940s to 1960s. This output was defined by surrealist figuration, biomorphism and geometric abstraction, executed in brightly hued palettes with striking expressive range. Her work continued to evolve throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, demonstrating a fluid shift towards representative figuration that led to a production of contemplative self-portraits known as her 'I Am' paintings. This series was followed by a group of surrealist 'Body Landscapes' wherein the human figure assumes the form of mountains and desert sand dunes. At the end of her life, Hurtado continued to explore themes of language and nature with her work, focusing on the planet, natural elements and the environment, in recognition of the urgency of the ecological crisis. These works function as symbolic proxies and intimate meditations on the Earth as mystic progenitor, underscoring the interconnectedness between corporeality and the natural world.

In 2019, Hurtado was listed in TIME 100's most influential people and received the Americans for the Arts Carolyn Clark Powers Lifetime Achievement Award. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Luchita Hurtado: Earth & Sky Interjected' at the Harwood Museum of Art, Taos NM (2024 – 25), 'I Live I Die I Will Be Reborn' at the Serpentine Galleries, London, UK (2019) that traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2020), 'Just Down the Street' at Hauser & Wirth Zurich (2020) and 'Dark Years' at Hauser & Wirth New York (2019). In 2018, her work was included in the Hammer Museum's biennial exhibition 'Made in L.A.' and is featured in public collections worldwide, including The British Museum, London, UK; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York NY; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museum of Modern Art, New York NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston TX and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco CA.

Learning

A comprehensive learning program will be developed with our community partners in conjunction with the exhibition, inspired by the life and work of Luchita Hurtado. Further details to be announced in June. For more information about Learning at Hauser & Wirth, please visit www.hauserwirth.com/learning.

For additional information, please contact:

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Sunday, 11 am – 6 pm

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Caption and courtesy information:

Luchita Hurtado
Self Portrait
1973
Oil on canvas and thread, 3 parts
Overall: 132.1 x 224.2 x 2.5 cm / 52 x 88 1/4 x 1 in
© The Estate of Luchita Hurtado
Courtesy The Estate of Luchita Hurtado and Hauser & Wirth
Photo: Jeff McLane

Luchita Hurtado, ca. 1973
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