

Cecilia Vicuña

*La India Contaminada*

May 19—July 6, 2018

536 West 22nd Street, New York

@lehmannmaupin | #ceciliavicuna

**Opening Reception: Saturday, May 19, 6-8 PM**



*Leoparda de Ojitos*, 1976, oil on cotton canvas, 55.375 x 35.5 inches (image), 40.7 x 90.2 cm. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maun, New York and Hong Kong.

New York, April 18, 2018—Lehmann Maupin is pleased to present *La India Contaminada*, the gallery's inaugural exhibition for **Cecilia Vicuña**. While the Chilean-born artist has lived in New York and exhibited widely in the United States and abroad for over three decades, this is the first comprehensive survey of her work in New York. The exhibition spans 1969 to 2017 and will feature Vicuña's raw wool installation and sculpture known as *Quipu*, mixed-media sculptures referred to as *Lo Precario*, video, and painting. *La India Contaminada* will run concurrent with a solo exhibition of her *Disappeared Quipu* at the Brooklyn Museum, opening May 18, with her early performance and photographic work also included in the museum's iteration of the traveling exhibition, *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*. **The gallery will host a reception for the artist on Saturday, May 19, from 6 to 8 PM.**

Vicuña's *Quipu* (translated as "knot" from Quechua) works reinvent the ancient Andean system that recorded statistics and narratives through the knotting of colored thread. Historically, the quipu has been regarded as a simple bureaucratic device, but research demonstrates they represented a complex system of knowledge, with symbolic and virtual dimensions of enormous existential and social value that connected communities. Addressing this larger paradigm, Vicuña constructs her *Quipus* as poems in space. These tactile representations of the expansive interconnection between the cosmological and human realms relate her work to the Quantum Poetics movement that seeks to describe a reality that does not conform to standard perception. For Vicuña, Quantum Poetics are aligned with the indigenous worldview of the Americas.

At its core, her work is poetical and philosophical rather than anthropological. Vicuña's use of dyed, raw, and unprocessed wool, coiled as in *Caracol Azul (Blue Snail)* (2017), or suspended as in *Quipu Viscera (Visceral Quipu)* (2017), creates a visual meditation on the liminal spaces between life and death, humans

and nature, and the past and the present, represented in the diffuse fibrous strands of wool. With our mutual fate now in question as we venture into the anthropocene, Vicuña's *Quipus* serve as a reminder of the hubris that separates humanity from nature, asking us to reconsider our origins and interconnectedness.

This cosmological connection is evident in another sculptural series, *Lo Precario*, "the precarious." Each component—found scraps of cloth, shards of plastic, a feather, a leaf, a butterfly, a pencil—is included for its formal and representational potential. This gives each object infinite complexity on its own, a synecdoche of the larger installation as a whole, meant to be interpreted as a constellation. Originally, Vicuña composed these along the ocean's shores, intended to disintegrate and wash away with high tide right after creation. She continues to perform this ritual in waterways around the world, while also bringing them indoors to display on walls and in vitrines, where the fragility of the composition and materials warns of their precariousness.

Vicuña, a noted poet and author, has garnered her reputation as an activist through her multidimensional art, performances, films, and writing that confront the patriarchy, white supremacy, violent totalitarian rule, and ecological plundering. Nowhere is this more visually evident than in her paintings, primarily created during the 1970s. While several are explicitly political in content, such as her *Lenin* (1972), Vicuña's most radical act, perhaps, is to embody and depict the undoing of centuries of indoctrination and dogma.

Like her *quipus*, the paintings refer to Latin American history, in this case the points of first contact between the Spanish and indigenous people when Incan artists were forcibly converted to Catholicism and enlisted to paint and worship European religious icons. They nevertheless found ways to subvert the rulers by incorporating their own cultural iconography and worldviews into the renderings. These early South American, Christian paintings are a tangible visualization of the miscegenation that defined the colonial period, where fusing one's way of life with the alien form imposed upon them was required for survival. Vicuña similarly adopts this method by using this colonial style of image making, but incorporating revolutionary iconography. Paintings like *Leoparda de Ojitos* (1976) offer evidence of this "contaminated" mode of thinking—daring to position an indigenous, decolonized woman's perspective, presented to the viewers throughout *La India Contaminada*, as emblematic of human history and potential. A return to the past, in order to understand and transform the future.

### **About the Artist**

Cecilia Vicuña (b. 1948 in Santiago, Chile; lives and works in New York and Santiago). Vicuña received her MFA from the National School of Fine Arts, University of Chile in 1971 and continued her postgraduate studies at Slade School of Fine Art, University College London, from 1972-1973. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans (2017); Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Santiago, Chile (2014); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile (2014); FRAC Lorraine, Metz, France (2013); Institute for Women and Art, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ (2009); The Drawing Center, New York (2002); and the Boulder Museum

of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO (2002). Group exhibitions and biennials featuring her work include *documenta 14*, Athens, Greece and Kassel, Germany (2017); *Radical Women: Latin American Art 1960-1985*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2017); 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2012); *DANCE / DRAW*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2011); *ONLINE, Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010); *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2007); 12th Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1997); and *INside the VISIBLE*, curated by Catherine M. de Zegher, at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, which traveled to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; and Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth (1996). Her work is in numerous international private and public collections, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Tate Modern, London; FRAC Lorraine, Metz, France; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile; UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA; and the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin, TX.

Vicuña is the author of 25 volumes of art and poetry published in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Her filmography includes documentaries, animation, and visual poems. Vicuña has received several awards, including The Anonymous Was a Woman Award, New York (1999) and The Andy Warhol Foundation Award (1997). In 2015, Vicuña was appointed a messenger lecturer at Cornell University.

### **About Lehmann Maupin**

Founded in 1996 by partners Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin, Lehmann Maupin has fostered the careers of a diverse group of internationally renowned artists, both emerging and established, working in multiple disciplines and across varied media. With locations in New York, Hong Kong, and Seoul, the gallery represents artists from the United States, Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Known for championing artists who create groundbreaking and challenging forms of visual expression, Lehmann Maupin presents work highlighting personal investigations and individual narratives through conceptual approaches that often address such issues as gender, class, religion, history, politics, and globalism.

### **Current & Upcoming Exhibitions**

*American Landscape*, through May 5, 2018, West 22nd Street, NEW YORK

OSGEMEOS, *Déjà Vu*, through May 12, 2018, Pedder Building, HONG KONG

Catherine Opie, *So long as they are wild*, May 17—July 7, 2018, Pedder Building, HONG KONG

Nicholas Hlobo, July 12—August 24, 2018, West 22nd Street, NEW YORK

For more information on Cecilia Vicuña or other Lehmann Maupin artists, please contact Kathryn McKinney or Marta de Movellan at +1 212.255.2923.

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