

CANTAR DE CIEGOS / SONG OF THE BLIND

ESPERANZA CORTÉS

SEPTEMBER 4, 2020 - FEBRUARY 6, 2021

MAYER GALLERY



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about the artist



Esperanza Cortés is a Colombian born contemporary multidisciplinary artist based in New York City. Cortés has exhibited in the United States in solo and group exhibitions in venues including Smack Mellon Gallery, Neuberger Museum of Art, Bronx Museum of Art, Queens Museum, El Museo Del Barrio, MoMA PS1, Socrates Sculpture Park and White-box Gallery in New York City. Nationally, Cortes exhibitions include Cleveland Art Museum, OH, CSU Galleries at Cleveland University, OH, Helen Day Art Center, VT and The Lorenzo Homar Gallery, PA. Internationally, exhibitions have include Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Japan, Mexico, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Spain and Greece.

Cortés is a recipient of awards including: The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship; BRIC Media Arts Fellowship; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Creative Engagement Grant; Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE: Art in Embassies Program; Puffin Foundation Project Grant; Bronx Museum of the Art, AIM Program; New York State Biennial; Robert Rauchenberg Foundation, Change Grant; New York Foundation for the Arts and Sustained Achievement in the Visual Arts Award.

Cortés's is a recipient of residencies including: McColl Center for Arts + Innovation: Museum of Arts and Design Artist Studio Residency; BRIC Workspace Program; The Caldera Residency; Joan Mitchell Center; Webb School of Knoxville; Sculpture Space; Fountainhead Residency; MoMA PS1 International Residency Program; Socrates Sculpture Park; Abrons Art Center and Longwood Art Project. Esperanza's international residencies include Altos de Chavon, Dominican Republic, Can Serrat, Spain, and Bielska BWA Gallery, Poland.

about the artist

Esperanza's work has been reviewed by Whitehot, Artforum, Artnews, New York Times, New Art Examiner, Art in America and Art Nexus. Esperanza has been the subject of interviews and programs on public television and radio, newspapers, art blogs, and publications in the USA, Europe, South America and the Caribbean.

Esperanza has designed workshops and taught extensively as a museum educator, artist in residence and community artist, creating murals, sculptures, site specific installations and visual arts projects through the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Artist Space, Brooklyn's Children's Museum, Socrates Sculpture Park, El Museo Del Barrio, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of Art and the Museum of Art and Design.

Cortés's work is in private and public collections including the American Embassy in Monterey, Mexico.



about the artist

NOTABLE AWARDS

- 2018 **JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION:**
FINE ARTS FELLOW: NEW YORK, NY
- 2016 **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS:**
SCULPTURE SPACE FELLOWSHIP, UTICA, NY
- 2014 **JOAN MITCHELL FOUNDATION:**
2014 PAINTERS & SCULPTORS GRANT, NEW YORK, NY

NOTABLE RESIDENCIES

- 2019 **MCCOLL CENTER FOR ART + INNOVATION,**
CHARLOTTE, NC
- 2018 **MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN,**
NEW YORK, NY
- 2014 **WEBB SCHOOL OF KNOXVILLE,**
KNOXVILLE, TENN

about the artist

ARTIST LINKS

2020 TCVA: CANTAR DE CIEGOS/SONG OF THE BLIND: ESPERANZA CORTÉS

2020 ESPERANZA CORTÉS WEBSITE

2019 ESPERANZA CORTÉS, CANTÉ JONDO / DEEP SONG AT SMACK MELLON

2018 GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2018 FELLOWS

2018 ESPERANZA CORTES GUGGENHEIM FELLOWSHIP

2017 OJO! ESPERANZA CORTÉS MAKES HER ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH DEBUT

2014 JOAN MITCHELL FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 2014 PAINTERS &
SCULPTORS GRANT RECIPIENTS

2000 THE NEW YORK TIMES: ART REVIEW; PIECES OF DOMESTICITY AND LINKS
TO NATURE

ARTIST VIDEOS

ESPERANZA CORTÉS: ARRESTED SYMPHONY

ESPERANZA CORTÉS, BRICWORKSPACE ARTIST, EXPLORES THE
COLOMBIAN EMERALD INDUSTRY | BK STORIES

artist statement

My interest in the folk art traditions, art rituals, music and dance of Latin America, The Caribbean and Africa and their continuous and evolving changes are at the core of my practice. I utilize a wide variety of materials and artistic methods often in combination with reworked found objects that are impregnated with cultural symbols that act as sites of memory. The hand crafted artworks which are poetically and intricately crafted, create an intimate repository for individual and collective memory and implement the human body as a symbol and expression of nature, vulnerability and power. Physicality informs my practice through body memory. As a former afro latin dancer, my work seeks to underscore and use sacred space and the patterns of dance and percussion. I use music and fragments of histories as departure points to investigate and build the structure and space of the installations. My artworks are organic and improvisational constructions that are infused with hope and renewal. Esperanza (hope) is a guiding force in the making of my work, which is a call and response to people

culture, place and history. My installations which are organic and improvisational constructions are infused with hope and renewal. As a multidisciplinary artist, I create sculptures, installations, reliefs, works on paper and site specific outdoor interventions. I use my work to encourage viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives especially when dealing with colonialism, and raise critical questions about the politics of erasure and exclusion. My recent work examines the extent to which a consciousness, national or personal, defines itself through the opposing force of a transcultural experience. My work is an exercise of collective memory that underscores its transformative potential and triggers a reflection of issues of interpretation, dialogue, and the role of contemporary culture in our global reality. I create structures for collaborative dialogues as expressions of personal, community truths and histories.

Esperanza Cortés
TCVA.org

exhibition statement

CANTAR DE CIEGOS/SONG OF THE BLIND is a multidisciplinary exhibition incorporating multiple installations, sculptures and reliefs that examine the aftermath of the colonization of the Americas. Its title speaks of the seizures of lands, the enslavement of people and pillaging of precious natural resources which created the massive wealth of the European Nations and the United States. 90% of Indigenous people in the Americas were decimated by Europeans, from a combined impact of massacres, disease, and overwork. Through this genocide there was a loss of cultures, languages, knowledge, and the rewriting of histories. The history we consumed afterwards in the Americas was written by people of European lineage. For that reason we are unable to recognize the history and accomplishments of people of Indigenous and African descent without prejudicial rhetoric. Which leads us back to this moment in time. My work is informed by the extraordinary hybridization of our Americas. This hemisphere is a creative force forging its way through the arts and sciences and has been punctuated by African and Native structures. These seeds are embedded in the literature, visual arts, music, dance,

film and phraseology that has impacted world culture. Imagine a world without Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Rock and Roll, and Hip Hop in the United States. In Latin America life would be strained without Salsa, Samba, Cumbia, and all the musical forms which make life beautiful and bearable. I make use of my work to encourage viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives especially when dealing with Colonialism, and raises critical questions about the politics of erasure and exclusion. My work is an exercise of collective memory that underscores its transformative potential and triggers a reflection of issues of interpretation, and the role of contemporary culture in our global reality. I create structures for collaborative dialogues as expressions of personal, community truths and histories. Esperanza (hope) is a guiding force in the making of my work, which is a call and response to people, culture, place and history. My installations are organic and improvisational constructions which are infused with hope and renewal.

Esperanza Cortés

TCVA.org



ESPERANZA CORTÉS

**A CHARMED LIFE, 2008 - 2012
FRESCOS, CHAIR, ALABASTER BEADS,
CHAINS, AMULETS, PILLOW**

This installation considers the physical, social and spiritual sacrifices made to conform. Bruises, lacerations and contusions stand for the abuses imposed by self and others, and question the lengths traversed to attain our desires and the desires themselves. What is exchanged for life lived as a fairy tale?



ESPERANZA CORTÉS
CHARLOTTE, 2019
CHAIR, EMBROIDERY, 4 PLASTER
FLOWERS WITH PEARL NECKLACES

Charlotte was created during my 2019 residency at The McColl Center for Art + Innovation. This work is influenced by the naming of the city of Charlotte, NC and the history of Queen Charlotte.



ESPERANZA CORTÉS
EL GRITO DE LAS FLORES/
THE CRY OF THE FLOWERS, 2019
PERSONAL EMBROIDERY, GLASS
BEADS, MDF BOARD

El Grito De Las Flores was created during my 2019 residency at The McColl Center for Art + Innovation. This work is a lamentation on the destruction of rain forests and the horrible effect it has on the health of humans and the natural environment.



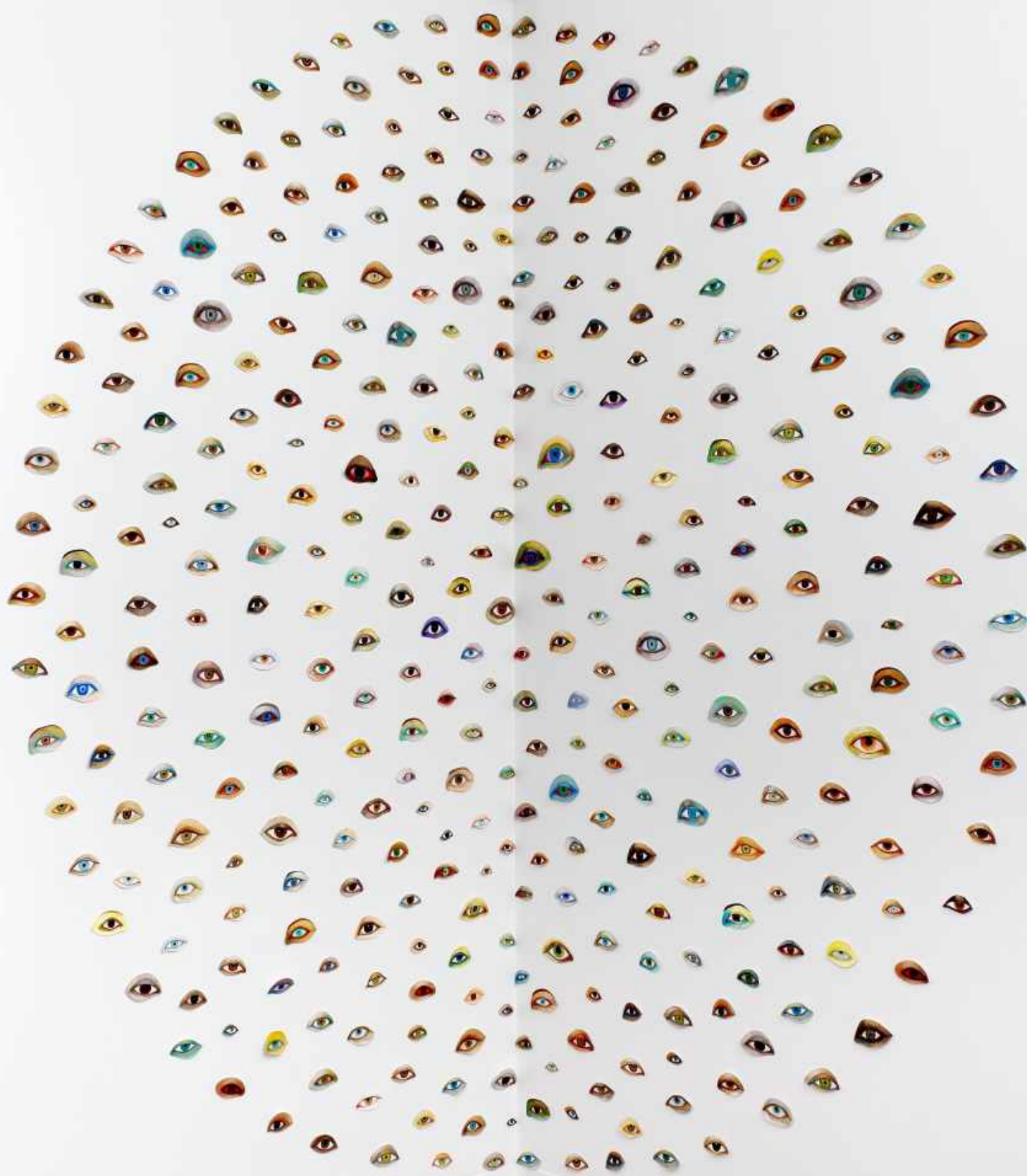
ESPERANZA CORTÉS
LA CRIOLLA, 2019
CLAY, CHAINS, AMULETS

La Criolla was created during my residency at The McColl Center for Art + Innovation in 2019.



ESPERANZA CORTÉS
LA MANO PODEROSA/
THE POWERFUL HAND, 2016 - 2019
CLAY, CHAINS, FILIGREE BEADS,
BRASS BEADS

This piece was started during my 2016 residency at The Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans and finished during my residency at The McColl Center for Art + Innovation.



ESPERANZA CORTÉS
OJO II, 2008 - 2018
400 HAND PAINTED EYES
AND ARCHIVAL PRINTS

Ojo II explores the human response to political, economic and natural disasters, as well as human rights abuses. There are those who watch and those who are watched.



ESPERANZA CORTÉS
SECOND SIGHT, 2008 - 2018
GLASS BEADED SCULPTURES,
TABLE, MIRROR, VITRINE

Second Sight honors the curandera (healer) in Latinx culture as a whole, as well as the personal connection to my grandmothers who were both curanderas in Colombia. These individuals dedicated their lives to maintaining the physical and spiritual well being and equilibrium of their families and communities. Each individual piece represents their instruments and fruits of their labors.



ESPERANZA CORTÉS

WHAT WAS LEFT, 2008 - 2010
GOLD LEAF CHANDELIER, CHAINS,
GLASS BEADS, CRYSTALS, CURTAIN

A large hanging work looms at 16 feet, in an elaborate gold leaf chandelier with a multitude of gold plated brass chains. The work attracts the viewer to the excessiveness of colonialism which has led to our current situation with the world bank. Around the world today, conflict is found in many areas that were once colonized or controlled by Europeans for their natural resources. The source of many of these conflicts, lies in past colonial policies, the treatment of indigenous populations, and the privileging of some groups over others.

behind the scenes

INSTALLATION



prompt & activity

CANTAR DE CIEGOS / SONG OF THE BLIND

ESPERANZA CORTÉS



ACTIVITY

Find an item that has a particular meaning for you. How could you change that item or add to it in order to accentuate the meaning or the importance of that object in your life?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The art world was turned upside down when artist Marcel Duchamp installed a common factory made plumbing fixture in a gallery. Duchamp used an ordinary item in a slightly different way and asked the question, 'Is this art?' Think about all of ordinary objects that you noticed have been included in the sculptures of Esperanza Cortes. How did those items add to your interest and understanding of the piece? Why do you think the artist selected the items used to create her art?



THANK YOU

FROM THE TURCHIN CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachian State University engages visitors from the university, community, nation and beyond in creating unique experiences through dynamic and accessible exhibition, education, outreach and collection programs. These programs inspire and support a lifelong engagement with the visual arts and create opportunities for participants to learn more about themselves and the world around them.

SHARE YOUR WORK WITH US AT #TCVAATHOME !

Appalachian
STATE UNIVERSITY.