

## To the Guts of Yapci Ramos

The international video artist and photographer Yapci Ramos discovers the second part of her exhibition trilogy in the show 'Know us', which she opened at the CAAM.

---

BY NORA NAVARRO- MARCH 15TH 2019

Artist Yapci Ramos questions who we are and looks for what we were. And that dialogue that confronts and overlaps questions of the present with the faces of the past breathes into the heart of Know us, the second vertex of the exhibition trilogy of this canarian video artist and photographer, curated by art historian Yolanda Peralta. This hypnotic identity game, currently exhibited at CAAM-San Antonio Abad, at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Canary Islands, Spain), forms the second chapter of the exhibition narrative that discovers the creative universe of this international artist for the first time in her native Archipelago, distributed in three different art centers in a staggered manner. The exhibition Show me opened this journey through Ramos' artistic arteries last October at the TEA Tenerife Espacio de las Artes with a poetic speculation on the relationship with others. And after the introspective assault in Know us, which sees the light for the first time at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, this trip results in Welcome her, a contextual immersion exercise that mirrors the artist's close relationship with the african continent and opened on 22 March at Casa África.

The first path around Know us on the ground floor of CAAM-San Antonio Abad houses a photographic enigma that dances and mutates before our eyes, as if the artist recalled that identity is always a construction in movement, which is revealed in different directions depending on where we stand to look. The photographs in this section correspond to portraits from Ramos' family album, as of her mother's, father's or her two aunts', but each face blurs like an evanescent hologram until it is redrawn in the artist's own face. This duality or familiar analogy imprints in its physiognomy the reminiscences of an "unconscious transgenerational legacy", that revives in the expression of the eyebrows, a half smile or a way of looking. "This transition or metamorphosis between each character in my family and myself is the formal search that allows me to bring that past to the present, which is part of me," states the artist, who in turn points out that "in the Show me project, the important thing was to show myself, whilst the Know us project has to do with knowing oneself".

The artist discloses that this performative attempt to superimpose times and identities, where she appropriates the gestures of each family portrait as a decalcomania, implied "about three hours of work for each photograph, because I was not only looking for the physical connection, but also for the emotional connection, in order to reach that moment in which each picture was taken".

"Through this search exercise you never get to reach all the answers, but what is actually important is the journey", holds Ramos, as she invites us to embark on this narrative proposal that "could be that of any Canarian family" within the common territorial, migratory and cultural framework of the islands.

This passage ends in the courtyard of CAAM-San Antonio Abad with a sound installation that envelops the whole exhibition with the song of a bird in Tegucigalpa (Honduras), one of the numerous cities that make up the artist's vital and action map.

"This sound recreates a moment in which I felt physically trapped by the circumstances and where I undertook a dialogue between that song and the whistle, which in turn connects with our ancestral communication, which has to do with the concept of freedom," points the artist. Thus, this piece named Freedom underlines that recognizing oneself through our family ramifications should never chain our lives. "This work also evokes my grandmother's words, who told me: be free", states the artist.

Finally, the upper floor of CAAM-San Antonio Abad exhibits the video installation Red-Hot, which the artist opened for the first time at the Catinca Tabacaru Gallery in New York, 2018. This visceral and organic piece shows the artist herself drawing her questions across 24 words on the shower's marble wall through the ink of her menstrual blood: go, why, how, time, true, you, which she then dilutes in water as a symbol of purification.

Her vocation to pulverize the taboos associated with menstruation in order to sublimate, liberate and bleed her own doubts, experiences and resignification as a woman is

reproduced in a rite that she developed over a period of two years, and that, in turn, refers also to the ritual of purification of the Canarian aborigines in the sea before reproduction. "I did not intend to turn this into a work of art, but the best way to convey my anguish was through a matter that I could pull out of myself, and that was menstruation," reveals the artwork.

All in all, this international artist born in the island of Tenerife, who now lives between Barcelona and New York but has developed a significant artistic career over 20 years in numerous countries such as Moscow, Honduras, Republic of Congo or Senegal, among many more African countries, discovers her work for the first time in the Canary Islands.

The director of CAAM, Orlando Britto, who made contact with Ramos 10 years ago at the Damako Biennial, highlighted "the great quality of her art work" and her "outstanding capacity for empathic immersion in contexts".

Ramos' Know us at CAAM-San Antonio Abad is also part of this art center's commitment to exhibit and vindicate the silenced works of women artists in the Canary Islands.

In this regard, Yolanda Peralta, a reference in the struggle to make women creators visible through the narrative of Art History, celebrated "the work carried out by CAAM in recent years in favour of female artist's visibility, not only by promoting individual exhibitions, but also with the incorporation of female creator's art works into the center's collection". Peralta also pointed to the latest report given by the association Women in Visual Arts (Mujeres en las Artes Visuales-MAV), which reflected a worrying decline in the presence of women creators in the last edition of ARCO, the biggest International Contemporary Art Fair in Spain. "The art market is a complex world and if, in addition, you are a woman over 40 years old and dedicate yourself to video art, you are a 1%", laughed Ramos, "very happy" from the second page of her artistic trilogy.