

SITE Santa Fe — Glenda León: This tree is more than a tree

Posted: Friday, July 18, 2014

5:00 am

By: Paul Weideman

Artificial leaves, trees, and glue comprise the medium for Glenda León's work *Esperanza (Out of Season)*, featured in SITE Santa Fe's biennial exhibition. The first iteration of this evolving artwork was performed in Montreal, in the context of a performance-art show hosted by the artist-run La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse and curated by Tagny Duff.



Glenda León: *Esperanza (Out of Season)*, 2014, artificial leaves, trees, glue

“Choosing this project for a performance-art festival was also a gesture responding to a book I wrote about performativity in arts,” León said. “One of the main concepts in this book was that the action in some works of art was done not by the artist-performer but by other elements, in this case, nature.”

“I glued several artificial leaves to the branches of a tree, and they were identical to the real ones, so at the beginning no one could notice this intervention. It was just until the arriving of the autumn that we could see that there was something bizarre in that tree, as some of its leaves were still so green.” In Santa Fe her piece will gain a new dimension because instead of one tree there will be several. The five chokecherries and flowering crabapples were recently transplanted to the grounds of the museum, adjacent to Santa Fe Railyard Park.

León typically works in installation, drawing, photography, and video art, exploring what she calls the “interstices between visible and invisible, between sound and silence, between ephemeral and eternal.”

MAGNANMETZ GALLERY

Born and raised in Havana, the artist studied philology and classical ballet after high school. She went on to earn her bachelor's degree in art history at the Universidad de La Habana and her master's at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne. She now divides her time between Havana and Madrid.

Two recent examples from her résumé are *Hacia el Silencio*, a multimedia solo show hanging through July 25 at Galería Senda in Barcelona, and the sound installation *Música de las Esferas*, which was featured in last year's Venice Biennale.

“In the first years of my career I used artificial elements to point out about what is eternal and what is natural. In an ironic way, this reminds me of the Renaissance and how they simulate nature so much in their artworks as a result of a deep observation and close relationship with it.

“I'm also very interested in remarking the process of this work. It's the nature who gives it life, as in the first days or months of the show. This could be a very anonymous piece, which is also a way to annul the ego of the artist (and the ego as a wider concept), something a bit bizarre too, as they usually like to be in the first and more visible places in the shows.

“I want to underline the fact that nowadays the artificial things have inundated the world, from the food to all sort of materials. This is also a subtle intervention in the city, a touch of banishment within its daily rhythm, a metaphor to encourage us to be positive even when it may look that it is not the time for that.”

Unsettled Landscapes, first in the *SITELines* biennial exhibition series Opening 2 p.m. Saturday, July 19; exhibition through Jan. 11, 2015

SITE Santa Fe, 1606 Paseo de Peralta, 505-989-1199

No charge July 19, then entry by museum admission