



BEATRIZ CANFIELD'S VIDEO/SCULPTURE/SOUND INSTALLATION "SIN ECO"

CULTURAL EXPORT

Young Mexican talent on display in London

BY ELIZABETH MISTRY
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LONDON — "For me everything starts with the space," says Mexican sculptress Beatriz Canfield.

"It's important because if the work is site-specific, it needs to be appropriate to the surroundings, fit where it is going to be, where people will see it and experience it," she said.

And it is in London, at the Crypt of St Andrew's Church on the edge of the city's financial district where Canfield and seven other artists are currently showing their latest creations — a collection of sculpture, video and installations — all of which have been created especially for a new exhibition of contemporary Mexican art, "Betrayal."

The show is the brainchild of the British producer Jon Bonfiglio who has emerged as one of the United Kingdom's most important promoters of contemporary Mexican art in recent years.

"Betrayal" (Traición) is the second in a series of three exhibitions produced by Bonfiglio. The first show, called "Emerging from the Shadow," (Emergiendo de la Sombra) took place in February 2006 beneath an English town hall. It later came to Mexico City in October, appearing in another crypt-like space — the abandoned former National Financiera.

A number of the artists return from "Emerging" to appear in "Betrayal," including up-and-coming Mexican artist Javier Areán, whose work this year is called "Viaje" (Journey). The piece features rows of figures distributed on pallets that run off into the distance. According to the artist, the artwork offers a comment about where people find themselves in life.

But it is Canfield's thought-provoking multi-media installation, "Sin Eco"



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JAVIER AREÁN'S "VIAJE"

(Without Echo) that captures the imagination. The creator, trained at the prestigious Esmeralda art school in Mexico City, has assembled a deeply moving response to the murdered women from Ciudad Juárez (with more than an echo of other victims of violence). The piece takes up an entire section of St. Andrew's labyrinthine undercroft. A long line of pebbles — each one representing one of the almost 400 women killed in Chihuahua lead to a projected image of a larger-than-life-size woman with hands apparently bound that morphs into and out of focus.

EMPTY SWINGS

Japanese-born Miho Hagino has spent more than a decade in Mexico developing her unique style. Her piece, "Columpios para las Alicias" (Swings for the Alicias), consists of two empty swings made to fit the mold of the artist's floppy, plush toys she calls Alicia, a character that appeared in her "Emerging" piece "La cama de las dos Alicias" (The Bed for two Alicias). The artist states that empty swings in the artwork reflect on the notion of alienation.

"Betrayal" co-curator Katri Walker, a Scottish photographer who used to live in Mexico

City and who works closely with the Garash Gallery there, presented a one-off opening night piece titled "Llorona."

Named after the Mexican legendary spirit that haunts the night looking for her children, Walker presented a crying woman surrounded by candles, symbolizing betrayal and loss.

Her "Llorona" featured a weeping woman surrounded by candles, symbolizing the betrayal and loss — the recurrent themes for the exhibition.

Discussing the exhibition, Walker said, "We had to whittle the artists down from 25 to 8 because there is so much good work coming out of Mexico now."

"I'm really excited about the future of Mexican art and I think people are realizing that it has a lot to offer."

Walker added that the organizers plan to bring "Betrayal" to Mexico City later this year in collaboration with the Jumex Collection, considered by many to be the most important contemporary art collection in the country.

"It means that people are finally ready for the new generation and I find that tremendously exciting," said Walker.

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