

## Yeni & Nan: Nacimiento

Opening Reception: Friday May 11, 6-9 pm

Exhibition runs through June 16, 2018

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 11-6 pm

Henrique Faria Fine Art is pleased to present *Nacimiento*, the second exhibition of the work of Venezuelan duo Yeni & Nan in the New York gallery. This exhibition is centered on the development and realization of their pivotal performance piece *Nacimiento (Birth)*, 1979. As curator Cecilia Fajardo-Hill notes in the exhibition text, the theme of birth was predominant in Yeni & Nan's work throughout their time working together (1977-1986), as it encouraged them to use their own bodies to further explore this subject, as well as related topics including the female/feminine, life and freedom. As multidisciplinary artists, they incorporated their interests in meditation, yoga and Tai Chi with poetry, writing, drawing, photography, video, installation and performance to create multifaceted works that engaged the spectator on sensorial, emotional and intellectual levels.

The two series *Cuerpo línea (Body Line)*, 1977 and *Tensiones reflexivas (Reflexive Tensions)*, 1979, regarded by the artists as precursors to *Nacimiento*, introduce the viewer to Yeni & Nan's visual investigations of the body in space and their portrayal of the relationship between the body and its natural environment. These series examine how the body reacts when it comes against external forces of friction and rigidity, when freedom and movement are constricted and limited. In *Cuerpo línea*, the first performance enacted by the duo while they were studying at the Chelsea College of Arts in London, the artists superimposed their bodies upon the predetermined geometry of a tennis court, challenging the dominance of the square and the grid and reflecting the art world at large with the transitioning from the strictness inherent in the Modernist and Minimalist movements to the fluidity of form in Postmodernism and Postminimalism. In *Tensiones reflexivas* the hands of the artists are bound with string, contorting their shapes and restricting their motion.

The use of string took on an expanded role in the performances of *Nacimiento*, where it was employed along with a white sheet to create a microenvironment that symbolized a cocoon or a womb. As Fajardo-Hill describes, this performance was realized several times in 1979 and each rendition was slightly different, demonstrating the "subsequent development of the work and the multiple lives of the performative act." The version of the performance documented in the photographs of *Nacimiento I y II (Birth I and II)*, 1979 took place in Nan's lush backyard garden. Amidst this verdant backdrop, Yeni and Nan aided each other in undergoing their own birth ritual: they covered one another with the white sheet and bound each other tightly with string. As Margarita D'Amico, who filmed this performance, described their processes, "Yeni [created] shapes and [broke] her ties through actions of pure inner energy; [while] Nan [freed] herself through profoundly violent gestures and sounds". The performance at the Galería Universitaria de Arte Ángel Boscán, as seen in the photographs *Nacimiento Yeni* and *Nacimiento Nan (Birth, Yeni and Birth, Nan)*, 1979, had a more subdued and dreamlike quality in which spectators witnessed Nan untangling herself and emerging from a web-like entrapment of string and Yeni extricating herself from the chrysalis of the sheet that had been tightly sealed over her body by string. These performances' powerful use of symbolism heightened the transformational and metamorphic aspects of birth in not only a physical sense, but a spiritual one as well.

As the exhibition text concludes, although "the duo disbanded in 1986, the trove of supporting material created during these performances has allowed *Nacimiento* to take on a new presence, as the inception of singular and powerful notions of birth as ritual and origin of life. This and other works are witness and testament to the intense creativity engendered by Yeni & Nan and serve as an alternate lens through which the viewers of today can approach the liberated female body in the context of experimental contemporary art."

**Jennifer (Yeni) Hackshaw** and **María Luisa (Nan) González** (Caracas, 1948 and 1956) first met at the Cristóbal Rojas art school in Caracas during the 1970s. In 1977, they started to work together as Yeni & Nan and moved to London, England in order to study art, and later to Cannes, France to study photography. The pair returned to Caracas in 1979 to study film. Yeni and Nan worked together from 1977 to 1986, the year they decided to separate in order to pursue individual art careers. While working together, they participated in numerous celebrated exhibitions, some of which include *20 Contemporary Venezuelan Artists* at the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAyC) Buenos Aires, Argentina (1979); the Salón Arturo Michelena in Valencia, Venezuela (1979); various performances at the National Art Gallery of Caracas (1979, 1980, 1982, 1983); the Bienal de São Paulo (1981); *Colloquium on Non-objective Art* at the Museum of Modern Art, Medellín, Venezuela (1981); and the *Biennial of Young Artists of Paris* at the Museum of Modern Art, Paris, France (1982). At the third National Salon of Young Artists in 1985, the duo won first prize. Most recently, their work has been included in the touring exhibition *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985* now on view at the Brooklyn Museum, New York. Yeni Hackshaw now lives and works in Salamanca, Spain, while Nan González has remained in Caracas, where she resides and works. Each artist has continued to develop her own artistic and creative practice.

For press inquiries please contact Eugenia Sucre, Director, at [eugenia@henriquefaria.com](mailto:eugenia@henriquefaria.com)