

G A L E R I E G I S E L A C A P I T A I N

XIMENA GARRIDO-LECCA

Lines of Divergence

May 26 - August 31, 2018

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce its first exhibition with Peruvian artist Ximena Garrido-Lecca (* 1980 in Lima, Peru).

With her work Ximena Garrido-Lecca creates a visual story full of both history and insights into the current situation of her country Peru, which she conveys to the outside world in a powerful language, complex and direct at once.

With her sculptures, installations and video works Garrido-Lecca explores the cultural impact of neocolonial standards that are transmitted through the process of globalization. Her work reveals how modernization brings about profound transformations in the rural landscape and the life of its inhabitants. Frequently her sculptures, drawings, installations and videos have a direct relationship to vernacular Peruvian forms. Garrido-Lecca analyzes the use of quotidian materials that have been employed in crafts, arts and architecture throughout Peruvian history.

A recurring theme is the impact of copper exploitation through opencast mining in the countryside. According to the logic of the excessive demand for copper in this region, the mines are progressively taking over habitable space, making communities move and radically changing their way of life. As there is almost no industry in Peru, all the raw material mined in Peru is exported, and then eventually re-imported in its refined and processed form. By bringing the recycled copper back to artisanal practices in Peru, Garrido-Lecca reverts the process of industrialization. In her work, the use of copper functions as a gesture of resistance. The project *Lines of Divergence* is a telling example of the clash between the political promises of progress and the lack of infrastructure, the political corruption and mismanagement that make it impossible for progress to occur in Peru. The artist assembles objects from contemporary Peru to create a fact-based visual journey of its reality, without being accusing or didactic. While the references are highly local, Garrido-Lecca's work speaks to contemporary global concerns of struggles over natural resources, public services and private access for those living on its borders.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Lines of Divergence

The project started with a series of photographs titled *Divergent Lots*, taken in Pucusana, a fishing town on the outskirts of Lima. Over the course of three years, beginning in 2010, I documented a series of structures made with bamboo panels and wooden posts in the desert. The structures are generally built as a way of laying claim to the land. Over time they are gradually inhabited and expanded, acquiring a more permanent form, eventually turning into brick and concrete. This process of land possession is very common on the coast around Lima, and began with the first large influx of migration from the highland regions in the 1950s.

As Peruvian anthropologist José Matos Mar explains in his 1984 essay *Desborde Popular y Crisis del Estado*, the failure of the government to provide access to, and consequently

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distribute, the country's resources catalysed a spontaneous mobilisation of the Andean farming communities. Throughout the first half of the 20th century the dream that industrialisation would bring "progress and development" to the provinces failed, imposing instead a concentration of economic and political power which became centralised within the urban elites. The growth of communications and the acceleration of industry and commerce in Lima relegated agriculture to a secondary status. In the highlands, the decline of agriculture took the power away from the landowners, and led to a collapse in the welfare of the region. The Andean world was gradually forgotten, privileging the dominant coastal sectors. Feeling disenfranchised and tired of subordination, many people came to the city questioning the power of the government and the ruling elite. They employed inventive strategies and parallel social and political mechanisms, altering the established order. This movement developed creative plans for survival, confronting and overwhelming the norms, challenging what was legal and official, and went against the formal status quo. This phenomenon became known as the process of "informalisation". The new migrant population organised and coordinated invasions of urban property in the capital, overrunning the city. They demanded housing, titles, and basic services. It was the emergence of a new working class movement; the marginalised were finally empowered.

The video, which gives the title of the exhibition *Lines of Divergence*, is the last chapter in the documentation of the invasions near Pucusana. Made eight years after the first pictures were taken, it shows the last stage of the process of land possession. The chalk lines in the desert divide the already registered land into lots and demarcating the now legally owned land.

As the main exporter of copper to China, and the second largest producer of copper in the world, a large part of Peru's economy is sustained by this metal. In economics, there is a vigorous debate between convergence and divergence in growing economies. While some specialists believe that fast, sustained long-run growth is possible across the developing world, others, like Kemal Dervis, have warned that this fast growth leads to a phenomenon of convergence between countries but with a divergence within them.

The series of works *Aleaciones con memoria de forma* (Memory Shape Alloys), begun in 2013, use copper as a gesture of resistance. As there is almost no industry in Peru, all the raw material mined in Peru is exported, and then eventually re-imported in its refined and processed form. The copper weavings in the show are made from cut and opened copper tubes used in gas and water piping systems; the work reverts the process of industrialisation, bringing it back to artisanal practices.

I have worked in the past with the idea of transmutation. In the work *Resistant Shapes Cylindrical Planes* (2012) oil containers were reshaped making them into improvised barriers, and in the exhibition *Native States* industrialised copper was reverted to its natural form. In this exhibition, the wooden poles reproduced in cast copper were made in an artisanal foundry in Comas, one of the most populous districts in Lima that originated from a series of invasions in the 70s. Using recycled industrialised copper from electric cables from nearby gathering centers, the sand casting replicates the poles used as the first structures for the invasions, presenting them as a charged symbol of resistance.

Taking into consideration the different forms of colonialism that affect this region, the "invasions" of land still represent a strong force of opposition, aiming to open new spaces for integration and potential routes for democracy. However, this remains a very incipient and uncertain process, even after more than sixty years of struggle.