

NOAH BECKER'S

WHITEHOT MAGAZINE

OF CONTEMPORARY ART

(<https://whitehotmagazine.com/>)

WHITEHOT MAGAZINE

"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"

APRIL 2024

The Real Integration: Art from the Global South at Mexico City's ZONAMACO 2024



Ariamna Contino & Alex Hernández-Dueñas, Holding the Breeze, Installation, NUNU Fine Art, ZONAMACO 2024, Image courtesy of the gallery

By KAREN MOE February 29, 2024

I didn't have to go far to find my story about Mexico City's ZONA MACO (<https://zsonamaco.com/>) this year. Latin America's largest international art fair, ZONAMACO is organized into sections of North, South, East and West. I started in the south, ZONAMACO SUR, and I stepped into an epicentre of art that evoked empathy, works that narrate what we really are and what we can be.

This year, Luiza Teixeira de Freitas (Río de Janeiro, 1984) curated ZONAMACOSUR. She challenged galleries to exhibit works of empathy, community, and integration. Tellingly, the 23 galleries that comprised Freitas' curatorial project exhibited the work of artists from the Global South, those who live in the lands that are exploited in order to feed the insatiable greed of the North. It

should go without saying that the South is the most in need of empathy; however, at the same time, those who reside there are most able to communicate the necessity for empathy and community, a way of being that is in absolute contrast to the individualism of the self-interest-wielding north that is crucial for the health of not only the planet, but for all of us. As demonstrated by the artists featured in ZONAMACOSUR, the most productive criticisms and acts of resistance come from those who are intimately acquainted with neglected spaces and the wisdom that is found there.

NUNU Fine Art (<http://www.nunufineart.com>) featured the work of Cuban social practice artists Ariamna Contino and Alex Hernández-Dueñas with their installation *Holding the Breeze* . The project originated with air quality and was generated through the site-specific installation of air sampling stations that had been placed in Havana, Miami, New York City, and Mexico City. With the data collected, Contino and Hernández-Dueñas created stylized maps and grids pin-pointing the hot spots of air quality deterioration. On the surface, these artworks can be seen as acts of objective documentation; however, built with the intricate layering of Contino's hand-cut cardboard, a depth is achieved that serves to flesh out objectification while narrating the painstaking care the artists took when creating this information for us.

Barely discernable upon first entering the exhibition space, two 49 1/2-inch square white artworks beckoned, their emptiness from a distance activating the neglect of the subject matter of the work. As one approached, we beheld the forest, phantasmic, intricate layers of hand-cut paper, the delineation of the images discernable only through Contino's building of depth. Her three-dimensionalized artworks are miraculous in their intricacy and detail as they etch back into the world what needs to be noticed, empathized with, and re-integrated into the human community. "Natural Filters White Eucalyptus" and "Pino Carrasco" are as lace, both elegant and urgent, the depths the artist has built mesmerize as they call to us. Despite the brutal reality the installation represents, the title is telling in that it is 'holding' the 'breeze'—softness is evoked in this act of awareness, empathy and possibility.