

ESPINARIO

02.04.2024 – 28.05.2024

GALLERIA CONTINUA is delighted to present an exhibition by Yoan Capote, an emblematic artist of Cuba's rich and vibrant contemporary scene and now an international figure living between Cuba and Europe. Entitled *ESPINARIO*, this is the artist's first solo show at the gallery's Paris space, running from 2 April to 28 May 2024.

Taking an emotional approach to our world, the exhibition presents a selection of works exploring a variety of themes, but always linked to the artist's socio-political reflections, such as migration and borders, the dialectic of life and death, control and freedom of expression. Essentially inspired by his personal experiences and their link with the social environment in which they are lived, Capote is constantly seeking to translate the complex emotional and psychological conflicts of the individual into the physical experience of his work.

The name of the exhibition, *ESPINARIO*, comes from the small statue the "Spinario", of a boy pulling a thorn from his foot, taken from a legend that inspired many artists from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. This type of statuery dates from the 1st century BC and depicts a young shepherd removing a thorn from his foot. The best-known example of this theme is on display in the Hall of the Triumphs in the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome. The singular, graceful pose of this figure, caught in an unusual gesture, made it one of the most admired and copied works of the Renaissance. With a vitally important message to deliver, the shepherd boy only stopped to pull the thorn from his foot once his mission had been accomplished. While the foot was a symbol of freedom and mobility in ancient traditions, the thorn embodied obstacles, limitations and pain.

The use of this myth in Capote's work follows the characteristic metaphor of the artist as messenger, and shows his own involvement in the transmission of our shared ideas and feelings. In this way, the artist takes on the pain of the world around him, expressing it through his art and relieving people of their pain.

Many of the works in the exhibition are new, and are the result of a sensitive examination of contemporary human behaviour, affected by power structures, the fragmentation of the family sphere, conflicting ideologies, fake news and censorship. The artist's use of precise symbolism is informed by an in-depth analysis of the various inner psychological conflicts we face, individually or collectively, in many parts of the world today.

Capote is presenting a new series, *Sentimientos Encontrados*, based on electrocardiograms collected by the artist from various Cuban individuals, expressing the fragmentation of Cuban society caused by grief and frustration. The use of these techniques manifest the artist's turn towards abstraction in his artistic language. Made from saw blades, the rhythms of which are based on heartbeats taken from the electrocardiograms of various people in Cuba, the work evokes different ways of feeling and thinking about reality.

A similar creative process led to the development of *Espinario (síndrome de Procusto)*, practically echoing the name of the exhibition itself. Based on a work created by the artist in 2003, in which he tried to graphically represent the sound of his voice when he uttered the word "silence", *Espinario* develops in greater depth his work on the transcription of sound as a creative material. This time, the graphic shapes of the word "freedom", pronounced by many different people, are assembled in a

grid pattern to create an aggressive and sharp surface, similar to a bed of thorns. On the other hand, in *Lacerante (Paisaje de nostalgia)*, the artist received the voice files of several Cuban migrants saying words about their experience. Words like: Exile, uprooting, exodus, sadness, farewell, nostalgia, exile, melancholy etc. All these words were cut in bronze with green patina and brown rust corten steel in the size of trees in a maquette. Then all together fixed on an old wooden create a forest.

Purification (struggimento) (2024) is a work made specially for the exhibition. Throughout PURIFICATION series Capote recycles and reworks chains, barbed wire fencing, handcuffs, and other metal detritus into alternate shapes and dimensions, there are moments of deconstruction, tension, aggression, and control. All this work process is shown at the gallery in a video that documents the sequences of actions and that contents the most powerful meaning on the work.

The new works in the exhibition are presented in dialogue with earlier works by Capote, such as *Speechless* (2019), *Autorretrato (estudio de resistencia)* (2019), *Obediencia* (2019), in which the artist, through the representation of different parts of the human body, dilute the representation of individual experience in a collective empathy, or a social allusion.

About the artist:

Yoan Capote was born in Pinar del Río, Cuba, in 1977. He graduated from the National School of Art in 1995 and from the Higher Institute of Art in Havana in 2001.

He has received distinctions such as the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2006), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Prize (2006) and the Vermont Study Center Fellowship (2002). At the 7th Havana Biennial (2000), he was awarded the UNESCO Prize, together with the DUPP artists' collective. His work was part of the group exhibition at the Cuban Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011) and at the Sydney Biennale (2022). A large-scale painting was exhibited at Art Basel Unlimited, 2022.

His most important exhibitions include: *This far and further* (2023), Museum Voorlinden, The Netherlands; *Mirador Circular*, Galleria Continua, Havana; *La Brèche*, Galleria Continua, Paris, France; *Landlors Color*, Cranbrook Art Museum, Michigan, USA (2019); *Sujeto Omitido*, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy (2019); *Baggage Claims*, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA (2019); *Ola Cuba*, Gare Saint Sauveur, Lille, France (2018); *Cuban Art*, traveling exhibition co-organized by the Mid-America Arts Alliance with the Center for Cuban Studies (NYC) (2018); *Cuba mi amor*, Galleria Continua, Les Moulins, France (2017); *Art x Cuba*, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst,

Aachen, Germany (2017); *Overseas*, Center for Contemporary Art Halle 14, Leipzig, Germany (2017); *Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago*, organized by Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA and The Getty. Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Long Beach, CA, USA (2017); *On the Horizon: Contemporary Cuban Art from the Jorge M. Pérez Collection*, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Florida, USA (2017); *Adios Utopia: Dreams and Deceptions in Cuban Art, 1950-2015*, traveling exhibition at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. and The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota (2017); *Cuba Libre*, Ludwig Museum, Koblenz (2016).

Yoan Capote has acquired a recognisable personal stamp with his famous hook paintings in the Island series, which illustrate themes close to the artist's heart such as emigration, resistance, manipulation, stress, alienation, because they are common to human beings despite differences in context: immigration, resistance, manipulation, stress and alienation, all of which are common experiences of contemporary human beings, regardless of their differences in context. His work can be found in a number of prestigious public and private collections.

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome, Paris, and Dubai. GALLERIA CONTINUA represents a desire for continuity between times and a desire to write a current history. Thanks to its investment in forgotten and unconventional sites, the gallery has always chosen atypical locations, developing a strong identity and an original positioning in over thirty years of activity. In 2021, Galleria Continua opened a new space in the heart of the French capital. This space is dedicated to experimentation and the encounter between art, society and culture, in a constantly evolving setting.

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