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SOFÍA SALAZAR ROSALES AT ALICE AMATI: 'YO NO SÉ SI TENGA AMOR LA ETERNIDAD, PERO ALLÁ, TAL COMO AQUÍ, EN LA BOCA LLEVARÁS, SABOR A MÍ'

By Avantika Pathania

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“ The works are poetic and metaphorical with layers upon layers of thematic notions running harmoniously and simultaneously. They look like they will scatter or break, but they also look like they have been in the same position for years. There are only four sculptures, but the story each of them carries is vast.” *writes Avantika Pathania.*



Installation images courtesy of Alice Amati/ Tom Carter

ALICE AMATI

Sofía Salazar Rosales' first solo exhibition in the UK at Alice Amati explores the notion of *fantasmas* (ghosts) in a slightly spiritual manner. The title of the exhibition translates to 'I don't know if I'll have love for eternity, but there, just like here, in your mouth you will carry a taste of me.' Alice Amati points out for this exhibition, *fantasmas* extends even more than the literal meaning of the word, it becomes "slightly spiritual- benevolent, almost like the soul of someone that live as their own entity."

Rosales is originally from Ecuador but is now based in Amsterdam. Her works are life-sized and at composed at her own eye level, with her height becoming a proxy for the execution of her ideas. *When the axial skeleton decides to speak*, (2024), a sculpture made from glass and nylon, stands straight and folds in the middle. It anthropomorphises; becoming gloomy, drained, and tired. It also has a necklace wrapped around, which references Rosales' childhood growing up wearing it. Gifted to the artist by her grandmother, there is a seed in the necklace that is further connected to an Ecuadorian spiritual tradition. *We are contextual and sentimental & Meeting space(s)* (2024) consists of 2 bags with a rectangular mat beneath them. At first, they resemble pillows due to them being white and their texture appearing quite soft and crumpled but they are jute bags. These jute bags resemble the ones that are used in Ecuador for the transportation of goods. The green thread attached is again a gift given to Rosales, who wore it for a long time.



When the axial skeleton decides to speak, 2024, (details). Images courtesy of Alice Amati/Tom Carter

ALICE AMATI



We are contextual and sentimental & Meeting space(s), 2024. Images courtesy of Alice Amati/Tom Carter

Rosales very thoughtfully approaches the ideation in her works. A small but poignant detail that one can miss, as Amati points out, are the remnants of plaster powder scattered uniformly on all the corners of the gallery. Rosales is thinking back to the idea of the studio; everything is originally made of plaster. The transferability of dust is taken into consideration, maybe she tries to connect herself with the dust. “There’s also a wish to become somewhat like dust, to be able to travel anywhere the same way, carrying everything with you,” explains Amati. Interestingly, the works are not as heavy as they look. ***What does the city hide in a hug? & A witness (ghost)*** (2022/2024) looks as if it was entirely made from bronze but uses lighter materials including plaster and wire mesh.

ALICE AMATI



Sofia Salazar Rosales, What does the city hide in a hug? & A witness (ghost) (2022/2024)

She brings forward the intricate details of Ecuador in these works which are thought-provoking. These objects that are “forgotten but still have a soul,” says Amati. For instance, Amati highlights that bananas are “important for the artist,” but are also just a daily life food item for many if not all of us. “One of the first things she saw when she came to Europe was bananas. In a sense, it is an endearing thing that reminds her of her home. Yet it also has a lot of powerful connotations in terms of global power structures,” (considering Ecuador is the largest exporter of bananas).

For a small exhibition, there certainly is plenty to unpack. The works are poetic and metaphorical with layers upon layers of thematic notions running harmoniously and simultaneously, prompting the viewer to wonder about the reason for the origin of the artwork rather than the artwork itself. The works capture rigidity and flow beautifully; soft and hard at the same time. They look like they will scatter or break, but they also look like they have been in the same position for years without flinching a bit. It is a juxtaposition, though there are only four sculptures works, and the story each of them carries is vast. The simplicity of the works entails a heavy focus on history and tradition. The necklaces in particular act as a semiotic of protection. But why has she “gifted” this to the viewers? Are we to be protected, or protectors? What she received as a gift, she has now gifted to the viewer, for them to see and feel.

ALICE AMATI



Sofia Salazar Rosales, They ask to stay (ghosts), 2024. Images courtesy of Alice Amati/Tom Carter

The curatorial process, organised online over Zoom with the artist, was fun for Amati. “I saw her degree show in Paris. I fell in love with her work. Part of her body of work for this exhibition came from various ideas we brainstormed when we met. Her works are usually in continuation, she has made many versions of several pieces that are exhibited here. There is a slightly different formulation of the same idea that takes a different shape.”

What stands out is the artist attaching, or even leaving, so to say, a personal belonging alongside the installations, for us to feel her presence despite her absence. It is a way to connect the outcome, the journey, of what she has gone through with the viewer.

Avantika Pathania is a London-based writer and arts journalist.