

Yelaine Rodriguez: *EBBÓ*

August 7 – December 4, 2023

Nancy Hyatt Liddle Gallery



ALBANY, NY (July 17, 2023) – The University Art Museum presents **Yelaine Rodriguez's** film ***EBBÓ*** (2021), which sets a 1998 Cuban chamber opera by composer Louis Aguirre among the shores and colonial ruins of the Dominican Republic. In this retelling of a tragic story of devotion and defiance, two dancers tenderly perform in resplendent costumes designed by Rodriguez. As with all of Rodriguez's meticulously researched work, which encompasses video, photography, costume design, and sculptural objects, *EBBÓ* offers new representations of Afro-Caribbean religious and aesthetic heritages. The 25-minute film is presented as a wall-sized video installation in the UAM's second-floor Nancy Hyatt Liddle Gallery and runs continuously during museum hours.

The story created by the composer is loosely inspired by elements of the Afro-Caribbean religion and spiritual practice Regla de Ocha—sometimes called Santería—which originated in West Africa. Queen Apetebí is told by the Orisha, or spiritual being, Orula that the powerful deity Olofi has demanded she sacrifice her beloved pet Bird. The Queen refuses, instructs the Bird to hide, and flees. But the Bird's devotion becomes their undoing, as his need to sing for her draws the attention of the Iron King sent to destroy her and her kingdom for her defiance.

Rodriguez's costumes help tell and augment the story. She often incorporates sacred materials, such as the cowrie shells used in divination or the rooster feathers, often used in rituals, worn by Queen Apetebi in her two costumes. Rodriguez indicates the deep connection Orishas have to the natural world through, for example, the crown of green leaves and blue hand-woven cape, suggesting water, worn by Orula.

Throughout all her work, Rodriguez selects natural and architectural sites that hold deep cultural and historical significance, particularly as she considers how Black and Indigenous people have navigated those spaces. Her casting of two Afro-Dominican dancers in *EBBÓ*, Jeremy Antonio Caro and Rayser Rafelina Campusano Rosario, trained in modern dance and folklore forms respectively, becomes a way of defiantly reclaiming colonial spaces, specifically the sugar mill Ingenio Boca de Nigua and the mansion Casona de Palavé. The former was the site of a 1796 uprising by enslaved people led by Ana María, declared Queen by her comrades. Thus, Rodriguez's film draws a parallel between this historical rebellion and the Queen's defiance in Aguirre's story.

In *EBBÓ*, Rodriguez expands on Aguirre's opera, which incorporates Afro-Cuban percussion and rhythms into a Western classical tradition. Rodriguez's *EBBÓ* and her entire body of work are devoted to exploring Afro-Syncretism, that is, the blending and intersection of African, colonial, and Indigenous legacies. Included in this for Rodriguez is a demonstration of the inherent aesthetic solidarity among Afro-Caribbean religions, even as they are practiced differently throughout the region.

Yelaine Rodriguez's film *EBBÓ* was commissioned in 2021 by the Americas Society.

Louise Aguirre's opera premiered in 1998 Camagüey, Cuba.

About the artist

Yelaine Rodríguez (b. 1990) lives and works in The Bronx, New York. She is an Afro-Dominican U.S. artist, scholar, educator, curator, cultural organizer, and writer. Rodriguez conceptualizes wearable art, sculptures, and site-specific installations, merging her creative language and academic research on Black cultures in the Caribbean and the United States within those practices. She received her BFA in Fashion Design from Parsons School of Design | The New School (2013) and her MA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Museum Studies from New York University (2021). Rodriguez has exhibited in various venues internationally, such as El Museo del Barrio, New York; UNTITLED Art Fair, Miami Beach, Florida; Photoville, Brooklyn; Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, Texas; American Museum of Natural History, New York; and Wave Hill, The Bronx; El Centro Cultural de España, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; and Centro León Biennial XXVII, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic; Sur Gallery, Toronto; Critical Distance Centre for Curators, Toronto; Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; and La Escocesa, Barcelona, Spain.

ALSO ON VIEW

Barrow Parke: Systems and Mythologies

August 7 – December 4, 2023; January 22 – April 3, 2024

1st Floor Main Gallery

Artists Mark Barrow and Sarah Parke explore visual systems at the intersection of art, craft, and technology through their collaborative weaving and painting practice.

Supported by *The Coby Foundation, Ltd.*



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Libros/Arte: Handmade Books from Latin America & the Caribbean

August 7 – December 4, 2023

2nd Floor Main Gallery

Handmade books by small presses push the boundaries of traditional printing techniques while addressing a range of political, social, and cultural subjects.

Supported by the University Libraries and presented in partnership with the University at Albany M.E. Grenander Special Collections and Archives; the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures; and the Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies.

Additional support for exhibitions and programs provided by the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, The University at Albany Foundation, the University at Albany Alumni Association, the University Auxiliary Services at Albany, and the Robin Kanson Lewis '70 Exhibition Endowment Fund.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Museum hours beginning August 7, 2023:

Monday – Friday, 11am – 4pm

Open Select Saturdays 11am – 4pm: 9/23, 9/30, 10/14, 10/21

Closed: 9/4, 10/9, 11/10, 11/23, 11/24

Artists' Reception for all three exhibitions: Friday, August 25, 2023, 5-7pm

For additional programming announcements, please visit our website www.albany.edu/museum or call (518) 442-4035.

Contact: Christine Snyder, Office and Operations Manager, cbatson@albany.edu

Image credits: Yelaine Rodriguez, *EBBÓ* (still), 2021, video (color, sound), 24:36 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

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