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Susana Guerrero, her legends and superstitions evoked in a documentary film

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'Warrior. Head in hands

Susana Guerrero, Mario-Paul Martínez and Vicente J. Pérez

Presentation of the Guerrero MACA project

Plaza de Santa María 3, Alicante

January 28, 2022

The Guerrero project begins with a desire to document, but following in the wake of the artistic, ends up becoming a compendium of several pieces, a series of declarations and intentions that oscillate between the sample of the final work and the registration of the processes.

This drive towards annotation means that the project is made up not only of a documentary, but also the exhibition of several of the works that appear in the film. The documentary 'Guerrero. The head in the hands' tells a story that It links with the present, but it also supports other stories that are sometimes lost...

We were able to discover some of them in the presentation held at MACA (<https://maca-alicante.es/>), which was attended by the artists involved in the project.

Sometimes, we do not know how to locate the initial idea or the impulse necessary to start a project, but in this case, the insistence of the director of the 532 Gallery, Thomas Jaeckel, which represents Susana Guerrero's work in New York, for recording and present the artist through the audiovisual format, led Susana to ask for help from her colleagues from the Miguel Hernández University of Elche. It's funny that, despite his first refusal, because they did not want to do an advertorial, the story behind the processes will end up convincing them.



Frame from the documentary 'Guerrero. The head in the hands', by Mario-Paul Martínez and Vicente J. Pérez.

"We had a great time making the documentary," they repeated several times.

The filmmakers Mario-Paul Martínez and Vicente J. Pérez, both with extensive experience in the audiovisual field, knew how to see *those stories* that are hidden behind the pieces of Susana Guerrero, the attraction of her studio and, above all, the artist's way of narrating. So, in the audiovisual it is your voice that guides us. "We had many hours of recordings of Susana's voice. One of the hardest things has been knowing what to leave behind and what to cut," says Mario-Paul.

An experience where several disciplines meet. "It is not a documentary "use," comments the artist in a telephone interview, and that is precisely what is reveals after his vision. The static planes, an achieved atmosphere where the color and the dualism of background-figure, introduce us to the three main axes that Guerrero works. At first, what stands out above all is his interest in myths, legends and superstitions.

In fact, he continually refers to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a saint discovered by Susana in the Royal Monastery of Santa Clara de Toro (Zamora), where there is an image of the Spanish Gothic of this decapitated saint which is also signed by Teresa Díez, one of the few women whose signature we have. 'Las Decapitadas' is one of the great projects by Guerrero, and has women as the centerpiece of the mythologies derivatives. This can be seen in his piece 'La mare dels peixos', a representation of the creature typical of our Valencian identity which is, in the words of the artist, "the "I'm the first person I've come across who wants to be beheaded."



Susana Guerrero, between Mario-Paul Martínez and Vicente J. Pérez, at the MACA.

Thus, reconstructing the body of Saint Catherine is the *late motive* of the successive images that we see where the search for the material is constructed as another of the axes of their work. "Each material speaks to you," explains Susana as she searches her proximity that matter that will allow him, almost by magic, to reconstruct the body of the holy. The sound of the technique, the radial that rubs the material and makes the spark fly, remains amplified and isolated which undoubtedly helps to give us a better idea of the process.

"While we were recording the short, the work was also being created. That is why we believe that it is a joint project," says Mario-Paul. For this reason, images of the procedures like in those scenes where Guerrero appears weaving cables. "The use of what I do with the electric cable comes from a personal mourning," says Susana while we see the craftsmanship that almost covers everything around it. The symbolic tension is fortified even more with the use of agave and the tightness of the cable... The scenarios are hypnotic and the shots are key to introducing us to a dynamic where we let ourselves glimpse the almost mystical relationship between the artist and the protagonists of the works.

This brings us to the third axis: the anthropology of experience. During the short interviews three people connected to the art world and their careers. One of them, the critic and curator Joaquín Bajadoz, highlights the somatizing capacity that she has the personality of Susana Guerrero and she always pours into her works. "Recently

"I discovered that pain is the common thread of my work," the artist confesses after a reflection of an attendee at the event. And, as Rosa M^a Castells explains, whose presence can also be seen in the documentary, "it is a visceral art, it does an autopsy. I really believe that the decapitated ones come out to meet them."

While the exteriors can be sensed, the intimacy that usually surrounds the studio or workshop of the artist is revealed here. Vicente J. Pérez, another of the authors of the short documentary, states that "working with Susana's work was, at the same time, a "challenging and something easy." Perhaps because of the way the work lends itself to the almost fictional in that creative building experience.

In the end, 'Warrior. The head in the hands', is structured around a compendium where the sacred and the visual build a whole parallel narrative and at the same time essential. Narrative that, accompanied by sound design and music almost suffocating, manages to make everything fit into plans that are not at all normative to what we are accustomed to hearing the word documentary.



Susana Guerrero, in the documentary about the artist herself, by Mario-Paul Martínez and Vicente J. Pérez.

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