

Eduardo Basualdo, *Rey* (King) (detail), 2009, black pencil on copper, 15¾ x 20¼".

rootlike hair covering her face; a bunch of heads carry horrid expressions that recall Goya's nightmares; a man pulls something that looks like a spirit from another man's mouth, as if in some obscure medical procedure recalling Hieronymus Bosch's *Cure of Folly*. Wire silhouettes of heads lay randomly on the floor; Nordau and Lombroso would immediately have classified them as the heads of criminals. Medieval-looking machinery made of wood and stones moved to a slow tempo. A wooden plank came and went in circles; if you got too close it could have chopped your head off—that's *Zeus (Júpiter)*, 2009. A drawing of a lady, *Acá estoy* (I'm Here), 2009, when lit from behind, revealed the presence of a hidden figure, making manifest the double-sided nature of existence. The medieval imagery, combined with the dramatic lighting and the use of metals, imbued these artifacts with a sense of doom.

This fascination with the symbolic properties of light is not new to Basualdo's work. Last summer, he held a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Every night the students had to walk across the woods from the studios to their rooms. Basualdo designed a long aluminum stick that held a powerful light at one end. The last person to leave the studios was asked to place it on his or her back. It would shine brightly over the trees above, leaving the road ahead in darkness. The student would have to follow his or her own shadow home. The stick functioned as something like a psychopomp, a guide that escorts souls to the afterlife—in Jungian psychology, a mediator between the unconscious and conscious realms.

Basualdo is part of an artist collective called *Provisorio-Permanente* (Provisional-Permanent) that created a brilliant performance titled *Visitas a la Casa del Coleccionista* (Visits to the Collector's House), 2005–2007, which resonates with the shadowy intrigue of Basualdo's other works. To see it, a viewer had to make an appointment. A time and date were appointed for him or her to stand at a street corner at night alone. An unknown man would appear and guide the viewer to a house where something occurred—we are not told what. The house soon became an urban myth. Now working on his own but still obsessed with tropes of suspense and fear, Basualdo seems to distill dark impulses, dreams, and nightmares from mundane materials, in which forms flicker and mutate before our eyes.

—María Gainza

SÃO PAULO

Leda Catunda

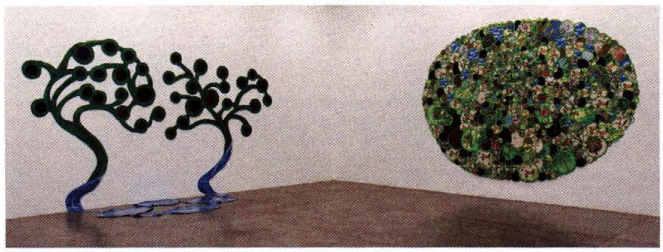
ESTAÇÃO PINACOTECA/GALERIA FORTES VILAÇA

Leda Catunda's retrospective exhibition at Estação Pinacoteca, with seventy-three works dating from 1983 to 2008, coincided with the premiere of a new installation at Galeria Fortes Vilaça. Emerging in the 1980s, Catunda participated in the return to painting and personal expression after a decade of experimental procedures linked to Conceptual art and institutional critique—but in a distinctive manner, painting on fabrics such as towels, sheets, clothing, plastics, and leather, often incorporating ready-made prints into the finished paintings as active parts of a commentary on domesticity.

Initially, Catunda's paintings had a narrative character. She used simple images such as a lake, a small house, or a spotted jaguar, which already existed as images printed on blankets, for example. One early work, *Vedação em quadrinhos* (Enclosure on Comics), 1983, is a printed fabric that Catunda merely edited with white paint, hiding some of the figures. Later, her works gradually became more abstract, as she cut cloth into rounded, organic shapes, focusing on negative space, superimpositions, and the contrast between flat, two-dimensional pieces of fabric and others that are stuffed and full of bulges. *Almofadas Amarelas* (Yellow Pillows), 1991, shows a yellow cushion, cut in geometric shapes, framed by red ribbons.

The present decade saw the emergence of the "*morulas*," works made of many layers of fabrics, reproducing the image of masses of cells resulting from the cleavage of the ovum before the formation of a blastula. In this period, Catunda began using personal images by silk-screening them onto fabric, with portraits of friends and family such as *Todo o Pessoal* (All the People), 2006, and *Todo o Pessoal II*, 2008. In *Mundo Macio* (Soft World), 2007, Catunda created a wall tapestry with fragments of fabric printed with images of nature—beaches, mountains, flowers—cut in organic shapes and connected by strings of orange fabric.

At Fortes Vilaça, Catunda had unified her poetics, bringing together the storyteller of the '80s with the artist who developed her forms in the following decade. It is this union of aesthetic approaches that found its embodiment in this new group of three large-format pieces based on the idea of landscape, probably her best work so far. *Paisagem com Onça* (Landscape with Jaguar), 2009, is a wall painting composed of hundreds of circular-cut cloth patches outlined with green ink and sewn together to form a single large oval shape, comprising printed cloths of plants, flowers, skies, and a jaguar, and amounting to an encomium to the idea of nature. *Duas Árvores* (Two Trees), 2009, takes the form of a wall-mounted cutout with branches and crowns made of green cloth from which sprout circular shapes—leaves and fruit—cut in velvet, in shades of green, red, and burgundy. At the base of the trunks, instead of roots, the two trees are united by small lakes made of painted plastic that spills out onto the floor. Finally, *Rio Comprido* (Long River), 2009, is composed completely of blue plastic over canvas, cut in wavy shapes, allowing a glimpse of a series of negative spaces. Again, this river begins at the wall and invades the floor area, mimicking the spread of flowing water. Catunda uses fabric, plastic, and canvas to build a hybrid of painting, object, sculpture, and collage; to her, pictorial strength derives not from the use of paint but from a vision that unites diverse materials in a vivid image.



View of "Leda Catunda," 2009. From left: *Duas Árvores* (Two Trees), 2009; *Paisagem com Onça* (Landscape with Jaguar), 2009. Galeria Fortes Vilaça.

—Katia Canton

Translated from Portuguese by Clifford E. Landers.

CORRECTION: In the January issue, in a "Passages" column by Francine du Plessix Gray about the life and work of photographer Irving Penn [pp. 29–30], it was stated that Penn's images of street debris, cigarette butts, and the like preceded his "Small Trades" series of 1950–51. Although the artist demonstrated an early interest in detritus as subject matter, the images in question were produced in the 1970s. *Artforum* regrets the error.