

## ZILIA SÁNCHEZ

### *Eros*

November 21, 2019 – January 18, 2020

Opening reception: Thursday, November 21, 6–8pm



Zilia Sánchez, *Eros*, 1976 / 1998. Acrylic on stretched canvas; painted wood supports. Panel 1: 85.5 x 54 x 20 inches (217.2 x 137.2 x 50.8 cm); Panel 2: 85.75 x 54 x 24 inches (217.8 x 137.2 x 61 cm).

Galerie Lelong & Co. is pleased to present *Eros*, its second solo exhibition of Cuban artist Zilia Sánchez, timed to coincide with the artist's first retrospective at El Museo del Barrio. Recalling the Greek god of love, the exhibition title encapsulates Sánchez's uniquely sensual, corporeal approach to abstraction, most familiar from her shaped canvas paintings. While the museum show will survey the artist's vast oeuvre spanning more than six decades, *Eros* focuses on about a dozen new and recent works, highlighting Sánchez's evolving interest in completely free-standing work and includes her first-ever sculptures in marble and bronze.

During a return trip to Cuba from her travels abroad in the 1950s, Sánchez witnessed a bedsheet that had been hung out to dry form a taut shape as the wind blew it against a pipe or tube. This passing scene affectively became the catalyst for a staggering six decades of work thereafter. Sánchez achieves crescent-like curvatures and anatomical protrusions by stretching canvas over hand-molded wooden armatures before

finally applying acrylic paint. Her resulting works imbue painting with sculptural and architectural sensitivity.

After feeling alienated from the New York art world during of the 1960's, Sánchez eventually settled in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1971. She explained, "I was searching for a warmer place, something more like my own country." It was there that she forged her first public work, *Mural in Cement* (1971), on the building façade of Laguna Gardens. Nearly fifty years later, Sánchez continues to make work in the same studio, which was rebuilt after Hurricane Maria. Among the works on view in *Eros* are a number that were saved from the devastation. Several feature deep, saturated blues that surround white peaks evocative of island terrain. Landscape, topology, and cosmology, remain central to her practice.

The exhibition also features new sculptures fully realized for the first time, which previously existed only as maquettes. Even when formed from precious metal and stone, the works retain a quality present in her paintings that Vesela Sretenovic, senior curator at The Phillips Collection, describes as: "implying not only a spatial depth but a pulse of life, a living body." The central work that lent its name to the show, *Eros* (1976/1998) is comprised of two freestanding parts to form a symbiotic pair. The sculpture shares visual characteristics with paintings such as *Topología Erótica (de la serie Azul azul)* [Erotic Topology (of the Blue Blue series)] (2016), demonstrating how the artist repeatedly explores a set of core motifs across her lifetime.

*Eros* coincides with the New York showing of the artist's first full retrospective, *Zilia Sánchez: Soy Isla*, on view at El Museo del Barrio, from November 20, 2019 through March 18, 2020. Spanning almost 70 years of artistic production, the exhibition was organized by the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, where it debuted in early

2019 before travelling to the Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico. Sánchez's work is included in international museum and public collections including the Colby College Museum of Art, Maine; Colección Isabel y Agustín Coppel, Mexico City, Mexico; El Museo del Barrio, New York; Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Latin American Art in Buenos Aires MALBA, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; National Museum of Fine Arts in Havana, Havana, Cuba; Perez Art Museum, Miami, Florida; Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey; Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York; Tate, London, England; The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC. Galerie Lelong & Co. has represented Zilia Sánchez since 2013.

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Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm.

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