

02.02.25

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Daniel Lind — Ramos

Ensamblajes

Nottingham Contemporary

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In 1953, artist Daniel Lind-Ramos was born to a family of artisans in the town of Loíza, on the North-Eastern coast of Puerto Rico. Founded by formerly enslaved people in the 16th Century, Loíza became a hub of West African cultural traditions maintained by the resident 'Afrodescendientes' (Afro-descendants). In his monumental sculptural assemblages, Lind-Ramos pays homage to this history and these traditions along with a wider human narrative into which all stories are woven.

Lind-Ramos' works are composed of items from across the world, washed up on the local shoreline or gifted by friends, that hold snippets of personal stories. From old boots, shoes and nets, to items of sacred personal value gifted from friends, and the recurring bright blue FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) tarps distributed to Puerto Rican communities in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria's devastation in 2017. Lind-Ramos fuses all these disparate and eclectic materials into semi-mythological guardians of both the mangroves, essential to the local ecosystem, and the lives of the people with which they intersect.

In Gallery 3 the prow of a boat sends gentle waves through sea water formed from the ripples and creases of a blue FEMA tarp. *El Viejo Griot* (2022-23), or 'elder storyteller' – a character derived from Loíza's annual Fiestas del Santiago Apóstol (Festival of Saint James the Apostle) – sits in a boat laden with the past. As he moves forward he carries history with him, packed tightly into colourful burlap sacks, presenting it to all he encounters. The dates printed on the sacks all refer to significant Puerto Rican events such as the Taíno Rebellion (1511), the failed British invasion (1797), the United States invasion (1898), the Commonwealth declaration (1952), and Hurricane Maria (2017).

Linked with the weight of colonialism's legacy – slavery, invasion and occupation – the dates also hold cause for commemoration, for they signify Black victories over European domination. The use of the blue FEMA tarp attests to the ongoing presence of this legacy, in the form of the imbalanced colonial relationship that still binds Puerto Rico with the United States.

Talegas de la Memoria (2020) presents an allegory for the history and colonisation of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, with Loíza in a starring role. Filmed at Vacía Talega beach, the video musically dramatises historical transformations that have taken place in Puerto Rico through improvised performances by members of the artist's community. The participants depict characters linked to Fiestas del Santiago Apóstol reconciling with past traumas of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. The soundtrack blends Taíno, Spanish, and African styles, acknowledging the cultural diversity and ancestral ties of Loíza and the surrounding region, much like the assembled form of *El Viejo Griot*.

The lone figure of *Ambulancia* (2020) (2022-23) strains forward against a heavy burden as a pair of lost boots try to gain leverage against the ground, pushing a broken wheelbarrow forward. Created after the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, this haunting figure tells us again of the global impact of the pandemic, the collective anxiety and loss. The head, a silent tannoy and unblinking emergency light, suggests the overwhelming presence of emergency vehicles. Usually recognised by their loud calls and vibrant flashing lights, now silent they instead speak of loss. The bare mattress springs are a reminder of the empty spaces left behind after a death, while the wheelbarrow signifies the movement of earth in preparation for burial.

At the threshold of Gallery 4 is *Centinela de la luna negra* (2023), who under the light of the black moon celebrates female labour and activism, while also remaining vigilant to activities that might affect the community without its knowledge. The face of this sculpture contains a bundle of mangrove branches, carried close to the heart. The mangroves of Puerto Rico are under the protection of activists who fight for them by standing against coastal development and promoting eco-tourism that safeguards the mangroves' future. *Centinela de la luna negra* stands resolute and proud, keeping watch over its fellow guardians.

Centinelas de la luna nueva (2022-23) is a group of figures embodying the history of female labour that has sustained and cared for the coastal forests. Gathered closely, this tight knit group protect a young sapling freshly planted in their midst. Over time, as the sapling spreads its roots and canopy, it will merge with the wider forest. After this, it will take on the role of protector and extend its guardianship to the community that raised it by providing nourishment, materials and shelter from extreme weather and coastal erosion.

The exhibition closes with the watchful gaze of a new work commissioned for this exhibition – *The Green Guardian* (2024) – observing all who walk amidst its fellow sculptures. The works in this room capture the essence or spirit of the mangroves and their local communities, highlighting Lind-Ramos' increased interest in eco-critical themes and the vital need to preserve natural eco-systems in the face of climate catastrophe. *The Green Guardian* is a sentinel, embodying the mangrove as it pays attention to its community and watches for environmental changes. The greens, blues and sandy tones capture the colours of the shores, the sea and the mangrove itself, as though absorbed up through the roots of the sculpture to display the vibrancy of life.

The orb of the guardian's eye, primarily composed from the cover of an old fan, also references a filter. A nod to the mangroves' biological processes in which the trees filter and purify sediment, nutrients, water and air through their roots and vascular functions, as well as the ways they capture and filter fragments of human objects and activity from the sea.

Lind-Ramos reminds us that the world we share is stitched together from ecosystems and communities that can easily be rendered vulnerable. Together, it is our collective responsibility to hold the threads that bind us with care, no matter how tenuous they may be. After all, much like Lind-Ramos' assemblage sculptures, we are all in some way an assemblage ourselves, built from fragments of the rest of the world and the remnants of each other.

The sculptural world that Lind-Ramos has built brings together this massive diversity of stories through the objects he gathers. While every work starts with a singular object, a personal memory or local story, Lind-Ramos does not consider every sculpture to have a completely fixed meaning. He invites everyone to interpret the work through their own lens. To the artist, no object is 'trash' but instead is one piece of a larger history. A history that gives reason to celebrate, a history to learn from and a history to pass on to those who come after.

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Suggested donation: £5

RELATED EVENTS

Exhibition Walkthroughs

Wed 12 Feb, 1pm

Curators' Walkthrough

Join Nottingham Contemporary's curators for a tour of our spring exhibitions.

Wed 19 Mar, 1pm

With Alma Solarte-Tobon, Doctoral Researcher at the Storytelling Academy, Loughborough University.

Wed 26 Mar, 1pm

British Sign Language Exhibition Tour with Martin Glover.

Wed 30 Apr, 1pm

With Dr Jennifer Rowntree, Associate Professor of Ecological Genetics at the University of Plymouth.

12.30 Talks

12.30pm every Tue, Thu and Sat, starting 11 Feb.

Join one of our friendly Gallery Assistants for a short exploration of one of our exhibitions. For more details visit our website.

Free Family Activities

February Half-Term: Tue 18 Feb – Thu 20 Feb

Easter Holidays: Tue 8 Apr – Thu 10 Apr and

Tue 15 Apr – Thu 17 Apr

Explore the themes in the exhibitions through making and play.

We Are Wonderlings: Early Years Workshops

Mon 17 Mar, 24 Mar, 31 Mar and 28 Apr

For more information about the exhibition, related events and learning programmes, visit nottinghamcontemporary.org or scan here:



Daniel Lind-Ramos: *Ensamblajes* has been generously supported by Headline Supporter The Ranch alongside The Henry Moore Foundation and the Daniel Lind-Ramos Exhibition Circle: Catherine Petitgas and those who wish to remain anonymous.

The Commissioning Circle: Nissreen Darawish, Gabriela Galcerán, Hamza Serafi, Carlo Solari and Paula del Sol, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

The exhibition is curated by Ali Roche and Niall Farrelly.

Exhibition graphics by Waste Studio.

Unless otherwise stated all works courtesy the artist and The Ranch.

If you would like a quiet space to reflect during your visit, please visit Gallery 0 (room adjacent to Gallery 1).

If you would like to use any alternative forms of interpretation, we have a range of accessible versions on our Access Wall beside Reception or alongside the wall text in the exhibitions.