



Spike Island

OFELIA RODRÍGUEZ
TALKING IN DREAMS

30 SEPTEMBER 2023
TO 14 JANUARY 2024

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Throughout her life, Ofelia Rodríguez created an extensive body of paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints that reveal a deeply personal world where childhood memories and popular traditions intertwine with daily life. *Talking in Dreams* is Rodríguez's first major survey exhibition in the UK and follows the trajectory of her practice: from drawings and prints that experiment with abstraction and collage, to paintings of anthropomorphic landscapes, and sculptures that incorporate found and mass-produced objects.

Born in Barranquilla, Colombia, Rodríguez studied Fine Art at the University of the Andes in Bogotá and painting at Yale University in New Haven. She later moved to Paris to study etching at Atelier 17, eventually settling in London in 1984.

An avid collector of objects she found in street markets in Colombia and Mexico, Rodríguez incorporated all kinds of findings into her work, from carved, painted and moulded masks, to devotional images, horns and plastic toys. In the late 1970s, after moving to Paris, Rodríguez began to arrange these objects in what she called 'magic boxes': small wooden boxes with doors, that she painted with bright colours and filled with objects, like relics or fetishes. The magic boxes on display here contain a wide variety of mass-produced objects, readymade materials and sentimental mementoes that explore the crossovers between the exotic and the popular.

Working in London from the mid-1980s onwards, Rodríguez developed highly personal work

marked by her experience of migration and anchored by her childhood memories: the feelings, characteristics and experiences of her native culture. In her paintings, tropical animals such as stuffed caimans are suspended on colourful flat surfaces. They appear alongside representations of cacti and bodily fragments such as hands, wounded hearts and photocopies of the artist's own ears, mouth and hands. The combination of disparate elements results in humorous yet critical reinterpretations of the Colombian Caribbean landscape and popular culture, as well as introducing a sense of latent violence.

Talking in Dreams takes audiences on a journey through Rodríguez's vibrant and idiosyncratic world. It is a world that challenges and reinterprets the clichés that defined her Latin American roots: the sensual colours, tropical motifs, and the many myths and legends that populate the Caribbean coast of Colombia.

This exhibition is part of the West of England Visual Arts Alliance programme, supported by Arts Council England.

Image: Ofelia Rodríguez, *Dying Landscape in Midair (Naturaleza Muerta en el Aire)* (1989). Mixed media paint, fabric and broom on canvas. Courtesy the Estate of Ofelia Rodríguez and Instituto de Visión

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol's harbour area.

Admission to the gallery is free.

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