

# VISIÓN | doble

REVISTA DE CRÍTICA E HISTORIA DEL ARTE

**Título:** Tan sagrado como profano: Cristina Lucas en el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico

**Title:** Both Sacred and Profane: Cristina Lucas at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico

**Autor / Author:** Rosario Romero

Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras

**Resumen:** La exhibición *Iluminaciones profanadas*, de Cristina Lucas, incluye varios vídeos y fotografías, cuyo hilo conductor es el arte mismo. La muestra nos invita a cuestionar la figura del artista, la creación y la obra de arte. En tales preguntas subyace también un planteamiento feminista sobre el papel de las mujeres a lo largo de la historia del arte, sus imágenes y sus narrativas. Publicado originalmente en español en febrero de 2017. Traducido por Joan Pabón y Brandice Walker, y editado por David Auerbach, UPRRP.

**Abstract:** *Iluminaciones profanadas* [*Desecrated Illuminations*] is an exhibition by Cristina Lucas, which includes several videos and photographs, the common thread of which is art itself. The exhibition is an invitation to question the figure of the artist, the act of creation and the work of art. Underlying such questions is also a feminist approach to the role of women throughout art history, their images, and their narratives. Originally published in Spanish in February 2017. Translated by Joan Pabón and Brandice Walker, and edited by David Auerbach, UPRRP.

**Palabras clave:** Cristina Lucas, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Video, Fotografía, Creación, Artista, Feminismo, Mujer, Rosario Romero

**Keywords:** Cristina Lucas, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, Video, Photography, Creation, Artist, Feminism, Women, Rosario Romero

**Sección:** Inglés / **Section:** English

**Publicación:** 15 de marzo de 2017

**Cita recomendada:** Romero, Rosario. "Both Sacred and Profane: Cristina Lucas at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico", *Visión Doble: Revista de Crítica e Historia del Arte*, 15 de marzo de 2017, [humanidades.uprrp.edu/visiondoble](http://humanidades.uprrp.edu/visiondoble)

**Visión Doble: Revista de Crítica e Historia del Arte**  
Programa de Historia del Arte, Facultad de Humanidades  
Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras  
13 Ave. Universidad Ste. 1301  
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00925-2533

+1 (787) 764-0000, extensión 89596  
[vision.doble@upr.edu](mailto:vision.doble@upr.edu)  
<http://humanidades.uprrp.edu/visiondoble>  
<https://revistas.upr.edu>



## ***Both Sacred and Profane: Cristina Lucas at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico***

Rosario Romero

Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras



Cristina Lucas, *La Liberté Raisonnée*, 2009. Foto Cortesía de la artista.

It is said that upon finishing his famous sculpture of Moses, Michelangelo struck the imposing figure on the knee and ordered it to speak. We can imagine the moment in which the great artist—the irrefutable genius, the monumental Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti—realized he had sculpted from marble an image so miraculous that, believing himself God, he ordered it to speak. It was undoubtedly a dramatic moment that reflected the essence of Michelangelo's idea of art as a divine gift that allowed the artist to bring a slab of marble to life. If this scene had occurred in the twenty-first century instead of the sixteenth, and had been recorded with a camera, it would have been a magnificent performance.

According to Cristina Lucas, *Habla* (Speak) is the most difficult project she has undertaken in her artistic career. The artist begins where Michelangelo left off and continues to strike the sculpture of Moses. Indeed, Moses must speak, he must speak to us all, because he spoke to God and, from that seminal moment, the Western notion of monotheism was created. Cristina Lucas exercises her right to continue questioning Moses and, at the same time, establishes a harsh, violent, exhausting and almost impossible dialogue with the history of art, with an iconic and magnificent piece, and with the artist, man, father, teacher, and genius whose name is written in gold letters in the annals of art history. Lucas, a contemporary female artist, seemingly fragile at first glance, takes a huge sledgehammer and works her way up from the sculpture's knee to its head, destroying it. A symbolic act of patricide, as Freud might put it.

*Iluminaciones profanadas* (Profaned Illuminations), which will be exhibited until March 18 at the MAC, showcases five videos and a series of photographs whose common theme is art itself. Cristina Lucas, a Spanish artist who exhibits for the first time in Puerto Rico, invites us to ask ourselves about the artist, the act of creation, the work of art and art itself, as structural components of the thought on which the world has been built. These are questions that underlie a feminist approach to the role of women throughout the history of art, its images and narratives.

Since the establishment of Christianity as the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire, the Church has been the foremost patron of art in the West. To enter any European church is to attend an artistic performance that features a vast array of ages and styles. In the video *Más luz* (More Light), Lucas, who was educated at a school run by nuns and, therefore, within the Catholic tradition, wonders out loud in a devout confession why the Church has turned its back on art and artists. Where are the glorious times of Michelangelo and Pope Julius II? Where have the agony and ecstasy that produced the seemingly indissoluble, eternal bond between art and religion gone?



Cristina Lucas, *Habla*, 2008. Foto cortesía de la artistas.



Cristina Lucas, *Nude in Museum Walker Art Gallery* (Colección Galería Juana de Aizpuru), 2010. Foto cortesía de la artista.

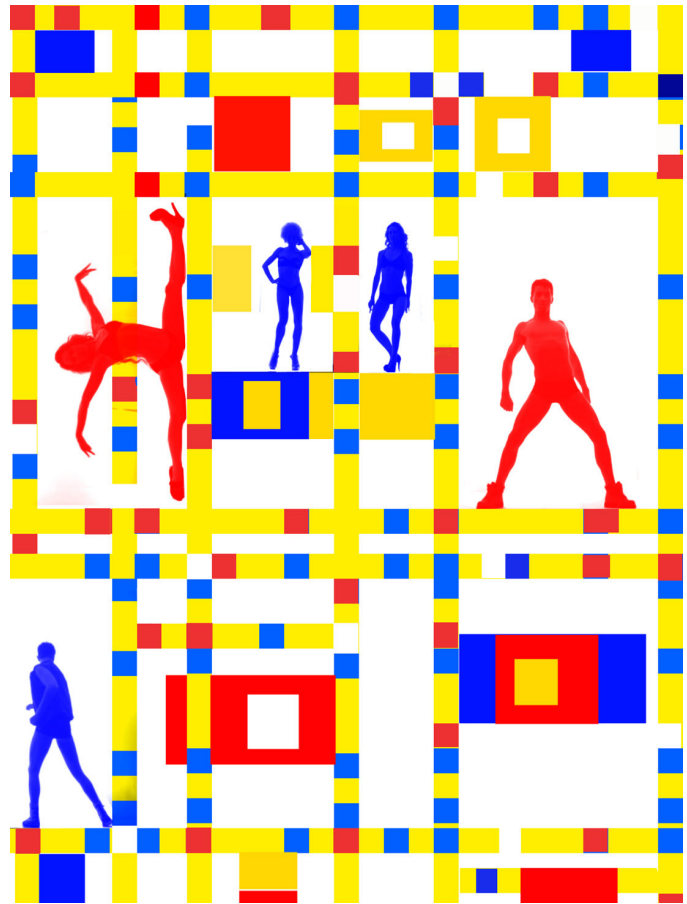
For centuries, museums have been so awash with depictions of nudes that viewers have come to contemplate them with respect and admiration, and without the slightest hint of outrage. The male and, in particular, the female body are subject to representation, endorsed by all the artistic institutions, as long as they correspond with the established conventions. With the series *Desnudos* (Nudes), Lucas documents various performances in different museums around the world, in which an actor undresses before a painting of a nude. With their exposed bodies, men and women shock the guards and spectators, inciting disgust, opprobrium, and immediate intervention from the authorities. These magnificent photographs ask us what do we like to look at? How do we look at it? What makes us feel comfortable or uncomfortable? How much reality are we willing to tolerate? How many subterfuges do we need to look at it? The series also asks when is the body and its exhibition considered illicit?

One of Gustave Courbet's most famous paintings, *L'Origine du monde* (The Origin of the World), is essentially a close-up of a vulva. The title is completely suggestive—the vagina is at the center of all things. Drawing its inspiration from this painting, Lucas' *Big Bang* is a video positioned

on the ceiling that forces the viewer to look upward. In it is a woman painting with a brush lodged in her vagina. The work alludes to the creation of the world, artistic creation, women artists, women architects and builders of the world, all of which are potentially powerful and provocative themes.

The history of painting is full of works laced with heroic narratives of victorious peoples. The epic of the victory of freedom over oppression serves as the subject for one of France's most famous paintings— Eugène Delacroix's *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (Liberty Leading the People), one of the crown jewels of the Louvre, and an indispensable reference alluding to the people's aspirations for liberty. Embodied by a semi-nude woman figure, like a Greek goddess giving life to liberation and meaning to the symbol of homeland, the work is also an allegory of these noble concepts. With the video *La liberté raisonnée* (Conjectural Liberty), Cristina Lucas meticulously creates an impeccable response to the Delacroix scene, but with an added element. The narrative is not frozen in time, but fluid, with the protagonists running in slow motion led by a female figure who no longer serves as symbol of freedom. A figure that before our astonished eyes transforms from a Greek goddess into a woman in the midst of battle, in a chaotic, downward spiral that leaves viewers reflecting on a narrative with unexpected twists with disastrous consequences.

This extraordinary exhibition curated by Gerardo Mosquera ends with *Abstraction Licking*, a witty video charged with humor and a critique of one of the most progressive cities in Europe: Amsterdam. In a series of well-known paintings by Piet Mondrian—a paradigm of rational and reticular spatial organization—the vertical lines turn into poles where male and female silhouettes dance and grind, hinting at the lures of Red Light District shop windows, highlighting the tension between Cartesian contemplation of an image and the leisurely exposure of bodies that are sensual and inevitably lascivious.



Cristina Lucas, *Abstraction Licking*, 2013. Foto cortesía de la artistas.

The aesthetic and conceptual questions posed by *Iluminaciones profanadas* allow Puerto Rican viewers to get a closer understanding of Cristina Lucas through a coherent and cleverly curated exhibition. The Museum of Contemporary Art is the perfect space to experience these works of art, which also shed pertinent light in these uncertain times.

**Cristina Lucas' *Iluminaciones profanadas* will be on display until March 18, 2017, in the Julio Rosado del Valle Gallery at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico. For more information, you can visit the museum website at the following link.**

**Translation by Joan Pabón and Brandice Walker  
Graduate Program in Translation, UPRRP  
Edited by David Auerbach**