

ART FROM LATIN  
AMERICA SINCE 1968

*Dark  
Mirror*



Kunstmuseum  
Wolfsburg 

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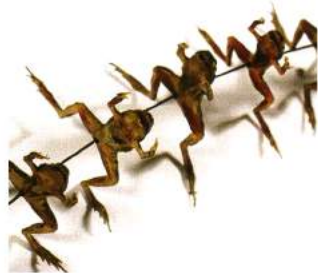
# MARÍA FERNANDA CARDOSO

Born 1963 in Bogotá, Colombia  
Lives in Sydney, Australia

## The Aesthetics of Death

I analyzed what sort of influences had affected me as an artist, as a person ... These influences were from pre-Columbian culture, which was not simply part of our daily life. The *huacas*<sup>1</sup> found in the fields by

my family and the *huacas* that we bought were all around us. My sister studied anthropology and was an archaeologist before she became a filmmaker, and we used to go to archeological museums together to learn about our roots. As a child, in those museums, I knew that I was looking at funerary art. The other great influence in our culture, religious and baroque art found in our churches, is also art about torture and the funerary. That image of Jesus bleeding and suffering, dead or in the process of dying, combined with the little bones found inside the *huacas*, the pots and the pre-Columbian jewels, formed my own definition of art, the art I was directly exposed to. It's not the art mediated by European art history books. Besides, nature was an essential part of living in Colombia, of growing up and visiting the mountains with my father. We used to go in search of lizards, frogs, and snakes and also to look at little snails and orchids. We learned survival techniques for when there is no water. You pick up these roots and suck the water from them. It was beautiful, and my father used to teach me the names of all the flowers. Those were the influences from my own life. From these I began to work with the animals I had played with as a child. Those were my animals. The moment I realized that they were all pre-Columbian sacred animals was revealing. ...

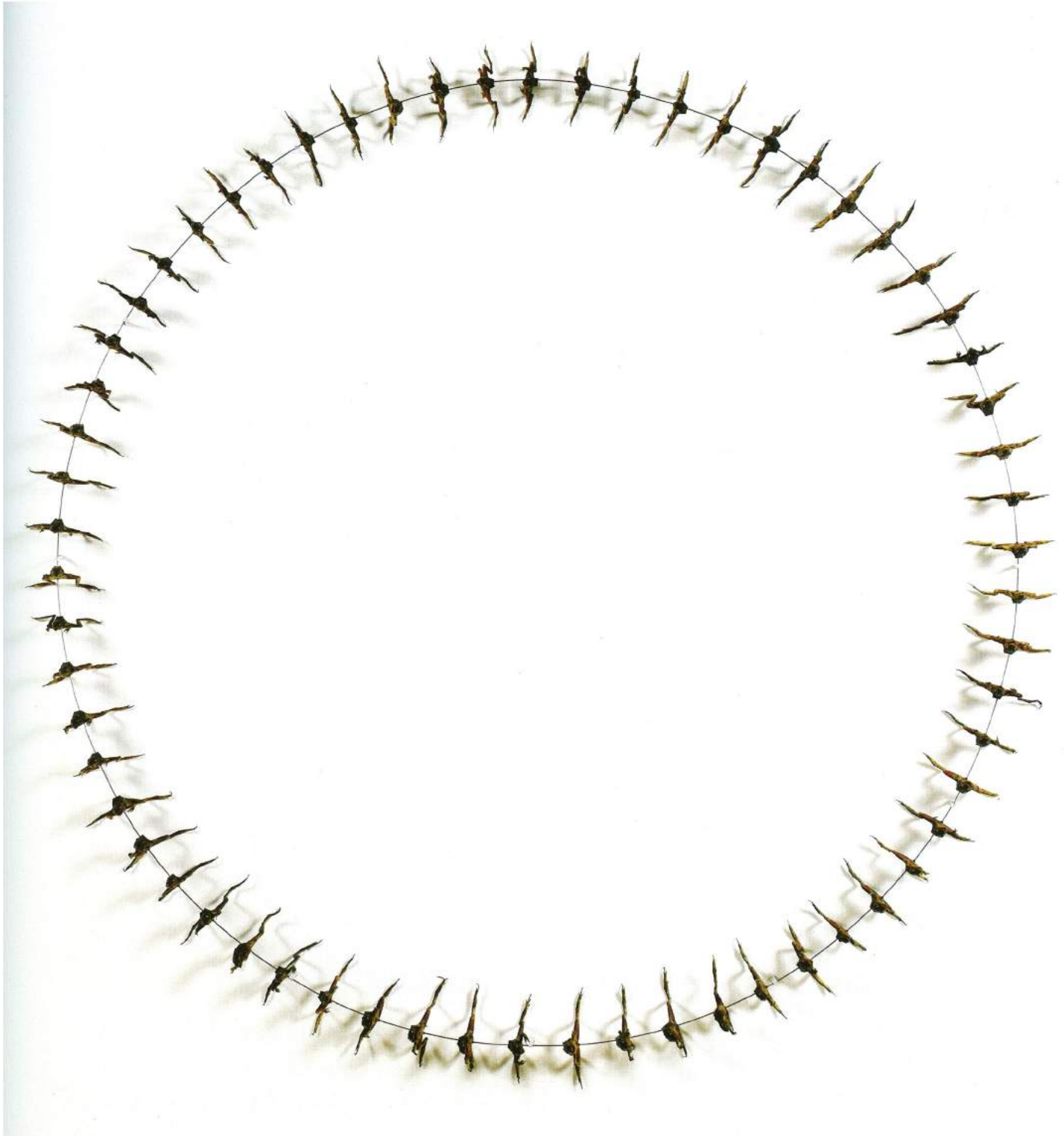


Living in the United States I noticed that nature and death are constantly denied. You do not want to see death or sickness; you don't want to see where animals are slaughtered and then processed for us to eat. You don't eat the animal; you eat the packet containing something you buy in the supermarket. It is something abstract. It has nothing to do with the animal. Coming from a country like Colombia where you confront harsh realities, there is a sharp contrast—they seem like the complete opposite of us. I want to feel pain, I want to see death, I don't want to deny it, don't want to cover it up, to hide it away. I developed a whole aesthetic of death, but for me it was a very natural thing.

María Fernanda Cardoso

<sup>1</sup> *Huaca* is commonly used in Colombia when referring to the tombs where pre-Hispanic societies buried their dead and/or the ceramic vessels used as grave goods. It is also used to refer to any buried or hidden treasure.

Figs. 1 and 2  
*Dancing Frogs on Wall*, 2002  
Preserved frogs  
(*Rana pipiens*, USA)  
and metal  
Ø 195 × 14 cm





A skull with a clown nose. A soccer ball completely covered with nipples. Ants carrying flags and peace signs like activists. A Che Guevara made of soup beans, a Freud consisting of chocolate sauce. In *Dark Mirror*, the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg casts a wide-ranging and determined glance at contemporary art in Central and South America, drawing on the rich holdings of the Daros Latinamerica Collection, one of the most significant collections of art from Latin America in the world.

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