

### PRESS RELEASE

20 November 2019 (New Orleans, LA) **JONATHAN FERRARA GALLERY** is proud to announce, *Arrested Symphony*, the premiere solo exhibition of Colombian born, NYC-based, multidisciplinary artist Esperanza Cortés. In this exhibition, the artist explores the theme of injustice by highlighting the corrupt and exploitative practices of global mining industries and illuminating how such practices lead to devastating social conflict. Esperanza draws inspiration from observed parallels in such industrious cultures both in the States and her birth-country; her work pays homage to the immeasurable human cost of such practices. The exhibition will be on view from 18 December 2019 through 14 February 2020 with an opening reception coinciding with the Arts District of New Orleans' (ADNO) First Saturday Gallery Openings on Saturday, 4 January from 6-9 pm. A second reception will be held from 6-9 pm on 1 February 2020.

The artist discusses the poignant message behind *Arrested Symphony*...

*Arrested Symphony* is an exhibition incorporating sculptures, reliefs, drawings and hanging works that explore the theme of injustice that is at the roots of the predatory gem and mineral excavation industry. While at a residency in Knoxville, Tennessee, I discovered that Oakridge was only 30 miles away. Oakridge played a key role in the development of the Atom Bomb and the Manhattan Project. I began an exploration and comparison of Uranium and Emeralds. These minerals look very much alike, beautiful but dangerous on their effect on civil conflict. Colombia my birthplace, has the finest Emeralds in the world. The mining of Emeralds was an important element in the continued colonization of the region. Emeralds have helped to fund the more than 60-year conflict which has taken over 450,000 lives and displaced about 5.7 million people. Uranium has brought destruction to a level which altered the future of warfare. The developments made during the Manhattan Project led to the death of about 700,000 people and its effects are still felt around the world. I use Colombia as an example, however this situation is repeating itself in many parts of the world. Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo are all involved in brutal civil conflicts fueled by Blood Diamonds. This project will make visual the human cost extracted with these minerals, once exposed to the light of day they can never be unearthed.

*My practice is an ongoing object-based exploration through which I create artworks which are organic and improvisational constructions that are infused with hope and renewal. The hand-crafted artworks are poetically and intricately crafted, creating an intimate repository for the individual and collective memory and implement the human body as a symbol and expression of nature, vulnerability and power. The work encourages viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives especially when dealing with the aftermath of Colonialism and raises critical questions about the politics of erasure and exclusion.*

**ESPERANZA CORTÉS** is a Colombian born contemporary multidisciplinary artist based in New York City. Cortés has exhibited in the United States in solo and group exhibitions in venues including Smack Mellon Gallery, Neuberger Museum of Art, Bronx Museum of Art, Queens Museum, El Museo Del Barrio, MoMA PS1, Socrates Sculpture Park and White-box Gallery in New York City. Nationally Cortes exhibitions include Cleveland Art Museum, OH, CSU Galleries at Cleveland University, OH, Helen Day Art Center, VT and The Lorenzo Homar Gallery, PA. Internationally, she has exhibited in Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Japan, Mexico, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Spain and Greece.

Cortés is a recipient of awards including: The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, BRIC Media Arts Fellowship, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Creative Engagement Grant, Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant, U.S.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, Art in Embassies Program, Puffin Foundation Project Grant, Bronx Museum of the Art's AIM Program, New York State Biennial, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Change Grant, New York Foundation for the Arts, Sustained Achievement in the Visual Arts Award.

Cortés's has also held the following residencies: McColl Center for Arts + Innovation, Museum of Arts and Design Artist Studio Residency, BRIC Workspace Program, The Caldera Residency, Joan Mitchell Center, Webb School of Knoxville, Sculpture Space, Fountainhead Residency, MoMA PS1 International Residency Program, Socrates Sculpture Park, Abrons Art Center, Longwood Art Project. Esperanza's international residencies include Altos de Chavon, Dominican Republic, Can Serrat, Spain, and Bielska BWA Gallery, Poland.

Esperanza's work has been reviewed by Artnet, HYPERALLERGIC, BELatina, Whitehot, Artforum, Artnews, New York Times, New Art Examiner, Art in America and Art Nexus. Esperanza has been the subject of interviews and programs on public television and radio, Newspapers, Art blogs, and publications in the USA, Europe, South America and the Caribbean.

Esperanza has designed workshops and taught extensively as a museum educator, artist in residence and community artist, creating murals, sculptures, site specific installations and visual arts projects through The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Artist Space, Brooklyn's Children's Museum, Socrates Sculpture Park, El Museo Del Barrio, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of Art and the Museum of Art and Design.

Cortés's work is in private and public collections including the American Embassy in Monterey, Mexico.

**For more information, press or sales inquiries please contact Gallery Director Matthew Weldon Showman at 504.343.6827 or [matthew@jonathanferraragallery.com](mailto:matthew@jonathanferraragallery.com). Please join the conversation with JFG on Facebook (@JonathanFerraraGallery), Twitter (@JFerraraGallery), and Instagram (@JonathanFerraraGallery) via the hashtags: #EsperanzaCortes, #JonathanFerraraGallery and #ArtsDistrictNewOrleans.**

