

NEW WAVE

JOIRI MINAYA Artist Statement

I grew up in the Dominican Republic, though I was born in the United States, and spent most summers here before moving in 2011. Navigating the global North / South informs my recent work, expanding my initial preoccupations around the body, domesticity and gender roles into the landscape: unlearning, decolonizing and exorcizing larger systems.

Beyond the “two-ness” of double-consciousness, my awareness is multi-conscious through immigrant and gender layers, and an identity that signifies entertainment, distraction, pleasure, paradise or fantasy to others. In addition to imperial narratives, the “tropical” is now a kind of universal ready-made: decorative, interchangeable, disposable. Inter-disciplinarily, I explore the performativity of tropical identity as product: the performance of labor, decoration, beauty, leisure, service, and the (female, brown, black) body within it all. Authenticity is marketable, thus I’m not interested in performing it, nor translating a cultural experience “from the island” when doing work in the North.

Both Global North’s colonial narratives and Global South’s nationalist patriarchal rhetoric devise a dangerous equation of women and nature, both centered in desire, consumption or perversion, and both to the end of control and conquest. I want to formulate new subjectivities arising from this confluence.

Jose Esteban Muñoz’ *Disidentification* speaks to minorities extracting or repurposing mainstream culture while neither becoming part of it nor fully rejecting it. This idea informs and builds upon my longtime interest in regurgitation: to consume culture / identity, internalize them, bring them back out: re-performed, re-arranged, deconstructed, self-evident, inserting a strategic intention, an enunciated awareness.

I look back at the Gaze othering me, and I turn it upon itself by seeming to fulfill, but instead sabotage its expectations. This Gaze is presumably male and heterosexual, but also white, imperial, and consuming, not only the gendered, racialized body, but it’s culture. I articulate and inhabit unspoken biases and projections to begin with, because to ignore them implies privileges I don’t possess, or a degree of naivety or assimilation, neither of which I’m interested in. I can enunciate the complex, multi-layered, expansive and humanized experience I crave for from within a reclaimed position. Meaning, my work explores how to invite the gaze while being a mirror reflecting its blinding light back.