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Pulitzer Presents First Exhibition Spanning Career of Colombian Artist Delcy Morelos

Delcy Morelos: Interwoven

On View March 8 – August 4, 2024

ST. LOUIS, MO, January 9, 2024— A labyrinthine art installation comprising over three tons of soil sourced from St. Louis, created specifically for the Pulitzer Art Foundation, is the centerpiece of an exhibition devoted to the work of the Bogotá-based artist Delcy Morelos (b. 1967), opening Friday, March 8, 2024.

Delcy Morelos: Interwoven is the first museum showing to place Morelos's acclaimed earthen installations within the context of her earlier artistic output. Some 30 drawings, paintings, and sculptures are assembled to trace the sociocultural and spiritual connections the artist has examined over the last 30 years.

Morelos grew up in Tierralta, a town near the Caribbean Sea in the north of Colombia, one of the most biodiverse countries in the world. Its rich and fertile terrain encompasses the Amazon rainforest, deserts, coastlines along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and the Andes Mountains. Like all Colombians of her generation, the artist grew up against a backdrop of prolonged violence.

From 1964 and 2016, an internal conflict claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals, predominantly civilians, while reinforcing enduring structures of racial disparity, social inequity, and land appropriation.



Delcy Morelos, *Double Negation (La doble negación)*, 2010

Having spent the majority of her life “on the brink between life and death,” as Morelos explains, she started her career by examining violence as something that originates from and is enacted upon the human body. In much of Morelos’s early work, crimson pigments, rope-like forms, and glistening, watery surfaces suggest the body and its internal organs. Two decades into her career she followed these ideas to working directly with soil as a primary material.

Morelos’s soil environments manifest deep reverence for the earth and address interconnected relationships between land and its inhabitants. It was through her grandmother, a descendant of the Emberá community, that Morelos developed her understanding of humans’ place in the natural world. She has furthered this knowledge in recent years with her own research into Andean and Amazonian cosmological teachings and information shared by the Indigenous leaders.

“This exhibition is an example of how contemporary art can connect people and ideas. In her art, Delcy draws on the knowledge of Indigenous peoples throughout the Andes and the Amazon and the craft of weaving, fundamental to those cultures, to call for greater ecological awareness,” says Cara Starke, Executive Director, Pulitzer Art Foundation.

Tamara Schenkenberg, Curator, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, and the organizer of *Delcy Morelos: Interwoven*, says, “Delcy has spoken about how everything that exists is interwoven like a basket that continually reweaves itself. In this exhibition, we take weaving as a process, visual motif, and conceptual throughline to trace her career, from her early paintings and sculpture to her recent installations using soil as an art material.”

Exhibition Overview

At the entry to the Pulitzer Arts Foundation is the introductory section to *Delcy Morelos: Interwoven*. In this gallery a selection of Morelos’s early paintings and sculptures trace the arc of her practice prior to her work with soil. These works consider the roots of violence, evoking experiences of trauma and healing through visceral materiality and the evidence of physical processes.



Delcy Morelos, *Concentrated Fields (Espacios concentrados)*, 2002

Encountered here is a pair of large-scale abstract acrylic paintings from the series *Concentrated Fields (Espacios concentrados)*, 2002. Morelos created the paintings through repetition, taking a fine brush to each five-foot-high canvas and applying thousands of single dots at an almost microscopic scale. The pointillist pattern first reads as an abstract field of color, but upon closer inspection, the tiny red dots coalesce as if in a swirling magnetic field. Individual marks constitute the animated landscape mirroring the relationship between individual lives and collective experience.

The *Concentrated Fields* paintings lean, rather than hang, against the gallery wall, propped up on two small wooden slats. Nearby another large-scale painting, made a decade later, is displayed the same

way in a subtle conflation of painting and sculpture. In the later, untitled work, soil particles suspended in clear acrylic top a canvas made of jute, coloring it an intense shade of red. For Morelos, red—a color present in both blood and soil—is one of many links that speak to the deep connections between humans and earth.

Nearby works in Morelos's *Double Negation* (La doble negación) series, 2008, resemble folded items of clothing tacked to the wall. For these works, Morelos wove individual cotton threads into the fabric and applied successive layers of acrylic allowing it to dry between applications. Through the act of folding and draping, Morelos gave these works their final form. A hybrid of painting, weaving, and sculpture, these works appear soft and shiny but are surprisingly firm.

Morelos moves further away from conventional painting in four works on view from the series *Eva*. Here the artist built up jute fabric strips, brushing each with an acrylic paint that stiffens when dried. Together the layers took on organic forms, their colors subtly alternating between the natural jute and shades of deep red imparted by the paint. Originally trained as a painter, Morelos applies the tools and techniques of that medium to three-dimensional sculpture. The title of this series references Eve, the first woman and mother in Judeo-Christian religions. Morelos associates the maternal figure of Eve, rather than Adam, with Earth's vital power and creative potential.



Delcy Morelos, *Double Negation (La doble negación)*, 2008

“The works in this gallery mark a transition point. There is the use of red as an emblem of both trauma and life energy and weaving as a symbol of spiritual and ecological interconnectivity. Newly introduced is Morelos's work with soil, as well as her experiments with scale and three-dimensionality as steps toward a more dramatic material accumulation,” says Schenkenberg.

Main Gallery

At the heart of the exhibition is *Interwoven*, an enormous maze-like structure made of soil. Eight-foot-high metal link fencing, encrusted with earth and spices, including aromatic cinnamon and cloves, forms passageways for visitors to navigate. Here, a building element customarily used to restrict access to land is repurposed to support an earthen structure.

A visitor navigating the dense maze is enveloped in the land and its sensory elements. Segments where the soil is thinner allow glimpses between layers as through the meshes of a net. The experience is one of immersion—possibly even disorientation—within the aromatic build-up of dark, textural soil. The artist intended the work to cultivate moments of connection with the earth, which she considers sacred.

Morelos has described the installation as being about the contemporary world's “obsession with being owners of the land.” Morelos continues, “People put up nets, fences, and railings to delineate and

separate land, saying this is ‘mine’ and that is ‘not mine.’ But it is absurd to think that we can be owners of the earth. We form part of the earth and we are united with her—we are not her proprietors.” In this way of thinking, the artist is following Emberá wisdom as passed down on her from her grandmother..

Occupying the length and breadth of the Main Gallery, *Interwoven* was commissioned by the Pulitzer and designed specifically for the space.

Cube Gallery

The visitor emerges from the immersive experience of *Interwoven* into another enveloping space, the 22-foot-high and 22-foot-wide Cube Gallery. In this at once intimate and expansive viewing



Delcy Morelos, *Untitled*, 1998

environment, a grouping of 16 never-before-exhibited drawings by Morelos are hung salon style. Intricate ink drawings and watercolors depict repeating, interlocking shapes that suggest multiple associations from the structure of wasps’ nests and root systems, to a tendon connecting muscle to bone and vascular tissue. Although they appear to represent familiar, non-hierarchical forms, these drawings also relate to an expanded sense of weaving. For Morelos, weaving is the mechanism that describes relationships between all of the disparate elements of the universe.

Another highlight in this gallery is Morelos’s *In the Personal Plot* (*En la trama personal*) series featuring a scaled-up pattern resembling a taut weave that extends across three large sheets of paper. The surface

pattern takes on the mottled colors of the human interior, from the soft pink of tissue to the deep crimson of clotted blood. With these works, Morelos calls attention to the color red as a property shared with the soil. As she states, “The color red in the earth is the color of iron. Iron is also what gives color to blood.”

Likewise, in nearby works from the *Organized Salt Water* (*Agua salada organizada*) series, Morelos investigates the properties and resonances of water, highlighting liquid as a force that inextricably binds humans to nature and all living things. Morelos partially coats cotton strings in dark red, shiny acrylic. The glistening red ropes present qualities reminiscent of bodily organs, but are draped in a line down the gallery wall as if to recall waterfalls.



Delcy Morelos, *In the Personal Plot (En la trama personal)*, 2004

It is evident that Morelos sees the body and land as part of the same fabric. Speaking to her belief in the interconnectivity of life, Morelos has quoted Isaías Román, a leader of the Huitoto community of the Colombian Amazon, who the artist describes as her philosophy teacher:

“In the universe, everything is knitted like a wicker basket, opposites intertwine in ever-looser knots until they can hold water. Polar opposites intertwine into a fabric where there is not separation, and we all are, along with everything that exists, threads of the fabric that receives, contains and constantly weaves itself.” (MoMA magazine, May 25, 2023)

Running concurrently at Dia Chelsea, New York, Delcy Morelos’s [first U.S. solo presentation](#), is on view until July 2024. This separate exhibition presents two new, room-sized commissions by Morelos.

About the Artist

Delcy Morelos’s practice blurs the definitions of painting, sculpture, and installation. Over the last decade, she has focused on large-scale, site-specific installations using soil, clay, natural fibers, and other organic materials.

Born in Tierralta, Colombia, in 1967, Morelos lives and works in Bogotá. She graduated from La Escuela de Bellas Artes de Cartagena in 1991. Her recent solo presentations include those at Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris (2023); Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires (2022); Galería Santa Fe, Bogotá (2019); Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Canada (2019); NC-arte, Bogotá (2018); and Röda Sten Konsthall, Gothenburg, Sweden (2018). Recent group shows include the 59th Venice Biennale: *The Milk of Dreams* (2022); 5th Aichi Triennale: *STILL ALIVE* (2022); 45 Salón Nacional de Artistas: *el revés de la trama* (45th National Artists’ Salon: *The Reverse of the Plot*), Bogotá (2019); *Sami Dáiddaguovddáš*, Karasjok, Norway (2017); and *Dum Som Jag (One as Another)*, Havremagasinet, Boden, Sweden (2016). Her work is included in the collections of Banco de la República (Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango); Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño; Museo de Arte Moderno de Cartagena; and Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá.

About the Pulitzer Arts Foundation

Located in the heart of St. Louis, the Pulitzer Arts Foundation presents art from around the world in its celebrated Tadao Ando-designed building and surrounding neighborhood. Exhibitions include both contemporary and historic art and are complemented by a wide range of free public programs, including music, literary arts, dance, wellness, and cultural discussions. Founded in 2001, the Pulitzer is a place where ideas are freely explored, new art exhibited, and historic work reimaged. Open and free to all, the Pulitzer is a cultural and civic asset to the St. Louis community and a popular destination for visitors from around the world.

In addition to the museum, the Pulitzer is home to several outdoor spaces, including Park-Like—a garden of native plants and pathways, the Spring Church—an open air stone pavilion and beloved landmark, and the Tree Grove—a shady picnic spot with oak and redbud trees. The museum is open Thursday through Sunday, 10am–5pm, with evening hours until 8pm on Friday. The outdoor campus is open daily, sunrise to sunset. Admission is free. For more information, visit pulitzerarts.org or @pulitzerarts on social media.

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Image Captions

Delcy Morelos, *Double Negation (La doble negación)*, 2010. Acrylic on cotton thread, 39 1/2 × 25 × 1 1/2 inches (100.3 × 63.5 × 3.8 cm). © Delcy Morelos; Courtesy of the artist

Delcy Morelos *Concentrated Fields (Espacios concentrados)*, 2002 Acrylic on canvas 66 15/16 × 35 7/16 inches (170 × 90 cm)
© Delcy Morelos; Courtesy of the artist

Delcy Morelos, *Double Negation (La doble negación)*, 2008. Acrylic on cotton thread, Dimensions variable. © Delcy Morelos; Courtesy of the artist

Delcy Morelos, *Untitled*, 1998. Watercolor on paper, Paper: 19 1/8 x 12 1/2 in. (48.6 x 31.8 cm); Frame: 21 5/8 x 15 x 1 3/8 in. (55 x 38.2 x 3.5 cm). © Marian Goodman Gallery. Photo Credit: Rebecca Fanuele; Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

Delcy Morelos, *In the Personal Plot (En la trama personal)*, 2004. Acrylic on paper, 62 1/4 x 83 7/8 x 1 1/8 inches (158 x 213.1 x 2.8 cm). © Marian Goodman Gallery. Photo credit: Rebecca Fanuele; Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery