

**Milagros Bello “Time & Place by Susy Iglicki”** Published in the exhibition catalog. Director of Curator’s Voice Art Projects, Miami, Florida - November, 2011- January, 2012

Venezuela: A critical view

Susy Iglicki proposes a crucial vision of Venezuela. With a personal narrative on the social process, she displays a frontal vision of what is happening in her country under the political ordeals and risky changes made by the Venezuelan president and his revolution. Iglicki is well aware, as are the majority of artists living in Venezuela, of the dangerous social and political situation of the moment. Her photographs depict the marginal neighborhoods of Caracas, the shantytowns or “barrios” growing in the city hills. They work as a metaphor for its uncertain and insecure future. The “barrios” are social spaces of critical poverty, a geographical dystopia where inhabitants survive through violence, death and hunger, and live through the frantic economy of a Third World country. With an anthropological gaze, Iglicki focuses in on these “barrios” showing them in close-up to give the viewer a closer look into the living spaces that conform them. The “ranchos” are precariously built with bricks, aluminum and cardboard and form these cluttered neighborhoods of invisible suffering and struggle. Iglicki’s photographs propose a critical discourse on the space-time being of these anonymous spaces.

In the series *Contemporánea*, Iglicki presents the mountain El Avila as a focal point. Profuse with vegetation and splendor, and admired by all of Caracas’ citizens, the Avila is an iconic image of the city. At the bottom of the photographs and at the foot of the mountain, there are several well-organized and high-end buildings of a city’s neighborhood. The three works of this series depict the mountain in three visual phases, In *Contemporánea I, 2005-2011* Iglicki superimposes digitally a panoramic vista of the “ranchos” (in reality located in the southwest of Caracas) over the mountain in a chaotic and hectic sight. Anarchic arrangements of shacks prevail over the well-ordered set of buildings at the bottom. Is it Iglicki’s discourse commenting on the high contrast of two social situations coexisting in one reality? Is it the artist highlighting the crucial reality of her country? The Avila, wonderfully covered in green with colorful nuances in its bushes, trails and cascades, has

now been transformed into a distressed metaphoric view of the country's social decomposition.

*Contemporánea II, 2005-2011* shows the Avila covered with rubble and mud from the mudslide that occurred on December 15 and 16, 1999 on the mountain's littoral north side, which is known as the Vargas area. Iglicki superimposes the mud and rubble of more than 1 million cubic meters over the green mountain. This tragedy occurred over the mountain into Vargas, killing over 30,000 people. Iglicki's work not only signifies that tragic and unforgettable event that deeply saddened the country, but in a wider and more current perspective, she refers to the decomposed condition of Venezuela today. *Contemporánea III, 2011* shows the Avila in its pastoral and bucolic view, as a hopeful and positive symbol.

In the digital image *Black River, 2011* taken in the Barrio Los Eraso, Caracas, dark waters running through the barrio act as a "black river" with a clear reference to the catastrophic social and economical damage that oil has meant to her country. A more brutal and cruel social dimension is exposed in the light box *Morgue, 2011*, which displays the bodies in the Caracas morgue. The multiple corpses allude to the precarious and dangerous living in a city where an average of 70 assassinations take place in just a weekend. These works grant the artist's vision and sensitivity to the country's social realities and in a wider perspective, it is an anthropological view that renders out the crucial landmarks of Latin American countries.

#### The Holocaust: Recovering the Roots

Iglicki reflects on the ordeals that faced Holocaust victims and her own trajectory on these historical passages in her light boxes. She retakes images and iconic symbols of Jewish history and personal memorabilia to display significant moments and episodes of this tragic time. Through the ignited effect of the light box, the artist reveals the forcefulness and intensity of human endurance in front of death and upheaval. In the light box *Wir Waren (We were), 2011*, Iglicki shows a grid with multiple shoes as remnants of the murdering process in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Of this work, Iglicki says: "This piece is dedicated to the millions of human beings that could not survive the tragedy of the Sho'ah. The image is only a small fragment of the huge piles of shoes taken from the Jewish prisoners before they were cremated in the extermination camps." The work prevails a sense

of mourning and loss, but also of remembrance and permanence. The shoes are not only references to the disappeared but also the testimony of the evil forces residing in human beings. In *Wir Sind (We are)*, 2011 Igllicki says: "This work is an eulogy of survival, of life. The people photographed in this group are all survivors of the Holocaust who arrived in Venezuela after 1945. Easo Alvarez, Maxime Bendahan and Aaron Sosa took these portraits for the three volumes of the book *Exilio a la Vida (Exile to Life)*, published by the Union Israelita de Caracas (the Jewish Center) between 2006 and 2010. The credits are on the side of this piece." "It is an homage to memory and survival and it is a way also of recovering the roots."