

Amalia Caputo

Words from the Curator

Amalia Caputo's reclamation of the camera and repurposing of archives as empowered repositories strikes through her stunning works.

Archives have never been neutral.¹ Historically, these spaces saw temporal events ordered into contested narratives, revealing suppressive hands that drove to create “us” and “them.”² The camera was history's primary weapon for the colonial gaze in name of “documentation.”³

Caputo thoughtfully subverts this past with hopeful eyes and hands. She explores what it means to remember, reconstruct, and recenter. Her works are both fieldsites of recollection and landscapes of imagination.

In *Sorora Mística* (2023), Caputo surrounds women's bodies with “natural debris and personal memorabilia”,⁴ placing them in natural environments. Here, Caputo embodies and portrays *woman* as alchemist,⁵ fusing material to form new arrangements with each layer.⁶ Her process is both artful and ethnographic; through a “skillful fashioning of useful artifacts,”⁷ she spotlights the feminine and natural amidst their histories of omission.⁸

The Series *Entanglements* (2021-2022) sees human and natural elements ravel; we appear interlaced. The series could respond to Sherry Ortner's concern about how women are devalued, mirroring the subordination of nature to culture.⁹ For Caputo, our inextricability from our natural worlds is our strength. Caputo blurs the “human,” cultural, and natural—their interplay altogether meaningful.

Time marks our encounters with spaces. Change characterizes the human condition. Caputo makes with this relationship in *Every Being is an Island* (2020-2021), slowing and intensifying the viewing experience through scale and repetition, mediating it with materiality.¹⁰ *Amidst temporality, what does it mean to be present?* Documenting the everyday lives of natural things, she highlights how our environments, too, are narrators of memory.

Caputo's craft speaks to our yearning for and yielding to the natural, the presence of women in and harmonious existence with living lands and seas.

We are one with and part of a bigger picture.

¹ Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha, *Imperfect Tense: An Ethnography of the Archive*. *Mana*. 1. 2005, 4.

² *Ibid*; John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff. *Ethnography and historical imagination*. Oxford: Westview Press. 1992.

³ Christopher Morton, “Photography, Anthropology Of,” *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, September 5, 2018, 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1621>. 4

⁴ Amalia Caputo, interview with ModA Curations, Feb 13, 2024.

⁵ Amalia Caputo, statement on *Sorora Mística*, 2023.

⁶ Tim Ingold, “Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials,” essay (University of Aberdeen, 2010), 9.

⁷ James Clifford and George E. Marcus, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 1-26, 4.

⁸ Amalia Caputo, Interview with ModA Curations, Feb 13, 2024.

⁹ Sherry B Ortner. “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?” *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 2 (1972): 5–31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177638>.

¹⁰ Amalia Caputo, Interview with ModA Curations, Feb 13, 2024.

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Amalia Caputo (b. 1964) is a lens-based visual artist, art historian, and researcher born in Caracas, Venezuela currently based in Miami, FL.

Through Caputo's practice, she aims to reflect on the experience of human and/of nature, the symbolic significance of photography, the construction of visual archives, and the complexities of memory. Utilizing photography, video, and installations, she establishes an intimate and respectful connection with nature while documenting, recreating, and observing surrounding ecosystems. These reflections serve as poignant expressions of the urgent need for human compassion towards the distress inflicted upon nature by human ecological destruction. Guided by feminist and decolonial ideas, Caputo seeks non-invasive and non-extractivist approaches to nature, fostering healing in the human-non-human relationship and forging connections among diverse forms of life, modes, and materials.

—*Courtesy of the Artist*