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Rachel Garrard Looks for the Invisible in the Visible


Meditation and Mayan sweat lodges provide inspiration for the holistic British artist

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“When I am in a place like this, if I sit in silence I start to understand that I am part of an extraordinary natural cycle,” explains British artist Rachel Garrard, who is sat next to the falls in the centre of the Hannacroix Creek Preserve in upstate New York. This is one of Rachel’s favourite places. “There is no distinction and separation between me and the waterfall or the air, the trees and the sun; it is all the same essence.”



INTERRELATED ECHOES, 2014, STEEL, 62 X 41 INCHES

The multi-medium artist is known for her exploration of the unseen world around us: her videos, paintings, sculptures and performances unite consciousness, nature and time. “People are always interested in developing ways of seeing beyond,” she says. “Whether it is through some kind of ritual or psychedelics.” Channeling a universal essence of being is a methodology she applies to her life as a whole, and she produces art with a series of processes, much like meditation. Experiences in Mayan sweat lodges, surfing and daily bike

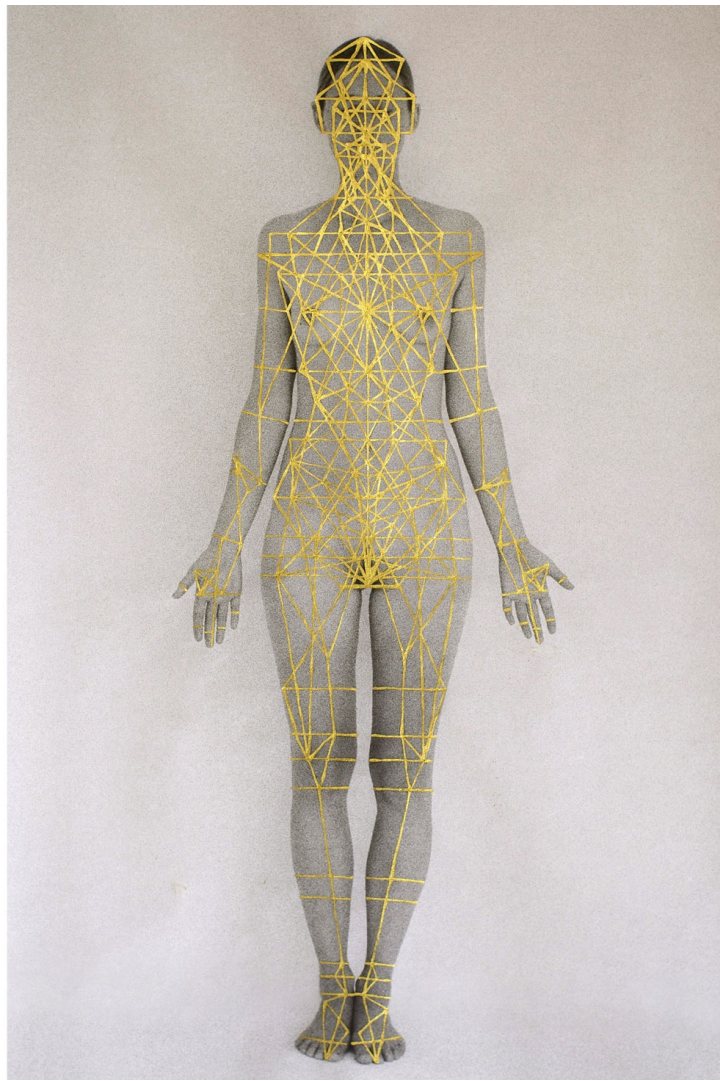
rides over the Williamsburg Bridge contribute to her work, with body and mind being central to her practice. Amuse spoke to the artist about her interactions with nature, metaphysics and cosmology.

How do you let notions of time affect your work?

In New York it's easy to be rushing all the time, but my artwork can't be rushed; its creation is a long, laborious process. Until I am calm, relaxed and ready to work, I'm likely to fuck things up. It is way more productive to just sit think about it for a while, and allow the ideas to come.

Tell us about other rituals that have influenced your work

I took part in Mayan temazcal ceremonies (purification rituals) in Tulum. You're essentially holed up inside a sweat lodge, or sauna: it is really hot and it's pitched black and you stay inside for four hours. Because it's so dark, you start thinking more and more internally; you also start seeing visuals where they don't exist. During one ceremony, I started seeing grey triangular shapes; that inspired me the next morning to collect the ash from the fire of the temazcal and create some work.



BODY SYSTEMS I, 2013, INK AND ARCHIVAL PIGMENT ON KOZO PAPER, 40" X 25"

Do you follow a daily routine when you're working in your studio?

I try to wake up at 5:30am and do yoga, meditate then cycle to the studio. As a teenager, I really believed in the idea of practices that helped me reach some kind of altered state. I had a very specific routine: I would fast for a day, then the next morning wake up, have a hard-boiled egg, a quadruple shot of espresso and a cigarette. Then I would get into this almost jittery-panicky hyper-excited state and that's when I would start painting. Now it's become a calmer more meditative practice.



COMING FORTH INTO DAY

Have you ever dabbled in psychedelics to reach altered states?

For whatever reason, I've never tried psychedelics or been interested in them. I think it's human nature to alter our state of mind; we've always known there is something beyond what we are able to see physically.

What other discoveries have you made in your travels?

In South America, shamans would bury themselves in the sand with just a straw sticking out. They would stay there for days. It is a ritual death and when they are dug out it's akin to rebirth. I had the notion from a very young age that some of our views on death are not very helpful. People try to avoid death and stay young forever. In a way that is stemming from the material age where we believe only the physical things that we can see are there. I decided it would be important to acknowledge death and not be fearful, it changes your perceptions and makes you live more fully. A recurring cyclic transformative process has always been essential to my work.



RESIDUAL, 2015.

Can you tell us more about the corporeal involvement with your work?

All our experiences and perceptions stem from within our own bodies. Throughout my research, I kept finding ancient maps of the universe drawn inside human figures and liked the idea of microcosm vs. macrocosm. If I wanted to explore the outer reaches of the cosmos, one method of doing so was looking more and more internally into the human body. The human body contains all of the different geometric and geodesic forms of the universe within its biometrics.

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