

Doris Salcedo: Parameters of Political Commitment in Colombia

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Abstract : Doris Salcedo is the most prominent sculptor from Colombia ever and currently, one of the most prestigious Latin-American artists in the world. Her artwork, intended as political art, has war as a background, in particular the Colombian civil conflict, and it addresses the way that its violence affects victims' lives irreparably. While Salcedo is internationally recognized as a talented and a politically committed artist, some Colombian critics consider her artwork as the propagandist and influenced by the interest of multinational companies and the organizations that fund it. This paper, as part of a more extended research project, attempts to demonstrate that Doris Salcedo's artwork makes visible the victims suffering and mourning and compels the viewers' sympathy, although its approach is superficial. It does not achieve a complete or complex understanding of the social and historical causes underneath the war and maybe because of that has become a successful commodity for the international arts market. The paper considers, firstly, the influence that Colombian Nuevo Teatro, from the sixties, had on Salcedo's early political perspective and, secondly, analyzes in detail the first series of her artwork (1992-1998) and how those works address grieving. The focus point of this analysis will be the domestic furniture sculptures, which are the main symbolic element of Salcedo's oeuvre.

Keywords : Arts and politics, Doris Salcedo, Colombian art, Political Art

Conference Title : ICALAS 2016 : International Conference on African and Latin American Studies

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : September 19-20, 2016