

Maru Aponte: Salt Stains

March 23–May 4, 2024

Reina María Rodríguez, “las islas” *

mira y no les descuides.
las islas son mundos aparentes.
cortadas en el mar
transcurren en su soledad de tierras sin raíz.
en el silencio del agua una mancha
de haber anclado sólo aquella vez
y poner los despojos de la tempestad y las ráfagas
sobre las olas.
aquí los cementerios son hermosos y pequeños
y están más allá de las ceremonias.
me he bañado para sentarme en la yerba
es la zona de brumas
donde acontecen los espejismos
y vuelvo a sonreír.
no sé si estás aquí o es el peligro
empiezo a ser libre entre esos límites que se
intercambian:
seguro amanecerá.
las islas son mundos aparentes
coberturas del cansancio en los iniciadores de la calma
sé que sólo en mí estuvo aquella vez la realidad
un intervalo entre dos tiempos
cortadas en el mar
soy lanzada hacia un lugar más tenue
las muchachas que serán jóvenes una vez más
contra la sabiduría y la rigidez de los que envejecieron
sin los movimientos y las contorsiones del mar
las islas son mundos aparentes manchas de sal
otra mujer lanzada encima de mí que no conozco
sólo la vida menor
la gratitud sin prisa de las islas en mí.

Reina María Rodríguez, “the islands”

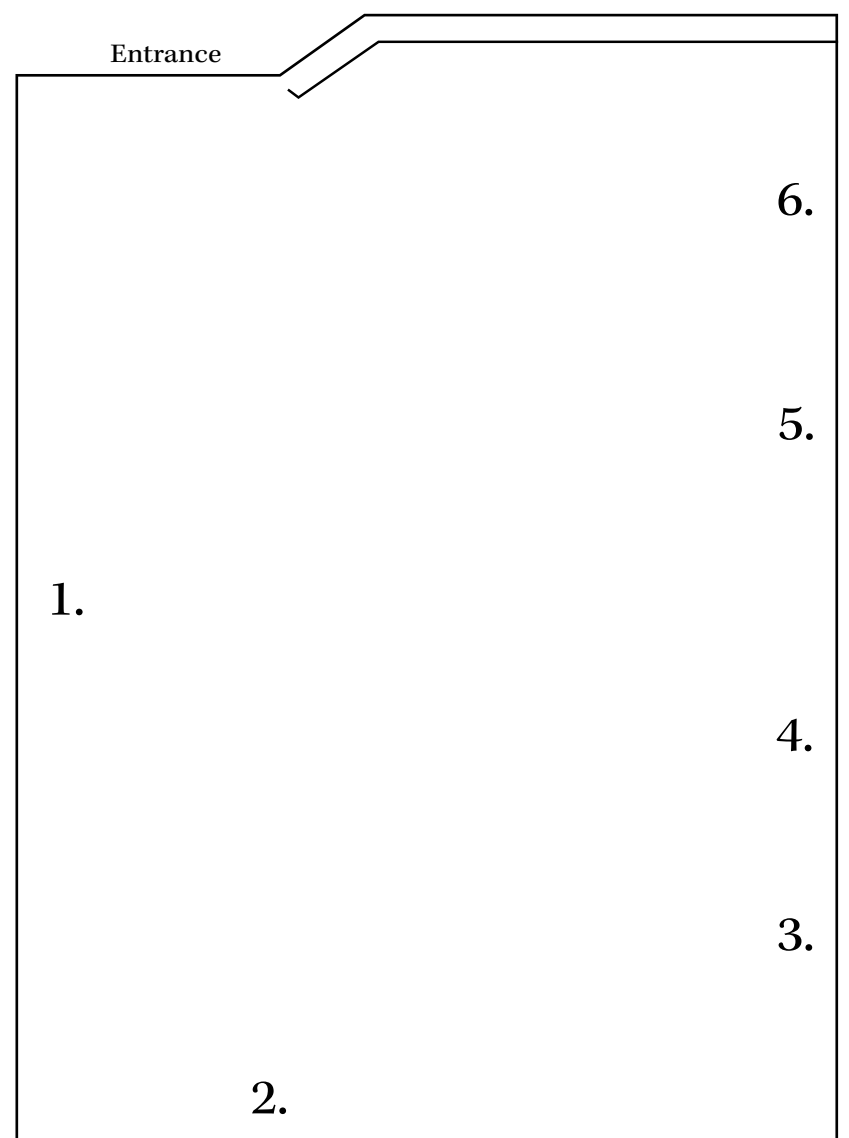
look and don't neglect them.
the islands are apparent worlds.
cut off in the sea
moving past in the solitude of rootless lands.
above the water's silence, a stain
from having dropped anchor only that once
depositing remains left by storms and gusts
on the waves.
here the cemeteries are beautiful and small.
they are beyond ceremonies.
I bathed before sitting down in the grass
it's the zone of thick sea mists
where mirages occur
and I smile again.
I don't know if you're here or if it's the danger
I begin to be free between those interchanging limits:
surely dawn will come.
the islands are apparent worlds
blankets of exhaustion on those who would bring about
calm
I know the reality was only inside me then
an interval between two kinds of time
cut off in the sea
I'm thrown onto a more tenuous place
girls who will be young one more time
in the face of the wisdom and the rigidity of those who
aged
without the motions and contortions of the sea
the islands are apparent worlds salt stains
another woman I don't know, thrown on top of me
only the lesser life
the unhurried gratitude of the islands in me.

Mona Island, in the Puerto Rican archipelago, has two hundred caves, many of which permeate its coastline and are visible from the sea. These caverns are caesuras in the island's chromatic landscape. The wind shakes the palms, sand and surf, making sunlight and shadow dance around the still, dark recesses. From a boat, Maru Aponte transcribes the movement and luminosity around her with watercolours on small pieces of paper. She works with the medium because it responds to wind, light and heat, much like the ocean. The plein-air sketches that inform the paintings in *Salt Stains* express the elements and forces that shape the islands in the archipelago.

In her poem “las islas / the islands,” Cuban poet Reina Maria Rodriguez observes that the physical and psychic landscapes of islands and their residents are entwined. An island's topography is akin to a floating body, and both bear the stains of atmospheric and social weather. Rodriguez explores how an island's isolation creates a unique spatial and temporal experience for those who inhabit them, and that is distinct from places and people that are from away.

At a distance, the caves on Mona Island resemble portals. Up close, they are places of contact, evidenced by the presence of cross-cultural art and tools dating back millennia, and epochs of plant and mineral life. The form and concept of a portal as a threshold of encounter resonates with Aponte. She has split her time between Bayamón, Puerto Rico, and Vancouver, Canada, since 2021, and her new work is informed by her passage between the two places. Her time spent in the Pacific Northwest's temperate climate resonates in the paintings' grey-toned ground, which subdues the vivid palette conjured by the Caribbean tropics.

Maru Aponte's artistic journey unfolds through the dynamic exploration of watercolour as a contemporary medium, challenging its historical associations with leisurely pursuits. Aponte is a Puerto Rican artist working in Vancouver, Canada, where she bridges diverse landscapes to evoke a profound sense of place. Intense colour emerges as a pivotal element in her work. This saturation reflects the intrinsic qualities of the medium and the vibrant palette of Puerto Rico. Her paintings resonate as a visceral representation of the Caribbean experience—beautiful, cacophonous and authentically honest. Aponte recently graduated with an MFA from Emily Carr University of Art + Design in Vancouver. In 2023, she had a solo exhibition titled *Con mil ojos de espuma* at Souvenir 154 in Puerto Rico and was granted the Griffin x ECU Fellowship studio award at Griffin Arts Projects in North Vancouver. In summer 2024, she will present a solo exhibition at Galería Agustina Ferreyra in Mexico City.



1. *Salt Stains*, 2024. 6' x 7', Watercolour on canvas.
2. *Pink Tides*, 2024. 6" x 8", Watercolour on paper.
3. *Fourth Dimension*, 2024. 5' x 4', Watercolour on canvas.
4. *Light in August*, 2024. 5' x 4', Watercolour on canvas.
5. *Looking for Turtles*, 2024. 6' x 7', Watercolour on canvas.
6. *Silver Sun*, 2024. 8" x 4 1/2", Watercolour on paper.

* Reina María Rodríguez, “las islas/ the islands,” *Violet Islands and Other Poems*. Translated by Kristin Dykstra and Nancy Gates Madsen. Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2004.