

November 2016 at The Hub Karen Mall in Nairobi, Begoña Lund exhibited her impressions of womanhood in the retrospective exhibition *Agua, Tierra, Mujer*.

The exhibition was a bold and honest manifestation of the artist's understanding and experience of what it is to be a woman. Using painting, sculpture and poetry, Lund explored both the natural attributes and the socially assigned roles of women. Shaped by her experiences, from Spain and France to Honduras and Cameroon, Lund's diverse, spirited sculpture and painting delved in to current and critical issues from environmental pollution, capitalism and consumerism, to the disempowerment and widespread abuse of women.

Lund celebrates women; their all-encompassing, all-embracing nature; their immense capacity to understand, their powerful sense of intuition and their remarkable ability to persevere when hope is dwindling. She conveys women as the keepers of secrets, life-givers, love-benefactors, problem-solvers, persistent forgivers, relationship menders and community builders. In her poem *Water finds its way*, Lund compares the determination of women to water; how it "penetrates the pores," so quietly, "moving, rising, filling everything," and finding its way through places that are difficult to traverse. Her poem is inspired by the painting *Water: Life Drop*, which is about both the resilience and the agility of women.

Fearless in her combination of materials, the artist picks up a tile from here, a brick from there, a shoe, a glove, some string, some jewels. A daring fabricator and bold colourist, she brings the fragments together, creating compelling mixed-media sculpture such as *Gold Cage*, *Old Time* and *Rivalry*, found in the *Tierra* (Earth) section of the room. *Gold Cage*, made with red glass, metal and wood (65cm x50cm) has a warm, brassy palette. A birdcage is secured to a base. The adjoining poem is called *A golden cage*. It addresses how women have been confined by social constructs and, "crushed by the show of destiny." And though the cage may be pretty, or flimsy, it is still a cage. Lund's messages are frank and forthright.

The most daring of her artwork in *Agua, Tierra, Mujer* has to be Lund's *Woman Creatures*. With their pincushion, voodoo-doll effect, these energetic, animated sculptures are chaotic, courageous things with a contemporary flair. Made of newspaper collage, paint, and found objects, Lund's 'creatures' represent different character types. There is the grandmother, the "happy and peaceful woman" wearing a giant grin, the distressed woman intimidated by technology (she is covered in wires), and the working woman clad in formal attire. Begoña Lund attempts to bare the many attributes and layers of woman. With pain and joy, slapdash strokes and fine detailing all jumbled in one, the panorama was surprisingly coherent.

The varied, miscellaneous nature of all the parts pieced together at *Agua, Tierra, Mujer* wouldn't ordinarily seem to fit together and yet the exhibition in its entirety, or as a whole, was beautiful to behold. Perhaps the same thing can be said for woman