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PHOTOGRAPHIC MURALS OPEN UP NEW WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE

Santiago Cucullu: The Wandering Rocks On View Now

MADISON, WI—*The Wandering Rocks* is an installation of floor-to-ceiling photographic murals and painted vessels by Santiago Cucullu that presents viewers with an enveloping collision of visual information that creates new ways of seeing, experiencing, and understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of contemporary life.

The commissioned, site-specific installation features murals comprised of photographs Cucullu captured both locally and around the world. The entryway to the artist's apartment complex in Milwaukee, the view from inside a billowing tent in Montana, a Hindu temple in South India, and a covered pedestrian walkway in Bologna, Italy, are among the images that, in total, create a perceptual shifting of space, depth, and perspective for viewers.

For the artist, these images represent moments from his life when architecture marked a boundary between different states of being. As such, if a photograph "freezes time," then the frozen time embodied in these murals are distinct occasions of transformation and change.

The installation also includes surprising visual interpolations in the form of 18 colorful ceramic plates affixed to the murals. Like the images that envelop them, the plates are indicative of shifts and transitions, serving as the end points of one visual idea and movement to another—similar to punctuation in passages of text. Loose, gestural line work in blues, oranges, yellows, and

greens cover the surface of the ceramics, helping to break up the grey tones and sharp angularity of the printed murals.

Cucullo's work also hearkens to literature. The number of ceramic plates and title of the installation reference the 18 vignettes in "The Wandering Rocks" chapter of James Joyce's epic Modernist tome, *Ulysses*. Just as each of Joyce's 18 vignettes transition the reader from one narrative episode to the next and serve as an integral part of the larger chapter, each of Cucullo's 18 ceramic vessels transitions the viewer from one visual thought to the next while functioning together as elements of a unified whole.

"The Wandering Rocks" is the only chapter that Joyce does not directly parallel with a section from Homer's *The Odyssey*. Although the ancient Greek poem makes reference to the Wandering Rocks, it only does so to indicate the route Odysseus avoids on his journey back to Ithaca. Joyce, by inserting this chapter into *Ulysses*, cleverly alludes to the road not taken. In structure and subject, Cucullo's *The Wandering Rocks* again mirrors Joyce, functioning as the transition from one section of the building to the other and elevating the very process of wandering to a place of central importance. The artist suggests that it's in the wandering that we find accidental meaning, in choosing the road not taken that we discover new things about ourselves and about each other.

As we traverse MMoCA's transitional corridor now occupied by *The Wandering Rocks*, Cucullo asks us to consider the boundaries or thresholds we have advanced through during our own wanderings, and how the cumulative impacts of these moments gradually shift each of us.

About the Artist

Santiago Cucullo was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and currently lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He holds an MFA from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (1999). Cucullo's work has been shown both nationally and internationally. Solo exhibitions of his work were presented at Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego, and Loock Galerie in Berlin. His work has been in a number of group exhibitions, including shows at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art's *Wisconsin Triennial* (2010, 2013). He is represented by Alice Wilds (Milwaukee) and Galleria Umberto DiMarino (Italy).

Housed in a soaring, Cesar Pelli-designed building, the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art provides free exhibitions and education programs that engage people in modern and contemporary art. The

museum's four galleries offer changing exhibitions that feature established and emerging artists. The Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an incredible view. The museum is open: Thursday, noon–8 pm; Friday, noon–8 pm; Saturday, 10 am–8 pm; Sunday, 10 am–5 pm; and is closed on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.

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