

## Feliciano Centurión

*I am Awake: 1992 – 1996*

**Exhibition Dates:** 19 September - 27 October, 2019

**Private View:** Wednesday 18 September, 6-8pm



*Ave del Paraiso Florecido*, c. 1995, Embroidery on blanket, 60 x 50 cm

Cecilia Brunson Projects is pleased to announce *I am Awake*, the first London exhibition of the celebrated Paraguayan artist Feliciano Centurión.

Centurión, who died aged 34 in 1996 from the complications of AIDS, was a central figure of the *Arte Light* movement of the late 80s, linked to the Ricardo Rojas Cultural Center in Buenos Aires. These artists were known for their flamboyant, irreverent works that embodied progressive attitudes to sexuality and lifestyle, emerging in tandem with the fall of right-wing dictatorships across

Latin America.

*I am Awake* is comprised of a series of works from the artist's estate, some of which are being shown publicly for the first time since his death. Taken mostly from the period of his life following his diagnosis with HIV in 1992, they consist of characteristic embroidered *frazadas* (blankets), along with his collection of plastic dinosaurs bedecked with crochet outfits and other items.

The artist's work signals a moment in Latin American consciousness, where a new generation of late '80s artists – influenced by postmodernism – eschewed big-idea utopianism in favour of a more layered, subjective and wry perspective. These artists embraced the peripheral and traditional as well as the popular and mass-produced. From a small-town childhood absorbing the cultural melange of Guaraní Indians and Spanish Jesuits and raised by a mother and grandmother who taught him the traditionally female activity of lacemaking, embroidery and crochet, Centurión became a shining light in this new cross-cultural consciousness.

In many of the works of this period, Centurión intervenes the most intimate household textiles – blankets, pillowcases and pillows – typically mass-produced and cheap. On these he sews beautifully intricate pieces of embroidery, Paraguayan Ñandutí lace, patches and backgrounds of bright fabrics. These form habitats in which the artist brings to life a pantheon of semi-mythical symbols or beings, which derive from his own night-time dreams.

Subjects also include animals, such as the Jaguar, that occupy the Paraguayan Chaco, conjuring up a mixture of nostalgia for his homeland alongside the tactile sensuality of everyday bedtime items. As the critic Ticio Escobar has said, this intention towards beauty is linked to the Guaraní Indian ideal of *tekoporã*, the search for the *beautiful life* in both communal and private life.

According to confidantes such as fellow artist Ana López, his diagnosis came with an overwhelming sense of vertigo – the feeling that a virus was tugging at his whole consciousness, not just his health. These feelings are woven into his pieces. Works that followed become increasingly intimate, small pictorial elegies – stars, suns, on pillows, handkerchiefs and scraps of blankets. To help him process his fear day-to-day, phrases and mantras appear in Centurión's embroidery: from Liliana Maresca's *'El amor es el perfume de la flor'* (Love is the fragrance of a flower) to the darker fragment of an Alina Tortosa poem, *'La muerte es parte intermitente de mis días'* (Death is a recurring part of my life). He shows us that the *beautiful life* can exist in darkness as well as light, and this is the legacy of Centurión's work.

Says Gallery Founder and Director, Cecilia Brunson: *'Highly codified and drawing on the art forms of his native Paraguay, Feliciano Centurión's work exudes spirit, bravery and light, and its aesthetic power is further enhanced when contextualised with the oppressive regimes he was compelled to live and work under and quietly against throughout his life. The gallery is delighted and honoured to present this landmark show, and in doing so to pay tribute to Centurión and satisfy the growing interest in his work both in Latin America — he was one of twelve individual artist shows highlighted in the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo in 2018 — as well as in Europe.'*

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## Notes to Editors:

### About the artist

Feliciano Centurión was born in San Ignacio de las Misiones, Paraguay, on March 20, 1962. By 1970 his family settled in Alberdi, Ñeembucu, on the border with Argentina. Under the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner, Feliciano and his family were forced into exile to Argentina in 1973. In Formosa, Argentina, Centurión had a formal art education at the Oscar R. Albertozzi School of Fine Arts. In 1980, Centurión moved to Buenos Aires, attending the Pridiliano Pueyrredón School of Fine Arts and at the Ernesto de la Cárcova Superior School of Fine Arts. He participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions, both in Asuncion, Paraguay, and in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as part of the group of artists linked to the Gallery of the Cultural Centre Ricardo Rojas (dependent of the University of Buenos Aires). He participated in the Fifth Biennial of Cuba (1992), and travelled to exhibit at the Maison de L'Amérique Latine in France. He died in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on November 7, 1996.

### About Cecilia Brunson Projects

Over the last six years, Cecilia Brunson Projects has earned a reputation as an increasingly prominent force in the dissemination of Latin American art across the globe. A prolific curator and critic of Latin American art, Cecilia Brunson has curated at The Americas Society, New York, and the Blanton Museum of Austin, along with writing for Artforum as well as numerous publications and catalogue raisonnés. Brunson set the mission of her London gallery to identify, champion and celebrate exceptional contemporary and historical Latin American artists and bring them to an international audience. Based in Bermondsey, London, the reach of the gallery is global and institutional. In 2015, the gallery proudly exhibited *Y entonces el mar te hablará* (And the Sea Will Talk to You), a film by the artist Coco Fusco which was the first time her film was shown in the UK as an installation. Recent highlights include the co-curation of a José Leonilson show in the Americas Society 2018; securing two artists' estates in 2018 (Victor Magarinos and exclusively representing Feliciano Centurión); three gallery artists featured in the Sao Paulo Biennial 2018 (Claudia Fontes, Alejandro Corujeira and Feliciano Centurión); the first Alfredo Volpi solo show in Europe and the first European solo show of Willys de Castro both in 2016.

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Opening times: Tues - Fri, 10am – 6pm  
Weekends/out of hours: by appointment  
Closed between exhibitions, on Bank Holiday Weekends and Public Holidays.

<https://www.ceciliabrunsonprojects.com/>

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