

NOT ALONE

16.01.2026 – 10.03.2026

GALLERIA CONTINUA is pleased to present Susana Pilar's first solo exhibition in its Paris Marais space.

Not Alone explores issues related to **gender**, **race**, and family **heritage** – recurring themes in the artist's practice. The fourteen works, including eight new productions created especially for the exhibition, take the form of a performance, videos, paintings, drawings, photographs, a sculpture, and installations.

Not Alone weaves a mosaic of narratives in which the artist's personal journey resonates with centuries of migration between Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Asia. From one room to the next, the gallery transforms into an echo chamber where the works take the visitor on a journey through an infinite space-time, the stage of the artist's experiences and aspirations.

Protect it at all costs, the performance marking the exhibition's opening, evokes a sense of inner peace. The intense light of the lamp carried by the artist conveys an energy that allows the soul to regenerate and face life's vicissitudes. These same elements are present in **Autorretrato**, a drawing that preserves the trace of the artist's ephemeral action and reaffirms her will to reclaim control over her identity.

This same energizing serenity is at the heart of the video **Joy is Power**. This daily act of meditation, in which the artist takes care of her hair, constitutes a relaxing ritual practiced by many women with frizzy hair. This work stands in contrast to the brutality depicted in **Libre**, a video of a performance presented at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid in 2025, which references the painting *El rapto de las mulatas* (1938). In Carlos Enríquez's work, two armed white men abduct two fully nude mixed-race women on horseback, treating their bodies as trophies to consume with impunity and without restraint. In her

performance, the artist extricates herself from a circle of surrounding white men in a gesture of passive resistance. She thus denounces the image of Black women's bodies as eternal objects of fantasies and stereotypes.

Landscape, consisting of two photographs, several drawings using different techniques, a clay bas-relief, a wall engraving, and two paintings, is a direct reference to her childbirth in the Netherlands. The scar she bears testifies to doctors' prejudices regarding her relationship to pain. The series also serves as a reminder: women's bodies, especially those of color, bear the traces of centuries of abuse and domination, of which too few are outraged.

This variable empathy, a visible face of persistent racism, is evoked in **All Colors**, a painting made up of squares in different shades of brown. Is skin color the cause of social inequalities, or merely a tool used by Western structures to maintain control over people of color? This question is also central to **Kont pa s'ı bato mon fr̃er pou sot la rivĩer**, a video of a performance created in Réunion in 2011, shown in the gallery's basement cinema space. The work reflects on power relations established between cultures. By quoting popular Creole proverbs and using a mirror that reflects an image without ever reproducing it faithfully, the work questions economic dependency and recurring racial conflicts on the island. The insular context of this French overseas department recalls Cuba, as both have been shaped by centuries of migration and patterns of domination.

Apuntes para una historia is a series of graphite drawings, notes for a story still to be rewritten. Who should own the wealth built on the blood of the colonized? When will the descendants of those exploited and enslaved be compensated? These questions also gave rise to **Historias Negras**, a performance first

presented in Belgium, addressing the historical ties of slavery between that country and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The work emerged from the artist's research into her African origins, by the aid of her family, particularly elders over ninety who revealed that she had ancestors from Congo and Sierra Leone. The video shows the artist seated with her hands behind her back, referencing the severed hands in the Belgian Congo, making origami figures from black paper with her feet. This three-hour labor, denouncing colonial violence, also pays tribute to all African diasporas – her "large family" – dispersed across the Atlantic over the centuries. Through a gesture repeated a thousand times, the artist urges former colonial powers to revisit their history and confront their past.

The installation **Not Forgotten** also references her "large family." The stones suspended from or attached to the ceiling each bear an African name that, according to her research, was common in regions from which many people were sent to the Americas. The work evokes the spirits of the deported, whose journeys carried cultures, beliefs, and knowledge.

Saberes is a botanical garden composed of medicinal plants whose benefits have been passed down through generations within families and communities. Like the open-air cabinet of an Afro-Caribbean traditional healer, the installation is a tribute to ancestral knowledge, often questioned by the well-intentioned.

Dibujo Intercontinental documents, through photographs, a performance in which the artist walks through a city dragging a small boat attached to her waist by a rope. This gesture symbolizes how she carries her multiple legacies, passed down by women and men who arrived in Cuba by boat. Her heritage, particularly its Chinese component, is also highlighted in **Un chino llega a Matanzas....** This installation, showcased on the basement floor of the gallery, consists of silk fabrics suspended from the ceiling, on which the artist has written poems in Spanish. These evoke memories of her Chinese great-grandfather, Arcadio Shang, who emigrated to Matanzas. Fragments of stories, lost in the exhausted minds of her family members, strive to resist oblivion, reminding her that she descends from multiple lineages united in Cuba.

Not Alone, the title of the exhibition, is also a video created with the help of artificial intelligence, exploring intergenerational relationships and the presence of entities – spirits of all the artist's ancestors. This video, a metaphor for the memory of her real or imagined ancestors present in her daily life, evokes blood, the sea, journeys, and her legacies. A horde of women emerges from the water and follows her, imparting a force that symbolizes the fullness of being constantly protected by one's kin. **Not Alone** is a declaration of love for her families, for personal stories that punctuate the larger History, and above all, a tribute to human dignity.

– N'Goné Fall, curator of the exhibition

About the artist:

Susana Pilar Delahante Matienzo was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1984. She currently lives and works between the Netherlands and Cuba.

Her work focuses on the body, gender, race and social issues. The artist suffered some family situations that stimulated her interest in the reality of women around the world, as well as the different forms of discrimination against them. To this is added her interest in the physical history and process of the body, as well as the public as an active participant in her work.

Susana Pilar graduated in 2008 from the Higher Institute of Art in Havana, Cuba. From 2011 to 2013, she completed postgraduate studies at the HfG | University of Arts and Design in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Her work has been exhibited in the following biennials and international art events: Berlin Biennale (2022), 14 Dakar Biennial, Senegal (2022); Lubumbashi Biennial, Democratic Republic of Congo (2019); 12th and 13th Havana Biennial (2015, 2019); 13 Biennial of Media Arts, Centro Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo Cerrillos, Santiago de Chile (2017); New Talents Biennale 2016, Cologne, Germany; Cuban Pavilion at the Venice Biennial (2015); International Biennale of Contemporary Art (BIAC), Martinique (2013); IV Bienal deformes de performance, Chile (2012); III Biennale Arts Actuels Réunion, Reunion Island, France (2011); International Photography Exhibition, World Festival of Black Arts and Cultures, Dakar, Senegal (2010); 7th Gwangju Biennial, South Korea (2008).

Amongst her principal solo shows are *Achievement*, Secession, Vienna (2024); *Empathy*, GALLERIA CONTINUA, San Gimignano, Italy (2024); *Opening paths*, FOROF, Rome (2023); *Resilience*, TRUCK, Calgary, Canada (2022); *Body Present*, KIOSK, Gent, Belgium (2019); *Jardinera*, GALLERIA CONTINUA, Les Moulins, France (2018); *Dibujo intercontinental*, GALLERIA CONTINUA, Havana (2017); *Un chino de paso por Venecia*, ICI, Venice, Italy (2017); *Bala perdida*, Galería Villa Manuela, Havana, Cuba (2017); *Reclaiming meaning*, Skövde Art Museum, Sweden (2016); *Tropiques h ritage*, Andr  Arsenec Gallery, Tropiques Atrium, Fort de France, Martinique (2015); *Sleeper*, NAOS gallery, Karlsruhe, Germany (2012); *Fiebre cerebral*, Villa de Bank Gallery, Enschede, Netherlands (2011).

Her work has also been featured in numerous international group exhibitions.

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