

Experience Three Generations of Art at The Box Gallery Before It's Gone

August 6, 2015

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“That urge to go west, that urge to push, that urge to be extreme, and that freedom to not have precedence—it’s very L.A.,” explains artist Corazon del Sol. “They were both really interested in pushing extremes and not giving a fuck about the history that came before them.”

“They” are del Sol’s mother and grandmother, trailblazing figures in the Los Angeles conceptual art world. Her mother, Eugenia P. Butler, first exhibited her art at only 18 years old. Her grandmother, Eugenia Butler, ran a radical art gallery in the 1960s. Del Sol immortalized their lives and work in her latest show, “Let Power Take A Female Form,” at the DTLA Arts District gallery The Box.

“It’s nowhere. It’s not been written about at all,” del Sol says of her family’s role in L.A. lore. Both Eugenias found themselves abused by their families and excluded from art history. Though her mother showed in some of the biggest and earliest conceptual shows, often as the only woman, her contributions went unrecognized. “If you look at her work, she predated a lot of the work that the men made. There’s not one art historian that I’ve talked to that’s included her in that history.”



“Let Power Take a Female Form” incorporates multimedia artworks and artifacts from the three generations of women, from copies of Eugenia the elder’s letters to del Sol’s installation of a honey-soaked sheet dotted with flies. The flies echo one of the Eugenia Butler Gallery’s major claims to art world fame: in 1970, Dieter Roth filled 37 suitcases with cheese and left them to rot in the gallery for weeks.

Since del Sol knows conceptual art can be intimidating, she offers frank and in-depth tours of the show to visitors every Thursday (the final one is today), though she also pops by the gallery frequently. She candidly discusses the abuse her mother endured from her grandfather and the disappointments her grandmother faced in a repressive era. Del Sol even tells one particularly “extreme” story: In 1972, a year after the Eugenia Butler Gallery closed its La Cienega doors, Eugenia the elder arrived at an arts exhibition riding a white horse—completely naked. She then told attendees that she was Eugenia the younger and tried to take credit for her daughter’s work. That incident “totally devastated” del Sol’s mother.

Yet the show, del Sol notes, is not just about history. It’s about healing. “I feel like I’ve been given this incredible gift, having conceptual art and art as part of my daily life, and I want it to be accessible,” she says. “I really think about young women being empowered through their stories. So much of the [show’s] narrative is about the power of vulnerability, coming to terms with your trauma.” This is the first time del Sol has exhibited her own artworks—which include surreal sculptures and a playable video game with bobbing vaginas—so publically. “I really shied away from being public about my art practice before because of my mom’s experience,” she continues. “I was really scared of being so vulnerable. But the response has been so amazing.” Visitors have even cried during her tours. “That feels like a real success to me, that’s it’s actually affecting people. I feel really happy and grateful.”

“Let Power Take a Female Form” closes Saturday, August 8.

