

Visions » Cecilia Paredes Vanishes Into Nature Through Body Paint Photography

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July 9, 2025 by [Dominique Musorrafti](#)



Cecilia Paredes creates mesmerizing photo-performances, installations, body-paintings, and sculptural works exploring nature, identity, femininity, and migration

Transmission 235: Interview with *Cecilia Paredes*

Multimedia artist Cecilia Paredes works across decoration, nature, and the body in her artwork. After graduating from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru with a degree in fine arts, she continued her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and Cambridge Arts & Crafts in England. A politically engaged student in Lima during the 1970s, she and her spouse were deported. She later lived in Mexico, Lima, and Costa Rica before settling in Philadelphia. Her artistic practice is shaped by experiences of migration, diaspora, and displacement.

She is best known for her “photo-performances,” particularly her ongoing *Paisajes* series. In these works, she meticulously paints her body to merge with patterned backgrounds, flora, tapestries, and animals, creating visual continuity between figure and environment. Her interdisciplinary practice also includes sculptures and installations, often incorporating discarded or organic materials. Her work addresses themes such as migration, gender, ecology, and the role of humans within the natural world. Through the use of performance, painting, photography, and installation, Paredes examines camouflage and presence, identity and place, and the shifting boundaries between humans and their surroundings. The resulting compositions challenge perception and emphasize the relationship between self and environment.

She has exhibited internationally, including at the **Venice Biennale** (2005), **Havana Biennial**, **Pingyao Photo Festival** (China), **Tabacalera** (Madrid), **MMOMA** (Moscow), **Hermitage** (St. Petersburg), **Museo de la Fotografía** (Bogotá), and **MOLAA** (Los Angeles). Her awards include the **Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio**

Residency (1998), First Honorable Mention at the Central American Biennial (2002), and the International Award for Artistic Excellence at the Pingyao Photo Festival (2014). Her work is held in major collections such as **MMOMA**, the **San Antonio Museum of Art**, **Museo del Barrio**, the **Museum of Contemporary Art and Design** (Costa Rica), the **Museum of Fine Arts Houston**, as well as in numerous university and private collections.

Can you please tell us what motivated you to choose the field of art? It has been your dream career since childhood?

Yes, art has always been in my life since I was a child.



Your self-portraits blur the line between body and environment. What does disappearing into your surroundings symbolize for you? Do you see camouflage as an act of concealment or revelation? Or perhaps both?

The portraits were not intended to be a self portrait at the beginning or at least I thought I was using my own body because I didn't want to submit anybody else to the long process of being completely still for hours and hours while the painting was going on. It was only afterwards that I realised that I was telling my own story. My intention is not to disappear but more to blend into the background as if I am part of the landscape. It all started when I came to live in the United States and I had to become part of my new geography and then the portraits started to extend more into remembering perhaps lost places where I used to live or even stories related to places.

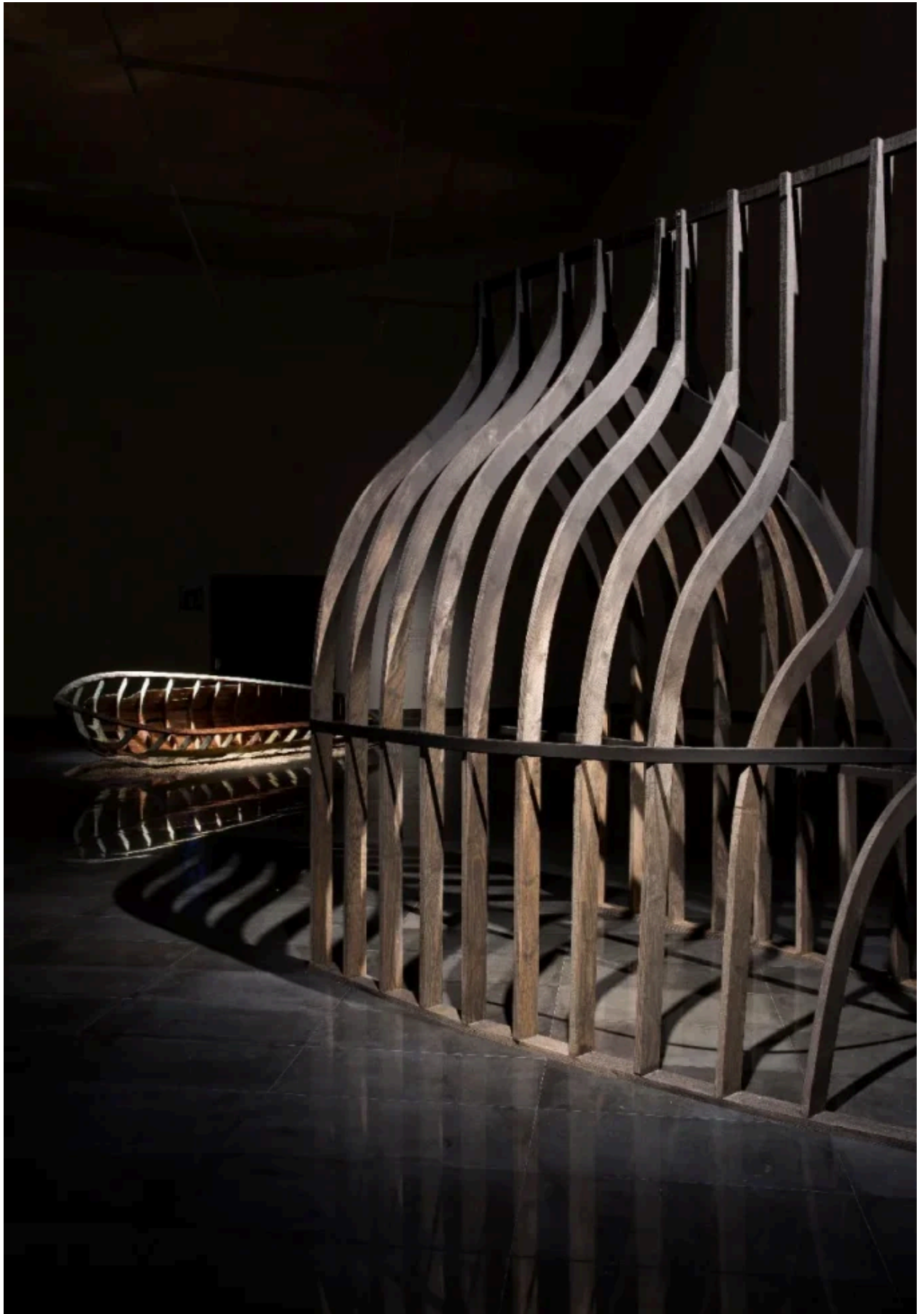
Your artwork has a sculptural quality despite being photography-based. What do you think about the body as both a canvas and an object? Has the physical process of painting your own body changed your relationship with self-perception over time?

Indeed having your body being painted for hours as the process sometimes is five hours long makes an indent in you especially when I was portraying animals it was very intense and somehow spiritual.

Your pieces often explore themes of migration and belonging. How does your own journey influence the way you construct identity in your art?

I always say that no matter in what condition you migrate you will always have the sensation or the feeling of longing. My personal experience has been of having a privileged migration if you can say that as my life was not in danger but certainly leaving your space or where you used to live is somehow nostalgic and can even be even painful. It's completely another thing when you migrate because your life is in danger there you have another set of experiences, but all of them at the end unite with the sense of longing and belonging.





There's a deep connection to nature in your art, especially through botanical and organic motifs. How do you choose the textiles and patterns that become part of your compositions? What draws you to these natural elements? Do they hold specific cultural or personal significance?

Indeed there is a deep connection to nature in my art and in my life . When I have used or chosen certain textiles I always have done it with a certain complicity from the textile itself. It's like I have a story to tell and the textile with its print also tells it.



Your artwork speaks to a universal human desire to connect with the environment. How has your own understanding of this connection evolved throughout your artistic career? You underline with your art a moment of pause, still, reflection and quiet. There's a sense of vulnerability. How does this vulnerability relate to your personal journey as an artist? In a very loud and fast paced world, what does the quietness that you create mean to you?

I think there is a responsibility from the artist as a social person to point out or address what is happening around. It can be direct or subtle but through any manifestation of art, the thermometer of what is happening around us, will always appear in a work of art.

What is a personal ritual or practice that helps you connect with your creative self before starting a new project?

Silence. Silence is your best ally with silence you reflect, analyse, discover errors , study them, correct them and concentrate on your work. The studio of an artist is a solitary place, silence is its ally.



How has the evolution of photographic technology, especially with digital photography, influenced your process and the final presentation of your work? In an age of digital manipulation, your artwork relies heavily on the physicality of paint and fabric. How do you see the tactile nature of your process contributing to the authenticity and what impact do you hope this dissolution of you will get on the audience?

We have gone through many changes and phases indeed. I am still sad of not being able to use film and a Hasselblad to shoot. But we have to evolve and adapt. I work with minimal photoshop only because I like to do things by hand. But don't think I don't need it or use it , in other disciplines, I do.



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The final moment in your art is a photograph, while your artwork is inherently performative. Could you share with us a meaningful experience of a performance that holds a special connection for you?

Theatre. Performance is the closest discipline to theatre and I love thinking I am performing. Theatre is what I would have done if I had not become a visual artist.

Photos courtesy of Cecilia Paredes

Dominique Musorrafti