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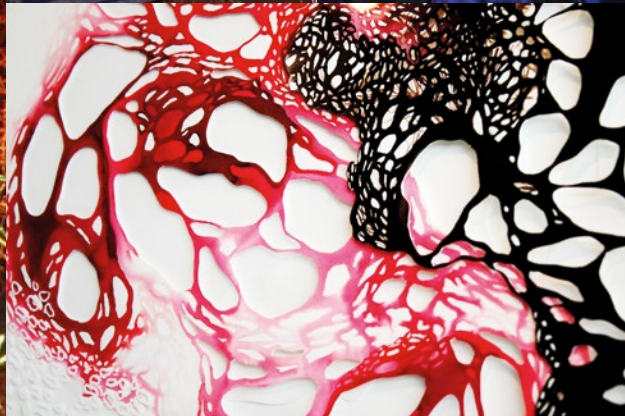
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CLAUDIA BUENO CREATES AN OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPERIENCE THROUGH LIGHT AND SHADOWS WITH HER FIBERSPACE INSTALLATION.

Claudia Bueno navigates nonchalantly through the pitch-black Wei-ling Gallery like a soldier with night vision goggles. Her stilettos make a steady, rhythmic clack on the wooden floor. She takes a small flight of stairs, turns and continues her march towards the heart of the building, where her site-specific, three-storey tall light installation Fiberspace is housed. "Watch your step," her voice, warm and contralto-like, echoes through the obscurity. "Here, come sit down. Have a quiet moment and take it all in."

A bright jolt of white light pierces through the murky darkness and hits on the web of strings that make up Fiberspace. It quickly breaks down into hundreds and thousands of little fragments and spreads throughout the network, now moving in a slow, undulating movement like a school of ghostly floating jellyfish. Minutes later, the cold white beam is replaced with a warm orange glow, smouldering insidiously. Next, a psychedelic blue flicker emerges and takes over the installation.



"The blue one is my favourite cycle," says Bueno, explaining that the light effects on Fiberspace are achieved by projecting videos of flowing water and burning flames, made in collaboration with her filmmaker brother who is based in Spain, on a vast and intricate mesh of hardened cotton strings of varying thickness. The strings were painstakingly dipped in toxic epoxy resin and were left to dry on a mould before being removed and assembled into the desired configuration. "I had to wear a hazmat suit when I was moulding the strings. It was like being baked alive and I carried ice packs to cool myself. After each session, I was soaked in sweat and melted ice," she recalls. "It was one of the hardest stages of creating Fiberspace."

Bueno took only four days to set up the installation at the gallery but she has taken a lengthy eight-month period to materialise Fiberspace. The idea was conceived not too long after her first installation, *Forgotten Cities* and *Extracto*, both also involved a play in light, shadows and depth. "I particularly enjoy creating installations because I like exploring with space and scale, something I tapped into when I did set designs back in university and I have the liberty to experiment with various methods and themes because there are less limitations in installations compared to paintings; unlike paintings, there is no pressure that installations be sold," explains the 31-year-old Venezuela native, who moved to Malaysia three years ago when her husband took up a job at the International School of Kuala Lumpur.

Sipping her hot tea, she reveals that, because no briefs were given, she held the *carte blanche*. In the mornings, she would jump out of bed with a deluge of ideas and rush to her studio to work. She tried inks, watercolours, markers, paper and paint. The constant outpouring of thoughts, which she describes as "slide shows in my head", were dynamic and unstructured and she soon realised that, in her pursuit of finding a concept for her new project, the very process – her overwhelmed state of mind – was a concept itself. She took a nosedive into neurology, where she was further inspired by images of brain scans and the nervous system. "I wanted to visually present the transmission of signals in our body – how an idea or a thought travels through within one self," Bueno shares. "The name Fiberspace is in fact a reference to the term 'cyberspace', a virtual world where data are conducted via a seemingly invisible network of fibres."

The series of video clips run for 25 minutes in loop. Viewers can appreciate the light installation from a distance, up close within the structure or get a bird's-eye view from the top floor of the gallery. Through Bueno's thorough planning, each angle provides a different perspective and insight. "Fiberspace is a blow-up version of what we have inside ourselves," she says. "To see it outside our body, and in such commanding scale, can be both an intimate and otherworldly experience." ●

Fiberspace runs till 31 October at Wei-ling Gallery, 8 Jalan Scott, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, tel: +603-2260-1106.