

MARIA THEREZA ALVES

PRESENTATION

Born in 1961 in São Paulo (Brasil). Lives and works between Naples (Italy) and Berlin (Germany).

Maria Thereza Alves' artistic trajectory is inseparable from her political activism, be it in favour of ecology, the rights of indigenous minorities or territorial and decolonising struggles.

Maria Thereza Alves does not favour any particular medium, although her work often takes the form of prolific installations mixing natural and manufactured objects, videos, texts, drawings and photographs. These installations, like real investigations, reconstruct the artist's explorations and actions on a given territory. In the same way, its field of research and commitment is free of geographical boundaries, whether it invests in the urban environment (New York, Manchester) or natural spaces. In 1992, on the occasion of the commemorations of Christopher Columbus' arrival in America, she presented, with Jimmie Durham and Alan Michaelson, the performance *Veracruz / Virginia*, in Monterrey, London and Madrid. The three artists wear metal helmets that prevent them from speaking, symbolizing the muzzled speech of the colonized peoples. The *Seeds of Change* project, begun in 1999, this time articulates the issues of colonization, slavery and ecology. Seeds brought back to Europe by merchant ships are exhumed and then replanted in the heart of large western cities on floating platforms. The circulation of beings, be they human or vegetable, allows Alves to draw up a paradoxical history of globalization, between uprooting, abandonment and resistance, in the manner of those garments washed up on the shores of Senegal in *Time, Trade and Surplus Value* (2004), which take human form again.

In 2017, she has been awarded by the Vera List Prize.

Selected exhibitions include solo shows at IAC - Institut d'Art Contemporain (Villeurbanne), Parsons - The New School of Design (New York), CAAC - Centre Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (Seville), Musée d'Histoire de Nantes - Château des Ducs de Bretagne, and group shows at Manifesta 7 (Trento), Serpentine Gallery (London), (d)OCUMENTA 13 (Kassel), Bétonsalon (Paris), Crac Alsace, Jewish Museum (Berlin), 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, 29th Sao Paulo Biennial.

Her work is part of prestigious collections as Centre National des Arts Plastiques (Paris), National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), Heather & Anthony Podesta (Washington D.C., Collection vidéo Seine-Saint-Denis, Collection de la Province de Hainaut (Charleroy).

Née en 1961 à São Paulo (Brésil). Vit et travaille entre Naples (Italie) et Berlin (Allemagne).

La trajectoire artistique de Maria Thereza Alves est indissociable de son activisme politique, que ce soit en faveur de l'écologie, des droits des minorités indigènes ou des luttes territoriales et décolonisatrices.

Maria Thereza Alves ne privilégie aucun médium en particulier, bien que son travail se présente souvent sous la forme d'installations foisonnantes mêlant objets naturels et fabriqués, vidéos, textes, dessins et photographies. Ces installations, telles de véritables enquêtes, restituent les explorations et actions de l'artiste sur un territoire donné. De la même manière, son champ de recherches et d'engagements est affranchi des frontières géographiques, qu'elle investisse le milieu urbain (New York, Manchester) ou des espaces naturels. En 1992 à l'occasion des commémorations de l'arrivée de Christophe Colomb en Amérique, elle présente, avec Jimmie Durham et Alan Michaelson, la performance *Veracruz / Virginia*, à Monterrey, à Londres et à Madrid. Les trois artistes portent des casques métalliques qui les empêchent de parler, symbolisant ainsi la parole muselée des peuples colonisés. Le projet *Seeds of Change*, débuté en 1999, articule cette fois les problématiques de la colonisation, de l'esclavage et de l'écologie. Des graines rapportées en Europe par les navires marchands sont exhumées puis replantées au cœur de grandes villes occidentales sur des plates-formes flottantes. La circulation des êtres, qu'ils soient humains ou végétaux, permet à Alves de dresser une histoire paradoxale de la mondialisation, entre arrachement, abandon et résistance, à la manière de ces vêtements échoués sur les rivages du Sénégal dans *Time, Trade and Surplus Value* (2004), qui reprennent forme humaine.

En 2017, elle fut récompensée par le prix Vera List.

Le travail de Maria Thereza Alves a notamment été exposé au IAC - Institut d'Art Contemporain (Villeurbanne), Parsons - The New School of Design (New York), CAAC - Centre Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (Seville), Musée d'Histoire de Nantes - Château des Ducs de Bretagne, an group shows at Manifesta 7 (Trento), Serpentine Gallery (London), (d)OCUMENTA 13 (Kassel), Bétonsalon (Paris), Crac Alsace, Jewish Museum (Berlin), 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, 29th Sao Paulo Biennial.

Son travail est présent dans de prestigieuses collections comme Centre National des Arts Plastiques (Paris), National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), Heather & Anthony Podesta (Washington D.C., Collection vidéo Seine-Saint-Denis, Collection de la Province de Hainaut (Charleroy).



Fondation Groupe EDF, *Courants Verts*, Paris, France, 2020Z



Michel Rein, *Oh les beaux jours (Happy Day)*, Paris, France, 2020



MIMA - Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, *Fragile Earth : seeds, weeds, plastic crust*, Middlesbrough, UK, 2019







IAC - Institut d'Art Contemporain, *The Middle Earth*, Villeurbanne, France, 2018



Inanna, 2017

glass, seed-necklace

verre, collier de graines

25 x 24 x 34,5 cm (9.8 x 9.4 x 13.5 in.)

unique artwork

private collection



Untitled, 2018

glass

verre

34 x 24 x 24 cm (13.4 x 9.4 x 9.4 in.)

unique artwork

ALVE18123



Olea europaea (1), 2018

painting on paper

peinture sur papier

paper : 66 x 51 cm (26 x 20.1 in.)

frame : 75 x 60 x 3 cm (29.5 x 23.6 x 1.2 in.)

ALVE18120



Olea europaea (3), 2018

painting on paper

peinture sur papier

paper : 66 x 51 cm (26 x 20.1 in.)

frame : 75 x 60 x 3 cm (29.5 x 23.6 x 1.2 in.)

ALVE18122w

MARIA THEREZA ALVES

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MICHEL REIN PARIS/BRUSSELS



Michel Rein, *Seeds of Change: New York - A Botany of Colonization*, Paris, France, 2018



Michel Rein, *Seeds of Change: New York - A Botany of Colonization*, Paris, France, 2018



Vera List Prize Center, Parsons - The New School of Design, *Seeds of Change: New York - A Botany of Colonization*, New York, USA, 2017



Vera List Prize Center, Parsons - The New, School of Design, *Seeds of Change: New York - A Botany of Colonization*, New York, USA, 2017



Michel Rein, *The Flood*, Brussels, Belgium, 2017

MY FAVORITE COUSIN PIU, TOOK ME ALL AROUND THE HILLS TO MEET SINGERS AND MUSICIANS WHO WERE
EXPERIMENTING AND PLAYING.

MANY WERE LIKE HIM, OF AFRICAN DESCENT.

NOW, THE DESCENDANTS OF THE PORTUGUESE IN TOWN LINE UP IN THE MAIN PLAZA
AND WEAR USA RODEO STYLE CLOTHING:

BLUE JEANS, COWBOY BOOTS, WHITE SHIRT, RIBBON TIE OR BANDANA AND A COWBOY HAT.

THEY DANCE AND SING "COUNTRY". PIU DIED A LONG TIME AGO.



The Flood (My favorite cousin, Piu...), 2017

watercolour and acrylic on paper, wooden frame, plexiglass

aquarelle et acrylique sur papier, cadre bois, plexiglas

watercolor: 56 x 77 x 3,5 cm (22.05 x 30.31 x 1.18 in.)

texte: 50 x 65 cm (19.69 x 27.95 in.)

unique artwork

ALVE17104



***The Flood*, 2013**

painting watercolour on paper, wooden frame, plexiglass

peinture aquarelle sur papier, cadre bois, plexiglas

frame : 29,8 x 37,8 x 3,5 cm (11.7 x 14.9 x 1.4 in.)

ALVE17093



***The Flood*, 2013**

painting watercolour on paper, wooden frame, plexiglass

peinture aquarelle sur papier, cadre bois, plexiglas

frame : 25 x 30 x 3,5 cm (9.8 x 11.8 x 1.4 in.)

ALVE17094



***The Flood*, 2013**

painting watercolour on paper, wooden frame, plexiglass

peinture aquarelle sur papier, cadre bois, plexiglas

frame : 24 x 32 x 3,5 cm (9.45 x 12.6 x 1.4 in.)

ALVE17096



Centre Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC), *El largo camino a Xico (1991-2014)*, Seville, Spain, 2015



***Untitled (Unrejected Wild Flora)*, 2017**

acrylic on paper, wooden frame, glass

acrylique sur papier, cadre en bois, verre

frame : 102,3 x 72,8 x 3 cm (40.3 x 28.7 x 1.2 in.)

ALVE17087



***Untitled (Unrejected Wild Flora)*, 2017**

acrylic on paper, wooden frame, glass

acrylique sur papier, cadre en bois, verre

frame : 102,3 x 72,8 x 3 cm (40.3 x 28.7 x 1.2 in.)

ALVE17088



Untitled (Unrejected Wild Flora), 2017

acrylic on paper, wooden frame, glass

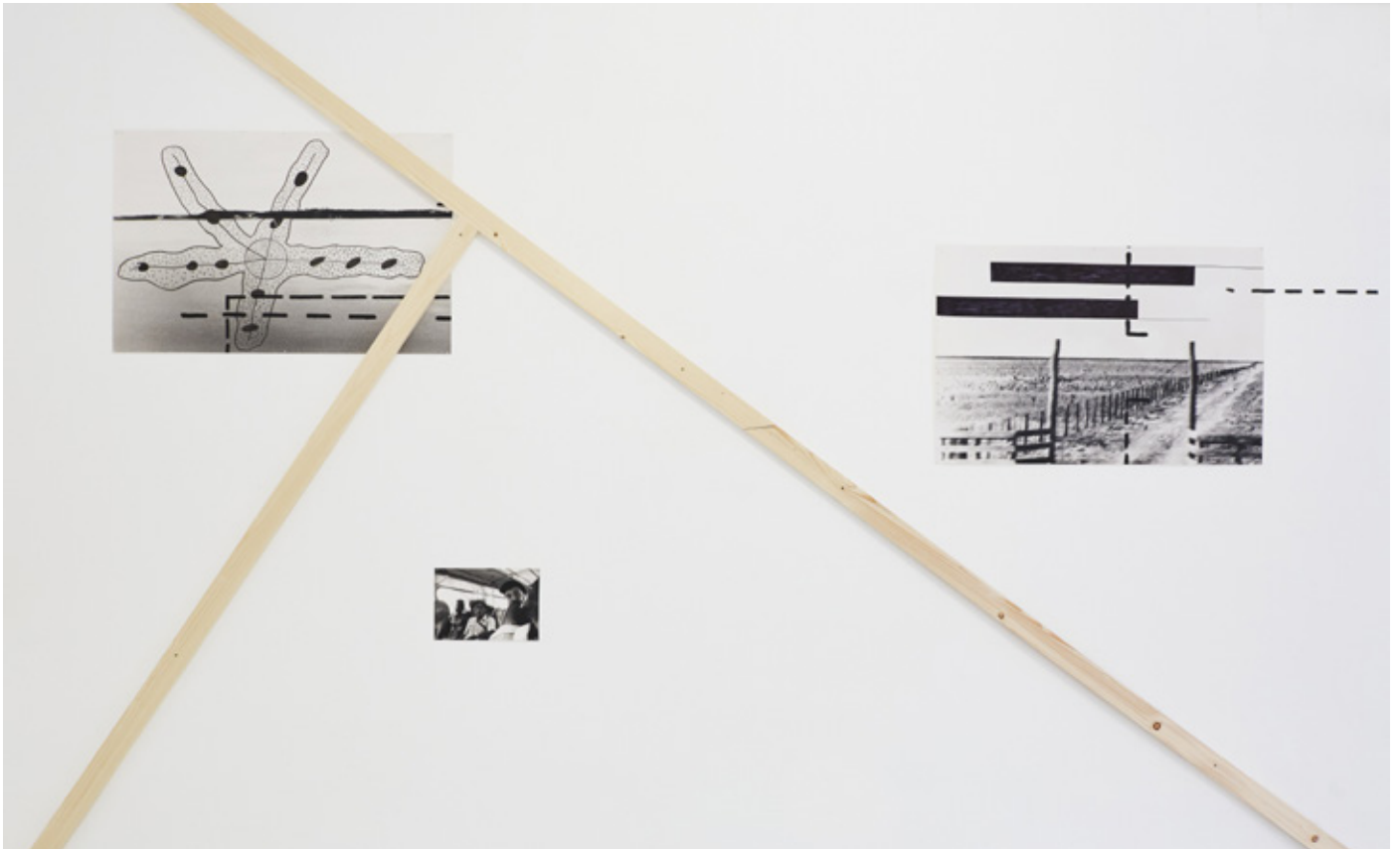
acrylique sur papier, cadre en bois, verre

frame : 102,3 x 72,8 x 3 cm (40.3 x 28.7 x 1.2 in.)

ALVE17090



Centre Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC), *El largo camino a Xico (1991-2014)*, Seville, Spain, 2015



***Nowhere*, 1991**

10 black and white photographs, marker, paint, wood
10 photographies noir et blanc, marqueur, peinture, bois
variable dimensions
unique artwork

ALVE16084



Centre Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC), *El largo camino a Xico (1991-2014)*, Seville, Spain, 2015



Coigbâcete recou (Metaplasmos), 2014

bronze

bronze

50 x 28 x 24 cm (19.7 x 11 x 9.4 in.) / 20 kg

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE15078



Aimōbucu (Metaplasmos), 2014

bronze

bronze

57 x 39 x 17 cm (22.4 x 15.3 x 6.7 in.) / 16,1 kg

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE15079



***Aicoabeeng (Metaplasmos)*, 2014**

bronze

bronze

50 x 45 x 16 cm (19,7 x 17,7 x 6,3 in.) / 20,5 kg

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE15080

ALVE17086



Art Dubai projects, A4 Space, Wake: Flight of Birds and People, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 2015

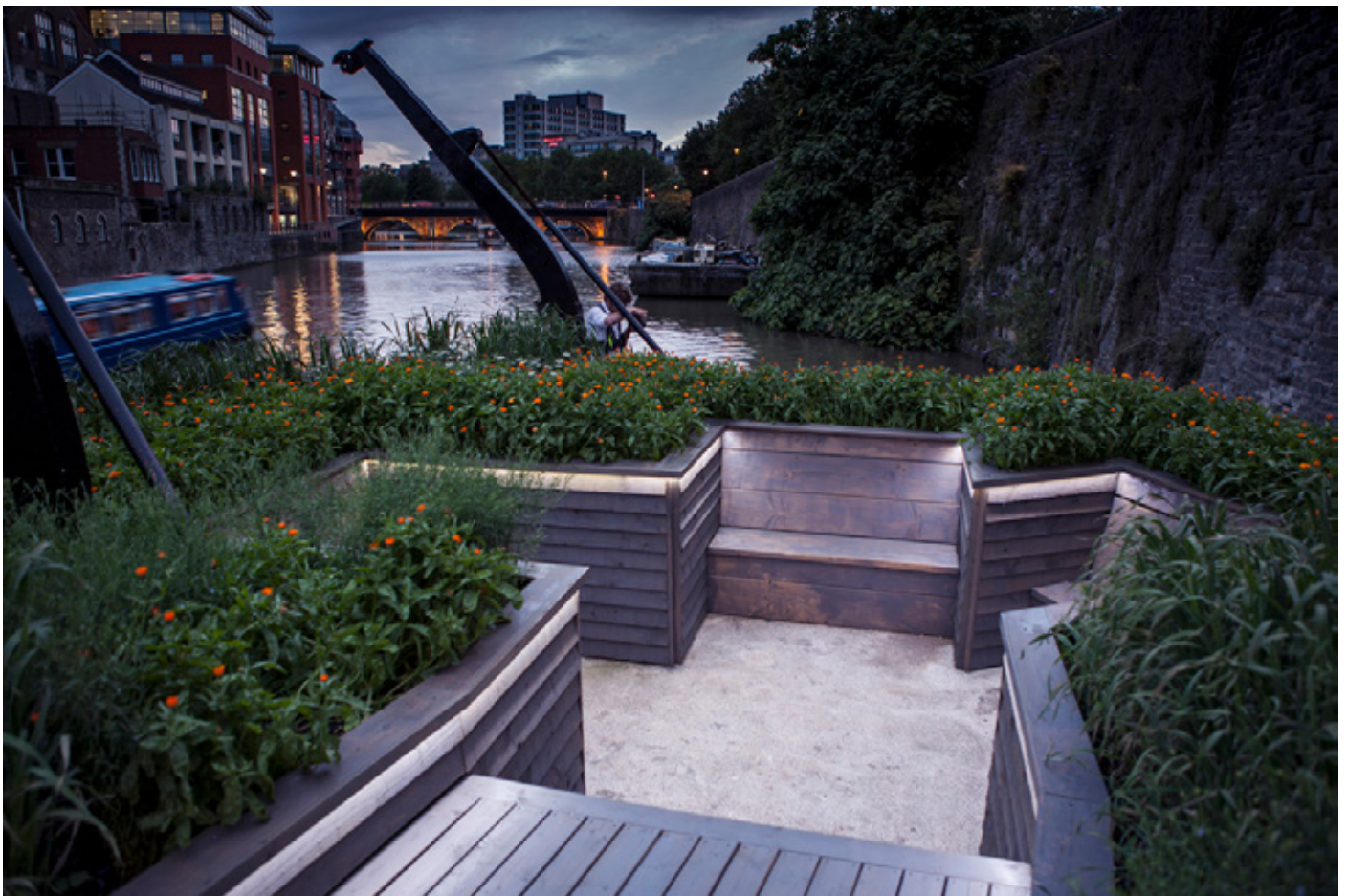


Michel Rein, *Beyond the Painting / Unrejected Wild Flora*, Paris, France, 2014

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MICHEL REIN PARIS/BRUSSELS



Seeds of Change: Floating Ballast Seed Garden, Bristol, UK, 2012



Seeds of change: Bristol, 2007 - 2012

photos, text, map, 2 frames

photographies, texte, plan, 2 cadres

125 x 240 cm (49.2 x 94.5 in.) / 90 x 140 cm (35.4 x 55.1 in.)

ed. of 1 + 1 AP

ALVE14074



Seeds of change: Liverpool, 2004

photos, text, map, frame

photographies, texte, plan, cadre

115 x 225 cm (45.3 x 88.6 in.)

ed. of 1 + 1 AP

ALVE14076



Seeds of change: Reposaari, 2001

photos, text, map, frame

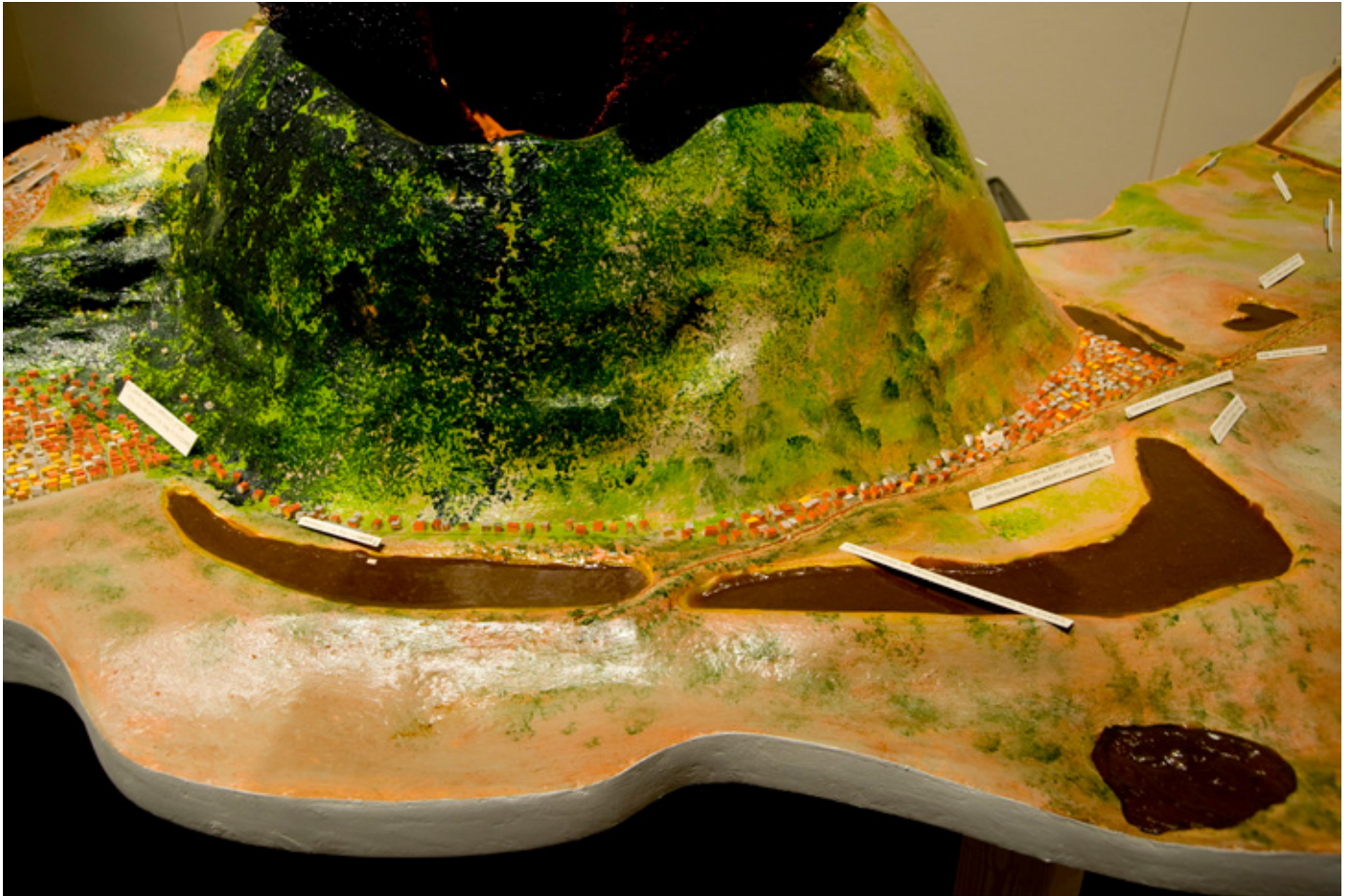
photographies, texte, plan, cadre

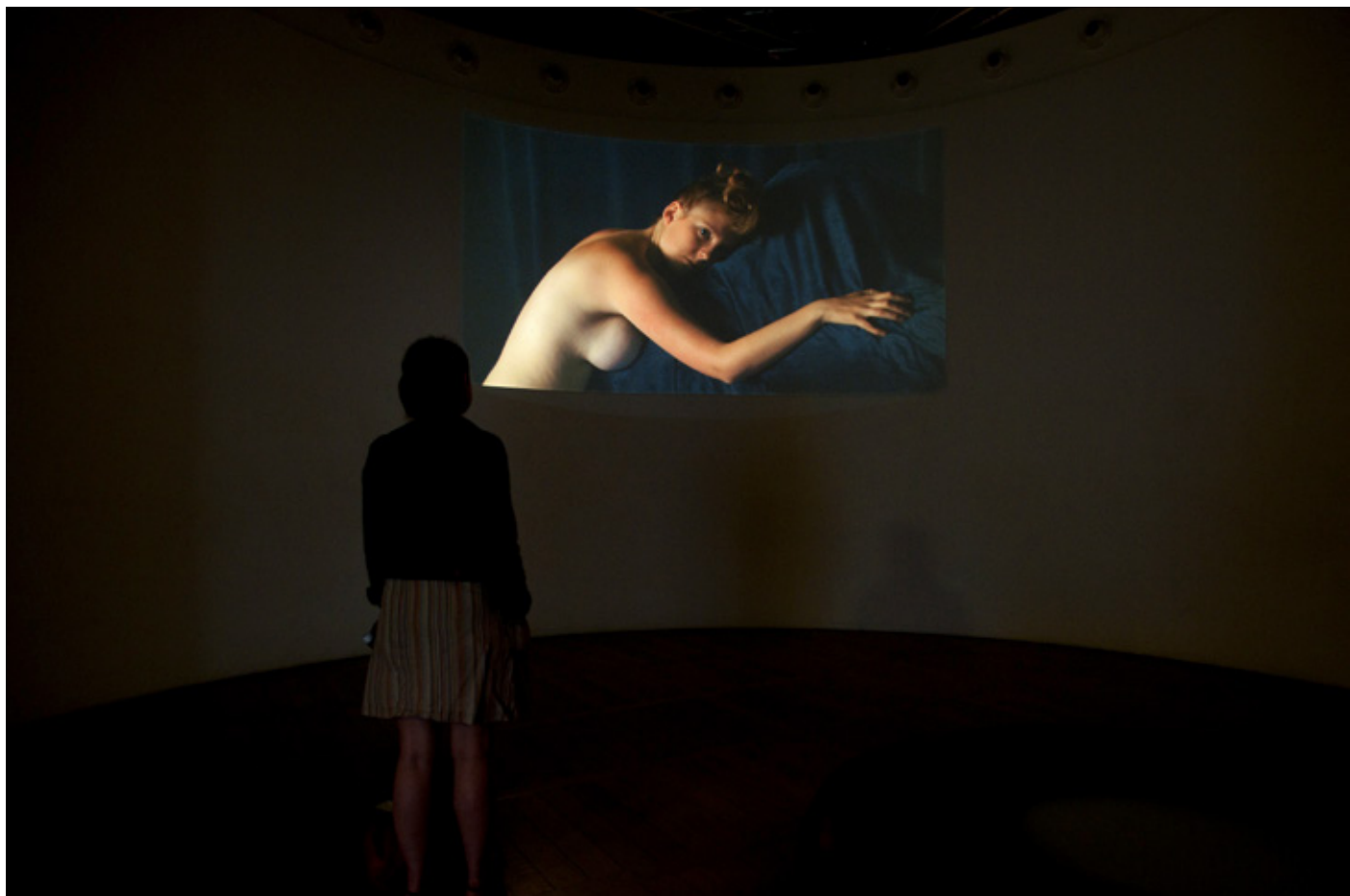
110 x 215 cm (43.3 x 84.6 in.)

ed. of 1 + 1 AP

ALVE14077







Musée d'Histoire de Nantes - Château des Ducs de Bretagne, *Par ces murs nous sommes mal enfermés*, Nantes, France, 2012



***Beyond the painting*, 2011**

video work, color

oeuvre vidéographique, couleur

23' 43"

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE12033

MARIA THEREZA ALVES

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MICHEL REIN PARIS/BRUSSELS



Kunsthalle Basel, *Strange Comfort (Afforded by the Profession)*, Basel, Switzerland, 2010





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BIOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS / ARTWORKS PUBLICATIONS PRESS

MICHEL REIN PARIS/BRUSSELS



Michel Rein, *Constructed Landscapes*, Paris, France, 2009



Through the Fields and into the Woods, 2007

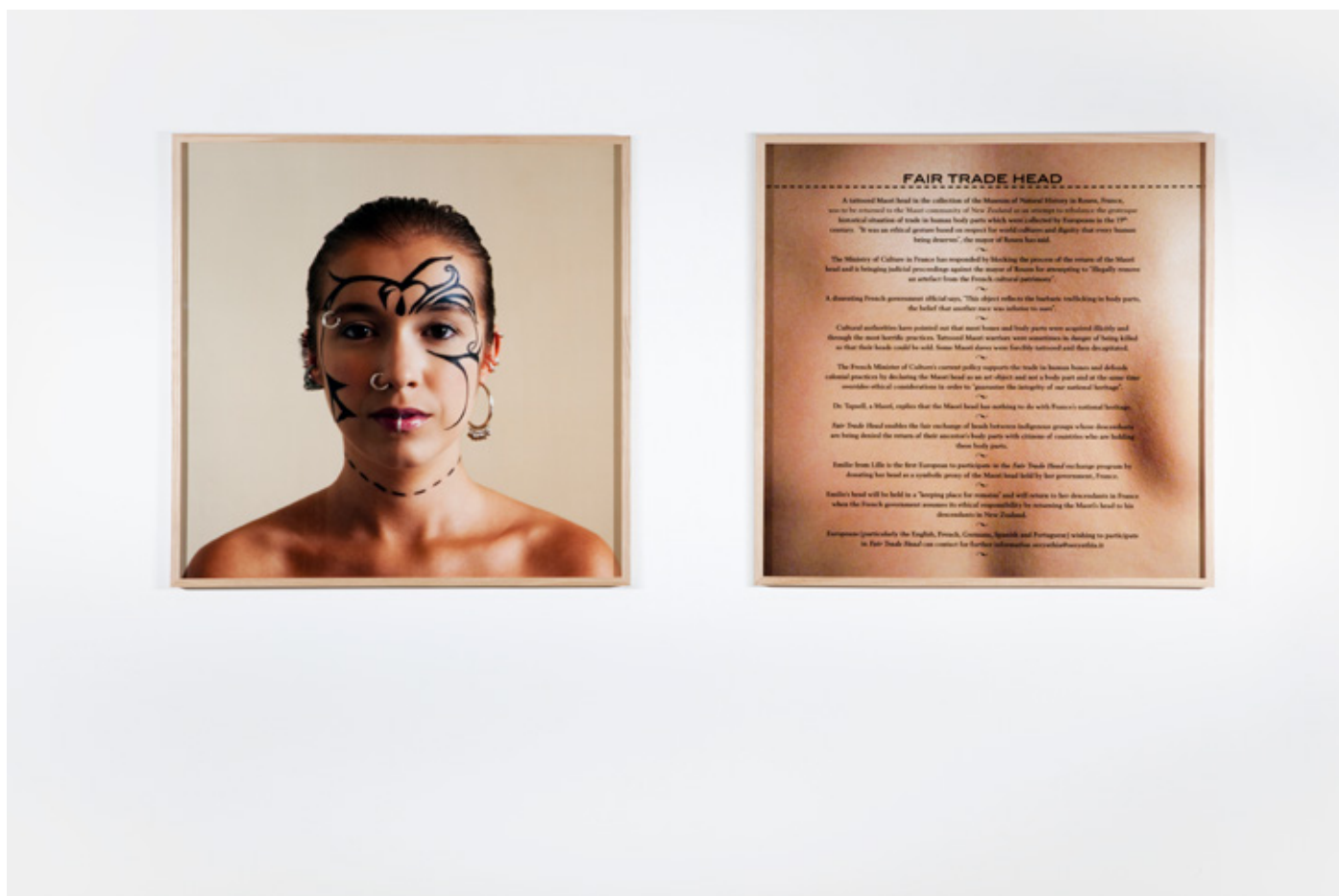
fer, chaînes en métal

iron, metal chains

225 x 70 cm (88.58 x 27.56 in.)

unique artwork

ALVE08027



Fair Trade Head, 2007

color photographs (diptych) and text (French or English), lambda prints, oak frame, glass
 photographie couleur (diptyque) et texte (français ou anglais), tirages lambda, cadre en chêne, verre
 each : 100 x 100 cm (39.4 x 39.4 in.)

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE08024



Michel Rein, *Constructed Landscapes*, Paris, France, 2009



What is the color of a German Rose, 2005

video work transferred to DVD

oeuvre vidéographique transférée sur DVD

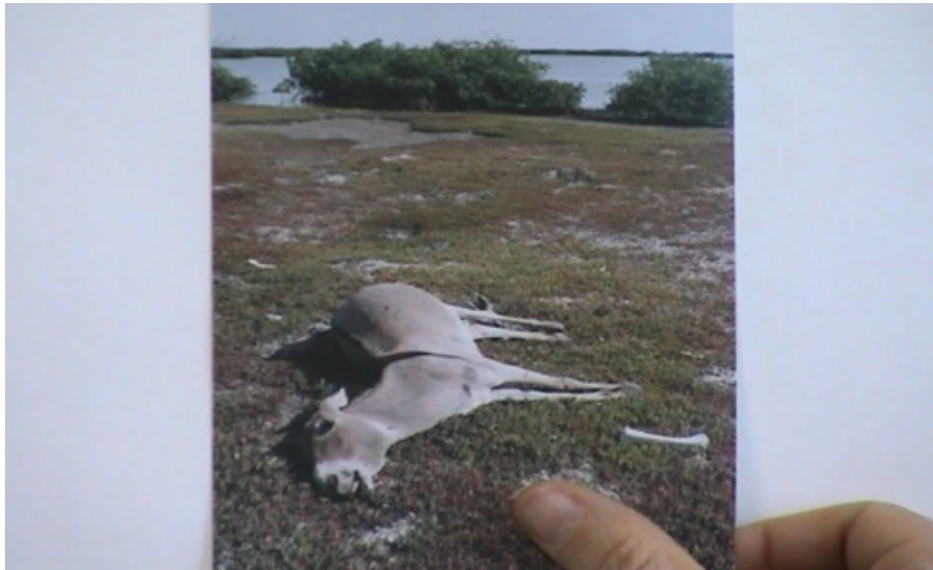
6'14"

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE08004







***Diothio Dhep*, 2004**

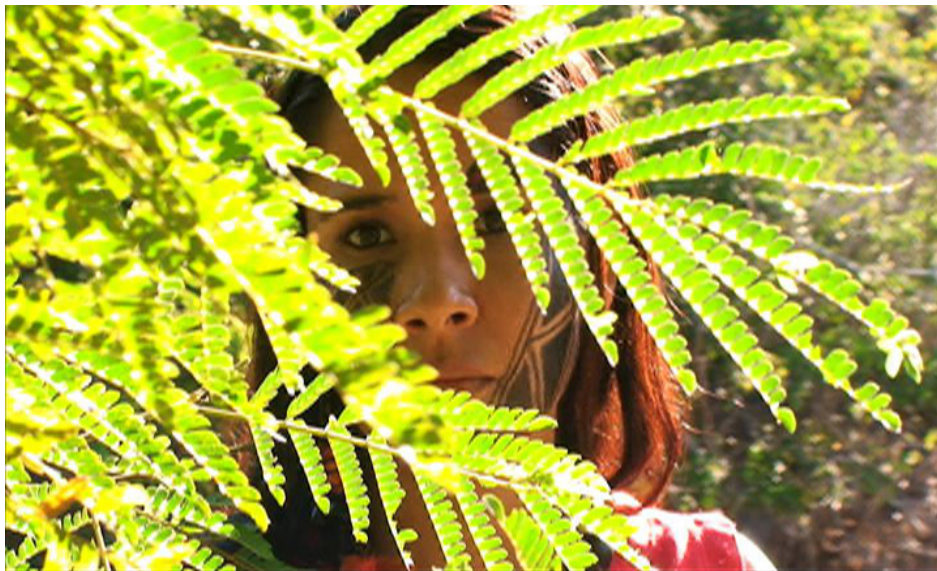
video work transferred to DVD

oeuvre vidéographique transférée sur DVD

2'35"

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE08006



Iracema (de Questembert), 2009

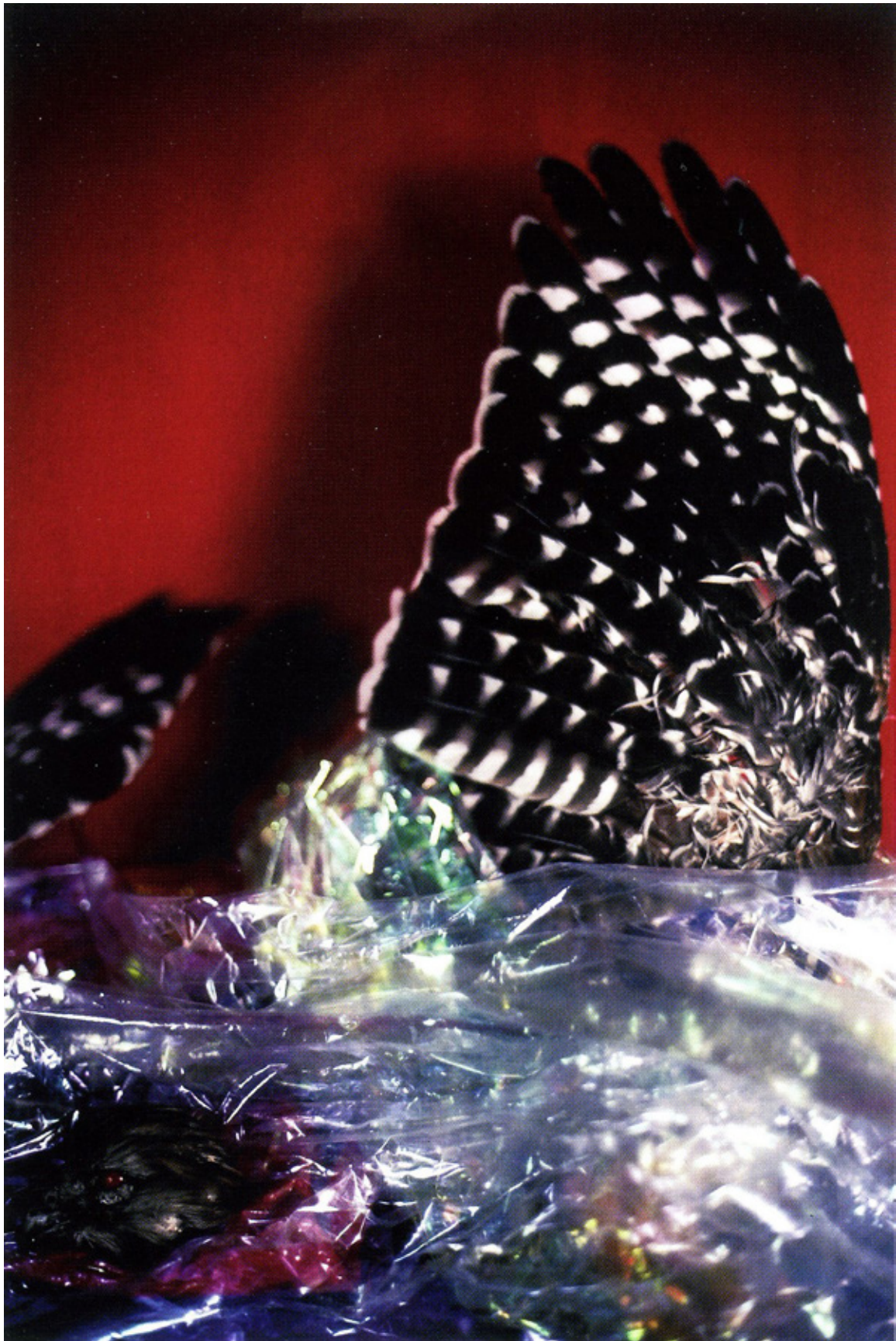
video work transferred to DVD

oeuvre vidéographique transférée sur DVD

26'43"

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE09029



In Spanish Harlem (2), 1983

digital photograph

photographie numérique

60 x 40 cm (23.6 x 15.7 in.)

ed. of 5 + 2 AP

ALVE08026

MARIA THEREZA ALVES

BIOGRAPHY EXHIBITIONS / ARTWORKS **PUBLICATIONS** PRESS

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PUBLICATIONS

RECIPES FOR SURVIVAL

Maria
Thereza
Alves

***Recipes for Survival (1983)*, 2019**

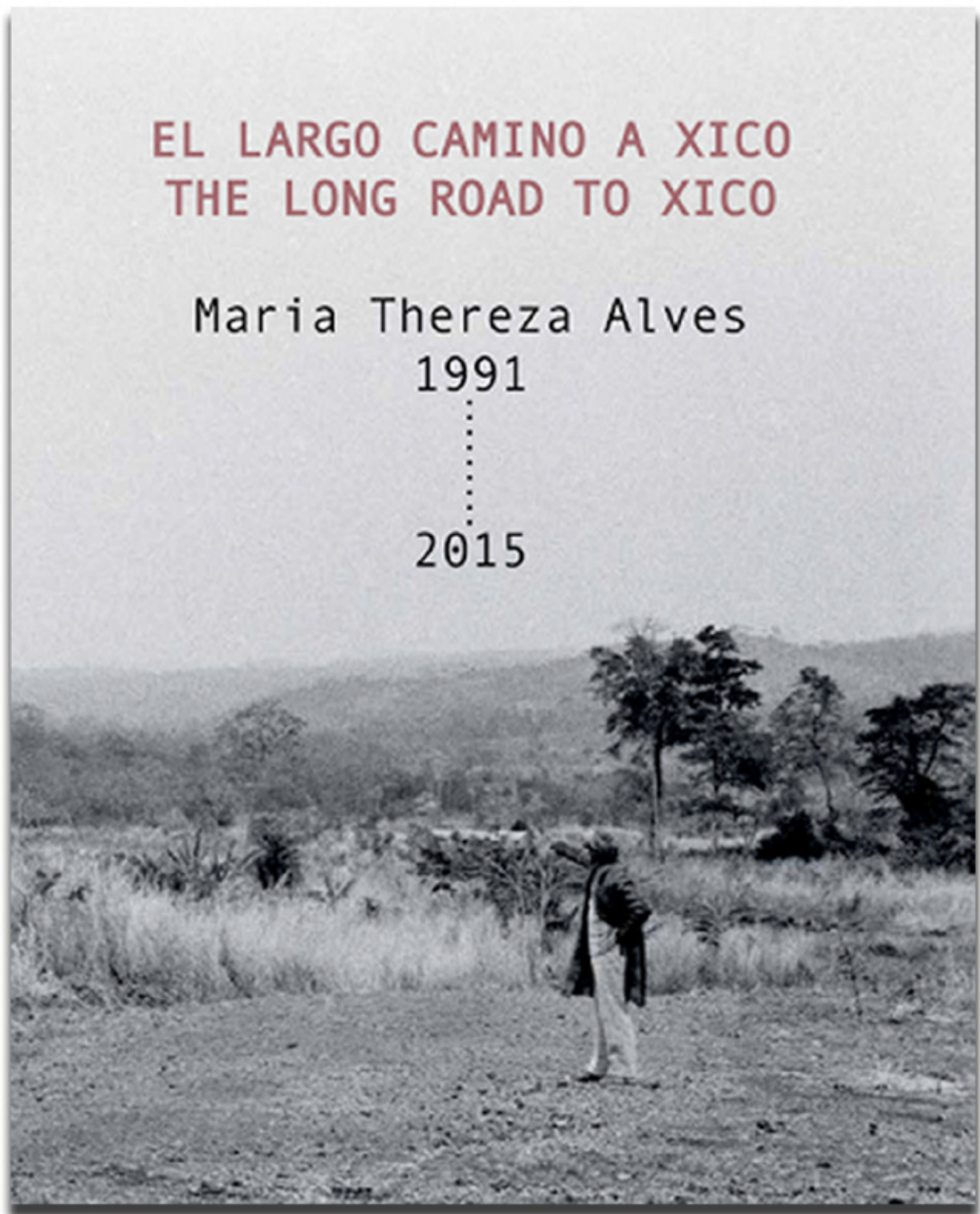
Texts by Michael Taussig

Publisher : University of Texas Press

256 pages

English

ISBN 978-1477317204



El Largo Camino A Xico / The Long Road To Xico, 1991 - 2015, 2017

Texts by Maria Thereza Alves, T. J. Demos, Pedro de Llano

Edited by Pedro de Llano

Publisher : Sternberg Press, Berlin / Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Sevilla

290 pages

English / Spanish

ISBN 978-84-9959-238-1

Maria Thereza Alves



Maria Thereza Alves, 2013

Texts by Emmanuelle Chérel, Jean Fisher, Catalina Lozano

Edited by Beaux-arts°Nantes

Publisher : Musée du Château des ducs de Bretagne, Nantes.

112 pages

French / English.

ISBN 979-10-92693-00-3

SELECTED PRESS

Mousse Magazine

Maria Thereza Alves
Mousse Magazine
summer 2019

Maria Thereza Alves

CONVERSATIONS

On Fights, Rights, and Real Forms of (Artistic) Contribution

Maria Thereza Alves and Antonia Alampi in conversation

This exchange with Brazilian artist Maria Thereza Alves is the outcome of a dialogue begun during the section of Art Basel Conversations this year. Artist, editor, and writer Julieta Aranda—curator of the program in 2019—invited me to moderate a panel with Maria Thereza, Pedro Neves Marques, Markus Reymann, and Kate MacGarry, revolving around environmental issues and focusing on how, on which terms, and with what engagement and methods artists, galleries, and institutions deal with the climate crisis and with the communities engaged in fighting it. On that occasion, and spearheaded by Maria Thereza's strong statements, we ended up talking of redistribution: Namely, how the surplus value produced by artworks in the art market—artworks inspired by or engaging with the social, cultural, and political contexts of vulnerable communities needing economic support (for example, engaging with environmental matters)—can, in one way or another, give back to them and avoid an otherwise very extractivist logic. How could a social contract be made between artists/organizations/funders and the communities they make work with or about? Maria Thereza Alves has clear ideas in response to all of this, ones that struck me for their depth, pragmatism, and criticality. Here, we discuss her ongoing work with indigenous communities in Brazil, and in particular with the Association of the Movement of Indigenous Agroforestry Agents of Acre and the ways she believes the global art world can *really* contribute to such causes.

ANTONIA ALAMPI: I would like to start by reflecting on a few terms circulating within the art context, particularly when addressing issues related to the climate crisis. While environmentalism (understood here, for me, as a political movement), fights against climate change, or the notion of the Anthropocene seem to have become buzzwords in the last years, they seem also to have been used in rather abstract and generic terms. They tend to produce a discourse whereby all humans and human cultures are defined as equally responsible for the current state of the planet and for its saving, a kind of universal guilt of humanity. I want to point out that it's a particular type of culture, one whose beginning we could trace back to the fourteenth century, that has understood nature—and the notion of nature here comes to define any subject outside of the European male subject—as something cheap and disposable to be used, abused, and exploited in any way possible to serve a particular type of human lifestyle. There are many other cultures, instead, that don't have such abusive relations with the environment. So, as a starting point, I'd like to know what references—cultural, spiritual, in terms of community building, et cetera—inspire, shape, and even determine your work, your position, and more generally your practice.

MARIA THEREZA ALVES: I agree with the strangeness of where the Anthropocene and climate discourse is going but am dismayed at the discourse of decolonization, too. There is so much disappointment about where it is going that some indigenous thinkers believe it is best to chuck it out completely and concentrate solely on sovereignty. If we do that, however, it will be only a superficial approach since the forces governing will always remain colonial and anti-indigenous and hold the military power. There are examples of artificial semblances of sovereignty (e.g., Yellowknife Territory), but it is the European settler state that continues to have a hold on the land and continues traditional European approaches towards (and hence against) the environment.

The starting point of my work is the colonization of the Americas against indigenous peoples and cultures. My engagement started long ago, as I joined the International Indian Treaty Council in New York in 1978, at the age of seventeen, to learn how to make a national indigenous organization in Brazil, as the genocide campaign against indigenous peoples was very hard and harsh during the military dictatorship of Ernesto Geisel. My thought was that creating such a national organization would make indigenous issues more visible. In 1979 I made a presentation at the United Nations Human Rights Commission against the Brazilian government on human rights violations of indigenous peoples.

In terms of references, I would like to talk in particular about the work of AMAAIAC (ASSOCIAÇÃO DO MOVIMENTO DOS AGENTES AGROFLORESTAIS INDÍGENAS DO ACRE / Association of the Movement of Indigenous Agroforestry Agents of Acre), where I met thirty-four indigenous agroforestry agents while making the work *To See the Forest Standing* (2017), commissioned for the exhibition *Disappearing Legacies: The World as a Forest* (2018).

AMAAIAC was founded in 1995 to represent agroforestry agents throughout the different indigenous reservations in the state of Acre, in Amazonian Brazil. AMAAIAC's mandate is to preserve forested areas on indigenous land and provide training for more efficient agroforestry methods, particularly for areas that have been heavily deforested and destroyed by settlers. The agroforestry agents of AMAAIAC come from various reservations throughout the state of Acre and are from different indigenous peoples, such as the Huni Kuin, Shanenawa, Ashaninka, Shāwādawa, Yawanawá, Katukina, Nukini, Poyanawá, Nawa, Manchineri, Kulina, Jaminawa Arara, Kontanawa, Apolima Arara, and Jaminawa.

AMAAIAC agents are elected by their communities and are responsible through community consensus for managing reforestation, sustainable farming, and development projects, overseeing animal life, and promoting biodiversity, protecting water sources, organizing environmental education programs for indigenous and nonindigenous residents, caring for archaeological sites on indigenous lands, and protecting the land from destruction, illegal logging, or gold mining.

Spending a month with AMAAIAC, I came to greatly admire their knowledge, humility, and the quiet and persistent courage in their efforts as custodians, whether as individuals or as communities, who protect the forest. This amazing and insistent labor occurs every day of their lives, and it gives us the air we breathe, but their work goes unrecognized by the global community and is under constant threat by the Brazilian government. On my last day in AMAAIAC, I was asked to be a facilitator for AMAAIAC, and I am committed to continue my search for support for the organization and their work.

AA: I want to underline here what the video artist and filmmaker Zina Saro-Wiwa has defined as a call for “decolonizing environmentalism,” by it meaning a certain Western approach to that too, as a lot of actions being called upon are relatively mindless, one could even dare to say problematically naive, of the actual conditions in which humans and nonhumans alike live in different areas of the planet (could we think of a lack of intersectional thinking?). Not everyone can afford a certain type of environmentalism, also because many will have to prioritize other basic survival needs—such as food, shelter, education. In this sense, how do you deal with the layered aspects of the issue—at hand and in your practice—particularly considering the art world and, I assume here, both producers and consumers, being still an extremely bourgeois context?

MTA: I was a cofounding member of the Partido Verde of São Paulo. I also participated in our contribution to the party platform and to lobbying in the making of the new Constitution of 1988, which is being dismantled. The PV was, at the time, a very elitist party. Almost all members were from the Euro-Brazilian elite. Ecology was not a buzzword at the time. In part, that was why we were so successful in making the most progressive constitution in regards to the environment in the world, since the reactionary elite didn’t have a clue about the green movement and didn’t understand ecology or environmentalism. I remember very well one article in the Constitution supported by the PV that would allow no hunting of any kind. I said that indigenous people, respectful of mating seasons and availability of animals, would then lose a major source of food. But a separate article would keep this situation viable to indigenous communities. However, I also mentioned peasants who hunt one animal for food and not for the market. I was informed that the article must say “no hunting” because in Brazil there is no respect for the law and so, if there were any exceptions, then it would fall apart. I was also assured that no one would activate that article against a lone peasant. Of course, the anti-environment lobby did just that—the first case of hunting was against a peasant. And these are people who rarely eat any meat—it is an immense luxury, and yet the brunt of the law was brought against them so that the right-wing politicians could make a point. This also occurred in the US with anti-coal strip mining legislation in New Mexico when the first one arrested was an Acoma Pueblo person, the cousin of the great poet Simon Ortiz. He had a wheelbarrow and would take coal from a naturally opened vein for his family’s needs... in another case, Sierra Club took to court the Havasupai people for living in the Grand Canyon!

Some of my work involves communities. I meet communities, I ask what is important for them and what they think I could do as an artist. Then I try to do what is requested to the best of my ability. In 2009 I met with the Community Museum del Valle de Xico in Mexico. At a community meeting, they mandated that I tell the history of their lake. This resulted in the work *The Return of a Lake* (2012), for dOCUMENTA (13), and in the book with the eponymous name. Today, progressive teachers use it as a textbook in the local grammar schools. In Brazil, during the making of the site-specific installation *A Full Void* (2017), realized for the Frestas Triennale in Sorocaba, São Paulo, I worked with indigenous students from the local university. We read a selection of texts translated into Portuguese by published contemporary indigenous thinkers such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Jimmie Durham, Vine Deloria Jr., Richard Hill, and others. The racism is so strong in Brazil that indigenous thinkers are not published except when writing children’s books. At the end of the workshop, the students requested that I come back because they wanted to make the book titled *Decolonizing Brazil*. The students wrote essays about indigenous activists they find important today and mostly unrecognized by Brazilian society. Recently, I have had some recognition in the art world, and for the first time I used this advantage to fund-raise in order to realize this book (only online) along with several workshops and publications of indigenous language magazines, particularly of languages spoken by the students, to give away to the nonindigenous ones on campus, in order to activate interest in those languages and perhaps convince the university of the importance of teaching them (none, in fact, are taught). In return, I gave a free workshop to nonindigenous artists at SESC, the local cultural center that funded the project. I forfeited my artist fee in order to secure the funding for the students. I also attempted to forge a relationship between these students and SESC. Students were hired to be guides to the exhibit of *Decolonizing Brazil* (and although this should have been an obvious arrangement, there was much resistance to hiring them). Since then, SESC has hosted several events organized by the students and paid them fees for this work.

Regarding my work, I make it with a community: if I sell a work that I realized with them, and a gallery is involved, the profits are split as such: one-third goes to the community, one-third to me, and one-third to the gallery. If there is no gallery involved, then one-half goes to the community and one-half to me. I also work

with researchers hired from the community, and they are paid upfront during the making of the work. The *labor* conditions and relations established are important to me. After many years, I find it is essential to realize work for both the local community—where it is developed—but also for the global art community, otherwise each space becomes a ghetto. Who I am addressing depends on the needs that the community I work with has determined. The ways in which I will bring the work to the public depend on direct suggestions by the community or are based on my experiences as an artist. As I am working in communities that are in difficult economic situations, I attempt to secure sources of funding for them and also to open networks that they might not have access to ordinarily due to deep and historical economic segregation. I also make myself available for what might be needed after the work is done. I strongly believe that if I work with a community, then I become a member of it, and I must act responsibly in relation to their present and future. I don't hop into communities that are economically deprived and spend a week to make a workshop and leave (as is, sadly, easily and way too often the case). For example, I continue to work with the Community Museum del Valle de Xico in Mexico and the students in Sorocaba in Brazil.

AA: I'm thinking on what you mentioned about using a privileged space in the art context as a spot able to provide a key point, precisely when questioning the transnational economic elite that stands behind it. I wonder whether we could discuss the possibility of creating alliances, coalitions, using the economic power and symbolic value the art system has in order to pressure politicians, industrialists, and so on. I believe some of them are directly involved in the art world, such as powerful collectors who are industrialists, private funders with a lot of leverage on a political level. My question is how do we move from acting in the symbolic realm of art to having agency in the real material conditions of the world?

What kind of protocols or social contracts could be proposed and established in order to move beyond addressing the subject merely on a discursive, temporary level, but in order to let this subject shape the way in which we—cultural practitioners, organizations, institutions, collectors, funders—work? Could we think of creating protocols that might have an impact in the long run and bring forth an awareness that is also self-critical?

MTA: Yes, indeed, how to formulate and organize protocols is important. Take this as an example. In the eighties in New York, among a certain class of the intelligentsia, such as artists, lefties, and liberals of all sorts, the now famous work of Hans Haacke, titled *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, which documents where the money came from for an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum—all corporate money—was considered revolutionary. Sadly, it changed nothing except that there was the pretense that attitudes changed.

Decolonization is now the buzzword in Brazil, and it will be over in a year probably, and then, I guess, we can take it for granted that we are decolonized, although genocide of indigenous peoples continues and usurpation of their lands too. Recently we had a conference about decolonization organized in a museum where local indigenous peoples were not invited to the first meeting. A groundbreaking decolonization symposium on psychology in 2018, where the sole indigenous speaker of the first day was the last speaker and the first three speakers were Euro-Brazilian men. This is constantly happening in Brazil, and no one questions this because the myth of multiculturalism and ethnic plurality is so strong and accepted worldwide—a nice sell job by Euro-Brazilians. The problem in the Americas compared to Europe is that the institutions, collectors, funders, et cetera, are predominantly Euro-descendants in colonized lands.

The federal government in Brazil is cutting education funds. Some universities will lose 50 percent of their available courses. Indigenous students are facing cuts in their modest living grants (food and accommodation), which allow almost all of the students to study, as so many come from economically underprivileged households and live far from city centers where universities are located. I once did the math that if we had six hundred indigenous students that we could fund for four years at five thousand euros per year per student, that would be twelve million euros. In the world, that is not much money. And it would change not only the Eurocentric Brazilian intellectual world forever but also Brazilian society. Now, does anyone know how we could make a conglomerate of wealthy people who could do this?

Mr. Masha of the Huni Kuin people, who is an indigenous agroforest agent and a leader on his reservation in the state of Acre in the Amazon, was chosen by his community for this work, which is unpaid. His principal responsibility is to organize new tree plantings. But he also inspects the community's lands, catalogues the flora and fauna, and decides how many trees can be cut for fuel or housing and how many animals can be hunted. He also attempts to give workshops to the local nonindigenous settlers about the preservation of the forest and the animals. The community is in great angst [because] of loggers and mining. Mr. Masha is responsible for noting any intrusions on community lands. He is a courageous person and is our first line of defense of a future. Mr. Masha ensures that we breathe and has asked for support. Like all agroforest agents that do all of this work, he must also farm his own plots of land, hunt and gather seeds to make necklaces, and try to sell them in towns that would rather see them dead. He made an eloquent plea in a conversation with me; he asked "that we not be left alone."¹

This has remained in my brain, and I do not know how to respond, how to find means to support. I have asked for help in different places, I have talked about this work in many contexts, to ask for suggestions—but it has been mostly students who reacted actively and who themselves usually have precarious means. I have purchased necklaces from the Huni Kuin for resale to help raise funds for them but have not been able to sell one.

AA: I wonder whether continuing to participate in the type of conferences you described above might lead somewhere in terms of fund-raising if one, just like you did in Basel, were to be more direct in terms of what is needed right now beyond complacent understanding. Do you imagine a transnational coalition of art workers putting pressure on such things, and do you have experience (or hope, for that matter)?

MTA: I think it is important to resist the forces that be, which urge us to be complacent with their consumerist culture. It is important to decide to be committed long-term to a community and to resist pressures to move on to something *more interesting*. I don't know what long-term structure to think of in order to support the indigenous agroforestry agents in Acre. In the meantime, I will continue to talk about their work whenever possible, and yes, I agree with your suggestion to be clear about what is needed. I participated in Artists' Call against US Intervention in El Salvador by organizing a students' exhibition at the Cooper Union School of Art in New York in 1984, when I was a student there. I also attended various meetings of Artists' Call. It was an important mobilization among the art community. I think all attempts and efforts are important in these situations, whether or not we can see a short-term improvement, as long as we proceed with the support of the community while listening to what they think is important. And I do think it would be feasible for the art circuit to pressure in certain situations, particularly for those artists who are in positions of relative safety, in terms of economy and fame.

[1] This conversation happened on August, 2017, at the Transaccreana Highway kilometer 7 in Rio Branco in Acre.

Maria Thereza Alves

ARTNEWS

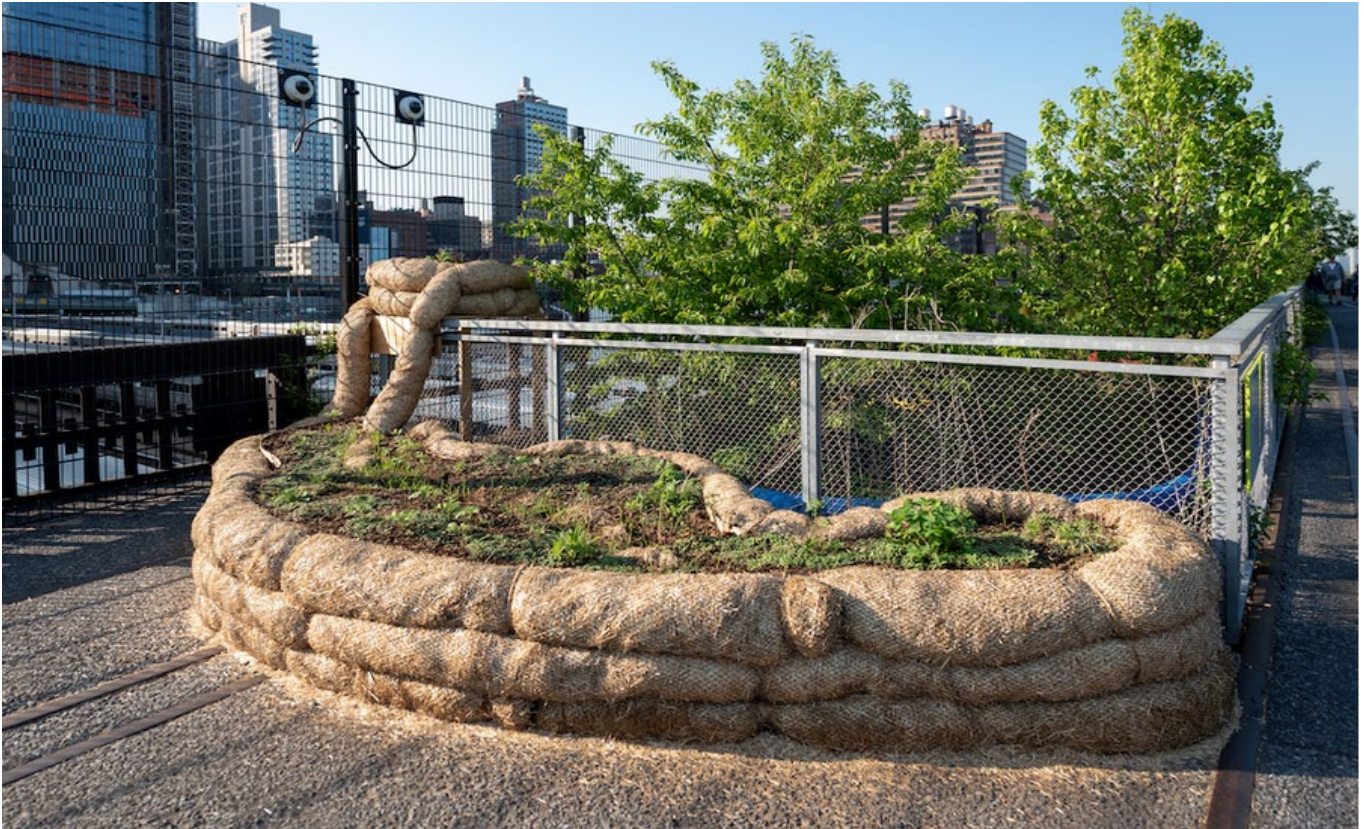
July 20th, 2018

by Andy Battaglia

ARTNEWS

'Activating Public Space': A High Line Art Walk with Curator Cecilia Alemani

MARIA THEREZA ALVES



Maria Thereza Alves, *A Ballast Flora Garden: High Line*, 2018.

TIMOTHY SCHENCK/COURTESY HIGH LINE ART

Maria Thereza Alves, *A Ballast Flora Garden: High Line*

“Maria Thereza Alves is a Brazilian artist who lives in Berlin, and for many years she had been doing this work called *Seeds of Change*. She follows seeds’ migration due to man, not to nature, and she’s been doing a lot of studies in harbor cities like Bristol, England, and also New York, studying what’s called the ballast flora, which are dormant seeds that were brought with cargo ships from the 1700s onwards. Ballast was used as counterweight for the boats, and at the port they would dump it—mainly dirt or bricks or soil—in the harbor. But the ballast was actually carrying seeds, and so many of the seeds that we find here and on the High Line that we call native are actually not native of the United States at all—they come from West Africa or the U.K. or the Netherlands. Alves got the award from the Vera List Center for Arts and Politics two years ago, and so this is a collaboration with the Vera List Center and Pioneer Works and Weeksville Heritage Center. We all have a garden made of these seeds, which we consider native to New York City though they’re not native at all. She questions the notion of migration and what it means to be native.”

Maria Thereza Alves

Asharq Al-Awsat

May 16th, 2018ASHARQ  AL-AWSAT

Maria Thereza Alves

New York High Line Park Displays Works of 9 Artists



People stroll on the New York High Line. (AFP)

New York visitors can now enjoy some culture in Manhattan at an outdoor art exhibition organized along the High Line Park. The High Line, a deserted old railway that was transformed into a park in New York, will display the artworks of nine painters until next March at a massive exhibition entitled "Agora." The works of the nine painters focus on the role of art in the definition, creation and use of public spaces. The name of the exhibition is taken from the ancient Greek word that refers to the square, which is traditionally the gathering place, according to the organizers. The pieces were placed along the two-mile-long park on the west side of Manhattan from Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking district to the 34th street. The participating painters include Timur Si-Qin from Germany, Duane Linklater from Canada, Sable Elyse Smith from the US, the Irish-German Mariechen Danz and Maria Thereza Alves from Brazil. The park has been attracting more visitors annually than the Statue of Liberty, according to officials. Inspired by the "La Colle Forte Pak" in Paris, High Line Park was built on a railway line that authorities had previously pledged to dismantle. It boasts more than 300 carefully selected plants and trees and overlooks Hudson Lake and the streets and buildings of Manhattan. Dutch landscape architect Piet Oudolf, who designed the garden, decided to retain the wild character of the park, which constantly changes according to the seasons. Parts of the former railway have been preserved. The park is open from 7 am till 11 pm during the summer, making it a popular destination for New Yorkers to relax and enjoy free art and celebrations.

Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie Durham Durham, la Méditerranée en terre promise

Par **Mailys Celeux-Lanval** • le 29 mars 2018

Maria Thereza Alves et Jimmie Durham ont vécu à Marseille et à Rome avant de poser leurs valises à Naples. Ensemble, ils ont exploré les richesses de la mer Méditerranée. Ils présentent le fruit de leur collecte à Villeurbanne : textes, végétaux et objets archéologiques dressent le portrait sensible du berceau de l'humanité.



Vue de l'exposition « The Middle Earth – Projet Méditerranéen » de Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie Durham

« **Cette exposition est dédiée à ceux qui**, en ce moment, rejoignent courageusement les frontières de l'Europe et aideront à construire le futur. » De la part de deux artistes autoproclamés « citoyens itinérants », cette dédicace souligne l'importance des migrations et du mouvement. Dans ce projet intitulé « The Middle Earth », chaque objet semble façonné par des siècles d'histoire(s), à l'image des migrations qui tirent des lignes invisibles sur la mer Méditerranée.

De cette errance émerveillée sur les bords de la Méditerranée, ils retiennent également une part de rêve.

Les identités se définissent comme des flux.

Maria Thereza Alves (née en 1961) et Jimmie Durham (né en 1940) engagent dès la première salle à se débarrasser de tout rapport normatif à l'art. Le duo n'établit d'ailleurs aucune hiérarchie entre les reliques archéologiques, les œuvres d'art contemporain et les textes. Autrement dit, le visiteur peut ici toucher, s'asseoir sur les chaises de l'artiste, lire, sentir, goûter, écouter de la musique. Le

parcours se déploie sur une dizaine de salles aux murs jaunes, roses ou beiges, chacune dédiée à un thème : l'écriture (inventée en Méditerranée !), les plantes, les déchets, la couleur pourpre... À la façon d'un herbier, Maria et Jimmie inventorient leurs trouvailles, qu'ils ont dénichées au gré de leurs pérégrinations à travers les paysages et les villes – certains objets proviennent de fouilles dans les poubelles ! De cette errance émerveillée sur les bords de la Méditerranée, ils retiennent également une part de rêve, collectant des textes aussi bien littéraires que scientifiques, enregistrant les cris du phoque moine – animal en voie de disparition – comme les témoins du passé sonore d'une mer sans navires bruyants, ou l'évocation du chant des sirènes dans *l'Odyssée* d'Homère.

On croise ici des poissons de verre dressés sur une table, une plante à palmes qui pousse sagement dans un coin, un tronc d'arbre posé sur le sol, une mosaïque faite à deux mains (œuvre qui concentre l'idée centrale de la collaboration, où chacun apporte sa touche), le tout étayé par quelques explications au mur – où l'on apprend par exemple que « le verre n'est pas solide parce qu'il est dans un état d'écoulement. Cet écoulement est plus lent que l'expansion de l'univers »... L'exposition « The Middle Earth » semble toujours s'étonner face au réel, face à la faune et à la flore, face aux sons, aux textures, au patrimoine, face aux crises et aux déchets. On pourrait y voir une forme d'archéologie multi-sensorielle de la Méditerranée, mais sans volonté de donner un aperçu exhaustif de ce qu'est le berceau de l'humanité. La proposition des artistes induit plutôt une relation poétisée à cette région du monde, actuellement au centre d'une crise humanitaire dramatique.



Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie Durham, *Mediterranean*, 2018

Engagés, Maria Thereza Alves et Jimmie Durham l'ont été et le sont toujours : elle a lutté pour les droits des peuples autochtones au Brésil, lui pour la reconnaissance des natifs indiens en Amérique du Nord. Mais ici le sujet écologique – incarné par un sol jonché d'ordures, de pots de yaourt, de cotons-tiges et canettes de bière – et la (rapide) référence aux migrants cède le pas à un récit essentiellement esthétique, où l'on s'arrête sur des détails... Tel ce minuscule poisson en silex daté d'il y a « au moins 30 000 ans », sans doute l'une des plus anciennes œuvres d'art du monde ! « The Middle Earth », par son aspect inachevé, sa modestie et ses élans poétiques, réussit à provoquer un sentiment d'espoir, une sensation de mouvement, où l'ancien côtoie l'actuel et où rien n'est jamais figé.

→ **Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie Durham : The Middle Earth**

Du 2 mars 2018 au 27 mai 2018

Institut d'art contemporain Villeurbanne / Rhône-Alpes • 11 Rue Docteur Dolard •
69100 Villeurbanne

i-ac.eu

Le Monde

CULTURE

La Méditerranée, en long et en travers

A Villeurbanne, les artistes Maria Thereza Alves et Jimmie Durham remontent l'histoire

EXPOSITION
VILLEURBANNE (NORD)

Les notions de « musique à programme » et de « musique descriptive », voisines mais distinctes, sont d'usage courant en musicologie. La première désigne une composition fondée sur un sujet précis – historique ou religieux par exemple – qu'il faut évoquer ou exalter. La seconde s'applique à des œuvres qui intègrent des références sonores non musicales. Elle peut s'étendre aux inclusions de sons prélevés dans le monde extérieur, collages et montages. Conçue par le couple Maria Thereza Alves et Jimmie Durham, « The Middle Earth » est une exposition à programme et descriptive, fondée sur collages et montages. C'est même le prototype du genre, avec ses habitudes établies et ses limites, ici flagrantes.

Les deux artistes sont connus de longue date pour leurs interventions critiques. Maria Thereza Alves, née au Brésil en 1961, s'est engagée à partir de 1979 en faveur des droits des peuples autochtones, bafoués par l'État et les entreprises. Elle a participé à la fondation du Parti vert au Brésil et adhéré ensuite au Parti des travailleurs. Ses participations à des biennales et des triennales ou à la Documenta de Kassel se placent sous le signe de l'observation et de la dénonciation de conflits politiques, écologiques, économiques et sociaux. Jimmie Durham, né en 1940 aux États-Unis, a d'abord une activité essentiellement politique et éditoriale, mili-

tant de la cause indienne, auteur d'essais critiques. A la fin des années 1980, son mode d'action devient artistique et visuel. Performances, assemblages, environnements sont allégories ou métaphores de ses colères et dégoûts. Parmi les plus puissantes, ses automobiles haut de gamme écrasées par un bloc de pierre brute de quelques tonnes.

Leur projet commun, pour l'Institut d'art contemporain de Villeurbanne (Rhône), évidemment intrigant quand il a été annoncé, a le monde méditerranéen pour sujet : son passé depuis les temps les plus reculés, les inventions qui y ont été faites, son état actuel.

Sobriété délibérée

Les sections sont descriptives, sous des titres qui rappellent le Musée de l'Homme d'autrefois et celui des arts et traditions populaires, disparu du bois de Boulogne en 2005. Elles s'appellent « Silex » – quelques silex taillés ramassés en Égypte par Durham –, « Plantes » – une collection de plantes méditerranéennes en pots – ou « Écriture » – des sceaux-cylindres de Mésopotamie prêtés par le Musée des beaux-arts de Lyon. Il y a aussi une salle consacrée au murex et la fabrication de la pourpre, une autre à la couleur bleu, une troisième au fer. Chacune est didactique et métonymique. Didactique parce que textes explicatifs et photocopies de pages tirées d'ouvrages scientifiques d'il y a un siècle présentent le thème. Métonymique parce que quelques objets sont là pour

**Les objets
archéologiques
sont d'une
grande banalité,
sans doute
pour éviter tout
spectaculaire**

illustrer : un fragment de tronc d'olivier pour l'arbre, la réplique d'un crâne de phoque moine pour la faune marine. La présentation est d'une sobriété que l'on suppose délibérée : vitrines et socles éparpillés dans les salles blanches et, au bas des murs, les noms latins de la flore régionale. Les objets archéologiques, à peu d'exceptions près, sont d'une grande banalité, sans doute là encore pour éviter tout spectaculaire. Mais, à pousser la sobriété à ce point, on court le risque d'ennuyer. C'est le péril du genre : s'en tenir à une suite de documents et de vestiges qui ont une fonction essentiellement mnémotechnique et symbolique. Ils font penser à. C'est peu.

C'est trop peu, d'autant que cet exposé d'ambition encyclopédique est étrangement privé des chapitres historiques qui rappelleraient empires, guerres de religion – les monothéismes sort à peine mentionnés – et guerres de conquête – à peine une vague allusion à la colonisation. Célébrer la naissance de l'écriture et de la métallurgie, est-ce vraiment

l'essentiel ? Faut-il se contenter de ces aimables commémorations, des aquarelles d'oiseaux méticuleusement peintes par Alves et des charmants poissons de verre filé de Durham ? D'artistes engagés, on s'attendrait à des œuvres un peu moins joliment pittoresques. Il n'y a guère ici que deux œuvres à plus haute tension, réalisées en commun par les artistes. L'une est un panneau polychrome de matériaux divers, du tessou de bouteille usé par la mer à la disquette informatique désuète et au débris de carrelage. De loin, on dirait la carte d'un port, et les allusions aux mosaïques romaines et à celles de Gaudí à Barcelone fonctionnent efficacement. L'autre est un environnement intitulé *Mediterranean Sea* : des bouteilles en plastique, des déchets imputrescibles, des filtres de cigarette, des cotons-tiges, tout ce qui est chaque jour jeté à la mer. Et, au centre, un baril plein d'eau. Cette brutalité ironique rompt avec la tonalité générale et rappelle cette évidence : une œuvre d'art n'est pas qu'une idée ou un sentiment, si bons soient-ils. C'est une forme, qui doit intéresser pour être efficace. ■

PHILIPPE DAGEN

The Middle Earth, Institut d'art contemporain, 11, rue Docteur-Dolard, 69100 Villeurbanne. Tél. : 04-78-03-47-00. Du mercredi au vendredi de 14 heures à 18 heures, samedi et dimanche de 13 heures à 19 heures. Entrée : de 4 € à 6 €. Jusqu'au 27 mai.

Maria Thereza Alves
Le Monde
March 18th, 2018
by Philippe Dagen

Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie Durham, *The Middle Earth* © Art contemporain

Critiques arts visuels

The Middle Earth

Le couple d'artistes américains Maria Thereza Alves et Jimmie Durham, présentés comme « citoyens d'itinérance », composent ensemble une odyssée méditerranéenne qui réfute les hiérarchies et les sens uniques.

Par Orianne Hidalgo-Laurier
 publié le 9 mars 2018



VOIR LE SITE

[de l'IAC de Villeurbanne](#)

D'emblée, l'exposition de Jimmie Durham et Maria Thereza Alves fait oublier que l'on se trouve dans un centre d'art. Le voyage qu'ouvre *The Middle Earth* débute dans une pièce aux murs jaune safran, décorée de multiples images et meublée de tables en bois sombre. Dessus, reposent de la vaisselle en céramique typiquement méditerranéenne et de petits objets – dont des ampoules « trouvées dans les racines d'un acacia jouxtant la plus vieille église de Naples » – que l'on imagine chéris par les éventuels hôtes. Des produits issus des industries agro-alimentaires méridionales – dattes, olives, pain azyme, amandes, poids chiches espagnols, fleur d'oranger – ajoutent à l'ambiance tout en relativisant son pittoresque. En fond sonore, les notes d'une lyre donnent la réplique aux cordes d'un oud. Ni ready-made, ni nouveau réalisme à la Spoerri, cette scénographie s'associe davantage à un incipit romanescque, où sont distillés les motifs constitutifs de la trame. Parmi ceux-ci, une mosaïque composée par le couple avec des résidus hétéroclites glanés au cours de leurs dérives – puces électroniques, piles, pièces, bouchons, coquillages, éclats de céramique et d'ornements architecturaux classiques. Les époques, les sociétés, les cultures, la faune et la flore s'y enchevêtrent. Cet ouvrage intitulé *Mediterranean* semble une synthèse non linéaire de ce « berceau des civilisations », en forme de cosmogonie actualisée et alternative au mythe vertical et biblique de la Tour de Babel. Comme une boussole qui guiderait vers l'autre côté du miroir, cette œuvre cartographie un envers de la Grande Bleue, sans zones d'influences délimitées, postes-frontières, garde-côtes et plan d'action immigration. Dans le couloir qui mène aux autres salles, un préambule intitulé « La condition humaine », écrit par les deux artistes et dédié à ceux qui arpentent les routes de l'exil, rappelle que les peuples européens, en tant que premiers déportés aux Amériques, ont été les victimes initiales des politiques impérialistes. Cet appel à une solidarité universelle n'est pas sans lien avec l'engagement politique des auteurs pour la reconnaissance et les droits des peuples indigènes, le rôle de Jimmie Durham au sein de l'American Indian Movement et celui de Maria Thereza Alves dans le Partido Verde et le Partido dos Trabalhadores au Brésil.

Réminiscences animistes

Le parcours en enfilade dans le ventre de *The Middle Earth* se déploie en neuf chapitres – d'« écriture » à « fer » en passant par « sirène », « temple » et « arbres » – tissant un récit hybride entre mythologie, anthropologie et géologie, défiant l'autorité des taxinomies. Contrairement à ce que l'entreprise peut supposer d'encyclopédique, aucune monumentalité ici mais des écriteaux discrets, des noms de plantes qui courent sur les murs, des petits dessins naturalistes photocopiés et collés au dessus de quelque plinthe, des vestiges archéologiques, précieux mais sans grandiloquence, issus de la collection du couple ou de celles de musées consacrés. Entre les statuettes et les figurines animales de différents âges, les amulettes d'Égypte antique, les colliers de l'époque ptolémaïque, les silex ou encore les arbres en terre, s'immiscent des installations, sculptures et peintures signées de l'un ou de l'autre artiste, parfois des deux. Que ce soit un morceau de « réel », comme cet énorme tronc d'olivier huitcentenaire couché entre un bois de noyer et les branchages d'un cyprès, une œuvre d'art ou d'artisanat, un objet fétiche ou une canette de bière, les éléments cohabitent dans une harmonie toute horizontale. La sculpture *Heléns* de Jimmie Durham, à mi-chemin entre l'arte povera et le totem, cumule les différents âges. Sur un socle fait d'une caisse en bois manufacturée, trônent trois branches dont l'une, pour atteindre la hauteur des autres, s'appuie sur une boîte de conserve, elle-même posée sur une pierre. Juste après l'espace « temple », au centre du parcours, le duo aménage une sorte de chapelle. L'autel est un bidon en métal – habituellement converti en brasero – rempli d'eau, le sol est parsemé de déchets contemporains à la manière d'une plage. Survivances des cultes païens ou installations à dimension géopolitique, l'une de ces interprétations n'exclut pas l'autre.



Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie Durham, *Mediterranean*, 2018, Courtesy des artistes. p. Nick Ash

Exposition non-domestiquée

Sous leurs faux-airs de Bouvard et Pécuchet, Maria Thereza Alves et Jimmie Durham ouvrent un pan de leur recherches et pérégrinations autour de ce bassin saturé d'histoires, façonné par les métissages. Les regards de ces deux Américains installés de longue date sur le vieux continent remettent en jeu les récits nationaux, la linéarité historique, les discours ethnocentrés et les théories essentialistes, sans avoir besoin de faire commerce de l'actualité politique et migratoire. Tout en jouant sur des cordes pseudo-scientifiques, ils construisent humblement une odyssée transversale sans égard pour ce qui *doit* être une œuvre ou une exposition d'art contemporain selon des règles, non pas universelles, mais bien occidentales.

Maria Thereza Alves
Neromagazine
March, 2018

NERO

Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie Durham "The Middle Earth" at IAC, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes



Jimmie Durham, *Four Fish Flasks*, 2018
Ph. Nick Ash, Courtesy the artist

This Spring, the IAC, Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes handed the totality of its space over to artists Maria Thereza Alves and Jimmie Durham for their project devoted to the Mediterranean, called *The Middle Earth*. This new and original collaboration comes from the artists' desire to explore together the territory where they live, in a poetic and critical fashion. After a period in Marseille, followed by Rome and then Naples where they regularly travel, Alves and Durham settled on the coast of the "inland sea" following a continuous and committed period of roaming that led them away from the American continent and all the way to Europe. In a similar vein to Jimmie Durham's *Eurasien Projet*, begun in 1994 just after his departure from America, and the project *Seeds of Change* that Maria Thereza Alves began in the port of Marseille in 1999, the idea of *The Middle Earth* began to form little by little, in search of that vast continent, not at all defined by nations, but rather something that is completely imagined and dreamed, and thus, endless. The two artists, who both have their own distinct, internationally recognized, artistic practices, reveal common influences that come, on the one hand from a political engagement that flows through their respective work, and on the other hand common areas of research, that deal with notions of territory and authority. One can effectively observe these questions in the work of both artists, and in both cases, their thought processes are engaged in the same criticism of the ideological and normative frameworks that shape people's relationships with the world. Maria Thereza Alves brings a particular attention, that is also that of an activist to the experience of a territory and guides the research, between poetry and ethnology, that she does on migratory phenomena and peoples that have been uprooted. In Europe Durham's work has focused primarily on the relationship between architecture, monumentality and national narratives which deconstructs the stereotypes and official tales of powers. Conceiving history as a process, he seeks the reality of objects, their intentionality even, within their evolving context, moving backwards and away from any kind of frozen categorization. Starting from the matrix form of relationship that exists between their artistic practice and the places that they move through or live in, the two artists will work in collaboration with one another, embarking upon new research at the IAC that deals with the mixed heritage of the Mediterranean. Divided into specific fields of knowledge, from archeology to biology by way of climatology, *The Middle Earth* explores a multiplicity of sources. Playing with universalist models, Alves and Durham's dialogue hijacks the apparent objectivity of classification in order to deploy an active dialogue between recent artworks and archeological and ethnological objects in each category, with writing that places itself somewhere between the poetic and the scientific.

Maria Thereza Alves

E-flux

March, 7th, 2018The logo for e-flux, featuring the text "e-flux" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The "e" is slightly larger and more prominent than the other letters.

In Spring 2018, the IAC in Villeurbanne will entrust the totality of its space to artists Maria Thereza Alves and Jimmie Durham for their project *The Middle Earth*, devoted to the Mediterranean region. This new and original collaboration comes from the artists' desire to explore together the territory where they live, in a poetic and critical fashion. After a period in Marseille, followed by Rome and then Naples, where they regularly travel, Alves and Durham settled on the coast of the "inland sea" following a continuous and engaged period of roaming that led them away from the American continent and all the way to Europe. In a similar vein to Jimmy Durham's *Eurasian Project*, begun in 1994 just after his departure from America, and the project *Seeds of Change* that Maria Thereza Alves began in the port of Marseille in 1999, the idea of *The Middle Earth* began little by little to take shape, in search of that vast continent, not at all defined by nations, but rather something that is completely imagined and dreamed, and thus, endless. The two artists, who both have their own distinct, internationally recognized, artistic practices, reveal common influences that come, on the one hand from a political engagement that flows through their respective work, and on the other hand common areas of research that deal with notions of territory and authority. One can indeed observe these questions in the work of both artists, and in both cases, their thought processes are engaged in the same criticism of the ideological and normative frameworks that shape people's relationships with the world. Maria Thereza Alves brings a particular focus, that is also that of an activist, to the experience of a territory and this guides the research, between poetry and ethnology, that she does on migratory phenomena and uprooted peoples. In Europe, Durham's work has focused mainly on the relationship between architecture, monumentality

and national history, through the deconstruction of stereotypes and official narratives. Considering history as a process, he seeks the reality of objects, their intentionality even, within an evolutive context, as opposed to their frozen categorization. Starting from the matrix form of relationship that exists between their artistic practice and the places that they move through or live in, the two artists will work in collaboration with one another, embarking upon new research at the IAC that deals with the mixed heritage of the Mediterranean. The exhibition *The Middle Earth* has been created and imagined in the form of an active dialogue between recent artworks, original creations and a multiplicity of archeological pieces and objects originating from the Mediterranean basin, that have been borrowed from the collections of different museum collections: The Museum of Archeology of Marseille, The Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon and The Musée des Confluences of Lyon. Divided into specific fields of knowledge, the exhibition thus plays with universalist and scientific models such as the traditional museographic codes. Western museums of art, ethnography, cultures and society, through the objects that they choose to exhibit, do indeed transmit a certain vision of the world, reflecting a certain vision of what they "represent," often referring to historical stereotypes. It is this vision that Jimmie Durham and Maria Thereza Alves have decided to challenge, remaining faithful to the poetical and critical engagement that forms the basis of their artistic approaches, whether in the very principle of assembly of Durham's sculptures or the contextual work being done by Alves.

Maria Thereza Alves

Art Forum

June 1th, 2018

By Rachel Aima

Maria Thereza Alves

SECRET GARDENS

Rahel Aima on Maria Thereza Alves's *Seeds of Change*

Seeds, like colonized populations, bear buried within them the capacity to endure despite the most oppressive of surroundings.



Maria Thereza Alves, *Seeds of Change: A Floating Ballast Seed Garden*, 2012–16, barge, plants, soil, wood.
Installation view, Bristol, UK, 2015. From *Seeds of Change*, 1999–. Photo: Maria Thereza Alves.

THE FUNNY THING about ships is that you have to weigh them down to keep them afloat. Historically, stones, soil, sand, wood, and bricks placed inside a ship's hull have provided this weight. At the end of a voyage, the ballast is dumped, to be repurposed as building materials or to settle as soil. It becomes a pedological archive: A portion of the ground beneath Manhattan's FDR Drive is built from the rubble of British buildings demolished during World War II; the area came to be known as Bristol Basin. Meanwhile, Liverpoolian stones that were a by-product of the transatlantic cotton and tobacco trades make up Savannah, Georgia's iconic cobblestone streets. Sometimes, ballast creates new terrain, too, as is the case on Lilla Norge, an island off the eastern coast of central Sweden that blooms with Norwegian flowers found nowhere else in the area.

Ballast similarly anchors Maria Thereza Alves's project *Seeds of Change*, 1999–. Like people, seeds can unexpectedly find themselves far from their homelands. They travel in the bellies of animals and amid ballast in the hulls of ships before being discarded as waste on new shores. These seeds can lie dormant for hundreds of years before a chance upheaval exposes them to light, causing them to sprout. Seeds are patient, after all: In 2005, Israeli researchers were able to germinate a two-thousand-year-old date-palm seed; the resulting plant was subsequently dubbed the “Methuselah” tree. Seeds, like colonized populations, bear buried within them the capacity to endure despite the most oppressive of surroundings. In 2012, a team of Russian scientists announced that they had successfully grown a flower from a thirty-two-thousand-year-old squirrel cache of seeds buried in Siberian permafrost. They failed to germinate the seeds but were able to extract cells from their placentas and grow new flowers. The next year, the flowers—which were identical to one another but had narrower petals than the same species of flower today—produced seeds of their own.

Like the best time travelers, seeds are storytellers. Since 1999, Alves has been using these inadvertent hitchhikers to unspool violent histories of colonialism, transnational commerce, migration, and resource extraction. After researching a city's ballast sites, she takes soil samples, germinates whatever seeds they contain, and consults scientists and archives to identify the flora, later displaying them in gardens. Previous iterations of the project took place in the European port cities of Marseille in France; and Dunkirk, Exeter, Liverpool, and Bristol, in England; and on Reposaari, a small island that was once Finland's largest port.

In each location, Alves reverse-engineers horticultural history to question what it means to be indigenous to a land. Consider the species Japanese knotweed and kudzu. Both were initially introduced to Europe and North America from Japan as ornamental garden plants, which is to say, as plants that can be controlled and contained. Today, they are billed as invasive alien hordes, kudzu in particular, which has gained the moniker "the vine that ate the South." Parallels between this extension of xenophobia to foreign-origin plants and the present-day rise of nativist sentiment are clear, if sometimes overdetermined. For example, in Bristol, where Alves planted her garden on a floating river barge, the selection of flora included rocket and marigold. Both plants are beloved for being quintessentially English, and are semiotically loaded as such, but they are also relatively recent products of the shipping trade—the marigold is, in fact, native to the Americas.

A YEAR AFTER winning the biennial Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics, Alves transposed her project to the Americas. The resulting multiyear installation, *Seeds of Change: New York—A Botany of Colonization*, has displayed flora propagated from ballast seeds in several locations, first as a living installation at the Aronson

Galleries at the New School (which sponsors the List Center Prize) in New York this past November, followed by iterations at Manhattan's High Line, and at Pioneer Works and the Weeksville Heritage Center, both in Brooklyn. Just as the movement of ballast stones is not unidirectional, this New York chapter of her project briefly traveled to Michel Rein in Paris in February and March before returning to the city this spring.

This time, Alves's process differed, because many of New York's ballast sites—Red Hook, Inwood Park, and the Gowanus Canal, among them—had been built up and were inaccessible. Instead, she turned to historical records to identify four hundred plants from seven sites. Working with students and faculty from the New School and children from Pioneer Works' community youth program, she grew seeds from these plants last summer. At the New School, the plants sprouted in plywood boxes alongside some rather lovely botanical sketches of tumbling saltbush, perennial wall-rocket, annual mercury, and common vervain, all so-called indicator plants that signal the presence of ballast. Watercolor maps plotted local ballast sites



(including Bristol Basin), and a cerulean-washed diagram of ship arrivals used snaking arrows to identify the sources of the city's ballast: elsewhere in the United States and Europe, but also Cape Verde, Cuba, Haiti, Barbados, and Brazil. A map of the Long Island coast makes the role of the slave trade explicit: As Alves's neat print explains, smugglers used to stealthily unload their enslaved cargo there so as to avoid paying city tariffs.

At the Weeksville Heritage Center, which occupies the site of one of the country's first free black communities, the ballast plants grow in soil enclosed by wattles—chubby, sausage-like straw barriers used for erosion, sediment, and stormwater control. Their growth nonetheless bespeaks a kind of liberatory ability to endure and to thrive. Later this summer, Pioneer Works will host walks around the neighboring Red Hook area, where participants can expect to see a kind of Ophelia's litany of the shipping trade: jimsonweed from Mexico, perhaps, or Asiatic dayflower hailing from East and Southeast Asia, and of course the aforementioned Japanese knotweed.



Left: View of Maria Thereza Alves's "Seeds of Change: New York—A Botany of Colonization," 2017, Aronson Galleries, New School, New York. Photo: David Sundberg.

Above: Maria Thereza Alves, *Verbascum Nigrum*, 2007, ink on paper, 16 1/2 x 11 3/4". From *Seeds of Change*, 1999–. Right: Maria Thereza Alves, *A Ballast Flora Garden: High Line*, 2018, straw wattles, plywood, plastic liner, soil, seeds. Installation view, High Line, New York. Photo: Timothy Schenck.



Alves is by no means the only artist to focus on seeds in her work. In recent years, Pia Röncke, Jumana Manna, Michael John Whelan, and Andreas Siekmann and Alice Creischer, among so many others, have made work inspired by the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a massive seed bank located on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen. The vault was the subject of Yongwoo Lee and Hans Ulrich Obrist's 2017 exhibition "Seeds of Time," and the island now hosts an artist residency, Artica Svalbard. Meanwhile, protests against the biotechnology company Monsanto, and other industrial corporations' forced displacements of indigenous communities in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, germinated another seed-bank work—Amar Kanwar's *The Sovereign Forest*, 2011–15, a project made in collaboration with activist Sudhir Pattnaik and filmmaker Sherna Dastur, which debuted at Documenta 13 in 2012. Further iterations have traveled to India, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Austria, Singapore, and Sweden.

Kanwar's contribution to the first Kochi-Muziris Biennale in 2012 centered on a set of sumptuous video works that pay quiet testament to Odishan workers and their land-rights struggles. Kanwar is known for his lush cinematography, and particularly lovely were videos projected onto open books of handmade paper, which seemed to collapse the skeuomorphic distance between page and screen. Yet most affecting was the installation *272 Varieties of Indigenous Organic Rice Seeds*, 2012, which displayed the titular seeds in shallow spotlit, wall-mounted shallow boxes. Their colors ranged from taupe to coffee, and some were husked and others not, but together they were dizzying in their sheer plurality. They left an indelible impression, furnishing a metaphor that feels increasingly poignant as a different kind of monoculture—that of Hindutva, or Hindu fundamentalism—asphyxiates the country.

YEARS AGO, I remember looking down at a Manhattan sidewalk and noticing a spray-painted stencil that read, SMILE. YOU LIVE ON AN ISLAND. We're surrounded by water and might cross a river several times a day, but this fact, like New York's shipping past, is easy to forget. Not so on the High Line, where both water views and the memory of a freight depot are inescapable. The park currently features the second installment of Alves's project, part of "Agora," a group show organized by Cecilia Alemani and Melanie Kress. Like ballast flora, the installation seems to have arrived there by accident. As at Weeksville, wattles enclose some soil, some hyperlocal ballast flora. On a hillside, wattles evoke topographical contour lines; here, the effect is more akin to the animal waste that carries seeds. Yet plants, like immigrants, just want to put down roots and flourish, and, over time, these seeds have, too.

This iteration of the project underwhelms compared to the other sites. But it becomes interesting when one considers the park's history. The defunct railroad was slated for demolition, yet thanks in large part to photographer Joel Sternfeld's documentation of its luxuriant wildscape in 2000 in 2001—the greenery came up from seeds spilled from cross-continental trains in a kind of locomotive analogue to ballast flora—it is now an impeccably manicured, ersatz-wilderness park. To walk the High Line today is to experience a profound sense of loss for Sternfeld's feral garden, and for an older time when Manhattan was Mannahatta. It shows us history like layers of soil. It is here that *Seeds of Change* feels truly decolonial, in its potential to go beyond awareness and education and refract the landscape into disparate pasts. After all, as much as Alves' sprouting plants bring to mind New York's industrial history, they also invoke the ghostly ecology of the pre-colonial period that shipping and transport infrastructure effaced. The remarkable Welikia Project from the Wildlife Conservation Society charts the peoples, plants, and wildlife of the city in 1609, when Dutch settlement started. It suggests that the site of Alves's project might have been home to red maples, American hornbeam, starved panic grass, prairie fleabane, and white wood aster, some of which would later be displaced by ballast flora.

Hung with wall text on an adjacent fence is a map of ballast sites. In the middle distance is the bedbug-like carapace of Thomas Heatherwick's *Vessel*, 2018, the public-art centerpiece of the multibillion-dollar Hudson Yards redevelopment project. It looms over the rail yards like a ship nobody is happy to see on the horizon, and suddenly the wattles feel like they're guarding against more than soil erosion. It's easy to forget, too, that Wall Street's foundations sit atop a historical African burial ground, while the city around it is built on land stolen from the Lenape people—the original native New Yorkers. But the seeds remember. □

RAHEL AIMA IS A WRITER BASED IN NEW YORK. (SEE CONTRIBUTORS.)

OBSERVER

Maria Thereza Alves
Observer
November 7th, 2017
by Margaret Carrigan

Artist Maria Thereza Alves Is Charting the History of Migration in NYC Using Seeds

By [Margaret Carrigan](#) • 11/07/17 8:15am



The New School Students at a propagation event. The New School

For almost two decades, Brazilian artist Maria Thereza Alves has been traveling to European port cities documenting the non-native plant species she finds there. Her work is less horticultural than ethnographic, however. The project represents original research into the seeds that have been transported across seas in ballast, a material (often gravel, sand or coarse stone) used to balance maritime trade ships. Ultimately, this project reveals the impact of human displacement due to migration and slave trade over the course of centuries.

After exploring the shores of Marseilles, Reposaari, Dunkirk, and Bristol, among others, Alves has now turned her attention to the “New World” by bringing this ongoing project to the U.S. for the first time. She’s been working with the New School’s Vera List Center for Art and Politics, Pioneer Works, the High Line and Weeksville Heritage Center to excavate seed sites around New York City. The artist’s findings of plant species that were originally native to countries like the West Indies, Brazil, and the U.K. are presented with her maps and drawings depicting the ships’ journeys in an exhibition of the same title at the Vera List Center through November 27.



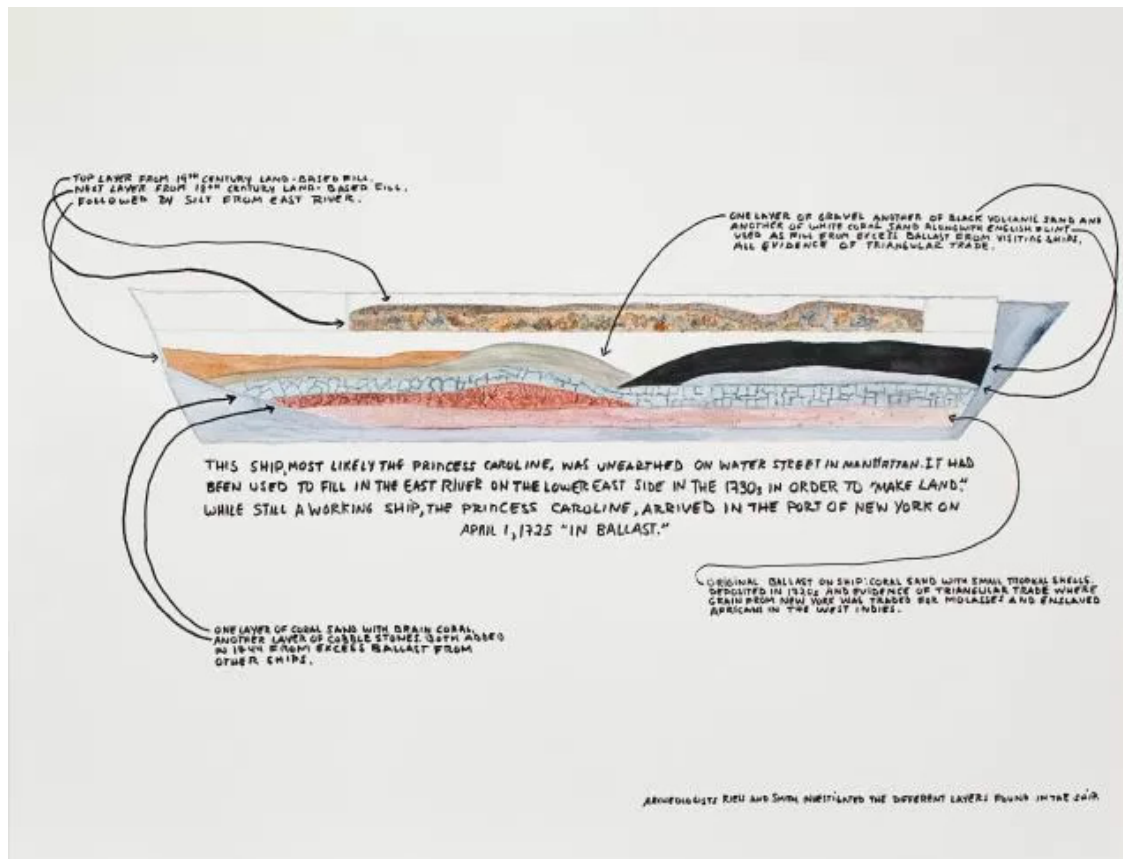
Maria Thereza Alves in Bristol. Ben Thomas/Arnolfini, Bristol

Alves told Observer that her research revealed that so much ballast came into Manhattan, it was used to fill in the city's ravines, marshes, creeks, ponds and other "undesirable" local topographies from 1646 until the middle of the 20th century. For example, she found that Eighth Avenue from about 155th to 140th Streets was filled in with an average of seven to ten feet of ballast with seeds hailing from the Sweden, Ireland, Algeria, the West Indies, Norway, Sierra Leone, Spain, Portugal, Antigua, France, Cape Verde, Germany, Bermuda, Brazil and of course, England. "So when we are walking around, due to the colonization process of our land, we don't know if we are stepping on New York or Bristol, Kingston, Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro, or Oslo," she explained.

Unique to the artist's New York-based findings is the discovery that while solid ballast like sand, earth, and stones gave way to the use of water ballast from the early 1920s onwards in European cities, such was not the case in America. According to Alves, ships sailing from

New York harbor to Europe during World War II to deliver armaments returned heavy in ballast back to New York as there was nothing else to bring back.

"Many chunks of Europe ended up in New York and many chunks of New York ended up in Europe over the last several hundred years and even more recently," said Alves, who explained that she found the deliberate midcentury "displanting" of New York quite shocking. This continued until the end of the Marshall Plan, which saw ships carrying food and building materials to devastated Europe until 1951. "This isn't a question of reconstruction of a lost landscape or purity, but an acknowledge the present coloniality we all find ourselves in."



Maria Thereza Alves, *Caribbean Coral Sand in Manhattan*, 2017. Watercolor on paper. Maria Thereza Alves/Galerie Michel Rein

The project is a natural fit for the New School's politically engaged Vera List Center, who awarded Alves the Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics last year. But, for Alves, it was equally important to loop in additional organizations. "*Seeds of Change* has from the beginning been about involving the local community with the history of the ballast flora," she said, noting that Pioneer Works, located in Red Hook, is situated on an area made of ballast landfill which has grown much of ballast flora that will be exhibited in the Vera List Center's galleries.

For the High Line portion of *Seeds of Change*, Alves worked with plants that are found in the Western Rail Yards, an area that is still populated only by plants that were growing here after the railway was abandoned. "This project touches on one of the most important collaborations for us: the relationship

between art and horticulture, and the ways in which both of these things can tell us stories about the histories of the city we live in today," Melanie Kress, assistant curator of High Line Art, told Observer. "In this way, Alves is illuminating part of the history of the park and the neighborhood within the larger narratives about trade, colonialism, and slavery."

The history of slavery in the West and the larger African diaspora is a point to which *Seeds of Change* routinely returns in its many iterations over the years, and for the New York edition of the project, Alves aptly chose to work with Brooklyn's Weeksville Heritage Center. Named after James Weeks, an African American stevedore and former slave who purchased a plot of land in 1838 and founded one of the first free black communities, the institution "is a witness to the complexity of the history of ballast in New York," said Alves.

According to Rob Fields, interim president and executive director of the Weeksville Heritage Center, *Seeds of Change* isn't just about the migration of seeds and flora, nor does it stop with abolition of slavery. "Migration is also a recurring theme for many African-Americans," he told Observer. Indeed, African Americans fanned out all across the country after Reconstruction to seek a life free from the oppression of the Jim Crow South. "It's that search for haven, for community, and for a new start that brought the founding residents of

Weeksville together: free African-Americans and formerly enslaved African-Americans alike," he said.

Fields is quick to point out that the project has a special relevance for New York City, which is a city of transplants. "Of course, there are plenty of people who are born and bred New Yorkers, but it's the transplants who came here, had something to prove—that they could make it here—that have really found ways to thrive," he said. "Like the flora contained in those seeds, at some point, we all became natives."

Margaret Carrigan is a freelance writer and editor. She planned to go to law school but she did terribly on the LSAT, so she got a master's in art history instead. She lives in Brooklyn with her cat, who is named after Alyssa Milano's character from the early aughts CW smash hit series Charmed.

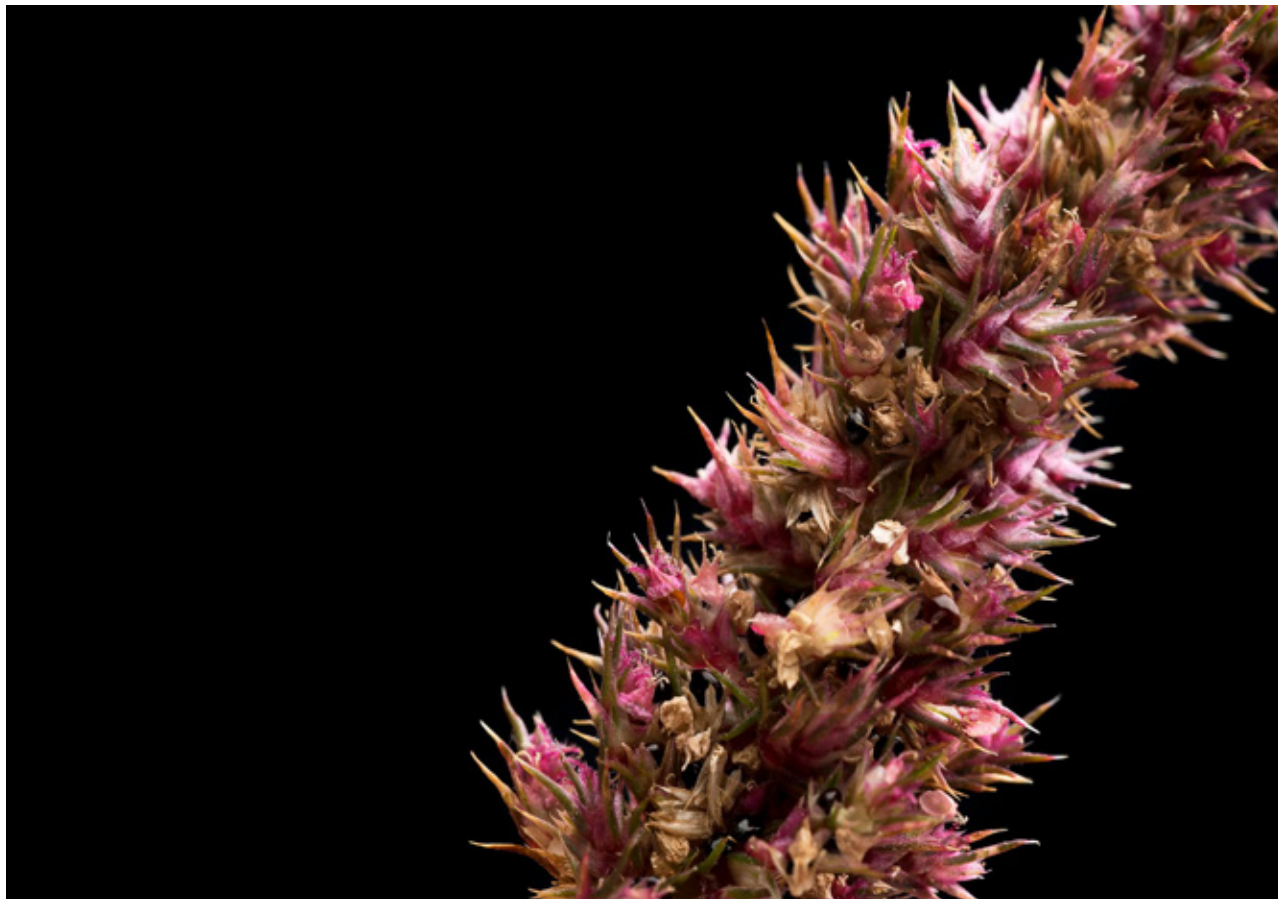
The New York Times

Maria Thereza Alves
The New York Times
October 31th, 2017
by Annie Correal

A Seed Artist Germinates History

An exhibition using plants brought to New York in ships' ballast illuminates the city's hidden past using stinging nettle, milk thistle and amaranth.

Written by ANNIE CORREAL; Photographs by KARSTEN MORAN OCT. 31, 2017



Amaranth, which grows wild in Red Hook, Brooklyn, is among the plants introduced to New York via ships' ballast long ago. It will be included in "Seeds of Change," an exploration by the artist MariaThereza Alves of how plants were carried around the world. Photographs by Karsten Moran for The New York Times

About 140 years ago, a botanist named Addison Brown noticed an unfamiliar red-tendriled plant growing around Red Hook, Brooklyn. Trade had lately picked up, he told readers of the *Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club* in 1879, and as ships arrived, they dumped thousands of tons of ballast — earth and stones used to stabilize ships — that carried seeds from far-off lands. The red plant, among several new species growing along Gowanus Creek, was *Amaranthus crispus*, native to South America.

“Amaranth,” said Marisa Prefer, a gardener leading a group through the same neighborhood last week, picking up a stalk of the crumbly plant, which was spilling out from a crack in the sidewalk like a Medusa head. “These wild urban plants can survive in the craziest circumstances.”

This year, a few dozen New Yorkers have been learning about and growing plant species that were inadvertently brought to the city in ship ballast as part of “Seeds of Change,” an ongoing exploration of the phenomenon by the artist Maria Thereza Alves. Ms. Alves, whose exhibition on local ballast plants opens on Friday at the galleries of the Sheila C. Johnson Design Center at the New School, is the most recent winner of the Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics. She has spent nearly two decades uncovering long-buried colonial histories using ballast seeds, which can lie dormant in the soil for hundreds of years, only to sprout in the right conditions.



Marisa Prefer, the resident gardener at Pioneer Works, lifting the leaf of a stinging nettle.



Lindsay Benedict, who teaches at the New School, holding a sprig of Virginia pepperweed.



Lindsay Benedict wiping the hand of Simone, her 2-year-old daughter, as they repotted plants at Pioneer Works.



New School students and faculty replanted seedlings grown in dorm rooms and offices on campus.

Born in Brazil, Ms. Alves has explored several European and British port cities, creating a floating garden using seeds native to Africa and North America found in the soil of Bristol, England; documenting exotic plants from Asia and elsewhere that turned up in people's yards in Reposaari, Finland. "I liked the idea that these plants were witnesses to things we would never understand, to paths of trade that we no longer have information about," Ms. Alves said in a telephone interview. "They are living there in our midst and saying 'hi.'"

This is Ms. Alves's first look at ballast seeds brought to the Americas. The exhibition, "Maria Thereza Alves, Seeds of Change: New York — A Botany of Colonization," will include examples of local ballast flora, watercolor maps, and drawings and texts by the artist exploring two centuries of maritime trade, including the slave trade.

The director of the Vera List Center and one of the judges for the prize, Carin Kuoni, said the project had struck the judges as an original way to track history — and as a powerful comment on contemporary political reality. "What struck us as pertinent when looking at Maria Thereza's project was its focus on migration and forced migration," she said.



Ballast plants including smartweed sprouting from the sidewalk at Sullivan and Van Brunt Streets in Red Hook.

Sitting in a coffee shop near the New School in Greenwich Village, Ms. Kuoni held a large satchel on her lap. As she spoke, she reached inside and took out a plastic planting tray and put it on the table next to her latte. Minuscule white insects fluttered up, and the people at the next table glanced over.

“Mugwort,” she said, smiling down at a few tiny leaves.

She took out another plant. “Stinging nettle.”

After learning about ballast plants, she said, her perspective on her adopted city — she is Swiss-born — shifted. “You look down at weeds in the street and say: ‘That’s incredibly sweet. I wonder what history is trying to tell me.’”



Ballast plants including mugwort, top center with pointy leaves, grow from cracks in the sidewalk on King Street in Red Hook.



Amaranth on Sullivan Street in Red Hook.



Smartweed flourishing on the sidewalk at Sullivan and Van Brunt Streets in Red Hook.

Ms. Alves, who lives in Berlin, visited New York twice to do research. The first thing she learned, she said, was how little of New York was actually New York. “New York was hilly and swampy, and they decided to drain it and make it more linear,” she said. Low-lying areas and marshland were commonly filled in with refuse, ashes, sand — and ballast from around the world. Ballast was brought from ports by boat to Harlem and elsewhere.

Solid ballast was largely replaced by water ballast in the early 20th century, but ships continued to bring ballast into New York until after World War II. After delivering goods and arms to bombed-out English cities during the war, ships sailed back filled with rubble. “There was nothing else,” Ms. Alves said. Bristol Basin, a patch of land under the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive in the Kips Bay neighborhood in Manhattan, is made from “stones, bricks and rubble from the bombed city of Bristol.”



Bindweed, with its white flower, on King Street in Red Hook.

In other cities, Ms. Alves took soil directly from ballast sites and germinated the seeds. In New York, many ballast sites had been paved or built over, so she turned to historical records, including the list of ballast plants identified by Mr. Brown. With the help of a graduate research fellow at the Vera List Center, Michael Castrovilla, she came up with a list of more than 400 species found on seven sites.

Marisa Prefer, the resident gardener at Pioneer Works, a cultural center in Red Hook, worked with the show's curators, Ms. Kuoni and Amanda Parmer, winnowing down the list to some 40 species that were still abundant in the city. New School students, faculty and staff, and children enrolled in a free summer program at the Miccio Center in Red Hook, were invited to grow them from seeds.

Recently, the growers gathered at Pioneer Works and in the courtyard of a New School building for their final planting parties, where they would transfer their plants from flimsy containers to the black plastic bags in which they will be exhibited.



Michael Castrovilla, a research assistant for the project, tending to plants in his dorm room.

Mr. Castrovilla, the researcher, had sent students regular emails reminding them to tend to their plants, but not all had flourished. Some of his own had failed to thrive on the windowsill of his room in a Fifth Avenue dorm. “My blinds are often closed,” he said. “But the flax is going crazy.”

The students plopped their ballast plants into bags, adjusting the roots, adding water and soil. Alana Giarrano, an undergraduate, appeared with a box containing milk thistle, St. John’s wort, stinging nettle and a plant with a fuzzy pink shock of a flower, like a tiny mohawk, called dwarf coral, or celosia. It was native to East Africa and grew around Southeast Asia, as well as New York.



New School students and faculty repotting seedlings on campus in preparation for the exhibition.

She has been interested in the project for a couple of reasons, she said. “First, I was interested in the idea of plants and migration and involuntary migration. They’re kind of byproducts that didn’t mean to come over.” Her mother was a refugee from Laos, she said. “Second, I just wanted plants in my room.”

Back in 1879, Mr. Brown had been realistic about the future prospects of plants brought in ballast to the city, predicting that most of them would “perish after a few seasons.” And yet, he predicted, some would survive.



A dwarf coral flower growing along the waterfront in Red Hook.

He was correct. On the waterfront in Red Hook, where Mr. Brown had once watched vessels spreading ballast “without cessation, night and day,” there wasn’t much vegetation to be seen last week. But construction for a new ferry terminal had turned up soil along the water, and a strip between a concrete walkway and a sea wall was overgrown with weeds. “Wow,” Marisa Prefer said, pointing out mugwort, St. John’s wort, lambsquarter and tufts of downy brome — all on Ms. Alves’s list. “Holy moly. That’s cool.” Amid them was even a lone, four-inch tall celosia with its fuzzy pink flower.

Follow Annie Correal on Twitter [@anniecorreal](#)

A version of this article appears in print on November 3, 2017, on Page A25 of the New York edition with the headline: Seeds as City History, Carried Across the Sea.

ARTFORUM

Maria Thereza Alves
Artforum
November 28th, 2016

Maria Thereza Alves Wins Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics

Manhattan's the New School has announced that Brazilian artist Maria Thereza Alves was named the winner of the 2016–2018 Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics, which honors artists “who have taken great risks to advance social justice in a profound and visionary way.”

Alves was recognized for her longterm project “Seeds of Change,” which she launched in 2002. By following the movement of seeds that have been distributed by cargo ships carrying people and goods around the globe, Alves explores notions of colonialism, commerce, ecology, and migration. She addresses various questions relating to identity and belonging such as: At what moment do seeds become ‘native’?



In a joint statement, the jury said, “By reimagining the historical geography of the contemporary world, she practices globalization from below to understand the planet as a holistic ecology.” Chaired by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the jury consisted of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Charif Kiwan, Carin Kuoni, and Radhika Subramaniam.

The five finalists for the prize included the London-based interdisciplinary research agency Forensic Architecture; the artists coalition Gulf Labor; House of Natural Fibers, a new media arts laboratory in Yogyakarta, Indonesia; IsumaTV, a collaborative multimedia platform for indigenous filmmakers and media organization in Canada; and MadeYouLook, an artist collective based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Established in 2012 in celebration of the Vera List Center's twentieth anniversary, the biennial prize awards projects for their longterm impact, boldness, and artistic excellence. Previous winners of the prize include Theaster Gates for “Dorchester Projects” (2012–2014) and Abounaddara, an anonymous collective of Syrian filmmakers, (2014–2016).

LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART

Maria Thereza Alves

Le Quotidien de l'Art

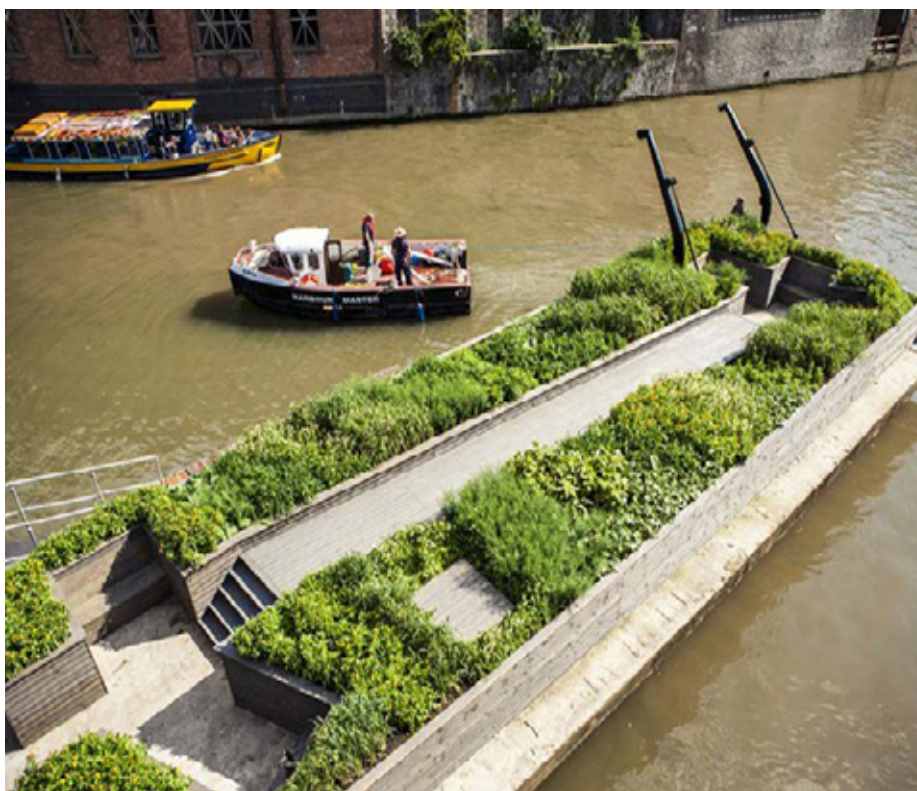
November 25th, 2016 - n° 1181 - page 8

Maria Thereza Alves.
Seeds of Change, projet
en cours, à Bristol,
au Royaume-Uni.
Photo : D. R.

UN NOUVEAU PRIX POUR L'ARTISTE MARIA THEREZA ALVES

> L'artiste brésilienne Maria Thereza Alves vient de remporter The New School's 2016-2018 Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics. Le jury, président par Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, était composé de Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Charif Kiwan, Carin Kuoni et Radhika Subramaniam.

Maria Thereza Alves a été récompensée pour *Seeds of Change*, projets en cours sur la flore de ballast des cités portuaires d'Europe. La remise du prix, accompagnée d'une exposition et d'une publication, se déroulera à New York en octobre 2017.



The New York Times

Maria Thereza Alves
The New York Times
November 23th, 2016
by Randy Kennedy

Prize for Migration Project That Weaves Art and Politics

Maria Thereza Alves, an artist who helped found Brazil's Green Party and whose floating-garden pieces explore human migration through the idea of seeds distributed inadvertently around the world in the holds of cargo ships, has won the Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics. The prize is given every two years to an artist or group whose work furthers social justice.

The center, based at the New School in Manhattan, said that Ms. Alves's ongoing project, known as "Seeds of Change," "weaves together the fields of art and politics in the most exemplary ways."

"The history of human migration has never been more relevant," David E. Van Zandt, the New School's president, said in a statement. "Through creative and scientific expression, Alves has made our past come to life through visual and oral art forms and, at the same time, highlights the importance of migration in the history of society."

Ms. Alves, who lives and works in Berlin, developed the seed project beginning in 2002 to explore the social, political and cultural history over centuries of "ballast seeds" — dormant seeds that ride along in the dense material used to stabilize ships. As a metaphor for human movement around the globe, the project, versions of which have been realized in various European port cities, touches on commerce, colonialism, ecology, migration and belonging.

Finalists for the prize included Gulf Labor, a coalition of artists working to ensure that migrant workers are protected during the construction of museums on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, and MadeYouLook, a South African collective that produces tongue-in-cheek works intended to disrupt urban routines and encourage the questioning of political norms.

The prize, first awarded in 2012 to the Chicago artist and activist Theaster Gates and in 2014 to the Syrian film collective Abounaddara, includes a long-term commitment by the school to aid the winner's projects through academic study or other means. It was established on the 20th anniversary of the List Center, named in honor of the philanthropist and collector Vera List, who died in 2002. List devoted her money and time to art and educational institutions, with a focus on programs that promoted social justice.

SPAIN

MARIA THEREZA ALVES

Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville

Since the early 1990s, Maria Thereza Alves has addressed both the devastating effects of Portuguese imperialism on the indigenous peoples of her native Brazil and the impact of the Spanish conquest in the Americas. Hosted by the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC), this long-overdue survey was, in part, a pre-history of her extensive project for dOCUMENTA(13), *The Return of a Lake* (2012). Extended in Seville, this room-sized installation centered on tabletop models that related the disastrous effects of the 1908 desiccation of Lake Chalco in Mexico City by Spanish businessman Inigo Noriega Laso, and the ongoing injustices suffered by those who live in nearby Xico. Bookended by the earliest work in the exhibition, *NoWhere* (1991), in which overpainted photographs from Amazonas address European delusions of city planning in 'empty' territory, *The Long Road to Xico* (1991–2014) illuminates the ecological assault and epistemological violence ushered in by colonialism. Given the city's past as the main port for Spanish trade with the New World, the context of Seville granted particular acuity to the ethical armature of Alves's decolonizing art. Moreover, CAAC's home is the former Monasterio de Santa Maria de las Cuevas, from where Cristóbal Colón (Christopher Columbus) planned his second voyage of 1493 and where his remains were once interred.

Several works were sited in the monastery's grounds. Two enlarged bronze jackfruit seeds (*"When they come, flee"*, said my grandmother to my mother and *"When*

they come, flee", said my mother to me, 2014) were placed at the foot of a mighty ombú tree near the entrance – a specimen apparently brought from South America by Colón's son, Hernando. Native to Southeast Asia, jackfruit was first planted in Brazil as a ready supply of food for slaves, although it's now a forest bully, outcompeting native species. Such ecological and cultural dynamics of displacement and 'misunderstandings' of non-natives in alien contexts seeded many of the perceptual clouds and squalls of concepts that gathered and precipitated throughout the exhibition.

Alves's aesthetics don't sit comfortably with the 'relational' label, yet her art has seeped frequently beyond spectatorship into collaboration, advocacy and political activism. Wary that incautious claims to activism make art seem toothless, curator Pedro de Llano included three vitrines of documents for the avoidance of any doubt. (Moreover, co-written wall texts on each work were both rigorous and generous.) This supplementary material reflected Alves's formidable formative work, including speaking at the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1979 as a member of the International Indian Treaty Council, representing Luiz Inácio da Silva's Workers' Party in the US, and forging indigenous peoples' rights onto the agenda of the São Paulo Green Party for the first time in 1988.

Presented as six boards of annotated maps and photographs, *Seeds of Change* (1999–ongoing) is an astonishing investigation into the unintentionally exotic botany of port cities, including Bristol and Liverpool, and how their colonial trading and slaving history can be read through dockside flora. Ships coming from the Americas used earth for ballast – inevitably containing seeds – which was often dumped on arrival. *'Unrejected Wild Flora'* (2014) comprises a series of brightly coloured paintings made

using plants as rudimentary brushes – plants which had happily sprouted outside the artist's home until someone tore them up, deciding they were unwelcome. The concept of a weed only exists if you are invested in defending a monoculture, Alves cautions. By contrast, her art solicits biotic diversity and linguistic plurality. Twenty paintings of different fruit from an Amazonas market (*This Is Not an Apricot*, 2009) disclose an uncomfortable truth: every fruit is now referred to as an apricot because the indigenous names no longer exist. Like the scores of extinct native Brazilian languages, Alves stresses how they were not 'lost' but systematically persecuted out of existence.

Two of the eight videos in the exhibition emphasized the cultural specificity and richness of non-verbal gestures. *Oculistics. An Investigation of Cross-Cultural Eye Contact* (2008) scrutinizes eye contact (a sign of honesty for Europeans yet of aggression to many other cultures) while *Tchôm Kroi Kytôm Pandô Grêt (Male Display Among European Populations)* (2008) satirizes colonial anthropology: an indigenous Brazilian woman asks a white European man to account for some members of his exotic tribe's superstitious habit of touching their cojones. This seriously ironic method of reversal was one of the exhibition's most effective strategies. *Fair Trade Head* (2007) comprises a portrait photograph of a tattooed Frenchwoman named Emilie, the first person to sign up to a scheme Alves devised in response to the French Ministry of Culture's 2007 veto of a Rouen museum's wish to repatriate a mummified Māori head. Upon their deaths, participants will have their heads dispatched to New Zealand and only returned to their descendants when the Ministry has changed its policy.

MAX ANDREWS



Maria Thereza Alves

El Cultural

March 27, 2015 - Page 35

By Rocío de la Villa

En los últimos años, el trabajo de Maria Thereza Alves (São Paulo, 1961) se ha mostrado en los principales centros de arte y en las bienales más destacadas, como en la última Documenta 13, donde vimos la compleja instalación *El largo camino a Xico*. El Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo presenta ahora su primera individual en España, con casi una veintena de piezas a modo de selecta retrospectiva de media carrera, remontándose a algunos de sus trabajos de mediados de los años 90. Fue entonces cuando Alves, formada en Nueva York (a raíz del exilio familiar motivado por la dictadura en Brasil), engarza directamente con la crítica poscolonial que en ese momento se afianza en la teoría de la cultura. Después, la artista fue una de las fundadoras del Partido Verde en su país, y extendió su cuestionamiento a otras etnias y países, convirtiéndose en una analista mordaz de las sociedades occidentales. La conciencia ecologista y la atención al lenguaje como medio de transmisión cultural se entrelazan en una investigación con la que esta artista debate “qué sabemos y quién pensamos que somos”, para intentar responder “dónde estamos y quiénes somos en este momento”.

Que la sombra de la herencia colonial es alargada se ve desde el inicio de la muestra con la instalación *Ningún lugar* (1991), donde la artista superpone los proyectos de célebres arquitectos modernistas al paisaje de la Amazonía, recordando que ya desde el siglo XVI con la Utopía de Tomás Moro en Europa comenzó a considerarse



Dónde estamos y quiénes somos

MARIA THEREZA ALVES: EL LARGO CAMINO A XICO (1991-2014)
CAAC. Avda. Américo Vespucio, 2. SEVILLA. Hasta el 31 de mayo.



EL RETORNO DE UN LAGO, 2012. ARRIBA, VISTAS DE LA INSTALACIÓN
THE RETURN OF A LAKE QUE IDEÓ PARA DOCUMENTA (13) EN 2012

América como el destino de una sociedad ideal, a la que “se invitaría a participar a los pueblos indígenas y si no quisieran, entonces se les mataría”.

De manera cíclica, la artista cuestiona los presupuestos de los medios en la tradición artística en Occidente, por ejemplo, la exposición de indígenas disecados en nuestros museos de etnología (frente a lo que propo-

ne un intercambio, con donación de cabezas), o bien, evidenciando la mirada colonialista de los pintores franceses en el siglo XIX, como hace en el vídeo *Más allá de la pintura*, donde se asume también una crítica desde la perspectiva de género que está presente en otros vídeos más directos, a menudo irónicos y en ocasiones paródicos.

Es muy interesante *Oculési-*

ca: Una investigación del contacto visual intercultural, donde se contraponen las miradas de dos hombres, uno de aspecto caucásico y otro más moreno, para explicar los roles de dominación y sumisión, que tópicamente se habrían plasmado en el binomio masculino/femenino. Y francamente divertida es la entrevista, a modo de encuesta, de una investigación antropológica a un hombre occidental sobre por qué y en qué ocasiones se toca la entrepierna, realizada por Shirley Krenak, habitual protagonista en los trabajos de Alves y cuyo apellido denota una etnia indígena de Brasil en peligro de extinción para la que la artista tradujo un diccionario de finales del siglo XIX krenak-alemán a krenak-portugués convencida de que la aculturación es irreversible con la pérdida del idioma propio.

En esta línea, Alves ha subrayado la incapacidad de los conquistadores europeos para determinar la variedad de frutos autóctonos (*Esto no es un albaricoque*, 2009), así como nuestra ignorancia actual, al desconocer que la mayoría de frutas y verduras hoy corrientes en Europa proceden de otros continentes (*¿De qué color es una rosa alemana?*, 2005). Es un proyecto que también ha desarrollado de manera colaborativa con vecinos dispuestos a reconocer y cultivar plantas traídas en las migraciones de esclavos a los puertos europeos. En estos viajes de ida y vuelta, se enmarca la instalación sobre el lago Xalco, en la localidad de Xico, a cuarenta kilómetros de México. Sobre su historia, protagonizada por Iñigo Noriega Laso y la comunidad actual, intenta recuperar todo lo que arrasó la avaricia del indiano español. **ROCÍO DE LA VILLA**

La conciencia ecologista y el lenguaje como medio de transmisión cultural se entrelazan en una investigación con la que Maria Thereza Alves debate “quién pensamos que somos”

ARTFORUM

Maria Thereza Alves
Artforum
January, 2015 - Online
By Miguel Amado

Seville

Maria Thereza Alves

CENTRO ANDALUZ DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO (CAAC)

Monasterio de la Cartuja de Santa María de Las Cuevas, Avenida Américo Vesputio, 2

This survey of Brazilian artist Maria Thereza Alves's practice intelligently includes her seminal work *Seeds of Change: A Floating Ballast Seed Garden*, 1999—. Here, panels with pictures, maps, and texts dedicated to European port cities document her scrutiny of the connection between trade, the scattering of ships' ballast flora, and landscape. Alves's interest in ecology is her trademark, but this exhibition addresses her range through a selection of works focused on colonial themes, including the subaltern condition of native peoples across history. Take for example *NoWhere*, 1991, which combines scenic views of the Amazon rainforest via photographs, partially obscured by black painted doodles, with geometric patterns of wooden battens diagonally positioned on the wall. This installation smartly reflects on utopia, modern architecture, and the clash between American indigenous culture and European ideas.

The exhibition's peak is *El retorno de un lago* (The Return of a Lake), 2012, an installation that brilliantly encapsulates Alves's key concerns. It consists of three elements: models of the Xico Valley region in Mexico; photographic portraits of its various inhabitants who are affiliated with a communitarian museum cofounded by Genaro Amaro Altamirano; and three-dimensional renditions of the Spanish empresario Íñigo Noriega Laso and his home village's mansion. All together, they narrate the 1908 artificial desiccation of the Chalco Lake as orchestrated by Laso, an endeavor that caused severe environmental damage impacting the local population's lives. Despite Altamirano's efforts to call attention to the consequences of Laso's project, he is still celebrated in Spain for it. This piece poignantly questions the amnesiac state of the European consciousness in regard to the effects of its imperialist enterprise.



Maria Thereza Alves, *The Return of a Lake*, 2012, installation, dimensions variable.

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Maria Thereza Alves
El País, June 2010, Page 6
By Sergio C. Fanjul

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EL PAÍS, miércoles 9 de junio de 2010

MADRID

Arte contra el sistema

Veinte obras critican la realidad económica ironizando sobre sus símbolos

SERGIO C. FANJUL
Madrid

Hay una tonelada de sal gorda repartida en paquetes de tres kilos (es decir, 333 saquitos) apilados en una montaña. Dentro de uno—solo uno—de los saquitos que forman esta instalación artística se encuentra un diamante valorado en al menos 1.000 dólares. El visitante tiene la opción de comprar un saco por tres euros, pero, claro, no sabemos dónde se encuentra el diamante y, además, en caso de que abriésemos nuestro paquete de sal para buscarlo, el paquete perdería todo valor como obra de arte: la artista dejaría de considerarla obra de su autoría. Esta paradoja, que plantea Fritzia Irizar en su obra *Sin título (fe de azar)* es solo una de las que deja al descubierto la exposición *Fetiches críticos. Residuos de la economía general*, que se puede visitar en el Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo de la Comunidad de Madrid, en Méstoles.

De eso se trata: de criticar al sistema económico dominante mediante la fina ironía, la reducción al absurdo, la transgresión o el uso de imágenes y objetos propios del sistema en contra del propio sistema, tergiversando, en algo que, a veces, recuerda a *détournement* de los situacionistas franceses. "No apelamos a ninguna comunidad racional, no creemos que se obtenga ventaja de mostrar el dolor que produce el sistema, eso se ha demostrado inoperativo", dice uno de los comisarios, Cuauhtémoc Medina. "Así que mostramos la realidad del sistema deformada para mostrar que la realidad del sistema es la propia deformidad".

El fetiche del título supone, a juicio de los comisarios, una descripción de las relaciones coloniales entre Occidente y África. Así, por ejemplo, uno de los objetos de *Obras de la Chapman Family Collection*, de Jake & Dinos Chapman, es un típico fetiche africano, parecido a un trofeo primitivo o a una máscara iniciática, que muestra el logo de los restaurantes de comida rápida McDonald's, tallado en madera, en una especie de juego de espejos etnográfico. La



Comercio justo de cabezas, de Maria Thereza Alves.



Museo de la moneda roja de Fran Blich. A la derecha, Mobiliario para museos de Mart Anson.

exposición provoca en el visitante desde la media sonrisa a la cosquilla en la conciencia crítica, pasando por la indignación ante los absurdos del sistema económico.

El dinero, cómo no, es utilizado de esta manera en algunas de las más de 20 obras expuestas: por ejemplo en *Hacer Dinero*, un vídeo que muestra cómo el artista Federico Zakerfeld imprimió

billetes bifacéticos falsos en una de cuyas caras se veía un valor de 100 dólares y en la opuesta el de cero pesos argentinos; billetes que posteriormente repartió de diferentes maneras por las calles



de Buenos Aires. Una reflexión sobre el valor que se le otorga al objeto-dinero inspirada en los tiempos del llamado corralito argentino. En Museo de la moneda roja, Fran Blich hace un muestra-

rio de monedas y billetes de diferentes regímenes o movimientos revolucionarios: se pueden ver lúpsos soviéticos, monedas zapatistas, pesetas de la Segunda República Española o cupones de la Revolución Cultural China, como en una historia económica paralela.

También los documentos oficiales son tergiversados, como el testamento real del artista Miguel Calderón, en el que deja como heredero de todas sus posesiones al multimillonario mexicano Carlos Slim, el hombre más rico del mundo según la revista *Forbes*. Los documentos fiscales y administrativos de empresas ficticias son convertidos en cuadros hiperrealistas en *Pinuras Jiménez*, modelo 036, de Martí Anson.

El Espectro Rojo es el nombre bajo el que se esconden los tres subversivos cerebros artífices de esta exposición: los comisarios Mariana Botey, Helena Chávez Mac Gregor y Cuauhtémoc Medi-

Un supuesto fetiche africano lleva tallado en la madera el logo de McDonald's

Los documentos fiscales se convierten en cuadros hiperrealistas

na, establecidos en México DF. El nombre está tomado del *Dieciocho Brumario* de Karl Marx (1852), según explica Medina: "Hoy en día la transformación radical del sistema se ve como un espantajo, tal y como explicaba Marx en el libro. Esto es algo que creemos que hay que redefinir, una postura que hay que tener en cuenta y recuperar, crear una nueva cultura radical". La exposición se complementa con un periódico, *El Espectro Rojo*. El fin de todo esto: "Hacer confluir la producción poética, la teoría y la reflexión política", en palabras del comisario Medina. Lo consiguen.

Fetiches Críticos. Residuos de la economía general. Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Avenida de la Constitución, 23-25 Méstoles. Gratuito. Hasta el 29 de agosto. Más información en: Tfno: 912 760 221/13 o <http://ca2m.org/es/press/fetiches-criticos>