

The Ministry of Citizenship, the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, and Itaú present the 34th Bienal de São Paulo

## First solo show of the 34th Bienal reflects on extractivism and colonization in Latin America

*The 34th Bienal presents an exhibition by Ximena Garrido-Lecca, whose work reflects on the history of Peru*

*The programming for February 8 includes a new musical performance by South African Neo Muyanga, with a 40-voice choir that includes participation from the audience and collaborations with the São Paulo theatrical collective Legítima Defesa and artist Bianca Turner*

The **34th Bienal de São Paulo – Faz escuro mas eu canto** [Though it's dark, still I sing] opens on Saturday, February 8 at 9 a.m., with the first of a series of three solo shows that introduce some of the themes featured in the group exhibition, which opens in September 2020. The monographic show by **Ximena Garrido-Lecca** (b. 1980, Lima, Peru) presents nine artworks, including installations, photographs and videos, which will be on display on the third floor of the Bienal Pavilion until March 15. This is the artist's first solo show in Brazil, who works between Lima and Mexico City researching the history of Peru and the impacts of colonial processes as well as their contemporary consequences.

The opening of the exhibition will be followed by the presentation at 11 a.m. by South African artist **Neo Muyanga** (b. 1974, Soweto) of a new musical performance, **A Maze in Grace**, which will move through different floors of the pavilion and around the structure's iconic building-high empty space.

### **Ximena Garrido-Lecca**

The work by Garrido-Lecca is often based on the study of techniques and materials used in handicraft, art and architecture throughout Peruvian history. The installations presented at the 34th Bienal use ancestral ceramic techniques and weaving as well as materials such as copper, oil barrels, oil, wood, wire, nails and plants. One of her most emblematic works, *Insurgencias botánicas: Phaseolus Lunatus* [Botanical Insurgencies: *Phaseolus Lunatus*], 2017, is an installation with a hydroponic structure in which are planted seedlings of the bean species

*Phaseolus lunatus*. As the plants grow throughout the year, the public have the opportunity to accompany different moments of the installation's transformation, in a movement that symbolizes the process of the Bienal itself, which is being inaugurated now but will be enlarged, transformed and problematized until December. For Garrido-Lecca, the gesture of cultivating the beans becomes a symbolic reactivation of a supposed system of communication of the Moche culture, a pre-Incan Peruvian civilization that developed complex irrigation systems and which, according to some theories, used the spots present on these beans as signs in an ideogrammatic writing system.

Another notable work is the installation *Proyecto país* [Project Country], which is part of the series *Paredes de progreso* [Walls of Progress], produced by the artist between 2008 and 2012, based on research into advertising painted on adobe walls in Peru's Vale Sagrado region. Built according to a traditional construction technique common throughout the country's rural territory, these walls are frequently used to display political slogans and logotypes that gradually fade until disappearing completely, or the wall itself crumbles, since adobe, when exposed to the weather, breaks down bit by bit in the landscape. *Proyecto país* was the name of a small political party that participated in the 2006 Peruvian elections, but which wound up withdrawing from the running and disappearing due to a lack of followers.

To create *Divergent Lots*, Ximena Garrido-Lecca photographed Pucusana, a coastal district in the province of Lima, for three years (2010–2013). The artist documented a series of structures composed originally of bamboo panels and wooden posts, and which, over the years, begin to incorporate materials such as bricks and concrete. These temporary structures are built with the aim of laying claim to the land in these areas, which have received great migratory inflows since the 1950s, as populations leave the Andean agricultural regions to seek better conditions for life and work in areas of industrial and urban development. The migrant population often erects squatter settlements and seeks forms of survival linked to informal sectors of the economy. The video *Líneas de divergencia* [Divergent Lines] documents a recent moment in the occupations around Pucusana; the lines marked with chalk in the desert divide already registered parcels of land, demarcating new lots.

Carla Zaccagnini, guest curator of the 34th Bienal, explains: "We begin the 34th Bienal de São Paulo with this series of works by Ximena Garrido-Lecca, artworks that can help us see the relationships that exist between the invention of electricity, the mining of copper, the demarcation of the land, the depredation of the soil and the scattering of peoples. Because we know that art can give us tools to deal with difficult moments, when other languages are fruitless or absent."

The exhibition is held in partnership with **CCA Wattis** (San Francisco, USA), which, in 2021, will hold a solo show by the artist as part of the 34th Bienal de São Paulo's international collaborations.

### **Neo Muyanga – *A Maze in Grace***

On February 8, at 11 a.m., a new performance entitled ***A Maze in Grace*** will be staged by composer, sound artist and librettist Neo Muyanga. On this occasion, a 40-voice choir will occupy the three floors of the Bienal Pavilion, around the structure's iconic building-tall empty space, singing a new composition for the well-known melody *Amazing Grace*, often sung as a hymn at public mourning rituals in different parts of Africa, while also bearing religious-political connotation for the Afro-American community in the USA. Muyanga's work proposes a deconstruction under a new perspective of this song, which was composed in 1772 by John Newton, a white British slave trader who converted to become an abolitionist Anglican pastor at the end of the 18th century after a series of near-death experiences. The São Paulo theatrical collective **Legítima Defesa**, which stages poetic-political actions of reflection on and representation of blackness, is collaborating with the performance, as is also artist **Bianca Turner** (b. 1984, São Paulo, Brazil), who produced the video-mapping used in the work.

Besides its staging on February 8, kicking off the programming of the 34th Bienal de São Paulo, the new work by Muyanga will unfold in two other moments: in July, the performance opens the **11th Liverpool Biennial**, a partner institution in the realization of this work; and the audiovisual installation will form part of the 34th Bienal's group show, starting in September. As a work composed on the basis of Muyanga's country, South Africa, and now being staged in Brazil and England, this performance re-links the vertices of the so-called Atlantic Triangle.

According to Paulo Miyada, the exhibition's adjunct curator, "It is hard to imagine a more fitting way to open the programming of a Bienal entitled 'Faz escuro mas eu canto,' since Neo Muyanga reminds us how much a song of hope is marked by violence and cruelty and, then, re-enchants its sound with musical and discursive elements from the history of the Brazilian and African black men and women – precisely those who lead and led the fight for racial emancipation that lends meaning to this song."

### **Poetics of rehearsal**

One of the guiding aspects of the curatorial work of the 34th Bienal is the notion of "rehearsal," emphasizing the project's processual approach, as a space where the things are presented without an aim of being definitive, enlarging the importance of the re-signification that arises

from the relationships created over time. It is in this sense that the exhibition design of the solo show by Garrido-Lecca stands as a prelude to the architectural design of this edition of the Bienal, projected by Andrade Morettin Arquitetos. According to Jacopo Crivelli Visconti, the 34th Bienal's chief curator, "The architecture that holds the first exhibition is likewise constituted as an exercise, the inaugural gesture of a layered construction that will gain complexity over the course of the year. The works by Ximena Garrido-Lecca and Neo Muyanga that are presented now will be charged with other meanings by establishing relationships with the works of other artists. In an analogous way, the space that the architecture already delimits, but which the first movement of the exhibition does not occupy, is not an empty space: it is a space that holds potential.

### **34th Bienal de São Paulo**

Marked by mutual encounters and leverage between the curatorial project and the Bienal's institutional activity, the **34th Bienal de São Paulo** emphasizes the multiplicity of possible readings of an artwork and an exhibition based on the concept of "relation," approached by thinkers such as Edouard Glissant and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, and adopts an innovative structure of functioning, which involves the holding of shows and actions presented in the Bienal Pavilion starting in February 2020, coupled with a concerted network of related events held in partnership with the Bienal at 26 institutions in the city of São Paulo. When the pavilion is taken over entirely by the show, starting in September 2020, these institutions will hold, in their own spaces, exhibitions by artists who are also participating in the Bienal, emphasizing how the understanding of an artwork is always influenced by the "relationships" that are created with the works around it and with the context where it is shown. Curated by Jacopo Crivelli Visconti together with a curatorial team consisting of Paulo Miyada (adjunct curator), Carla Zaccagnini, Francesco Stocchi and Ruth Estévez (guest curators), the 34th Bienal de São Paulo is titled "Faz escuro mas eu canto" [Though it's dark, still I sing] after a line from a poem by Brazilian poet Thiago de Mello. For the publications, Elvira Dyangani Ose is acting as guest editor, and her participation is a collaboration with The Showroom, London.

According to José Olympio da Veiga Pereira, president of the Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, "The 34th Bienal is taking place as the outcome of a fortunate encounter. On the one hand, there is an institution that believes in the importance of dialogue and the power of its rich web of partners. On the other, there is a curatorial project that leverages the institution's objectives and strong points to propose this edition's brand-new format. In the expanded times and spaces of the shows the aim is to multiply the possibilities of contact and relationship with art, because the Fundação's power and motivation reside in its capacity for transformation and openness to the other."

The three solo shows feature works by mid-career artists from different backgrounds. All have different research focuses but nevertheless share in common the quality of relevant, complex and instigating productions: in addition to the show by Ximena Garrido-Lecca in February, in April there will be a solo show by Brazilian artist Clara Ianni (b. 1987, São Paulo, SP), and, in June, an exhibition by US photographer Deana Lawson (b. 1979, Rochester, NY). The opening of the show in April will take place simultaneously with the presentation of a performance authored by Argentine artist León Ferrari (1920–2013, Buenos Aires). A third performance will take place at the opening of Lawson's exhibition in July: a never-before-staged work titled *A Ronda da Morte* [Death Patrol], authored in 1979 by Hélio Oiticica (1937–1980, Rio de Janeiro).

### **Faz Escuro Mas Eu Canto**

Considered more as a statement than a theme, the title of the **34th Bienal de São Paulo**, *Faz escuro mas eu canto*, is a line from a poem by Thiago de Mello, published in the book by the same name in 1965. In his work, the Amazonian poet speaks clearly about the problems and hopes of millions of men and women around the world: "Hope is universal, the social inequalities are universal as well [...]. We are at a moment at which the apocalypse is gaining on utopia. For some time now I have made the choice: between apocalypse and utopia, I'm staying with utopia," the writer stated. Jacopo Crivelli Visconti adds: "By its title, the 34th Bienal recognizes the state of anguish of the contemporary world while underscoring the possibility of the existence of art as a gesture of resilience, hope and communication."

### **34th Bienal de São Paulo – *Faz escuro mas eu canto***

Bienal Pavilion, Ibirapuera Park  
Free admission

#### **February 8, 2020**

opening of the solo show – Ximena Garrido-Lecca: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

performance – Neo Muyanga with Legítima Defesa + Bianca Turner: 11 a.m. (duration: 60 min)

#### **Ximena Garrido-Lecca – visitation**

February 8 – March 15, 2020

Wednesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

#### **Future exhibitions**

**Clara Ianni**

*solo show*

April 25 through June 7, 2020

**León Ferrari**

*performance*

April 25, 2020

**Deana Lawson**

*solo show*

July 25 – August 23, 2020

**Hélio Oiticica**

*performance*

July 25

***Faz escuro mas eu canto***

*group show*

September 5 – December 6, 2020

**curatorial team**

Chief curator: Jacopo Crivelli Visconti

Adjunct curator: Paulo Miyada

Guest curators: Carla Zaccagnini, Francesco Stocchi and Ruth Estévez

Guest editor: Elvira Dyangani Ose in collaboration with The Showroom, London

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# Faz escuro *mas* *eu* *canto*

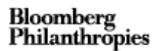
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