

The Museum of Modern Art

AUDIO TOUR

Chosen Memories: Contemporary Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Gift and Beyond

April 30–September 9, 2023

Floor 3, The Robert B. Menschel Galleries

Speaker List

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Elena Damiani, Artist

Michael Stevenson, Artist

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376 Leandro Katz. The Castle [Chichén Itzá]. 1985

Artista, Leandro Katz: My name is Leandro Katz. I am a poet and a visual artist.

In the 1840s, John L. Stephens wrote two books, which were illustrated by the works of Frederick Catherwood, an architect and a great illustrator. Stephens proposed the idea of looking for Mayan ruins in Yucatán and Central America and they both uncovered over 70 monuments.

In 1984, I began The Catherwood Project. The idea was to reconstruct those explorations, and I would hold a book with engraving by Catherwood in front of the location, trying to occupy the same point of view that Catherwood had used.

When we look at one of the works in The Catherwood Project, we are looking at different periods of time. I took the photograph in the 1980s. If we look at the engraving that Catherwood made in the 1840s, there is another layer of time. And then, if we look at the Mayan monuments, we are looking at 1500 years ago. And also we have the time when the spectator looks at the work.

My work is really about generating reflection. I want to understand the context of the period, the social conditions of the period, and the colonialist approach in the engravings.

377 Elena Damiani. Finding Field No. 1. 2012

Artist, Elena Damiani: My name is Elena Damiani and I'm a visual artist that lives and works in Peru.

Fading Field No. 1, as the title suggests, portrays a field or a landscape that starts vanishing, almost like if it was a memory or a recollection of a landscape. It's printed on a soft, translucent fabric—silk chiffon—and this translucency changes according to light and the position of the viewer.

The image that is printed on the fabric is made of two images. The one in the foreground is a black and white image of a mountain from 1900s. And it's framed by an image that shows the half dome rock from Yosemite in California.

I was very interested in working with found material that already have an embedded story in it. So these physical layers that can be found in the collage also become different layers of meaning.

Landscape representation has been associated with the exploration of new territories, with belonging and not belonging, with ownership. Images have the capacity to open up and evoke millions of associations in collective memory. So by looking at the past, we can understand the present.

How do we perceive this image? And how does it become more visible from a certain point of view, but becomes a lost memory from another point of view?

379 Regina José Galindo. Looting. 2010

Artist, Regina José Galindo (read by voice actor): My name is Regina José Galindo, and I am an artist and poet from Guatemala. What you're seeing here are eight Guatemalan gold fillings that were extracted from my mouth in Germany as part of a 2010 work called *Saqueo* or *Looting*.

The performance takes my mouth as a metaphor for the Guatemalan land—a perfect landscape full of riches. First, a dentist in Guatemala drilled into eight molars and placed eight fillings made from the highest purity of Guatemalan gold. One filling per molar, one molar per month.

Eight months later, when I had already installed the eight fillings in my teeth, I traveled to Berlin where the second part of the performance took place. There, a German doctor slowly removed the eight gold fillings from my mouth and they were left on display as works of art in Germany while I returned to my country empty-mouthed.

Looting was documented with photographs and video, but it is the eight gold fillings that I have chosen as the final document of the work. It seems to me that the radiance of those little stones contain all the pain and injustice that result from exploitation.

Today, the gold of my molars is in New York, as is the case with great treasures from the Global South that are hoarded and displayed in the first world.

Guatemala is a country that has been historically exploited—not only for gold, but for other minerals, for its rich lands, and for its waters. Today, the looting does not stop. The looting that began with colonial conquest more than 500 years ago continues.

378 Michael Stevenson. *The Fountain of Prosperity (Answers to Some Questions About Bananas)*. 2012

Artist, Michael Stevenson: I heard whispers that there was a physical model of the national economy. And I thought, well, what could that possibly be? The economy is not really physical. So that's when I found this thing.

It is based on a real existing object built by, probably New Zealand's most famous economist, Bill Phillips. He got some kind of scholarship to study at London's School of Economics and wanted to visualize some of this economic theory. He built this prototype and used a liquid medium as a measure of money flowing through in a singular national economy. It became quite famous and he built them to order and sold them.

This particular version of the machine was sent to the Central Bank of Guatemala, during the time of the Arbenz administration. And Arbenz was really trying to imagine what a fully functioning independent Guatemalan economy might look like. So Arbenz might need an object like that to imagine it. But that object could do nothing for him. It couldn't fix anything. It couldn't tell him anything. It couldn't predict anything. And it arrived broken.

After spending some time in Guatemala and visiting both the central Bank and then this public university where the machine was given to, I thought about this idea to somehow refabricate one of these objects and, it's an object that attempts to somehow describe or even be this thing which is completely without form. So this thing is not the economy. it's simply a flow of water.

382 Armando Andrade Tudela. *Camión*. 2003

Artist, Armando Andrade Tudela: My name is Armando Andrade Tudela. I'm a Peruvian artist that lives in Lyon, France.

You are looking at *Camión*, which is a work that I made in 2003. The work is a collection of different slides in which you basically see different designs that have been painted on trucks. The designs are interesting because they seem to be in a conversation with geometrical abstraction. But they're also transformations of logo types and different icons that we see in the street. You see these trucks in landscapes—that is the coastline of Peru.

As I was working outside Peru, I started understanding that there were holes in the official modernist narrative in Peru. One of them was that the impulse to tell your stories is stronger than to not tell your story.

Narrator: Though abstraction represents an important chapter in the history of art, it is most closely associated with the United States and Europe. In his work, Tudela looks for expressions of abstract art in the everyday surroundings of Latin America.

Armando Andrade Tudela: What I found with *Camión* is that actually there were these forms of geometrical abstraction, but they were not visible in the same places. So you will see something that will look like Minimalism, but you will see it on a truck and not in a gallery.

I think the first version that I did of this piece was through digital projection, and there was something about the temporality of the image that didn't work. There was a sound that I think needed to be injected into the film, the idea that there is a rhythm to these images. That's the reason why I took the trouble to transform the digital files into 35 mm, to be able to introduce it into a historical conversation.

383 Armando Andrade Tudela. *Deformed Pottery*. 2003

Artist, Armando Andrade Tudela: My name is Armando Andrade Tudela. *Huaco Deforme* is a 16 mm film, in which I documented pottery.

The pottery is Chancay, which is a minor culture that developed in the north of Lima. And Chancay is one of the only, if not the only culture, that decide to preserve deformed or useless pottery. It's one of the only cultures that's almost monochrome and they were very minimalist in the way of using iconography. Exactly because of that, Chancay has this sort of relation to modernism that has appealed a lot to artists through history.

The idea would be to understand this as an object that because it has become useless, it actually becomes a work of art. It's this lack of utility that was really important. What I wanted was to show the deformation, not to show the entire object. It's not a document. It's not archeological research. It's not making reference to anything other than the deformity of this turning object.

The turning around produced a sort of optic effect in which lights and shadow created this almost dreamlike situation. But this interplay of lights and shadow could only happen because the *huaco*, the ceramic, was deformed.

Using a Chancay ceramic was a very strong and very specific choice. *Huaco Deforme* is a response to how I position myself in relation to my legacy, my identity as a contemporary artist, and in relation what Peruvian pre-Columbian heritage is.

386 Laura Anderson Barbata and Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe. *Shapono*. 1996

Artist, Laura Anderson Barbata: When I first was in the Amazon of Venezuela, I was able to visit the school, and in the school I noticed that there were many books that the government sends. But the information contained is often obsolete and not useful in the community. And because they are single-use books, they create a new problem for the Yanomami community, which is how to dispose of them or discard them.

I proposed a project in which we could recycle the paper—give it a new use. We can make high quality natural fiber handmade paper so that they can together write their story, their history, whatever they wish that they would like to preserve in the written form. I facilitated workshops on how to make paper and drawing workshops. The whole community participated in the drawing and elaboration of the book.

Shapono means communal dwelling. This is the story of the first *shapono* as they learned from the brothers Omawe and Yoawe. It was important for us to have this story, which is traditionally told in an oral manner, to be retold collaboratively and in a communal setting.

Shapono won the Best Book of the Year award by the Centro Nacional de Libro in Venezuela. This book helped the Yanomami's voice and perspective to be seen and heard from the outside.

380 Laura Anderson Barbata. *Intercambios, Amazonas Venezuela. 1996–98*

Artist, Laura Anderson Barbata: My name is Laura Anderson Barbata. I am a Mexican transdisciplinary artist.

I first arrived in the Amazon of Venezuela in the '90s and I met the Yanomami people and Ye'kuana community as well. The Ye'kuana community, in this case, the familia Ortiz, was teaching the Yanomami community how to make canoes. And the whole process was something I wanted to learn.

So I asked if they would accept me as a student. They looked at my sculptures, my drawings, and they discussed with the elders and the youth of the community. And they responded with a question that changed my life. They asked me, "If we teach you, what can you teach us in exchange?" So I offered to lead workshops on how to make paper and books.

From my first time in the Amazon, I felt that photography was such a important tool because the environment offered me so much. But I began to photograph only after a few years of building a relationship of reciprocity and of trust between all of us.

Every single photograph that I have taken, the community has a duplicate. And in this image you see here is one of the first canoes that I am clumsily learning how to make. When Enrique Ortiz, who is one of my teachers, lifted the canoe so I could see it in a vertical position, I felt that he was holding a mirror to my inner self.

Now you can see why this series is titled *Intercambios* or *Exchanges* because that is the energy and the dynamic that is taking place.

384 Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis. *Las Dos Fridas (The Two Fridas). 1989*

Artist, Francisco Casas Silva (read by voice actor): Hi, I'm Francisco Casas. I am an audiovisual artist.

Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis is a collective. We found that art is a way to rebel against the dictatorial systems that had been imposed on us. And at that time—I'm talking about the years 1986, '87, '88—with the discrimination for being homosexual, you would go out to

the corner and people would yell horrible things, the bullying at school. But imagine that apart from this, AIDS arrives in Chile. Suddenly, it was no longer just being homosexual, but also being homosexual with AIDS—whether you had it or not.

So Pedro Lemebel and I decided to make this work in which we are bleeding to death because blood is always political.

Las Dos Fridas is a becoming of Frida Kahlo. It is not a reinterpretation. A reinterpretation is to copy something, reappropriate it, change it. I don't think we change anything here. What we do is connect with this brutal work by the artist Frida in which she depicts herself with an intravenous tube that joins her with a doppelganger. These tubes are cut, and blood runs down her skirt.

At first we tried to do it as a performance, the two of us connected by an IV tube—and all this was in connection with AIDS and contagion. I called my friend, the photographer Pedro Marinello, and I told him to take a picture of us like this.

Pedro Lemebel looks forward and I look a little to the side. There is a tension. But also in this photo, if you look at it and compare it with the original painting, Frida Kahlo has in her hand a portrait of Diego Rivera. What Pedro has in his hand is a condom. It's much more brutal, the multiplicity of readings that this causes within that time period.

But it's a feeling that Frida had, which we felt too. And what's more, I still feel it.

385 Paulo Nazareth. *Antropologia do negro II*. 2014

Artist, Paulo Nazareth (read by voice actor): I am Nazareth. Paulo Nazareth.

Antropologia do Negro is part of the right to having a funeral. This piece took place inside the Bahia State Police Museum. The museum had all these skulls of people who had been racialized—people of African descent, indigenous people, natives to South America and Brazil.

And the project was to perform a funeral for these people who didn't have one. Because my mother's mother suffered something similar. For questioning and not agreeing with what was happening around her, she was marked as crazy, insane, and sent to the psychiatric hospital, which was like a prison. People died there and their bodies were sold and packed inside this Police Museum.

So when my grandmother disappears, there's no telling what happened. She could be there. She could be one of these bodies inside this museum.

So when I am in there, it's like I'm connecting with my grandmother, and all the people that came before her. I think we owe debts to many. Those who come before us, who prepare this world. I do a ritual where I cover my head with these skulls and bones, and carry these many souls on my head.