

"Fuera de lugar"

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"Fuera de lugar" (Out of Place) is an exhibition about belonging, places of memory, and the representation of particular moments and places crossed by History. Colloquially, the expression "Fuera de lugar" is used to indicate an inappropriate tone or attitude.

The artists Daniel Otero Torres, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Leah Gordon, Patricia Esquivias, and Sammy Baloji, think about space as a significant point of contact between social processes and the transformations arising from the impossibility of pinpointing History materially and its complex counterpoint, the monument.

The artists present in this exhibition come from very diverse origins, and some are themselves, migrants. Consequently, they are very much aware of what it means to engage poetically, socially, and even politically with societies that are not the ones who birthed them. The title also refers to the autobiography of Edward Saïd (*Out of Place*, 1999). This exhibition gathers several works that deal with the notion of the local, belonging, historical site, tradition, and even the Carta Foresta.

Their reflections inspire us to situate historical moments into specific places in moments of different magnitudes: a family of metalsmiths and the dwindling value of their craft in Madrid at the turn of the XXIst century, the declaration of the enclosure act that ended the use of the commons and precipitated capitalism in 1773 England, the Bogotazo and the period known as La Violencia that followed it in the '50s in Colombia, the several re-significations of the square of Kinaxixi in Luanda throughout colonialism, liberation, change of regime and eventually decolonialism, and finally vocalizing as a way for storytelling rooted into ancestry.

The "**Slaughterhouse of Dreams**" by Sammy Baloji is a performance and video installation reflecting on how Luba history is transmitted, particularly through such mnemonic devices as scarification and art objects, and through oral and aural forms. The *kasala* is a traditional Luba recited is an ancestral way of storytelling and at the same time a way of belonging to a political and cultural group, mapping it as a geographic and spiritual space. The *kasala* is sung or recited, sometimes with instrumental accompaniment, by men or women who are specialists. This *kasala*: The Slaughterhouse of Dreams or the First Human, Bende's Error is a contemporary *kasala* about diamond diggers. Recited by its author Fiston Mwanza Mujila, a Congolese author based in Graz, Austria, he is accompanied by Patrick Dunst on the saxophone and Grilli Polheimer on the drums. On stage there is a drum and a trumpet, forged in copper and with surfaces etched in traditional Luba scarification patterns. Intertwined in the video, there are images of Congolese television news reports are intermixed with X-ray scans of ritual sculptures, images of Mbudye dancers, and images of floating minerals that underscore and overwrite all of Congolese History.

Kiluanji Kia Henda's Red-Light Square: History is a Bitch project: Kinaxixi

Largo do Kinaxixi, one of the main squares in Luanda, was built above a huge lagoon during the colonial regime. According to Bantu legend, the lake was home to a Kianda or goddess of water. Like the lagoon, this mythological being, daughter of Nzambi (God the Creator), rather like Yemoja in the Yoruba tradition and Yemanjá in the Americas, was buried to make way for colonial buildings. It is believed that the Bantu peoples, who emigrated from East Africa, were the first to conquer the region after driving the nomadic people who originally lived there towards the desert. Aiming to explore the immense symbolism of the Largo, Kiluanji Kia Henda drew on this first occupation of the space to take us on a journey through almost 400 years of History.

In 1937, the Portuguese Empire commissioned sculptor Henrique Moreira to produce the Monument to the Dead of the Great War, known as Maria da Fonte. A granite pedestal served as a base for European and indigenous soldiers, who gathered around Victory. The statue was blown up using dynamite in the early independence years in 1976/77 and a Soviet tank was placed on the pedestal. As the communist apparatus collapsed, the tank was removed in 1991 leaving an empty space.

At the end of the civil war in 2002, the space was filled with a statue of Queen Njinga Mbandi, ruler of Ndongo and Matamba (1582-1663) and an anti-colonial warrior, to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the country's independence, which was an

important moment in restoring national pride. However, in 2008 the Queen was moved to the Fortress of São Miguel, now the Museum of the Armed Forces, while the new towers of Kinaxixi Shopping Centre were built. To do so, the modernist building housing Kinaxixi Market was demolished. Sidelined by the petrodollars pouring into the country with the economic boom, the Queen remains at the fortress while the concrete towers on the Largo are still incomplete. These imposing structures may be viewed as a monument to money laundering.

The timeline extending from the pre-colonial period to the present is marked by several violent historical episodes and their interpretations, revealing a grotesque manipulation of History itself and of the Largo do Kinaxixi, a place in constant metamorphosis. These five monuments are depicted in the models, showing the far-reaching changes occurring in Angola and the remarkable flexibility with which these changes are expressed in the public space. The artist considers that it should always be possible to alter monuments as they reflect the passions and beliefs that shape the times in which we live.

Monument of the Vanquished (after Albrecht Dürer)

A Remembrance of the Enclosure Act

Joint project by Leah Gordon with Annabel Edwards as researcher and writer.

Part I | The Commoners

The Enclosure Act came into effect firstly in 1773, setting the first fences, thus ending the rights of commoners over the access to lands, its firewood, pastures for animals, and as a source for food. In 2020 and after several of such Acts still in force, Leah Gordon found small pockets of common land that still exist in Shropshire and photographed people who still had common rights there. Gordon and Annabel Edwards interviewed these people about their stories, exploring local myths and History.

The resulting photographs were taken using an analogue medium-format camera with black-and-white film. The subsequent prints are hand-tinted using traditional photographic dyes. The result are images that inculcate the landscapes with an aura of magical realism.

Daniel Otero Torres's *El Borrachero* and *La Revolución del Maíz*.

The pieces *El Borrachero* and *La Revolución del maíz* refer to historical events in Bogotá in 1984 and in México City in 1968. The first refers to a photograph taken by Sady González on the 9th of April. On this date, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, the Colombian liberal presidential candidate was murdered, sparking massive and violent riots in Bogotá called "El Bogotazo". This episode was followed by decades of violence during the period known as "La Violencia".

This mobile is composed of arms drawn by pencil on aluminium sheets, depicting the men in the photograph "Machetes". Daniel Otero Torres removed the machetes and other impromptu weapons leaving them empty while flowers float around them. The flowers are brugmansias or Angel's trumpets or "borrachero", a beautiful yet poisonous flower original from South America near the Andes.

La Revolución del maiz is inspired by an iconographic appropriation of the demonstrations and protests against the 1968 Olympics held in Mexico City, in which the Mexican Armed Forces opened fire on October 2, 1968 on unarmed civilians, killing an undetermined number, in the hundreds: "Matanza del 68".

Patricia Esquivias' Tumbar La Puerta, Colgar la Reja

The artist builds a network of knowledge around the narration of a family trade, starting from where its workshop was situated. Between History, anecdotes, and memories without any cuts and barely any edition in a deliberate attempt to show that authentic narratives are not easily framed in a pristine narrative. This work is composed of several elements as the video is itself composed of distinct fragments of information. The resulting web of facts and findings tells us about the chronicle of a family of metalsmiths from Madrid witnessing the end of their trade. As the artist delves deep into their story in an extensive investigation and interpretation of their art, it becomes evident the empathic measure of this work and how much have we delinked from this sort of specialist trade. The almost performative nature of the video does not delve into emotionalism but sets a somber tone over the aspirations, happiness, and ultimate obsolescence as craftwork.

Bruno Leitão

Curator

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