

Laura Lima

Balé Literal

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

April 24 - May 30, 2025

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present *Balé Literal*, Laura Lima's third solo exhibition with the gallery, and the fourth iteration of *Balé Literal* (Literal Ballet).

Balé Literal is an exhibition in motion — objects and artworks dance through the space in a choreographed movement of the absurd. Hanging from a pulley system, the objects (or ballerinas) glide and bounce across the gallery, powered by the energy of a cyclist on a modified bike apparatus. Under the direction of the artist, the objects, lighting, musical score, support team, and pulley system function like a living organism: evolving, adapting, and moving in perfect synchrony.

Through a series of cut-out windows, viewers can peek backstage, where the ballerinas prepare and wait for their act. The sound and lighting theatrics, controlled simultaneously by the cyclist, create particular moods and atmospheres which transform the objects into living beings. Collaboration and communication from one body to another is at the center of *Balé Literal*, and a continuous theme explored in Lima's practice.

In the spirit of DADA poets and Julio Cortázar's novel *Hopscotch*, in which the reader is advised to "hopscotch" the chapters in any order, Lima's "dancers" are choreographed according to a linguistic logic, arranged and re-arranged into three primary syntaxes: solitary promenade, dialogue, or hyperbole. The *corps de dance* float and leap into these phrases, baring social, political and art-historical references, and exposing the instability of symbols themselves. Alone, a sickle suggests the archetype of Death, dragging its shroud across the ground; in a dialogue with a hammer, it becomes a potent political emblem. Lima's Beckett-like gameplay highlights the culture that grows in and on every object — cascading grapes in a Caravaggio painting, the cult films of Ed Wood, Malevich's suprematist "Black Cross", LGBTQIAPN+ flag, the social sculpture of Joseph Beuys— images and signs that are porous, vulnerable, and alive. The *Balé Literal* allows the viewer to construct their own narratives from its riotous cadences, inviting interpretation and improvisation in a carnivalesque call-and-response.

Balé Literal (Literal Ballet) was originally shown as a one-time event in the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Subsequently, it was shown in a larger and more continuous format at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) in 2023. In 2024, the artist presented a one-night event of the Balé in the forest at Instituto Inhotim in Brazil. Each iteration is a unique and ever-changing collaboration with designers and composers to create a repertory of different compositions, which like all ballets, adapts to each new cast and staging.

Laura Lima grew up in Brazil's rural region of Governador Valadares. She lives and works in Rio de Janeiro and is the co-founder of and advisor to the artist-run gallery, A Gentil Carioca. The artist graduated from the State University of Rio de Janeiro and Visual Arts School of Parque Lage with BAs in Philosophy and Visual Art in 1994.

Upcoming, Laura Lima will have a major outdoor installation in the Boston Public Art Triennial, on view May 22 - October 31, 2025. Opening on June 5th, Lima will also present a major outdoor piece from her communal nest series at the Pantheon in Paris, France.

For three decades, Lima's practice has continually escaped easy classification. "Not installation, not performance, not cinema," Her work, which she sometimes calls 'images' are attempts to visually articulate the philosophical concerns that preoccupy her and destabilize the structures we take for granted. Her work often creates ambiguous and performative situations, in which human relationships are examined and social expectations are overturned.

Lima's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions in institutions around the world such as MACBA Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, Spain (2023); Fondazione Prada, Milan (2018); Pinacoteca (Octágono), São Paulo (2018); ICA Miami (2016); SMK, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (2015); Museum of Modern Art of Buenos Aires, Argentina (2015); Centro Cultural Banco do Nordeste, Fortaleza, Brazil (2015); Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2014); Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (2013); Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich (2013); MUAC, Mexico City (2013); Foundation Eva Klabin, Rio de Janeiro (2012); among others.

Laura Lima's works are held in numerous important collections, including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Instituto Inhotim, Brazil; Modern Art Museum of São Paulo; Bonniers Konsthall, Sweden; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Switzerland; Zabłudowicz Collection; and the Bonnefantenmuseum, The Netherlands, among others.

The music for this iteration of the *Balé Literal* was specially created by Arto Lindsay, Thiago Nassif, and Rodrigo Coelho. The full soundtrack also samples the original tracks composed by Ana Frango Elétrico produced in 2023 (featuring keys, guitar, vocals by Ana Frango Elétrico, cavaquinho, programming, and mixing by Ivo Fabiano; bass and programming by Luigi Tedesco; bass clarinet and clarinet by Maria Beraldo; rhodes and sampling by Vitor Araújo) and recorded at Studio Reurbana.

The mechanical elements were produced in collaboration with Yoann Saura (Developer of Mechanical System and Technical coordination) and Laura Lima's entire studio team:

Production Coordination: Eloy Vergara
Creative Coordination: Vinícius Pinto Rosa
Creative Assistance: Márcio Ramalho, Joanna Giglio, Clara Lua Benedito, Antônia Muricy Leite, Rafael Correa, and Alessandro Costa
Sewing: Solange Costa
Studio organization: Noemi Jacintha Araujo
Office Assistance: Patrícia Germano
Machines: Marcus Ferreira, Polo Maker, Yoann Saura
Photos: Thiago Barros
Lettering: Adeilson Moreira
Framer: Dayana Elói
Balé operators: Rory Hayatgheybi, Benji Pearson, Logan Wolf

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