

Press Release

Allora & Calzadilla

Foreign in a Domestic Sense

22 September – 11 November 2017

27 Bell Street, London

Allora & Calzadilla's exhibition 'Foreign in a Domestic Sense' features sculpture, performance, photo and video works. The exhibition continues the artists' ongoing investigation into the politics of language in public speech. In this new body of work, the uncanny vibrancy of the gestural interacts with a wide range of materials (bat guano, copper, ceramic, wax, electric transformers and industrial remnants). Moving from the performative to the indexical and back, Allora & Calzadilla take the social, political and cultural as a conceptual base and juxtapose it to the incorporated singularity of the human voice.

Conceived in dialogue with *Puerto Rican Light (Cueva Vientos)*, a long-term, site-specific Dia Art Foundation commission in Guayanilla- Peñuelas, Puerto Rico, 'Foreign in a Domestic Sense' activates the linguistic, biological and physical forces at play in Puerto Rico's geopolitical reality. As a 'non-incorporated' territory of the United States, the island is in the midst of a punishing debt and energy crisis that has brought to a head the legacies of colonialism and its complicity with global financial capitalism.

The oxymoron "foreign in a domestic sense" was first used by United States Supreme Court Justice Edward E. White in the 1901 *Downes v. Bidwell* case; the ruling that gave legal sanction to the US colonisation of foreign territories through the ambiguous formulation of territorial non-incorporation.¹ In a decision involving the foreign taxes oranges from Puerto Rico entering the port of New York should be subjected to, Supreme Court Justice White reasoned that "while in an international sense Porto Rico was not a foreign country, since it was subject to the sovereignty of and was owned by the United States, it was foreign to the United States in a domestic sense, because the island has not been incorporated into the United States, but was merely appurtenant thereto as a possession."² For more than a century, this equivocation has been the basis for Puerto Rico's uneven access to constitutional rights and sovereignty.

Allora & Calzadilla explore how the paradox contained in the phrase "foreign in a domestic sense" effectively constructs social and political relationships that legitimate authority while obscuring sites of conflict and struggle. Through a consideration of the material and sensorial byproducts it generates, the exhibition is an exercise in the formal and conceptual expression of this contradiction. Substitution, analogy, metaphor and displacement are thus mobilised to redirect the flow of power continuously running between the two parts – the incorporated and the non-incorporated, and the foreign and the domestic.

¹ The Insular Cases are a group of fourteen decisions taken between 1901 and 1904, collectively known as the *Insular Cases*, that involved the application of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights to overseas territories. The cases arose after the United States acquired island territories after the Spanish-American War (1898). The USA's determination to become a world power received overwhelming popular endorsement in the presidential election of 1900. The Insular Cases translated the political dispute into the vocabulary of the Constitution, with the Supreme Court eventually echoing popular sentiment. Hall, Kermit L. (ed.), *The Oxford Guide to United States Supreme Court Decisions* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1999. See also Burnett, Christina Duffy and Burke Marshall (eds.), *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: American Expansion and the Constitution* (Durham/London: Duke University Press), 2000.

² *Downes vs. Bidwell*, 182 U.S. at 341-42 (White, J. concurring). Downes, one of the Insular Cases of 1901, created the doctrine of 'territorial incorporation' to justify keeping the then-newly acquired territories, without the intent of incorporating them into the Union as states. *Recent Publications*, 23:561 Yale Journal of International Law, 1998.

By invoking seemingly antagonistic art-historical models – from the technological experiments of Russian constructivism to the base materialism of Bataillean surrealism and the cybernetic systems aesthetics of Jack Burnham, as well as the entropic geographies of Robert Smithson – ‘Foreign in a Domestic Sense’ participates in contemporary discussions regarding the power of things and materials to operate beyond the scope and frame of the human, while insisting on an urgent geopolitical awareness about the conditions of Puerto Rico and kindred territories in the global south.

The artists’ new work *Blackout* incorporates both sculptural assemblage and a vocal performance. Taking the event of an electrical blackout as a compositional directive, Allora & Calzadilla have worked with American composer David Lang to create a sonorous matrix that spans human and mechanical sources. The composition *mains hum* (2017), performed by the choral ensemble MUSARC, will take place each Saturday at 11.30am and 1.30pm during the exhibition, with additional performances from 6.30pm on Thursday 5 October as part of Frieze London’s West End Night and on Sunday 8 October at 11.30am and 1.30pm.

About Allora & Calzadilla

Through a complex research-oriented practice, Allora & Calzadilla critically address the intersections and complicities between the cultural, the historical and the geopolitical. Collaborating since 1995, the interdisciplinary nature of their interventions is echoed by an expanded use of the artistic medium that includes performance, sculpture, sound, video and photography. Their dynamic engagement with the art historical results in an acute attention to both the conceptual and the material, the metaphoric as well as the literal.

Jennifer Allora (b. 1974) received a BA from the University of Richmond in Virginia (1996) and an MS from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2003). Guillermo Calzadilla (b. 1971, Cuba) received a BFA from Escuela de Artes Plásticas, San Juan, Puerto Rico (1996) and an MFA from Bard College (2001). Important exhibitions of their work have been held at the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada (2016); Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA, USA (2014); REDCAT, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2014); Fondazione Nicola Trussardi at Palazzo Cusani Milan, Italy (2013); Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney, Australia (2012); the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN, USA (2012); MoMA, New York, NY, USA (2010); Haus der Kunst München, Munich, Germany (2008); Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2008); Serpentine Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2007); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, UK (2007); and Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2006), as well as several other institutions worldwide.

Among numerous group exhibitions, Allora & Calzadilla have participated in Documenta 13 (2012) and several editions of the Venice (2005, 2015), Gwangju (2004, 2008, 2014), Lyon (2005, 2007) and São Paulo Biennials (1999, 2010). In September 2015 they opened *Puerto Rican Light (Cueva Vientos)*, a site-specific project with the Dia Art Foundation in Guayanilla–Peñuelas, Puerto Rico, DIA’s first long-term installation outside of the continental United States since Joseph Beuys’s 1982 *7000 Eichen (7000 Oaks)* in Kassel, Germany. The artists are currently preparing a large survey exhibition featuring two decades of works related to Puerto Rico at MAXXI in Rome in February 2018, as well as a solo exhibition of selected works from 2007 to 2018 at the Tapies Foundation in Barcelona. The artist’s first mid-career survey in Latin America will be featured at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín, Colombia, and is scheduled to open in March 2018.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and develops 54 international artists across two exhibition spaces in London and two in New York. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie, to the public for the first time. In addition to a number of renowned artist estates, including Roy Colmer, the Leon Polk Smith Foundation and the John Latham Foundation, the gallery represents leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller and Tatsuo Miyajima. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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