

Laura Lima

I hope this finds you well.

February 21 – April 4, 2019

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present the first gallery exhibition in the United States of Brazilian artist Laura Lima. Titled, *I hope this finds you well.*, this will be the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from February 21- April 4. Since the mid-1990s Lima's practice has been a domain for transgression—continually escaping traditional classifications, her work attempts to visually articulate a personal glossary of concepts that the artist has worked and reworked over the course of her career. The conceptual structure of Lima's work is underpinned by the equation "Man=flesh/Woman=flesh." First conceived by the artist in a group of works by the same name, the concept of "Man=flesh/Woman=flesh" transcends hierarchies and explores the binary of the living and non-living. For Lima there is no hierarchy; humans, animals, and even spaces are tethered to the same plane, as matter, flesh, or bodies. This exhibition presents four distinct bodies of work that subvert common classification and invite the viewer to look again and re-conceive the established language of art. The exhibition, *I hope this finds you well.*, insinuates communication involved in an effort to achieve something, be it a certain understanding or the act of translation; taking on concepts of adaptation and metamorphosis as a result of translation from one body to another.

Occupying the first-floor gallery is Lima's ongoing work *Tailor Shop*, a fully functional tailoring workshop. In the workshop, a team of local tailors work to produce a collection of garments, creating portraits that translate and interpret the artist's ideas based on their own experiences and knowledge. The vestments created for each work are based off of abstract portrait drawings Lima has made of friends, family, historical figures, and people who have inspired her, and are titled after the first name of the individual. In what the artist refers to as *Instances*, Lima constructs the work through other people who perform the tasks she has designed; feeding off of chance, while also creating a dialogue between artisanal labor and the art-making process, as well as the exhibition spaces and use of objects. Drawing upon the concepts outlined in "Man=flesh/Woman=flesh," Lima considers the artisans as matter occupying the space in the same way as the objects, furniture, and architecture, which work together to communicate and translate her concepts. *Tailor Shop* develops and modifies as it is happening; in a constant state of becoming, the installation encourages visitors to observe the process of art making throughout the duration of the exhibition and to come back to see the progress evolve. As the exhibition unfolds, the completed garments made by the tailors become individual works and are hung on the walls of the gallery for display.

Tailor Shop was first exhibited as part of the artist's solo exhibition at the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht in the Netherlands, between 2014 and 2015, during which she was awarded the Bonnefanten Award for Contemporary Art. Most recently, *Tailor Shop* was presented at the Pinacoteca de São Paulo in Brazil in 2018. In each iteration, new portrait drawings are created by Lima. By working with local tailors, traces of their personal styles, influences, and techniques emerge, making each portrait unique and specific to its location and collaborators.

On view in the main upstairs gallery is a series of works titled, "Nomads," in which the artist employs a copyist to paint replicas of centuries-old landscape paintings. Operating under Laura's instruction, the copyist subtly modifies and translates the scenes, sometimes removing people or replacing the original vegetation with samples copied from botany books. Lima then folds and cuts the canvases, displaying these translations of paintings from the past as masks or portraits concealing the face. By removing subjects from these scenes, the humans can be imagined behind the eyes of the mask. Drawing upon what the artist calls "Ornamental Philosophy," Lima challenges the conventional view of ornamentation as something extraneous or unimportant, while also addressing these forms of translation and subjectivity that are still open to exploration. Firmly grounded in Lima's poetics, the exhibition calls into question fixed identities and classification through the exploration of communication from one body to another.

Presented in the adjacent gallery are new works from the artist's ongoing "Wrong Drawings." The "drawings" are composed of natural cotton with pieces of charcoal attached to them; over time, the coal begins to dye the works. In a continual state of fluidity the works are dated far into the future, suggesting an eventual time when they may reach completion. Charcoal as matter is comprised of carbon—the building block of life and all living constituents. Casting the works as a memory of the future, Lima again explores the mutability of her artworks by setting the stage and directing the action of the matter to translate and execute her will.

Alongside the "Wrong Drawings" is a work from the artist's ongoing group of works titled, "Ágrafo": translated from Greek, "Ágrafo" means "unwritten" or "one without writing." Concepts of absence, mystery, and complex social relations are central to the work—suspended from the ceiling with all sides visible, *Agrafo* refuses to adhere to common narrative acts or signs and insinuates the existence of a second reality within. Shrouded in mystery like an intricately wrapped package, the work's interior is obscured by fabrics and knotted binds that hint at its hidden contents and pique the imagination, addressing what has not been, or is yet to be, formulated. During the final stages of completion, Lima pushes these complexities a step further by assigning a cat to view, interact with, and scratch the piece by baiting the allusive animal with cat nip. What remains in its final form is the absence of the cat and her actions, a metaphor for the unwritten that underscores the gap and mystery between human and animal worlds, and a proposes a study of human behavior in the face of complex social relations.

Born in 1971, Laura Lima grew up in Brazil's countryside region of Governador Valadares. While still very young, Lima moved to Rio de Janeiro, where she is currently based. The artist received a B.A. in Philosophy from the State University of Rio de Janeiro in the 1990s and studied art at the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro. In 1999, she founded the Organism RhR (Representative hyphen Representative) and served as its first bureaucratic administrator. As such, Lima created a glossary and an archive of the activities of the group, including ideas such as a philosophy of nothing, the non-functional, emptiness, and failure.

Laura Lima is the 2014 recipient of BACA, Bonnefanten Award for Contemporary Arts, the Netherlands; and in 2006, Lima was awarded the Marcantonio Vilaça Prize. The artist was also nominated for the Francophone Prize in 2011, and the Hans Nefkens Prize in 2012.

Solo exhibitions of Lima's work have been presented in venues around the world such as Fondazione Prada, Milan (2018); Pinacoteca (Octagono) São Paulo, Brazil (2018); Ujazdowski Castle for Contemporary Art, Warsaw, Poland (2017), Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2016); SMK, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (2015); Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Argentina (2015); Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2014); Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden (2014); Migros Museum fur Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, Switzerland (2013); MUAC, Mexico City, Mexico (2013); Fundação Eva Klabin, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2012); Casa França Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2010); Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, Brazil (2002).

Lima's work has been included in prestigious group exhibitions such as the 24th and 27th São Paulo Biennales; the 2nd and 3rd Mercosul Biennales in Porto Alegre, Brazil; XI Lyon Biennale in 2011; 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 Rooms in various cities since 2011, curated by Klaus Biesenbach and Hans Ulrich Obrist. In 2014, *VERTRIPTICAL*, the third film in the Cinema Shadow project, showed live at the Stockholm Film Festival, Sweden. The project was commissioned by Bonniers Konsthall and filmed both in Rio de Janeiro and Stockholm for an 8-hour period during which it was simultaneously filmed and screened in real time. Upcoming, Lima will be featured in the Sharjah Biennial in Dubai.

Laura Lima's works are included in the collections of Instituto Inhotim, Modern Art Museum of São Paulo, Bonniers Konsthall, Migros Museum fur Gegenwartskunst, Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Zabłudowicz Collection, Bonnefantenmuseum, among others.