ESPACIO ODEÓN 2017-2018 PROGRAMMING T

Espacio Odeón

August 2017 - July 2018

Espacio Odeón is a contemporary art project that uses experimentation, interdisciplinarity, and research as the central pillars of the artistic experience. We develop small, medium, and large-scale multidisciplinary projects in a building classified as architectural heritage, located in the center of Bogotá. Our interest is focused on expanding possibilities for creation, research, and production in contemporary arts. Through our program, we aim to create processes that enable both artists and the public to actively reflect, converse, and interact with current critical issues and existing artistic practices. For the Red Galería Santa Fe grant, we plan to carry out an ongoing exhibition program between August 2017 and October 2018, in which national and international artists will exhibit unseen work.

For 2017, we set out to research how western culture determines particular ways of seeing, interpreting, and defining places and spaces in order to appropriate them. The investigation seeks to question these forms of interpretation and the way in which both the place and the territory have been defined. With this in mind, we addressed the topic of the landscape and its interpretation through nationalism, contemplation and narration with the collective exhibitions *A Seat at the Table*, curated by Alejandra Sarria, and *The Devil's Nose*, curated by Equipo TRansHistor(ia).

In 2018, we sought to analyze the idea of controlling the truth; so-called "alternative truths;" fake news; imaginary constructs used to oppress, exclude, invade, and destroy—based not on facts but on interpretations and constructions. The exhibitions *Detroiters*, by Caldo de Cultivo, and *Four Acts* by Tania Candiani, question this idea of fiction, staging, and construction of reality as a way of controlling the world.

***A Seat at the Table* T1**

August 30, 2017 – November 10, 2018

Curator: Alejandra Sarria

Participating artists: Antonio Caro, François Bucher, María Buenaventura, Revital Cohen and Tuur van Balen, Wilson Díaz and Juan Mejía, Herlyng Ferla and Ericka Flórez, Jeremy Hutchison, Christian Jankowski, Pedro Neves Marques, Reyes Santiago Rojas, Martha Rosler, Juliana Sánchez, Jaime Tarazona.

But if you're gonna dine with them cannibals
Sooner or later, darling, you're gonna get eaten
But I'm glad you've come around
here with your animals
And your heart that is bruised but unbeaten

Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, *Cannibal's Hymn*, 2004

During the Paleolithic period, people satisfied their hunger by hunting and gathering; food was a temporary good. In the Neolithic period, over 10,000 years ago, sedentism led to the domestication of plants and animals for food. This domestication resulted in the ownership of land and its resources. Later on, armies were needed to protect these assets and slaves were needed to work the land. The idea of civilization came about based on the accumulation of food and the separation of people according to their wealth, property, and power.

The expression "a seat at the table" is used to refer to the possibility of being part of a group and having decision-making power within it. The table is a metaphor for power games and relations. The place a person holds at this table – on top of, around, or outside of it – represents that person's place in the world as the predator or the prey: the person who can eat and participate, the person who is eaten, or the person who brings food to the table. This seat refers to the way in which, from the Neolithic period to the present day, food has been closely linked to power over the other (whether human or not), and it has determined the geopolitical distribution of the world; the exploiter and the exploited; who is eaten by whom. It is not a minor detail that the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas was an accident that occurred during their search for pepper and other spices. The conquest of the Americas was very much a process

linked to food. The colonizers, fearful that the food of the indigenous peoples would transform their bodies and make them look like them, asked for food to be sent from Europe. Warren Belasco says that "the importation of domestic animals, plants, and grains from the Old World probably contributed more to the destruction of the indigenous populations of the Americas than any European musket or sword." The lands of the indigenous peoples were turned into fields for cattle. Wheat replaced maize and quinoa, and taste became a tool of categorization and marginalization; "this is native Indian food," they would say.

Today, 525 years later, the situation has not changed much. 1% of landowners in Colombia control 81% of usable land, 30% of food is imported, and farmers' seeds are regulated. This has led to absolute food dependency. Here, as in many parts of the world, large, multinational agribusinesses have homogenized the countryside with their genetically-modified soy, maize, and sugar cane crops. Furthermore, supported by governments, they have razed and destroyed forests, towns, and communities. The companies' seed patents force farmers to depend on them and they are penalized for using their own resources. The lack of access to land and the control of seeds prevent the creation of autonomous alimentation processes, whilst destroying centuries of history, ancestral knowledge, and culture.

Far from being a historiographical journey through food processes and foods, this exhibition unites a series of perspectives and commentaries on the relationship between food and power. The appropriation of land, control of seeds, domestication of living beings, workplace violence, displacement, and categorization of social, political, and gender functions and roles are all topics that appear in the works of art presented in this exhibition, which are all, in one way or another, linked to food and land.

The pieces by Revital Cohen and Tuur van Bealen, and by Juliana Sánchez, question the implications of domesticating plants and animals as well as the human idea of controlling the earth and its resources. Meanwhile, works such as those by Herlyng Ferla, Ericka Flórez and Reyes Santiago Rojas refer to the dynamics of colonization, industrialization, and modernization, in which people are categorized and oppressed, and how food relates to these processes. Martha Rosler highlights the gender and class roles that have been linked to the preparation of food, and Christian Jankowski refers to the disconnect between urban life and the means of producing and obtaining food.

Pedro Neves Marques and María Buenaventura present different perspectives on the control of seeds, crops, territory, and the landscape. Jaime Tarazona and Antonio Caro use gestures from popular culture and culinary tradition to speak about the differences between the rural and urban worlds, cultural oblivion, and even comment on large exhibitions and art as an institution.

In their work, Wilson Díaz and Juan Mejía also ridicule class and art clichés and each of their rules. On the other hand, François Bucher and Jeremy Hutchison display pieces that refer to working conditions and violations experienced in them, whether directly or through technology. Maryam Jafri refers to the "commodification" of food and the commercial enforcement of taste.

However, just as the pieces selected demonstrate how food determines the social order and how its dynamics contribute to the unequal distribution of life itself, they are also a way of recalling that land is where survival and resistance mechanisms are concentrated. Eating, cooking, and producing food are ways of being together and creating meaning, independence, and agency. If food is power, then, who sits at the table?

The Devil's Nose **T1**

November 22, 2017 – 10, February 2018

Curator: Equipo TRansHisTor(ia) - María Sol Barón and Camilo Ordóñez

Artists: Fernando Arias, Alejandro Arango, Andrés Buitrago, Elkin Calderón, Antonio Caro, Jeison Castillo, Carolina Caycedo, Juan David Laserna, Carlos Lersundy, Nadín Ospina

The Devil's Nose is an unforgettable landmark for anyone who has travelled by road between Bogotá and Melgar. The legend began during the construction of the highway 70 years ago, when workers blew up a huge rock in the Boquerón area to allow the road to follow the course of the River Sumapaz. After several explosions, the stone gave way, leaving a large protrusion in the shape of a nose, which led many witnesses to claim that the Devil inhabited the area.

Despite the resistance or difficulties presented by nature, this highway enabled the economic development of Melgar. Under the government of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in the 50s, this town was planned to be a place for leisure and tourism, leading to the construction of numerous spas and family leisure areas. This made it a landmark that, later on, would serve as a reference for the state policies relating to boosting the tourism sector, yet to be developed in Colombia. This route extends to the main section of the Pan-American Highway in Colombia, connecting the capital to the southwestern part of the country and, from there, to the port of Buenaventura and the Pacific Ocean.

Before joining the Pan-American Highway, this route also leads to Cajamarca, one of the municipalities that has put up the strongest resistance to the penetration of large-scale mining projects. It was in March 2017, during the process of prior consultation, that the inhabitants of Cajamarca spoke out against the gold mining megaproject of La Colosa that had been promoted for several years.

Therefore, the Devil's Nose has become a visual and geographical point of reference that highlights sectors of the economy that have been fundamental to state policies over the last half century in Colombia, but are currently suspended: tourism and mining, achieved through the planning and construction of megaprojects that invade nature and territory in order to

consolidate the country's infrastructure around highways and media or services.

In fact, over the last several decades, there have been policies of varying intensity and scale to develop domestic and international tourism, to the point that this sector obtained a valuable place in the Colombian state's organizational chart. It was placed within the former Ministry of Development with the creation of the National Tourism Corporation (CNT), founded in 1968 and liquidated in 1997. Preceding this, the Fund for the Promotion of Tourism, later renamed Fontur, was created in 1996 and integrated into the portfolio of the new Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Tourism, from which various programs were launched to implement the country brands "*Colombia es passion*" (Colombia is passion) (created in 2005) and "*La respuesta es Colombia*" (The answer is Colombia) (valid since 2012). From each of these niches, state policies and advertising campaigns were implemented to promote Colombia and Colombian society as attractive tourist destinations, which had a considerable impact on the national economy. Although, understandably, these activities declined during the years of economic recession and increased armed conflict, they have been strengthened over the last decade by the Democratic Security policy, economic revival, reducing the armed conflict, and following the initiation of peace talks with the FARC and the ELN.

Parallel to this lengthy process of expanding the tourism sector, the first cases of territorial intervention for large-scale mining began in the 70s with the concession of Cerrejón for open-pit coal mining via a license which, in 2009, was extended until 2034 in favor of the operator consortium. Today, from various perspectives, this model is seen as paradigmatic in terms of the application and issue of large-scale mining permits. Consequently, since the concession, a great deal of audiovisual material has been produced seeking to create a construct that weighs up mining against environmental conservation and the human development of indigenous communities in the department of La Guajira. These representations contrast with the controversies that have recently arisen concerning the environmental and social impact of open-pit coal mining over the past decades on a regional level.

According to the above, it is clear that visual material on the subject of regional tourism and mining has been developed based on audiovisual and advertising material for over four decades. Even so, it is rare to find contemporary Colombian art that focuses on problems relating to tourism, mining, and infrastructure. Only in the last few years has the impact of mining been explored in an increasing number of works by artists and curators, due to the heightened visibility of the problem. However, it does not necessarily mean that this corresponds or is linked to the visual culture that, over the last several decades, has produced representations of the economic projects that imply exploitation of land and nature through

mining.

La Nariz del Diablo is a curatorial proposal that aims to begin to build a genealogy of artistic and visual production linked to images and representations produced over the last 50 years on tourism, large-scale mining, and the construction of mega infrastructure projects. These are three valuable economic sectors in a state of suspension but upon which many hopes for the country's economic and social development in the post-conflict context are pinned, and which undermine the representation of the nation, nature, and territorial sovereignty. All of this is stimulated by the desires and effects resulting from policies that were recently expanded in order to activate these sectors. This genealogy continues today with the production of images for mass consumption, such as the film *Colombia Magia Salvaje* (Colombia Wild Magic) and the new collection of Colombian banknotes issued by the Central Bank, both of which are characterized by a repertoire of natural landscapes. They serve as a visual manifesto that insists on declaring biodiversity and multiculturality as the potential capital needed to achieve social and economic development. In response to the desires for economic integration and global mobility, this development calls for the mass appropriation of nature and territory as a cultural and material extraction site.

In a way, using artistic practices to approach these phenomena implies the provision of content in order to critically consider the projection of economic development and its representation in Colombian visual culture. These economic and political programs determine the production of visual material that brings into play the tensions and expectations generated by the promises of current development. Therefore, this visual culture may also serve to drive content and ideologies that contribute to building communities that are either complacent or critical of the implementation of economic models designed to deal with territories that have recently been cleared of armed conflict activities.

Curators [t2]

Equipo TransHisTor(ia), made up of María Sol Barón and Camilo Ordóñez Robayo, is dedicated to developing investigative and creative projects that are inspired by reflections on art history and visual culture and directed towards the development of curatorial proposals and publications. Some of its curations and publications include: *Movimiento hacia la izquierda* (2016, co-authored with Gabriela Pinilla), *Sal Vigua* (2015), *Con Wilson… dos décadas vulnerables, visuales y locales* (2014), *Rojo y más Rojo. Taller 4 Rojo; producción gráfica y acción directa* (2012-2014), and *Múltiples y Originales. Arte y cultura visual en Colombia; años 70* (Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, Bogotá, 2010). Barón and Ordóñez are

professors of the Department of Visual Arts at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, and Ordóñez is a professor at the Faculty of Arts ASAB, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá.

March 7, 2018 – March 23, 2018

Detroit: “the ghost town,” “the crime capital,” “a city in ruins.” Detroiters address not only state and market violence, but also the violence of the partial representations and stereotypes of its city and people. In this context, Caldo de Cultivo responds with the creative “violence” of spoken word poetry to weave a powerful narrative of the city through *Detroiters*, which uses the body and words as a political and poetic strategy.

Detroiters is the polyphonic tale of a specific city, but it is also the tale of the *contemporary city*, the stage on which to experience the increasingly radical forms of impoverishment, segregation, and displacement of everyday life. From here, it becomes necessary to explore the political cry, rhymes, and rhythms that prepare us for battle.

Participating artists: Caldo de Cultivo

“An environmental factor used for the proliferation of something, generally damaging” (RAE). Against the totalitarian and totalizing experience of the city as something to be consumed, we propose envisaging the urban environment as an inevitably conflictive and contradictory space, the setting of political struggle and poetic creation, a temporality for the construction of the norm, a place for rebel creativity and resistance. Therefore, in the knowledge that we are guests (the hosts and the hosted) of a world that shamelessly vomits misery, silence, and conformity, we seek to implement an aesthetic and bacterial policy: ubiquitous microorganisms that act against consensus and infectious speeches that pervert a destiny that is presented to us as natural.

Four Acts **T1**

Tania Candiani

April 18 – July 2, 2018

Although on stage the curtain serves to hide and deny the mechanisms that make up the production, in *Four Acts,* Tania Candiani proposes using it as a tool to reveal all the elements that make up the project. Instead of presenting a piece that is "ready" to be seen, Candiani presents the exhibition as a gradual work process in which the systems of interdependence that build a discourse or action are made evident.

Over the course of this project, the stage of what was the Teatro Odeón is brought back to life in order to present two forms of staging. On the one hand, it becomes a sewing workshop in which four curtains are made, in a choreographed task that reveals its place in the production of a system that is supported through an ensemble of bodies structuring a reality. On the other hand, it once again becomes a stage for the performance of acts that confront different recurring processes of naturalization as well as historical and political concealment in Latin America.

Presenting these actions in this space implies not only focusing on realities and stories that have been hidden under other "officialized" versions, but also restoring one of the functions that the Odeón once had as a building. There is still a stage, but there is no longer a space for the audience; the seats are in ruins. There is an inevitable distance between the audience and the "stage," which forces us to see it differently.

The exercise of reiterating each of the gestures that make up the exhibition (making the curtain, raising the curtain, opening the curtain, showing the action, closing the curtain, lowering the curtain, repeat) is emphasized by documenting the actions and installing the curtains—to present them again—together with a video that overlays different narratives of the curtain as a stage and social object. This insistence on repetition becomes a metaphor for the way different realities are constructed, and it establishes a parallel between the theater staging and the theatricality of politics.

In *Four Acts*, the revival of the stage, the staging of the work processes, and the presentation of actions that confront totalizing discourses make it possible to think about what is "real" as an ongoing process in which the superposition of bodies, actions, and emotions combines realities that are produced over and over again. "Reality would have to begin. And, maybe, by beginning over and over (and over), reality could finally be produced."

The act *La paradoja del Cuervo,* by Ana María Montenegro, was presented as part of the Red

Galería Santa Fe grant. Through the interweaving of voices—those of the official journalistic narrative and the anarchic narrative—this act refers to processes to conceal the truth as well as the apathy towards the political deaths and disappearances that continue to occur in Colombia, in particular, and Latin America in general.

Biography

Tania Candiani (Mexico City, 1974) has worked using diverse media and practices, maintaining an interest in the intersection between different language systems. Her work is based on the aim of inventing through the reorganization and remixing of technologies, areas of knowledge, and materials. She has created individual and collaborative projects in which she explores how visions of scientific and technological progress lead to ideas on collective futures.

Ana María Montenegro, Bogotá