

Knowledge Entanglements:  
Beyond Abyssal Thinking  
Symposium

Wednesday, July 11, 2018  
daadgalerie\_studio

Conceived by Florencia Portocarrero,  
curator in residence of the program Curating Connections  
organized by KfW Stiftung and DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program

Program

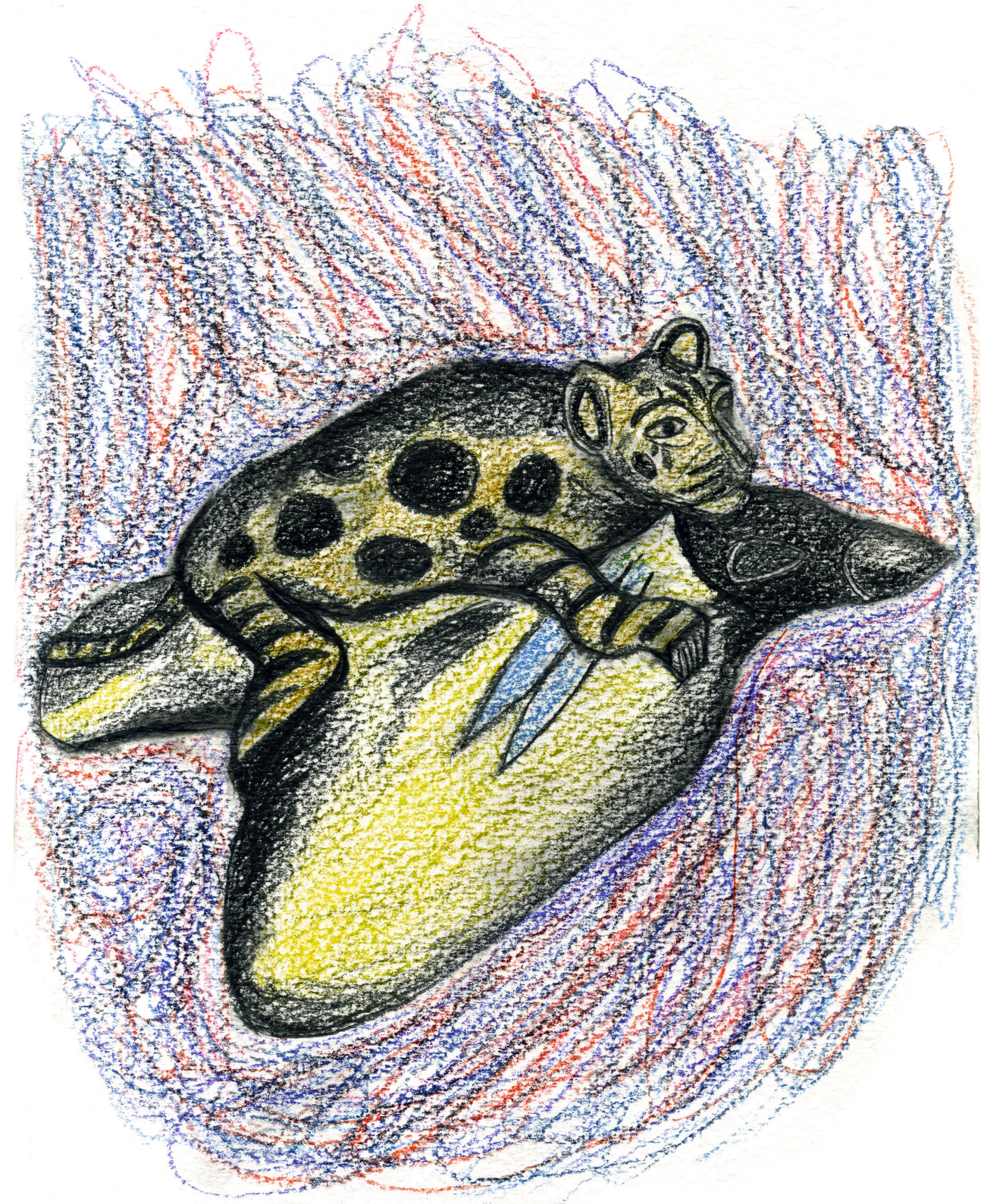
- 6pm Bettina Klein / Florencia Portocarrero  
Welcome / Introduction
- 6.30pm Sharon Lerner  
Expanded Narratives: On MALI's Contemporary Art Collection  
(video presentation)
- 7pm Manuela Moscoso  
ZARIGÜEYA / OPPOSOM
- 7.30pm Break
- 7.45pm Louidgi Beltrame  
Mesa Curandera, an experiment with a Peruvian healer
- 8.15pm María Iñigo Clavo  
If we could write art history without names, by the hand of (Brazilian) people?

The program Curators in Residence: Curating Connections is an initiative of the foundation KfW Stiftung and the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program. It seeks to stimulate intercultural dialogue by providing one emerging curator per year from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia with the opportunity to spend six months in Berlin. Besides encouraging high-level networking, research and critical reflection, the program facilitates interdisciplinary encounters between the guests of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Program and the Berlin cultural scene. Previous grant holders include Zasha Colah (Mumbai), Dana Whabira (Harare), and Mustafa Hussain Shabbir (Singapore); the upcoming grant holder is Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh (Accra).

Cover image:  
Louidgi Beltrame, *El Ave y el Jaguar*, 2018, colored pencils on paper.  
Courtesy the artist and Philippe Jousse Gallery.

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“The struggle for global social justice must be a struggle for global cognitive justice as well. In order to succeed, this struggle requires a new kind of thinking, a post-abysal thinking.”

Boaventura de Sousa Santos,  
*Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies*, 2007

This symposium takes as a point of departure Boaventura De Sousa Santos’s assertion that coloniality has an epistemological layer that continues to be a blind spot and operates through “abyssal thinking.” Abyssal thinking is characterized by a mono-cultural worldview that elevates modern science and Western art into unique criteria of truth and aesthetic quality, while suppressing non-scientific forms of knowledge and, at the same time, the subaltern social groups whose social practices were informed by such knowledge. In the case of the indigenous people of Latin America, De Sousa Santos continues, this form of epistemicide was the other side of genocide during colonial times.

In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, after the independence wars, Latin American newly formed nation-states promoted *mestizaje*—the merge of races and cultures—as a strategy for finally overcoming colonialism. However, the truth is that the apparent end of political and economic dependence and even the success of *mestizaje* did not mean that colonialism stopped functioning as a form of social relationship, and therefore, as a persistent and insidious force capable of shaping subjectivities. Quite the opposite, the process of absorbing indigenous people into the modern and homogenized nation states implied the transformation of the diversity of their cultures, cosmologies, and knowledge to the expression of an archaic form of irrationality or superstition that hindered modernization and national unity. The future, it seemed, belonged to the West and its distinctive notion of progress and civilization. Today, after years of neglect, the crisis of modern values and global ecological disaster have given rise to a renewed interest in indigenous knowledge as a tool for both questioning Western thought and imagining a post-capitalistic future.

For the symposium curators Manuela Moscoso and Sharon Lerner, artist Loidgi Beltrame and theorist María Iñigo Clavo will take Latin America as a point of departure for reflecting on global concerns such as the types of dialogues and relationships that are possible between different types of knowledge within the contemporary art world. By sharing their practices and work methodologies they will deliberate over how to challenge pre-existing epistemic institutions and hierarchies and offer possible “entanglement models” for curatorial, artistic, and theoretical practice from which to avoid the trap of “abyssal thinking.”

Florencia Portocarrero

Florencia Portocarrero 6pm  
Introduction

Florencia Portocarrero is a researcher, writer and curator based in Lima. She received her BA in clinical psychology at the Catholic University of Peru, where she also earned an MA degree in psychoanalytical theory. From 2012–2013, she participated in the De Appel Curatorial Program in Amsterdam and in 2015 completed an MA in contemporary art theory at Goldsmiths, University of London. Portocarrero’s writings on art and culture regularly appear in contemporary art magazines such as *Atlántica Journal*, *Artishock* and *Terremoto*. In Lima, she works as a public program curator at Proyecto AMIL and is a co-founder of Bisagra, one of the few independent art spaces in the city. She recently edited *Videos From This Woman: Performance Documentation 1997–2010*, a monograph on the work of the artist Elena Tejada-Herrera.

Sharon Lerner 6.30pm  
Expanded Narratives: On MALI’s Contemporary Art Collection

Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) offers a panoramic overview of art in Peru that spans from pre-Columbian times to the present. The diversity of the museum’s collection represents one of the main strengths of the institution. Without doubt, MALI is faced with the challenge of overcoming old prejudices. It continuously has to question the underlying assumptions that have shaped decisions on what has been considered as “art” or excluded as “art” in Peru in the past. New guidelines and thematic narratives have allowed the museum to increasingly break down the boundaries that have traditionally separated archeology from art, or ethnography from the fine arts. With regard to MALI’s contemporary collection, careful attention is being paid to the inclusion of old regional traditions. The museum exhibits works which often are repositories of communal memory while preserving ancient typologies. Thus, new acquisition projects, focusing on the cultural visual production in the Amazon region or on textile works in the Andes, stimulate critical reflection on the limits of aesthetic categories as well as on the disciplinary divisions that still dominate within local art institutions. This brief video presentation reviews the history of the Museo de Arte de Lima and of its collection at this crucial moment

where the museum is breaking new ground and introducing new acquisition policies for contemporary art. Sharon Lerner is the curator of Contemporary Art at Museo de Arte de Lima – MALI. She received her MA in Curatorial Practice at California College of the Arts (2010). In 2007, she was invited by Goethe-Institut to be part of the educational team of *documenta 12* in Kassel, Germany. In 2010, she was invited to curate and research at the Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts and at the Kadist Art Foundation in San Francisco. Lerner is co-author of *Corpus fragmentado: acciones en Lima 1966–2000*, published in *Arte no es vida: Actions by Artists of the Americas 1960–2000* (Museo del Barrio, New York 2008), and of *Post-ilusiones. Nuevas visiones. Arte crítico en Lima 1980–2006* (Fundación Wiese, 2007). She is currently a member of the curatorial team in charge of *Memories of Underdevelopment*, an exhibition project which is part of the initiative *Pacific Standard Time II* of the Getty Foundation, organized by the MCASD San Diego, the Museo Jumex in Mexico City and MALI. Recently, Lerner has been appointed curator for the Peruvian section of ARCO Madrid 2019, in which Peru is a guest country.

Manuela Moscoso 7pm  
ZARIGÜEYA /OPPOSOM

Zarigüeya/Alabado Contemporáneo is a research, production and exhibition program that creates connections between contemporary art and the pre-Columbian collection of the Museo de Arte Precolombino Casa del Alabado in Quito, Ecuador. Through a series of manifestations, artists, creators and thinkers will elaborate responses from the objects and materials of the collection, formulating questions such as: How can we understand pre-Colombian cultural production as contemporary culture? What type of behaviours and effects might these materials have in our culture, politics and society? How can we construct platforms, devices and relations that make it possible for them to intervene in our present? I will be sharing methods, affects and effects of Zarigüeya on the narrative and forms of representations of the past in the context of an archaeological museum in Ecuador. Manuela Moscoso is the senior curator at Tamayo Museo in Mexico City where she has organized monographic exhibitions of Armando Andrade Tudela,

Chimurenga, Eduardo Costa and Tania Perez Córdova. Moscoso sees herself as a curator of practices rather than objects. Understanding how people research, create, think, produce, relate and disseminate work and ideas enables her to constitute visible and temporal contact zones in the (expanded) form of exhibitions. She is part of Zarigüeya, a program investigating links between contemporary art and the pre-Columbian art collection of Museo de Arte Precolombino Casa del Alabado in Quito. Together with Sarah Demeuse, she co-edits books by the artist Manuela Ribadeneira. She holds an MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College and a BA from the Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design.

Loidgi Beltrame 7.45pm  
Mesa Curandera, an experiment with a Peruvian healer

In 2015, in Peru, I met José Levis Picón Saguma, a healer whose work perpetuates the tradition of pre-Columbian rites. While staying for two months with José and his community in 2017, I intended to capture the choreography created in time and space by the collective healing ritual called “mesa” through an apparatus involving nocturnal images. I filmed with a specifically developed technology and will present my research and details of the production process. Moreover, I will discuss the questions and doubts that arose while working on this project and share the possible answers I have found. Loidgi Beltrame is an artist and filmmaker based in Paris. His work has been presented in solo exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo (Paris 2016), Frac Basse-Normandie (Caen 2015), Jousse Entreprise gallery (Paris 2008, 2012, 2014), Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (2008), Jeu de Paume (Paris 2006), and at many other venues. In 2013, he took part in a film program curated by Apichatpong Weerasethakul for Sharjah Biennial 11, and participated in many festivals including FIDMarseille, Doclisboa, Festival del Film Locarno, and the International Film Festival Rotterdam. His films have been shown in specific programs at the Centre Pompidou, *Vidéo & Après in conversation with Pascal Beausse* (Paris, 2011), and at the Musée du Louvre with Catherine David (Paris, 2013). Recent group exhibitions include the 12th Gwangju Biennale (2018), *Stadtansichten*, Kunstverein

Heidelberg (2018), and *Y he aquí la luz*, Museo de Arte del Banco de la Republica de Bogotá (2017).

María Iñigo Clavo 8.15pm  
If we could write art history without names, by the hand of (Brazilian) people?

This talk examines the relationship between art history and popular culture on the occasion of the restaging of Lina Bo Bardi’s exhibition *The Hand of the Brazilian People* (1969/2016) at Museu de Arte de São Paulo. When the exhibition was first shown, it sparked great controversy. Previously, the dominant art historical discourse had neglected the works produced by the Brazilian people. Instead, it focused on international movements and debates surrounding the Cold War. The locally-oriented political interests of Hélio Oiticica in favelas, Lygia Clark in prostitutes, Mario Pedrosa in Rio’s psychiatric institutions, as well as of Rubens Gerchman and Guilherme Vaz in indigenous communities in the Amazon and of Bo Bardi in popular crafts demand a revision of the Western art historical narrative. It should acknowledge how these artists activated the agency of popular culture through their artworks and addressed the persistence of colonialism during the 1960s and 1970s. What would art history be like if it was re-written without the big names? Could our object of study change our methodologies?

María Iñigo Clavo is a researcher, curator and lecturer at the Open University of Catalonia, with a PhD in Fine Arts from the Universidad Complutense in Madrid. Her research focuses on coloniality, curating and museology, modernity and its inventions of otherness, and art in Latin America, particularly Brazilian art. She is the co-founder of the independent research group *Península: Colonial Processes and Artistic and Curatorial Practices*, in collaboration with Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. She was a visiting fellow of Afterall Research Centre (2016-2017), a researcher for the AHRC project *Meeting Margins: Transnational Art in Europe & Latin America 1950-1978*, University of Essex and University of the Arts London, and postdoctoral fellow at the University of São Paulo (FAPESP). She has written extensively for various publications including *e-flux journal*, *Afterall*, *Stedelijk Studies*, *Versión/sur*, *Concinnitas*, *Revista de Occidente*, *Bilboquet*.