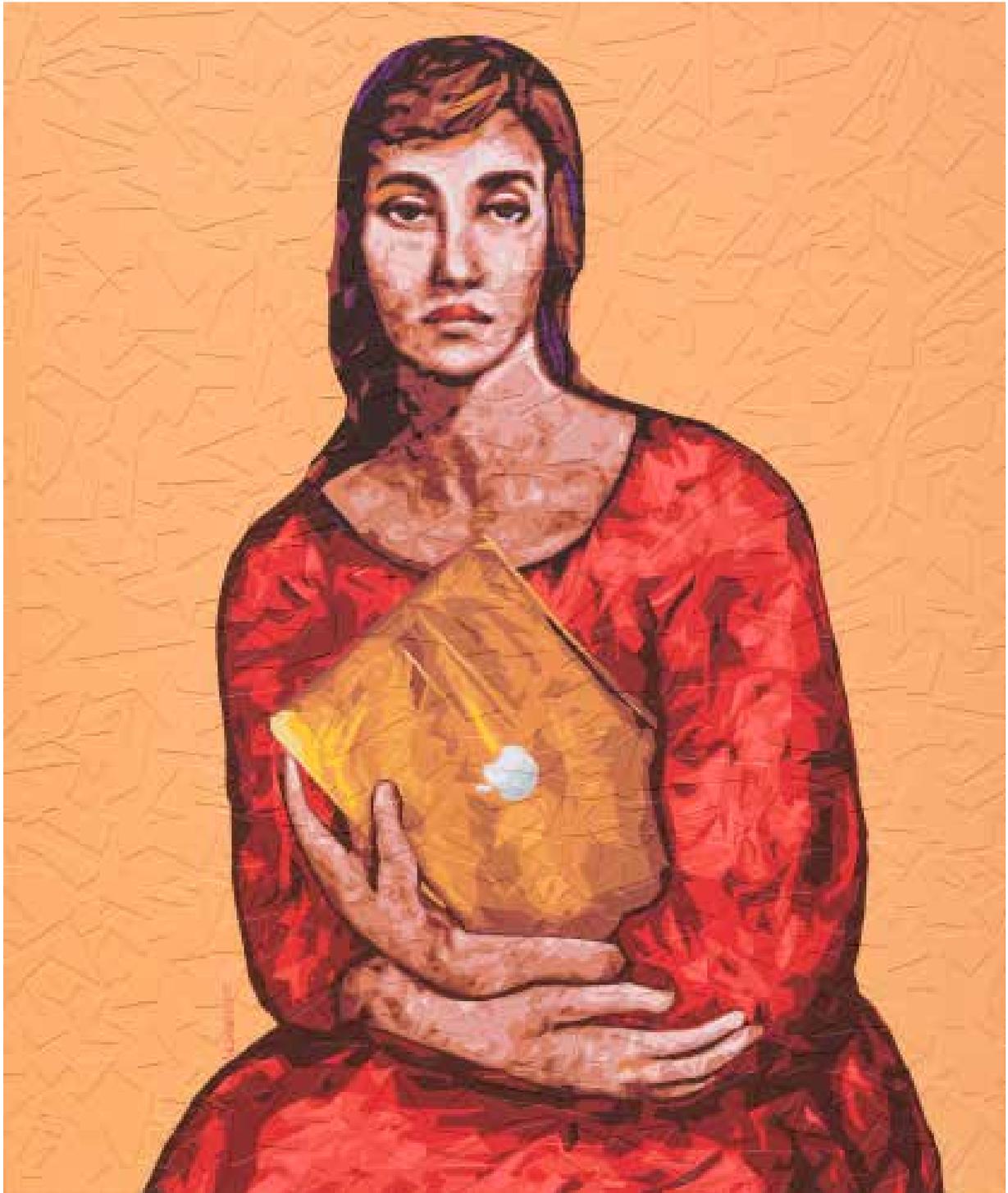
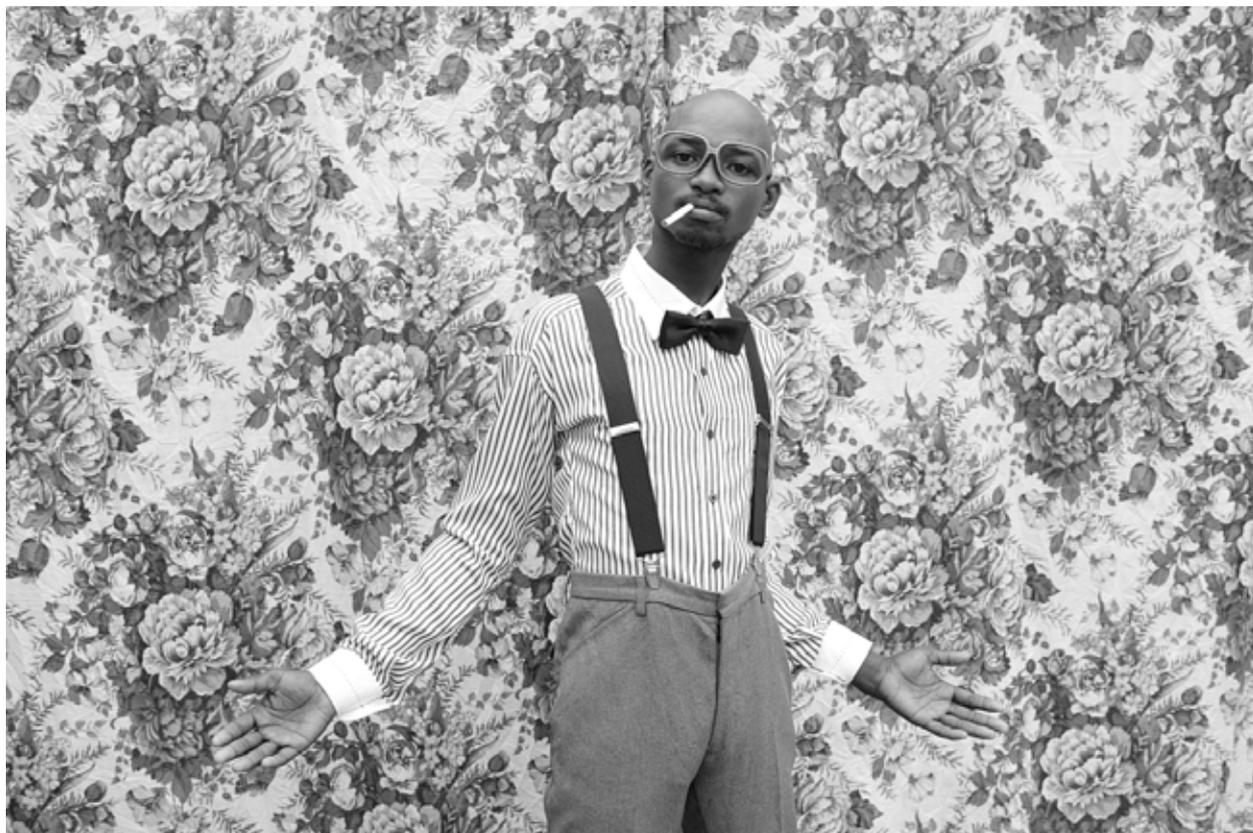


THE KURIOS

Art from elsewhere.



ISSUE FIVE



Mário Macilau. Alito, The Guy with Style. From the series *Moments of Transition*, 2013 Digital print 80 x 120 cm. Courtesy Ed Cross Fine Art Ltd, London © Mário Macilau.

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue Five of *The Kurios* magazine, where we take you on another journey through *art from elsewhere*. In this issue, we look at two artists that deal with issues of identity, perception and national consciousness, though they hail from very different eras and from very different parts of the world.

The Australian Impressionist painter Tom Roberts is credited with having led the way in defining the national consciousness of a young Australia. Though born in the UK, the self-consciously nationalistic paintings he made in his adopted country at the turn of the 20th Century are recognised masterpieces. We take a look at his life and career, to coincide with a major retrospective of his work at the National Gallery of Australia in Sydney.

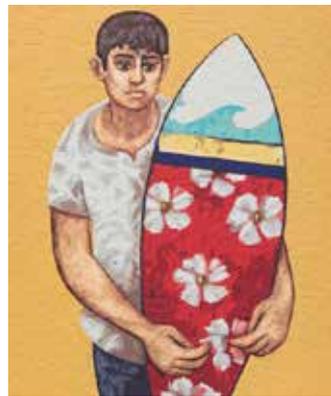
Meanwhile contemporary Iranian-born artist Farhad Ahrarnia is also preoccupied with notions of identity and nationality, but his subject is Egypt and the West's passion for all things Egyptian in the last two centuries. His daring works explore the aesthetics that emerged from the inter-mingling of the ancient, mythical and exotic with European Modernism. The artist's dazzling

mixed media pieces combine ancient imagery, hand-embroidered textiles depicting archival images of actors and spies, and influences from Persian mosaics.

We also explore the inimitable images taken by the German missionary-turned-anthropologist Martin Gusinde, whose bewitching photographs of indigenous tribes in Tierra del Fuego are testament to one of Latin America's lost civilizations. Then it's over to Mexico and the Casa Azul, where we get a glimpse of the intimate life of Frida Kahlo before she became an icon. Contemporary African art and design is also under the spotlight, as we take you on a tour through a revealing exhibition at the Guggenheim in Bilbao.

Last but not least, as usual we showcase the work of some of the most exciting artists practicing today, including the witty Belgian surrealist Sammy Slabbinck and the playful Brazilian artist Jac Leirner.

Sophie Davies, Editor



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Qu Leilei, *Nude 3* (2009) 91x170cm, ink on paper. Photo courtesy of Hua Gallery.

Chinese artist Qu Leilei is showing his masterly *Nudes* and *Hand* series at Hua Gallery. The artist was a founding member of the Stars Group in the 1970s, the first movement that fought for artistic freedom in China and launched the country's contemporary art movement.

Qu Leilei's work unites two very different art traditions: that of East and West, which are often seen as irreconcilable. He uses ink and brush techniques, which have a long history in Chinese art, to produce the sculptural complexity of Western art. "His works maintain an Oriental spirit and integrate it with the exceptional level of realism that was once achieved by European Renaissance masters," the curators said.

"With a deep understanding of human anatomy Qu Leilei's delicate nudes carry a variety of yin and yang elements such as luminosity and darkness, lightness and heaviness, fullness and emptiness as well as complexity and simplicity," they added.

The artist's dedication to ink on paper breathes new life into the traditional medium. While Western artists used

oil on canvas to achieve similar effects of tactility and depth, Qu Leilei has transformed the delicate medium of ink on paper to produce a similar effect, but with a contemporary sensibility.

The art critic Michael Sullivan has described his works as "both intriguing and satisfying." The serenity of these works speaks for itself. They combine a meticulous approach with a lightness of touch. The Chinese concept of *Qiyun Shengdong* – meaning a calm exterior with a sense of inner liveliness -- has fittingly been used to describe Qu Leilei's work.

The artist's work has been collected by The Victoria and Albert Museum, The Ashmolean Museum, The Japan Modern Art Museum, The China National Art Museum, Barclays Bank, and more recently by The British Museum.

Qu Leilei - The Great Master of Ink is on until 25th January 2016 at Hua Gallery's online platform.



La pesca del sol, 2015. Impresión digital sobre de algodón. 75 x 105 cm. Edición 1/5 + 2 PA.
Courtesy of Henrique Faria Gallery.

The exhibition *America* at Henrique Faria in Buenos Aires brings together the work of a group of artists who are united by the common aim of attempting to define or understand Latin America. Some of the artists present have experimented with the name of the continent itself; others have used maps to radically reconsider this vast continent.

Horacio Zabala takes school maps from the region; he then superimposes geometric figures, prints on top of them or burns the paper in various ways. In this way, his work references the “dark side” of Modernity, seen in the various crises of modernizing projects across the continent in recent decades, the curators said.

Amazonia 1976 by Jonier Marin demonstrates the interest that artists in the region have for Andean textiles and Pre-Colombian cultural production. Similar interests also inform the work of Alejandro Puente, one of Argentina and Latin America’s best-known conceptual artists.

Meanwhile *Proyecto Catherwood* by Leandro Katz and the *Epopéya Silenciosa* series by Leonel Luna both take as their precedent the contrast between representations of explorers and travellers in the region in the 19th Century with current images.

America is on until 10th February 2016 at Henrique Faria, Buenos Aires.



Basir Mahmood, *Manmade* (2010) Collection of the artist. Photo courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

Time of Others – Contemporary Art from Four Museums across the Asia Pacific at the Singapore Art Museum is an ambitious survey of contemporary art across Asia.

It is a co-curatorial collaboration with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo; the National Museum of Art in Osaka; the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art; and the Japan Foundation Asia Center.

Time of Others features works of artists responding to social, historical and geopolitical concerns in an interconnected world where “the notions of boundary, difference and Otherness have become more complex,” the curators said.

“These artists tackle the question of how we can authentically and meaningfully conceive, understand and engage with other cultural contexts of society, while residing within our own localities, and being part of a globalised world today,” they added.

The exhibition presents over 25 artworks by 17 artists from all over Asia Pacific, including Chen Chieh-Jen from Taiwan, Kiri Dalena from The Philippines, Graham Fletcher from New Zealand/Samoa, Saleh Husein from Indonesia, Jonathan Jones from Australia, and On Kawara from Japan.

In Chen Chieh-jen’s *Realm of Reverberations*, the state of a hospital for lepers in the Taiwanese state of Losheng is under the spotlight. The Loshen Sanitorium, which deteriorated when the Taiwanese authorities decided to build a train depot on the site, is now a byword for stigmatization and isolation. Chen’s work explores the lives of the marginalized inhabitants of the long-forgotten hospital.

Meanwhile in *Arabian Party*, Saleh Husein explores the little-known history of Arab-Indonesians. Husein’s take on Arab-Indonesians, whose rights were restricted under Dutch colonial rule of Indonesia, is a personal one. He turns historical photographs into paintings, thereby reflecting on issues surrounding nationhood and identity that are particularly pertinent to our time.

Finally, *Calendars* (2020–2096) by Singaporean artist Heman Chong, presents 1001 photographs of spaces that are accessible to everyone but devoid of human activity, such as shops, restaurants and communal plazas. In these uncanny photographs, everyday corners of Singapore are turned into void spaces, alluding to a dystopian world.

Time of Others is on until 28th February 2016 at the Singapore Art Museum.



Photo courtesy of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and the Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo.

The wide-ranging exhibition *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today*, which first opened at New York's Guggenheim in 2014, is now showing at the Museo Jumex in Mexico City. The blockbuster show aims to demonstrate that Latin America cannot be reduced to a single homogenous entity. It shows a diverse range of art from across the continent, that is focused on the past and present, as well as that which deals with the future.

Some of the artistic movements explored include Conceptualism – which many Latin American artists living in the United States during the 60s, 70s and 80s made central to their practice. The show also explores art that is based around participation and political activism. It looks into how the Brazilian art movement Tropicalism has played a role in the region i.e. how climate and nature, for instance, have affected artistic production on the continent.

“The works of art presented in this exhibition strongly reflect the contradictions and conflicts that intersect in the Americas, and in so doing, reconsider and allow us to imagine other possible futures,” said Pablo Leon, the Guggenheim’s Latin America Curator.

The exhibition sets out to explore differing artistic responses in countries moulded by colonialism, repressive governmental politics, economic crisis, and social inequality, as well as by periods of economic development and social progress.

Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today is on until 7th February 2016 at the Museo Jumex, Mexico City.



The Shape of Time, Gagosian Gallery Hong Kong (2015). Installation view. Courtesy of GGHK.

The Shape of Time: In Collaboration with Gisele Croes brings together a selection of Asian antiques and modern and contemporary works at the Gagosian Gallery in Hong Kong. The show exhibits the work of a number of well-known names from the Western tradition, including 20th Century artists Georg Baselitz and Alberto Giacometti and contemporary sculptor Richard Serra, as well as modern and contemporary works by Asian artists including Cai Guo-Qiang, Chu Teh-Chun, Takashi Murakami and Nam June Paik.

The exhibition features rare artefacts including Longshan culture black pottery from the 3rd millennium BCE, a gilt bronze mask from the Liao dynasty and a crown headdress with glass ornaments from the Tang dynasty. These are shown alongside modern and contemporary paintings, drawings, sculptures, and photographs, which -- in the words of the curators -- revisit "historically persistent subjects and common formal concerns."

In new ink and wash drawings by German painter Georg Baselitz, we are presented with reconsidered motifs from his earlier work, but also allusions to a 19th Century portrait by the Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai. The ukiyo-e artist, who lived during

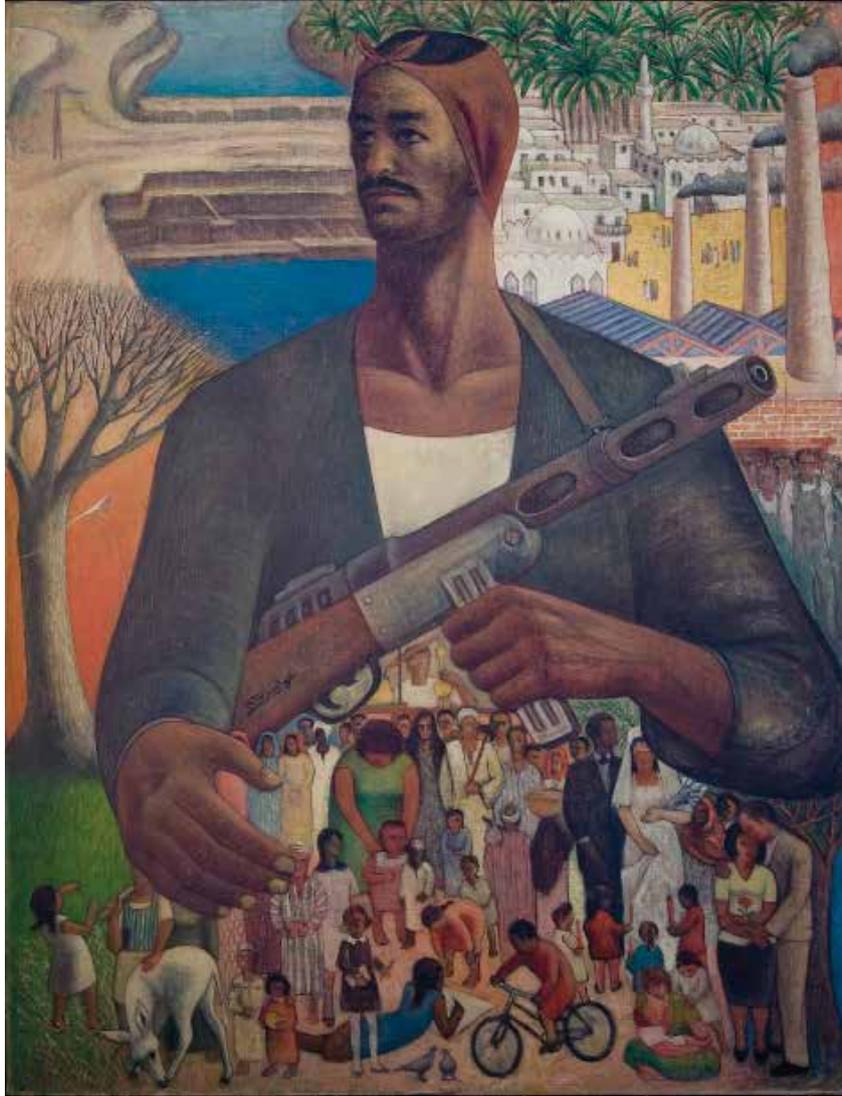
the Edo period, is most famous for his woodblock series of prints, particularly *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*.

In Chu Teh-Chun's *Untitled* (1958), the Chinese-French artist draws on Art Informel, Western abstraction and the tradition of Chinese landscape painting. Meanwhile in *Bangkok III* (seen above, top left, wall-mounted), German artist Andreas Gursky conjures the free-flowing depictions of water of Song dynasty landscape paintings, but also the late landscape paintings of Claude Monet.

The title of the exhibition refers to George Kubler's 1962 book of the same name that challenged the notion of 'style' by placing the history of objects and images in a larger continuum. In Kubler's universe, processes of innovation, replication, and mutation are in continuous conversation throughout time.

"Spanning millennia, the works are integrated without chronological mandate so that the viewer can discover fresh and unexpected correspondences between past and present," the Gagosian said.

The Shape of Time is on until January 9th at the Gagosian Gallery, Hong Kong.



Hamed Ewais, *Le Gardien de la Vie*, 1967-1968, Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of The Whitechapel Gallery.

A new installment of modern and contemporary Arabic art is on display at London's leftfield Whitechapel Gallery. *Barjeel Art Foundation collection: Part 2* is the second exhibition in a series of four devoted to the United Arab Emirates-based foundation, which contains the personal art collection of Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi. The final two exhibitions in the series will open at the East End gallery later in the year.

This display focuses on figurative work produced between 1968 and 1987. Among the work featured, *Erotic Composition* (1967-70), by Lebanese artist Huguette Caland eerily stands out – as does the work of artist and writer Kamal Boullata. Born in Jerusalem, Boullata explores what it means to be Palestinian and in exile. He depicts Islamic

calligraphy as colourful patterns, challenging the idea that Arabic script is Islamic when it is visually represented.

Egyptian painter Hamed Ewais (1919-2011) is also represented, with his work *Le Gardien de la Vie* (seen above). A pioneer of social realism, he is considered one of Egypt's greatest artists, both in terms of technique and subject matter. His work is seen to embody the struggle of Egypt's masses and he is a pillar of the revolutionary art that came after 1952, when the monarchy was overthrown by Nasser's progressive Pan Arab regime.

Barjeel Art Foundation collection: Part 2 is on until April 17th 2016 at the Whitechapel Gallery, London.



Evandro Teixeira. Ônibus em inundaç o no Jardim Bot nico. Rio de Janeiro, 1988. Inkjet print. Pigmento mineral sobre papel. Photo courtesy of Museu de Arte di Rio.

Brazilian photojournalist Evandro Teixeira (b.1935) has captured situations as diverse as the funeral of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, the social exclusion of Brazilians in the northern state of Bahia, the Brazilian student protests of 1968 and the Chilean military coup.

He started his career working in 1958 at the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *Di rio da Noite*. In the early 1960s, he moved on to the *Jornal do Brasil*, where he would work for more than 40 years. Teixeira is “a poet of the angle of vision and the point of view”, said Paulo Herkenhoff, Curator at the Museu de Arte do Rio, where his photos are currently being exhibited.

His work, which often takes an aerial perspective, contrasts with the ‘decisive moment’ approach to photography. This notion is famously evidenced in the work of the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose photos of early 20th Century Paris are now icons of so-called ‘candid photography.’

“His [Teixeira’s] ability to be at the front is not the sense of opportunity shown by Cartier-Bresson of ‘being in the right place at the right time’, but understanding how he should operate within the informa-

tion, in order to construct the image and experience of the facts. His movement is a physical, sensitive and political confrontation with what is happening,” he said.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade, the famous Brazilian 20th Century poet, wrote a poem about the photographer, entitled *Before the Photos of Evandro Teixeira*. In it, he says that Teixeira’s photos of the 1968 street fights in Rio are “as alive today as then”:

*Of the street fights in Rio,
in 68, what is left,
more positive, more flaming
than the accusatory photos,
as alive today as then,
reminding us how to exorcise?*

Teixeira’s critically-acclaimed photo essays including *Canudos – 100 years* and *Barren Lives* tackle the poor hinterlands of northern Brazil, indigenesness, belief systems and football, among other subjects.

Evandro Teixeira: the constitution of the world is on until February 14th at Museu de Arte do Rio.



Nguyen Thai Tuan. Black Painting No. 83 (2009) oil on canvas. 130x110cm. Photo courtesy of Art Stage Singapore.

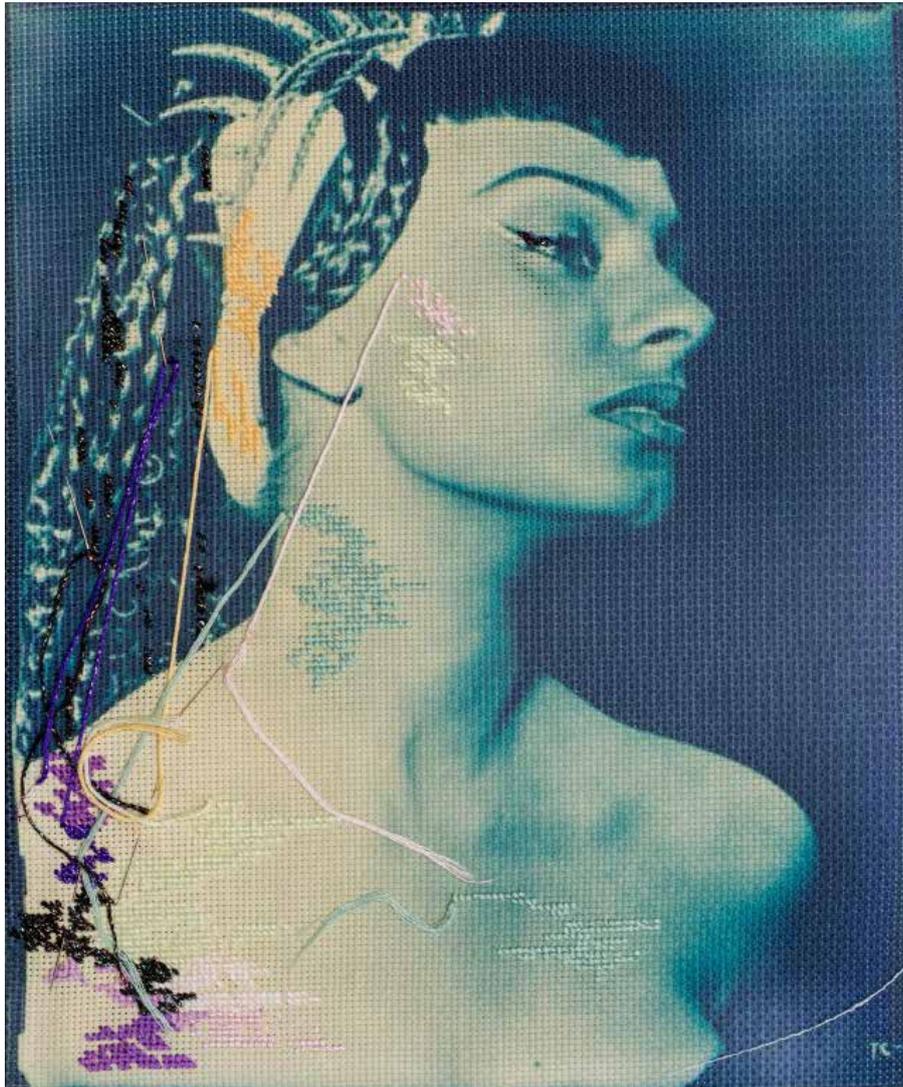
The sixth edition of Art Stage Singapore takes place in January with around 75% of the galleries present from Asia. This year sees the launch of the first edition of the Southeast Asia Forum, a series of talks -- and an exhibition -- which will run in tandem with the programme of the fair. Entitled *Seismograph: Sensing the City – Art in the Urban Age*, the focus of the forum is urbanization and how it shapes us. It aims to cast light on Southeast Asia's rapidly urbanizing landscape.

A number of notable artists from Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines are represented at the fair. Nguyen Thai Tuan (b.1965), one of Vietnam's most significant artists of his generation, is also taking part (see above). His striking paintings, stripped of references to time and space, offer a singular vision

of contemporary life. They underscore the fragility of humanity, and emphasise the subjective and the personal, yet at the same time achieve a universality.

Unlike many artists of his generation, Nguyen Thai Tuan remained and was trained as an artist in Vietnam, instead of going abroad. He has been compared to Ed Hopper in his use of colour in the depiction of interiors. He has also been referenced alongside the Chinese artist Hu Yang, whose intimate portraits of people from Shanghai in their homes crossed boundaries of social classes, treating the rich and the poor with equal respect.

Art Stage Singapore is taking place from January 21st-24th 2016.



REVERSING ORIENTALISM

New work by Farhad Ahrarnia melds together a dizzying range of influences from East and West, producing beautifully challenging art.

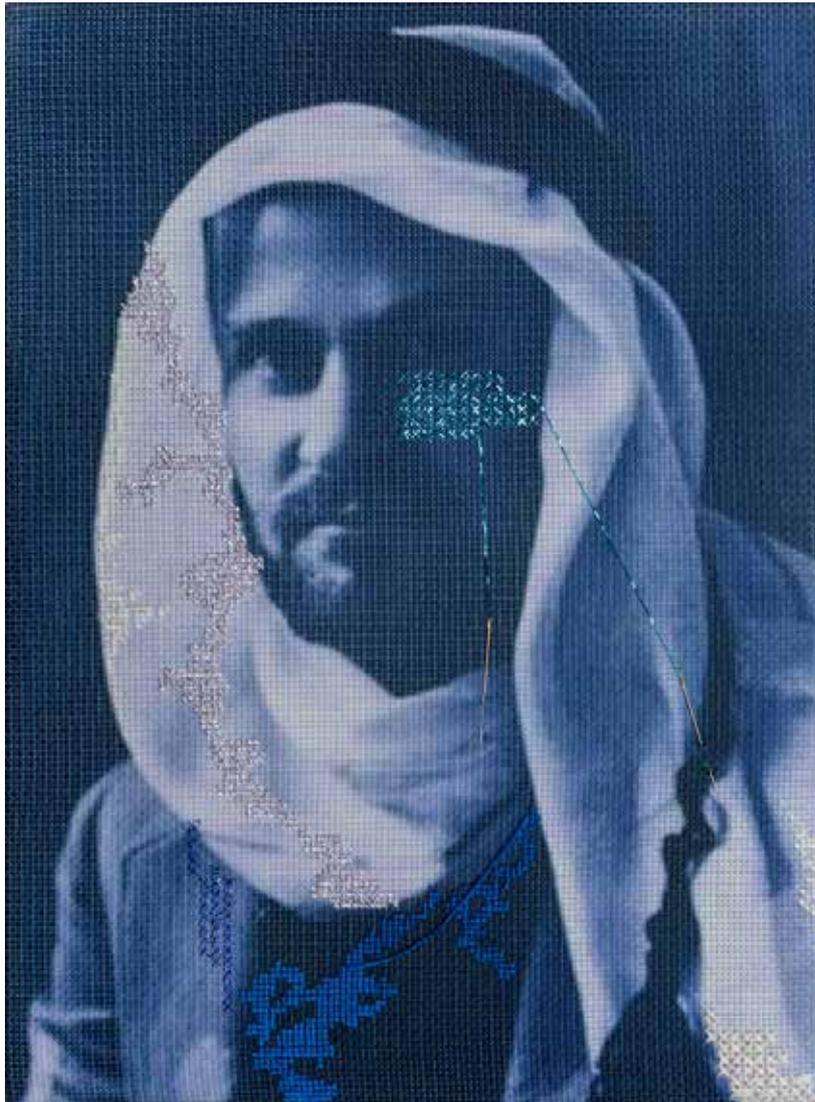
Iranian-born Farhad Ahrarnia (b.1971) explores the West's fever for all things Egypt in his latest body of work. Egyptomania has had a significant impact on the cultural imagination of Western culture in the last two centuries. The impact it has had can be seen in the visual arts, theatre, dance, architecture and literature since the early 19th Century, and was an important aspect of many Modernist works of art in the last century. But the West's fascination with

Egypt extends back to Hellenistic times.

Farhad Ahrarnia, who lives and works in the UK, explores the aesthetics that emerged from this inter-mingling of the ancient, mythical and exotic with high modernism. The resulting body of work is one that includes ancient imagery and hand-embroidered textiles depicting archival images of actors, spies and authors, and 20th Century modernism.



Above: Farhad Ahrarnia, *The Delirium of Becoming, a Moment Caught Between Myth and History, No. 1*, 2015. Digital print dyed onto cotton fabric, hand embroidered using silk, cotton and metallic thread, and needles. 147.5 x 113 x 2 cm. 58 1/8 x 44 1/2 x 3/4 in. (FA025). Previous page: Farhad Ahrarnia, *A Dish Fit for the Gods*, 2014-1015. Digital print heat transferred onto polyester aida, hand stitched using silk, cotton and metallic thread, and needles. 32.5 x 27 x 1.5 cm. Courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.



Farhad Ahrarnia, *Stony Silence of an Archaeologist*, 2014-2015, Digital print heat transferred onto polyester aida, hand stitched using silk, cotton and metallic thread, and needles. 36 x 27 x 1.5 cm. Courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.

Metalwork and a kind of Persian micro-mosaic known as Khatam even make their way into these multi-layered works. Into this melting pot of materials, the themes that emerge are diverse and complex: we find references to espionage, modern dance, sexuality, identity and orientalism, amongst others.

Well-known historical figures like Cleopatra and exotic dancer and double agent Mata Hari make an appearance, as well as a number of dancers from the 1920s and 30s, dressed in so-called “Egyptian style” dress. These images are embroidered with patterns referencing the textile designs of Paris-based artist Sonia De-

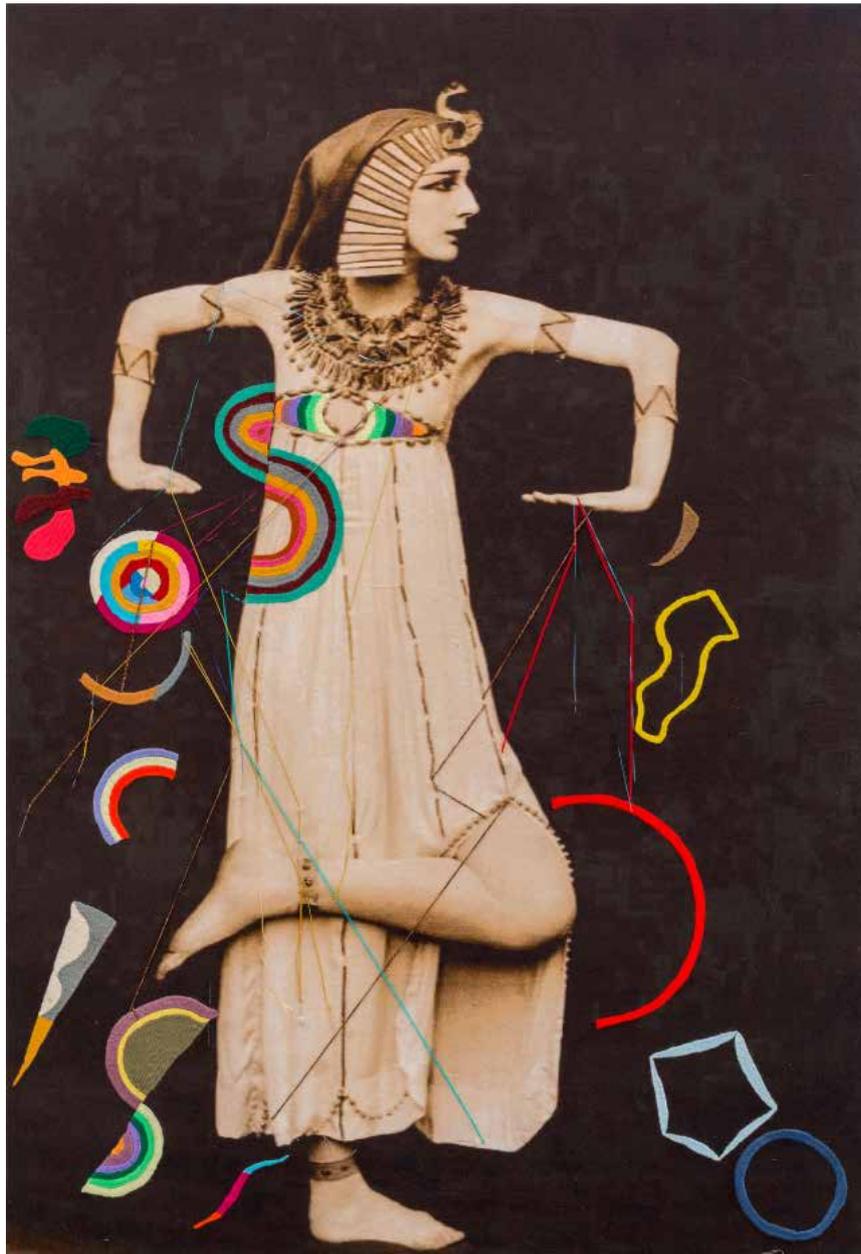
launey, who was their contemporary.

The Hollywood stars Elizabeth Taylor, Vivien Leigh and Sophia Loren also feature in these works, along with the silent movie star Theda Bara. Other colourful figures include Donald Wilber, the CIA agent with a love of Persian textiles who masterminded the overthrow of Iranian leader Mossadegh in 1953.

What unites all these figures is that they led duplicitous double lives. Through the use of embroidery, Ahrarnia “both metaphorically and literally weaves together the disparate strands into a narrative that is as rich as it is nuanced,” the curators of a recent exhibition of his



Clockwise from top (all Farhad Ahrarnia): *The Delirium of Becoming, a Moment Caught Between Myth and History, No. 3*, 2015. Digital print dyed onto cotton fabric, hand embroidered using, silk, cotton and metallic thread, and needles. 156 x 95 x 2 cm. *The Little Lonely God*, 2014-2015. Digital print heat transferred onto polyester aida, hand stitched using silk, cotton and metallic thread, and needles. 33.5 x 27 x 1.5 cm. *Variations on a Theme, No.2* [after Liechtenstein], 2015. Khatam (Brass, bone & wood). 29 x 47.2 x 3 cm. *Khufu*, 2015. Khatam (brass, bone and wood). 41.5 x 42 x 3 cm. All courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.



Farhad Ahrarnia. *The Delirium of Becoming, a Moment Caught Between Myth and History, No. 2, 2015*. Digital print dyed onto cotton fabric, hand embroidered using, silk, cotton and metallic thread, and needles. 155 x 106 x 2 cm. Courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.

work at Lawrie Shabibi gallery in Dubai said.

“Ahrarnia’s love of anecdotal and interconnected histories tie together various works, they added.” The reference to the author Agatha Christie in these works is particularly pertinent; the writer wrote many of her stories while stationed in Iraq with her archeologist husband. In addition, many of her novels including *Death on the Nile*, *A House in Shiraz*, and *Murder on the Orient Express* had a Middle Eastern backdrop.

“These locations provided mysterious and dramatic settings for the subject of her novels and the act of writing itself. In his embroidered portraits, Ahrarnia translates these notions into his own visual idiom - the coded

language of espionage and mystery writing represented by the needlework cross-stitch,” the curators said.

Finally, in his Khatam-based mosaic pieces, Ahrarnia ties together his Iranian origins with his interest in Egyptology and orientalism. He reworks Western European and American modernist works in his latest Khatam works. Radical versions of Roy Lichtenstein’s *Great Pyramid* and Max Bill’s triangular compositions can be understood as reversing the flow of orientalism, and uniting East with West.

A Dish Fit for the Gods, Farhad Ahrarnia’s first solo exhibition in the Middle East, recently took place at Lawrie Shabibi in Dubai.



Farhad Ahrarnia, *Her Body, Her Nation*, 2014-2015. Digital print heat transferred onto polyester aida, hand stitched using silk, cotton and metallic thread, and needles. 33.3 x 27 x 1.5 cm. Courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.



Sonia Boyce (b. 1962). Lay back, keep quiet and think of what made Britain so great 1986. Charcoal, pastel and watercolour on paper. 1525 x 650 mm. Arts Council Collection. © Sonia Boyce.

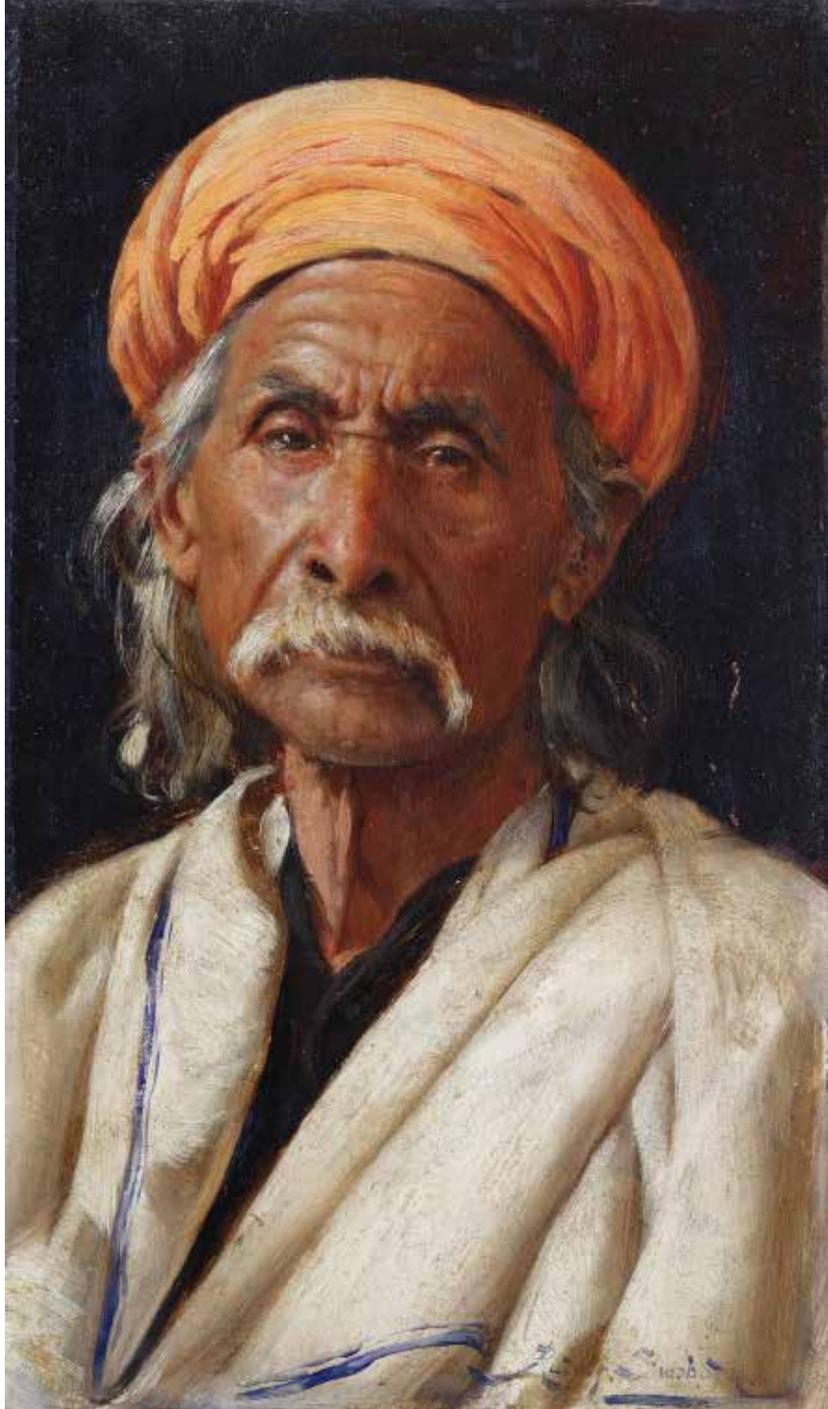
RICH HISTORIES

Tate Britain embarks upon an ambitious survey of art made during the British Empire.

Tate Britain's *Artist and Empire* exhibition ambitiously surveys art, and the role of artists, in the British Empire. Staging such an exhibition in 21st century Britain is undeniably challenging. Its curator, Alison Smith, said at the launch that the "real challenge was selecting the material to make a wonderful show without being celebratory of empire."

Alison Smith and her colleagues have surmounted this challenge on a number of fronts. Most promi-

nently they have chosen to showcase a large number of works by 20th century and contemporary artists who were, or are descended from, the subject peoples of the Empire. Some of these hint at or express moral rage at the appropriation that took place under the banner of the Empire's "civilising mission". Others betray a less confrontational though no less critical attitude.



Rudolf Swoboda (1859-1914). Bakshiram 1886. Oil paint on panel. 260 x 159 mm
Royal Collection Trust/ © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2015



The Singh Twins (b. 1966). *EnTWINed* 2009. Poster, gouache and gold dust on mountboard. 539 x 674. Museum of London.

Among works displaying the first tendency, the Guyanese-British artist Hew Locke superimposes gold and silver objects onto Bristol street sculptures of imperial figures, as if they were parading their imperial bling. On the other hand, *EnTWINed* by the Singh Twins (see above) celebrates -- in their Mughal-inspired miniaturist style -- the success of the Indian diaspora community in 21st Century Britain. However, this piece is a reworking of the 1859 painting *Home Again* by Henry Nelson O'Neil, also included in the exhibition, that shows soldiers disembarking on return from putting down the Indian Mutiny.

Throughout, the curators juxtapose familiar imperial artefacts with contemporary artistic commentary. In an early room the visitor is invited to admire Benin bronze heads, masterpieces of African art now displayed in Cambridge University. Later their shocking history is told through the inclusion of a series of drawings by Tony Phillips, one of which shows British troops killing Africans wearing the masks during the reprisal-raids of 1897 in which they were looted.



Charles Frederick Goldie (1870-1947). Harata Rewiri Tarapata: A Maori Chieftainess
1906. Oil paint on canvas. 610 x 510 mm. Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum,
Bournemouth.



James Sant (1820-1916). Captain Colin Mackenzie c.1842. Oil paint on canvas. 2386 x 1455 mm. National Army Museum.

A gentler side of Artist and Empire emerges in the record of the face-to-face interactions of cultures and peoples as they were recorded in art. Outstanding 19th century examples include portraits by Rudolph Swoboda, commissioned by Queen Victoria of Indian “native artisans”, and the portraits of elderly Maori by Charles Frederick Goldie. In these the realistic technique of Western oil painting captures both the universal humanity and cultural distinctiveness of the sitters.

Close by these portraits the curators have placed numerous artworks showing British monarchs, soldiers, tradesmen and administrators as represented according to the conventions of non-Western art.

Artist and Empire is showing at Tate Britain, London, until 10 April 2016.

Words by Gareth John.



Clockwise from top left:
Augustus John (1878-1961). Colonel T.E. Lawrence 1919. Oil paint on canvas. 800 x 597 mm. Tate. Presented by the Duke of Westminster. 1920.
Unknown photographer. A Man from Malaita in Fiji late 19th century. Albumen print. 198 x 146 mm. The British Museum, London.
Indian Artist, Delhi. Mahadaji Sindhia entertaining a British naval officer and military officer with a Nautch c. 1815-20. Watercolour on paper. 222 x 317 mm. British Library.



Frida Kahlo photographed by Leo Matiz in the 1940s. © Leo Matiz. Photo courtesy of FoLa, Buenos Aires.

BEFORE SHE WAS FAMOUS

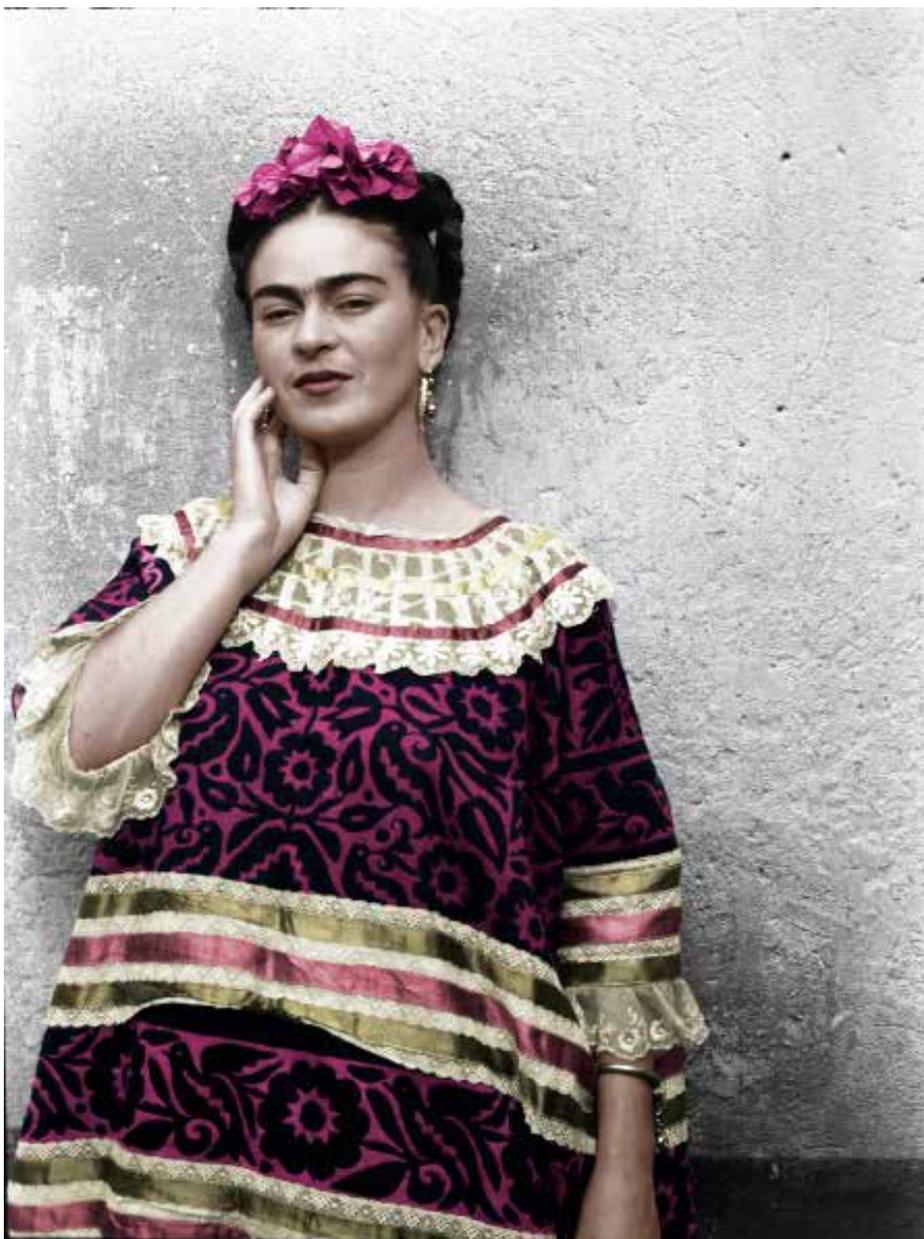
A new museum devoted to Latin American photography opens in Buenos Aires with an inaugural exhibition of Leo Matiz's revealing photos of Frida Kahlo

The humidity is rising as I make my way down Avenida Juan. B Justo, a busy thoroughfare that slices the fashionable district of Palermo in two. It's early December and therefore the first few weeks of summer. Cars are hurtling down the road, and motorists are beeping each other with barely-contained *porteño* rage. The yellow and black stripes of taxis are mere streaks in the air like bumblebees on a hot summer's day in England. Kitchen workers huddle outside restaurants, trying to catch a breath of fresh air, but the ever-present whiff of parrilla-made steak follows them. It's hot, it's noisy, it's a little ugly and it's also beautifully alive. It's the perfect setting for a dynamic new photography gallery.

The Fototeca Latinoamericana (FoLa) opened its doors barely two months ago. Situated in the corner of a brand new outdoor shopping centre, known as Distrito Arcos, it is in the beating heart of Palermo. Distrito Arcos is an attractive new addition to hipster paradise Palermo. It has exactly the right credentials: shops nestle under the arches of an old railway bridge, lending industrial charm and a New York West Village feel. Railways still pass ahead, interrupting this contemporary paradise now and then with the clanking sounds of an out-dated railway system, the dinosaurs of a bygone age.



Frida Kahlo photographed by Leo Matiz in the 1940s. © Leo Matiz. Photo courtesy of FoLa, Buenos Aires.

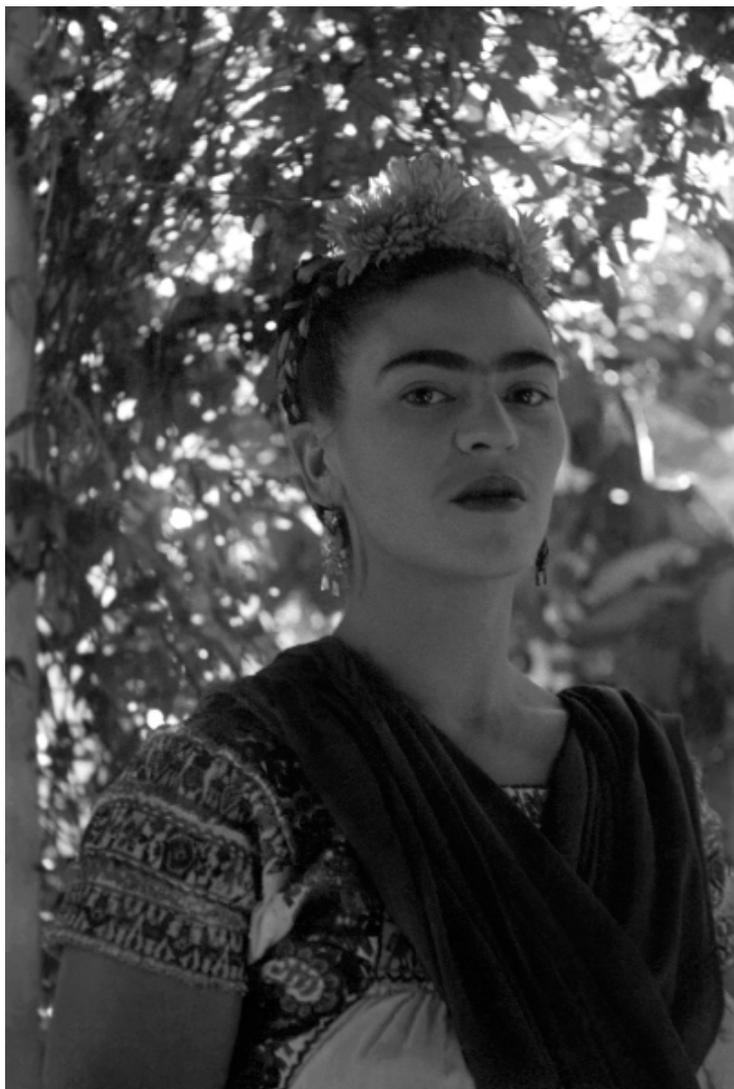


Frida Kahlo photographed by Leo Matiz in the 1940s. © Leo Matiz. Photo courtesy of FoLa, Buenos Aires.

FoLa is the brainchild of Gastón Deleau, an unassuming Argentine who worked for 25 years as an events producer for magazines, before founding the museum practically on a (it turns out, very successful) whim. He tells me that he is not a photographer himself, but has lots of friends who are – and is a passionate admirer of their work. He built up a private collection of around 250 photographs during his previous career. It was only two years ago, during a casual conversation with friends, that he alighted upon the idea of opening a Latin American

photography museum. He got sponsorship and found premises, and the rest is history. His own sense of wonder that his pioneering enterprise took off is palpable. Argentina, under the steely hand of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, has not been the easiest place to start a business, let alone one that relies upon generous sponsorship money and the use of public buildings (in this case, buildings belonging to the national railway company).

The museum's inaugural exhibitions do not



Frida Kahlo photographed by Leo Matiz in the 1940s. © Leo Matiz. Photo courtesy of FoLa, Buenos Aires.

disappoint. True to the aims of the museum, there is contemporary photography on display from all over Latin America. But for me the current highlight is the exhibition devoted to photos of Mexico's best-loved artist, Frida Kahlo. The show, entitled *La vida relatada con el ojo: Matiz y Kahlo (The life told with the eye: Matiz and Kahlo)*, brings together the photographs of Colombian photographer, Leo Matiz, who became friends with Kahlo and Diego Rivera when he lived in Mexico during the 1940s. These photos offer us a seductive insight into Kahlo's private life, showing us a side of the artist that we normally miss. One of the world's most recognised artists, we are saturated by images of Kahlo and her work but rarely feel that we learn anything new about this iconic figure. These intimate and honest photographs capture her everyday life uncensored.

Photographs show her lying on the grass sunbathing, drinking a Coca-Cola, smoking a cigarette with a friend – or quite simply, doing nothing. We get a textured insight into the woman behind the art, in her many different moods. Instead of the hype and the fame that we normally associate with this rock star artist, a vulnerable yet proud figure emerges from these photos.

Indeed, Matiz had a privileged insight into the lives of Frida and Diego. He was a close friend of the couple and would spend days in their company at the Casa Azul. The famous house, which was visited by well-known artists and intellectuals, was also the source of much of Frida's inspiration. The special character of that house is captured in some of these photos – the



Above and below: Frida Kahlo photographed by Leo Matiz in the 1940s.
© Leo Matiz. Photo courtesy of FoLa, Buenos Aires.

walls lined with pre-Hispanic objects and the patio and garden spilling over with plants.

But the most extraordinary aspect of these photographs is that they offer us a glimpse of Frida before her fame skyrocketed. Later in life she would become aware of her own image and would be a master at curating it – but in these early photos, there is a spontaneity and freedom that later is lost. Matiz provides an important insight into the personality and everyday life of a woman who would soon become an icon.

The life told with the eye: Matiz and Kablo is showing at FoLa, Buenos Aires, until 6th March.

Words by Sophie Davies





Frida Kahlo photographed by Leo Matiz in the 1940s. © Leo Matiz. Photo courtesy of FoLa, Buenos Aires.

In the large-scale and multi-layered works of the Argentinean artist Alejandra Seeber (b.1968), everyday subjects take on a transformative power. The artist, who was born in Buenos Aires but now lives in New York, replicates the techniques of collage and folding in her paintings.

Her works are characterised by change, disruption, and randomness – but these chaotic tendencies are softened by a painterly delicacy. Figurative elements are on the point of emerging in many of these works -- but they are stopped or masked by expressionist, spontaneous brushwork.

Seeber's use of colour in these works suggests, at first glance, a light-hearted mood. However, the it becomes clear that the overall tone of these paintings is more sombre, with many of the shapes taking on the forms of an abyss.

Seeber is appearing in the solo show *Autoamerican* at Barro Gallery, Buenos Aires, until February 13th 2016.





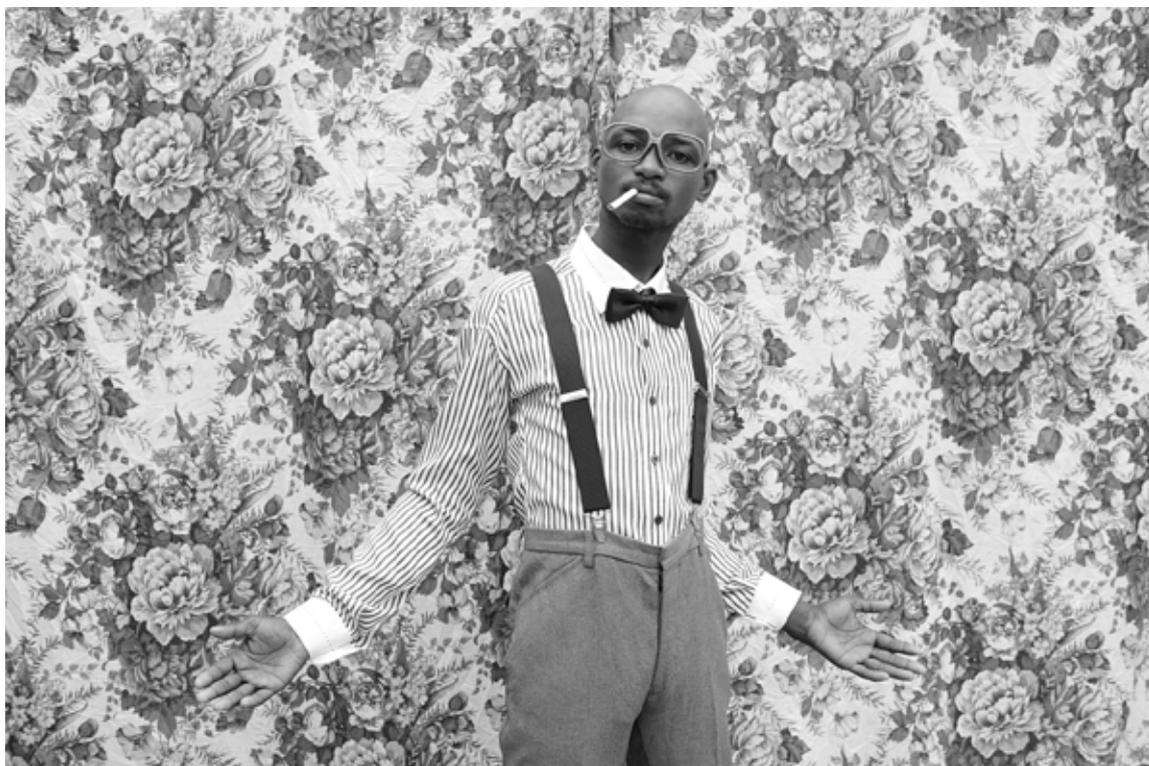












Mário Macilau. Alito, *The Guy with Style*. From the series *Moments of Transition*, 2013 Digital print 80 x 120 cm. Courtesy Ed Cross Fine Art Ltd, London © Mário Macilau.

CONTINENTAL SHIFT

Contemporary African art and design is under the spotlight at the Guggenheim Bilbao, as a complex continent emerges from the shadows.

A major new exhibition at the Guggenheim Bilbao, *Making Africa – A Continent of Contemporary Design*, sets out to shed new light on Africa through the work of 120 contemporary artists and designers. It adopts a cross-disciplinary approach to contemporary African practice by including entrepreneurs, thinkers, and designers. These creatives often work break with the conventional definitions of design, art, photography, film, and architecture, by working across several disciplines simultaneously.

“These works demonstrate the political, economic, social, cultural, and technological transformation of the continent,” the curators said. “These pieces are often created in small quantities by a collective of individuals; they are typically produced de-centrally, in an urban context, and are more oriented to the process than the result,” they added.

A number of the objects on show have emerged from an informal ‘maker’ culture. Many also radically rethink materials and are targeted at society, rather than a market. The exhibition aims to avoid stereotypical thinking about Africa, based on typical media accounts of famine, or corruption, for instance. Instead, it attempts to show the wealth of creativity and culture that Africa stands for – without trying to be comprehensive, given the vast size and complexity of the continent. “African design covers a fascinating spectrum of concerns that goes beyond recycling, traditional craft, or humanitarian design,” according to the curators.

The exhibition also seeks to show how the continent’s rapid economic growth and expanding middle class has transformed society – and will continue to do so in the coming decades. The



Pierre-Christophe Gam. The Kingdom of Taali M, 2013 . Website for the Parisian-Congolese Musician Taali M © Pierre-Christophe Gam.

rapid growth of the internet and mobile technology in Africa is another preoccupation of the curators. The continent now has more than 650 million mobile phones – more than in Europe or the United States -- which has enabled greater communication between Africa and the rest of the world, and resulted in a shift in perspective.

Here we give a snapshot of three of the most interesting artists featured in the exhibition:

Mario Macilau

Mario Macilau's journey from street kid to celebrated photographer was an unusual one. He never went to school as his mother couldn't afford the school fees. Instead he taught himself English by reading books and volunteering with NGOs.

While living on the streets of Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, he became interested in photography. He took his first photo aged 14 with a camera borrowed from a friend, of a woman selling cassava in the streets.

He later went on to teach himself photographic techniques from a makeshift darkroom he made in his mother's house. However he couldn't afford the chemicals and other materials required. Aged 23, he managed to acquire a Nikon FM2 camera from a friend who was given it by the Portuguese family he worked for – and Macilau's hobby got more serious.

He has since gone on to become a respected social documentary photographer whose work has been exhibited internationally. He still lives and works in Maputo. His photographs often capture the in-



Sunsum, 2015. Park Station, Johannesburg. Stained black concrete plinth (base) and seating. Stained black Saligna Glulam timber with steel inserts. Architect: David Adjaye, Adjaye Associates . Client: Zahira Asmal, THE CITY. Johannesburg Development Agency. City of Johannesburg. Model: (Materials) 2100 mm x 2100 mm x 2000 mm 12mm MDF, 3 mm steel rod and matt black stain. The base is 32mm MDF and painted with a Storm Grey PVA.

justice of oppression and the challenges of poverty. Some of his photographs show children who have grown up on streets with no electricity.

Other photos are less autobiographical – and focus on isolated groups of people including series on cement sellers in Mozambique, illegal loggers in Nigeria, and miners in Bangladesh. The photographer has said he uses light and composition in his photos to try to provide some balance – as his photos often deal with strong subjects.

In his *Moments of Transition* series (seen on page 40), Macilau aimed to capture the search for identity of contemporary young Mozambicans. All taken on a Sunday when people would traditionally wear formal attire, this series of photos depicts a youth movement that is heavily influenced by western fashion, partly through trips to Europe but also by a flourishing second-hand clothes movement. These photos also pay tribute to the mid-20th Century heyday of African studio photography, when

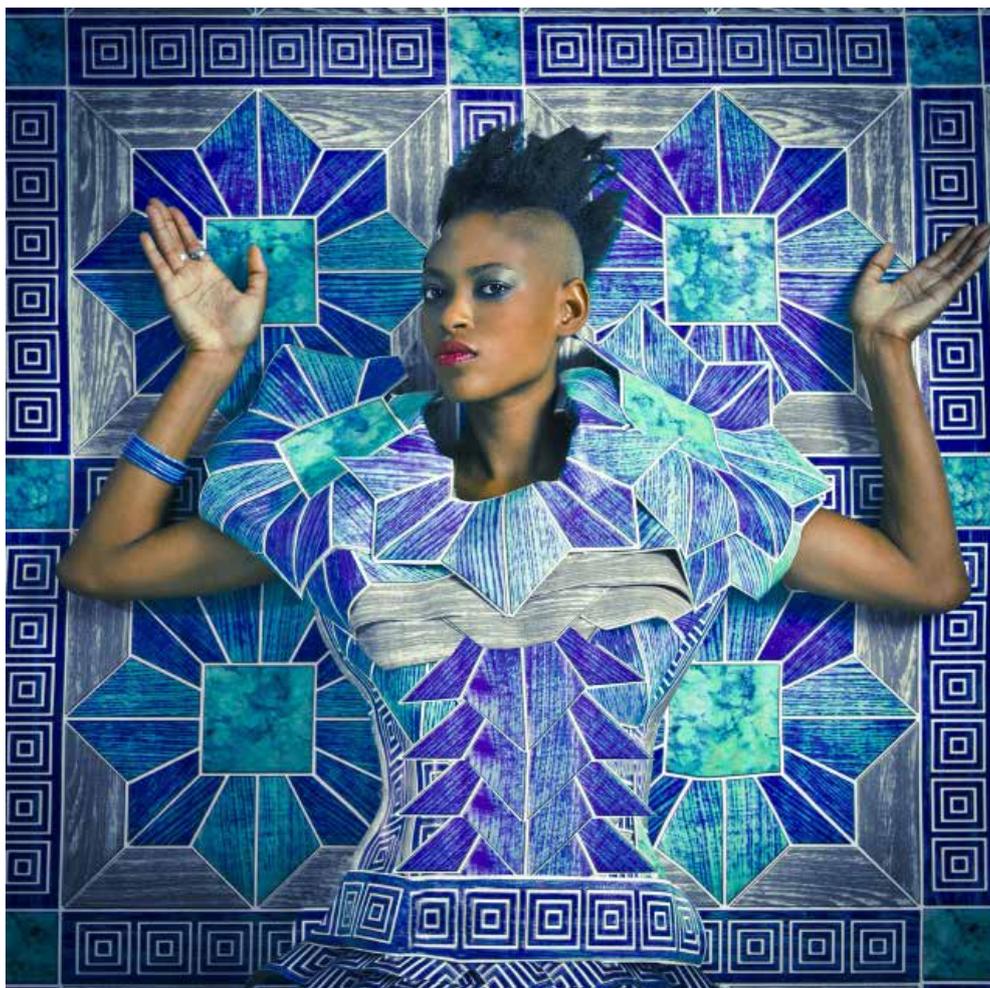
newly liberated generations celebrated the end of colonial rule.

Omar Victor Diop

Senegalese photographer Omar Victor Diop creates visually stunning photographs that are also conceptually challenging. But the Dakar-born artist's trajectory was not an obvious one. He was working in corporate communications when one day he bought a camera with a bonus.

He began taking photographs as a hobby, but success came quickly: his first project, *Fashion 2112, le Futur du Beau*, was selected for the Pan African Exhibition of the 2011 African Biennale of Photography. Encouraged by his swift success, Diop ended his corporate career in 2012 and dedicated himself to photography, despite coming from a family of financiers.

Diop's work draws on a long tradition of elaborate



Omar Victor Diop. *Mame*, 2014. From the series *The Studio of Vanities*. Pigment inkjet printing on Harman by Hahnemühle paper. 93 x 93 cm. Courtesy Magnin-A Gallery, Paris © Omar Victor Diop, 2014.



Cheick Diallo. *Sansa*, 2010. Metal, nylon, and cord . 80 x 70 x 90 cm. Courtesy Pascale Revert, London © Cheick Diallo.

African studio photography. He is also influenced by costume design and African visual traditions including textile design. His work interrogates long-held ideas about African identity. His *Project Diaspora* is a series of staged portraits of himself as historical figures, based on actual paintings from the 15th to the 19th centuries.

Some of these members of the African diaspora were stylish and worldly, like Juan de Pareja, who was a member of Spanish painter Velázquez's 17th Century household. Even though some were still owned by white people, they defied expectations of the black people of the time due to their level of education and sartorial sophistication.

Bodys Isek Kingelez

Congolese artist Bodys Isek Kingelez, who passed away last year, made postmodernist models of buildings and cities from a variety of materials including paper, cardboard and wood that offer a futuristic vision

of African cities.

The artist was born in 1948 in the village of Kimbembe-Ihunga in what was then the Belgian Congo. During the 1970s he worked as a restorer for traditional tribal African masks at the National Museum in Kinshasa. In 1978, he began building colourful, fantastical models of African megacities and from the mid-1980s onwards he dedicated himself solely to his own creations.

Some critics believe that his models comment on the trend for 'Afro kitsch' in contemporary African sculpture and architecture, which is seen by some as catering primarily to the expectations of Westerners. His works could also be seen as references to the overambitious building projects that have sprung up in Africa in recent years – many of which are abandoned before they are even completed.

His models, which he referred to as extreme models, also incorporate found materials like bottle tops and



Bodys Isek Kingelez. Red Congolese Star (Étoile Rouge Congolaise), 1990 Paper, cardboard, polystyrene, plastic, and found materials. 85 x 92 x 50 cm . Courtesy CAAC-The Pigozzi Collection, Geneva © Bodys Isek Kingelez.



Gallery view of *Making Africa* at the Guggenheim Bilbao. Photo courtesy of the Guggenheim.

tinfoil. During his lifetime, he created more than 300 models including one of the village where he was born. In the early 1990s, he started to create entire cities, not just buildings, which included parks, stadiums and avenues, among other things. His work has been shown at the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Whitney in New York.

Other artists featured in the show include the Philadelphia-based menswear brand, Ikiré Jones. The dynamic brand is inspired by the high-end tailoring of Western dress but also the colour and vivacity of West African culture. In addition, the clothes focus on storytelling: the brand's latest collection for Spring/Summer 2016, *e3 Other Stories By Our Stolen Children*, pays homage to children whose lives have been cut short by terrorism, disease or the tragedies of migration. The collection's Renaissance-era tapestry-styled silk scarves are also

intended to offer social commentary on Western perceptions of Africa.

The imaginative website of the French-Congolese musician Taali M, which invites views into an ancient African kingdom, is also featured – as are the wacky glasses by Nairobi-based Cyrus Kabiru, who uses found elements like spoons and screws. The exhibition also showcases a number of avant-garde African films, including *Afronauts* (2014) by the Ghanaian film director Frances Bodomo, born in Ghana, and *Pumzi* (2009) by Kenya-born Wanuri Kaji.

Making Africa – A Continent of Contemporary Design is showing at the Guggenheim Bilbao until 21 February, 2016.



Ikiré Jones. Idumota Market, Lagos 2081 A.D. From the series Our Africa 2081 A.D., 2014. Digital print 35 x 45 cm © Olalekan Jeyfous [vigilism.com] & Walé Oyéjidé [ikirejones.com].

Belgian artist Sammy Slabbinck (b.1977) uses vintage photographs to create surreal contemporary collage. He started making found-photo collages in 2009 using magazine images and vintage ads. In his work, these images are decontextualized and re-appropriated, partly by a dynamic use of scale and juxtaposition. Many of these deceptively skilful works are comprised of just two images that the artist combines perfectly.

His work, which is reminiscent of Jacques Prévert, is normally culled from mid-20th Century images. He has always been drawn to vintage imagery, particularly that from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, saying it has an innocence that he finds alluring. His witty images however have darker undertones than might not be perceived at first glance.

The artist began going to garage sales, where he would buy up old magazines and books, long before he began making collages. Slabbinck has said that normally an image will trigger his imagination and a story will be played out in his mind. With his photographic memory, sometimes one image will trigger the memory of another he has previously seen. He then has to search through piles of vintage magazines to re-find that image or to find another one that will suit the story in his head. These delightfully whimsical images are the result.

Sammy Slabbinck's latest work was recently showing at Michael Hoppen Gallery, London.



Trapped © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.





Emotional Rescue © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.

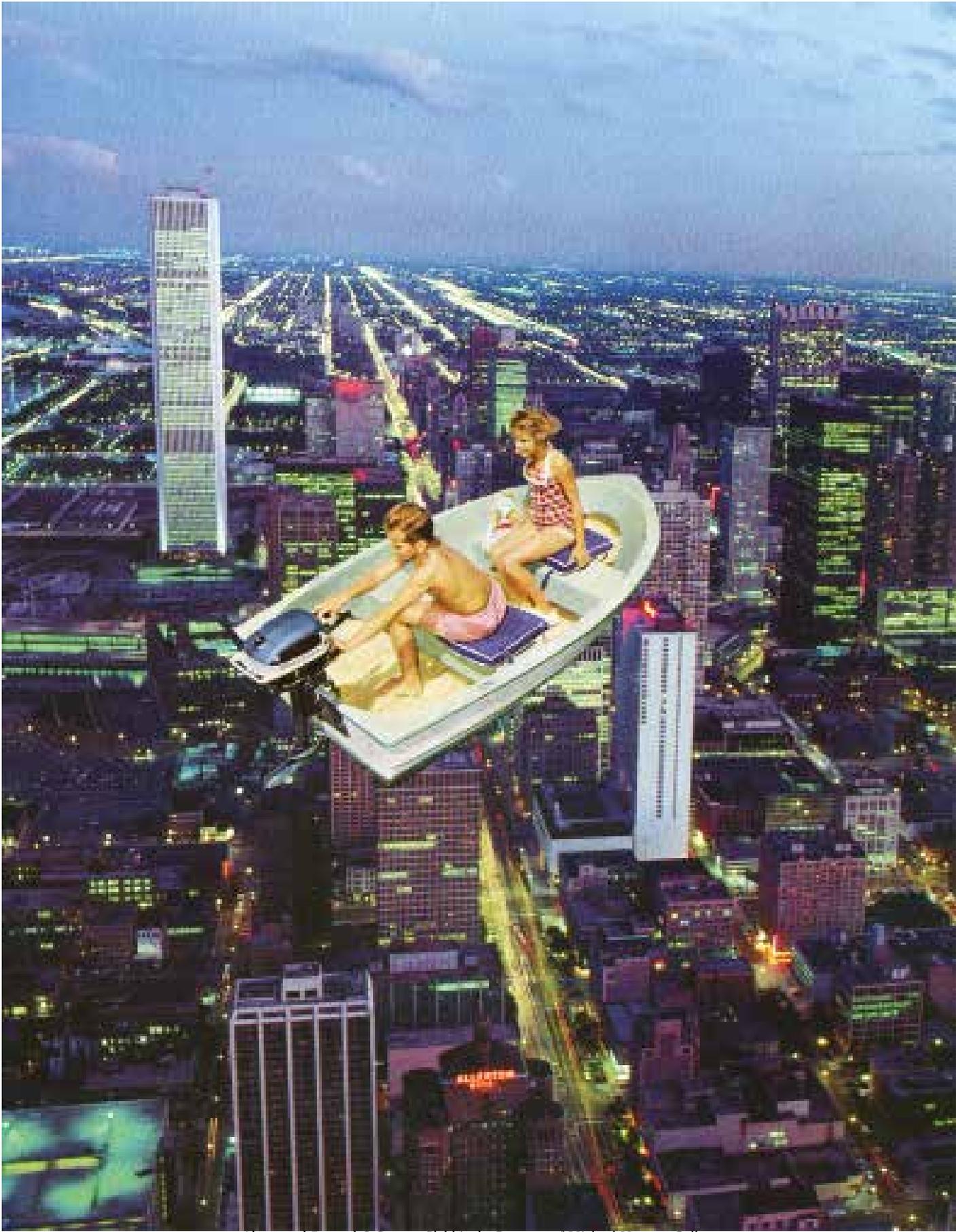




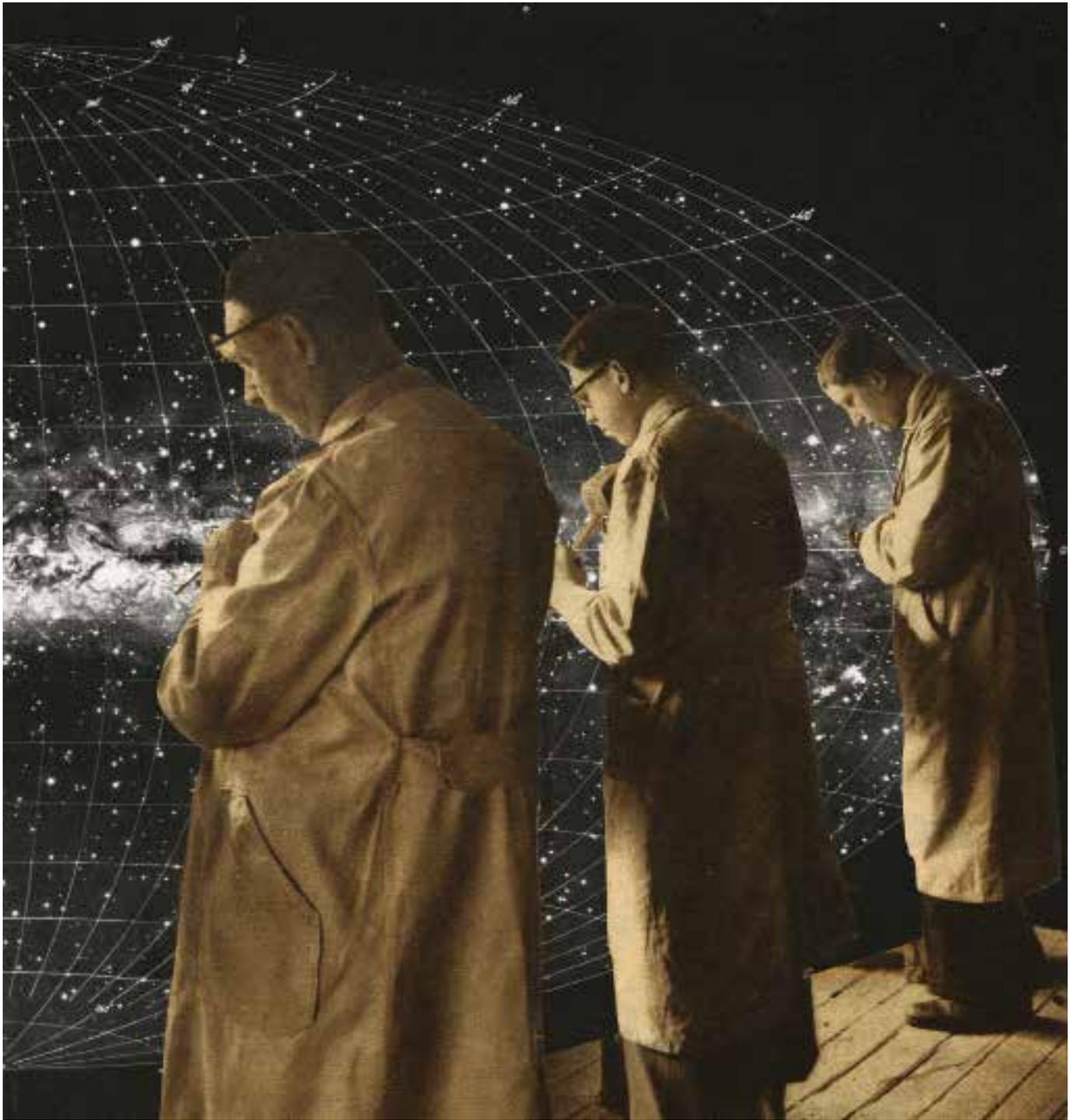
Where Have You Been Lately © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.



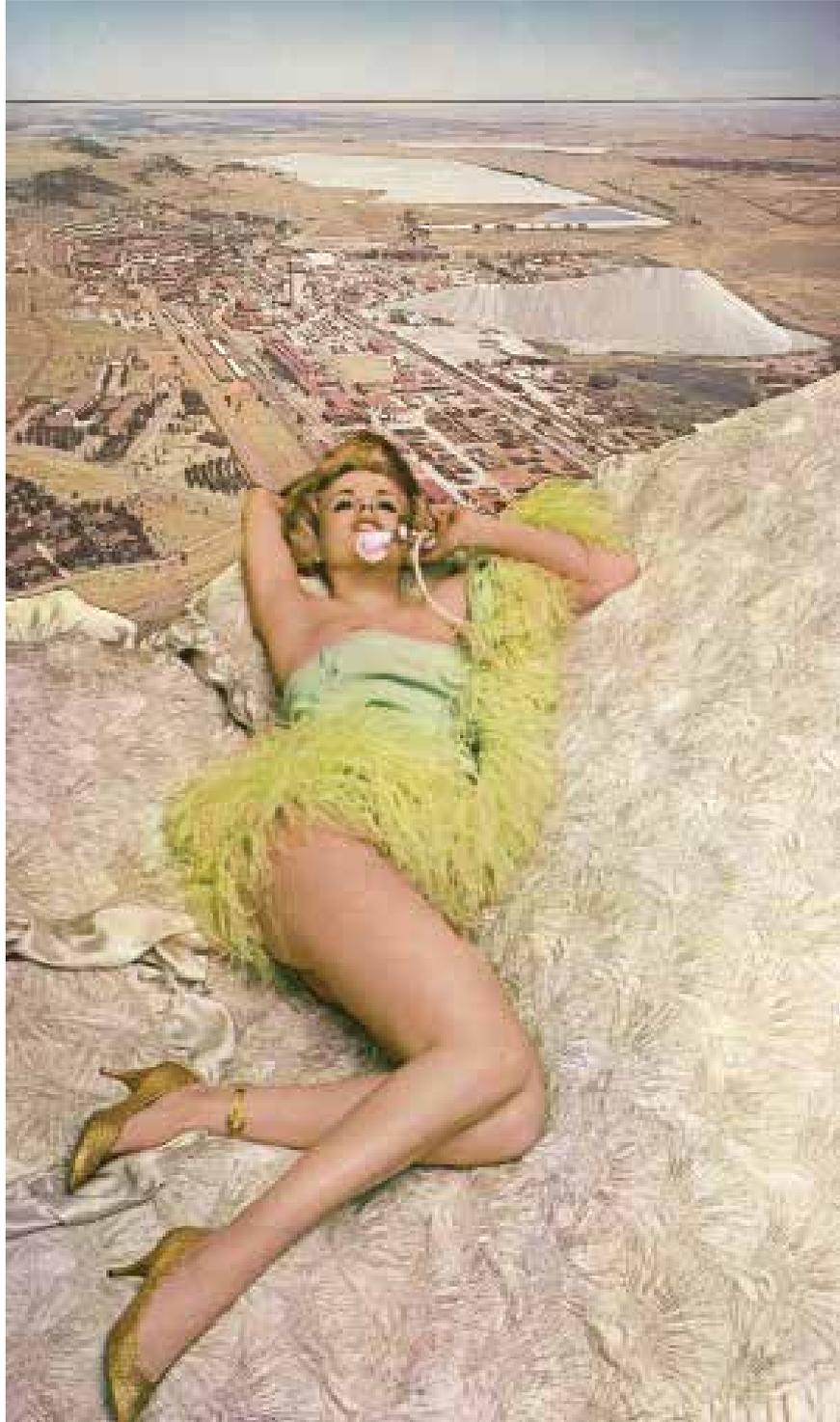
Perception © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.



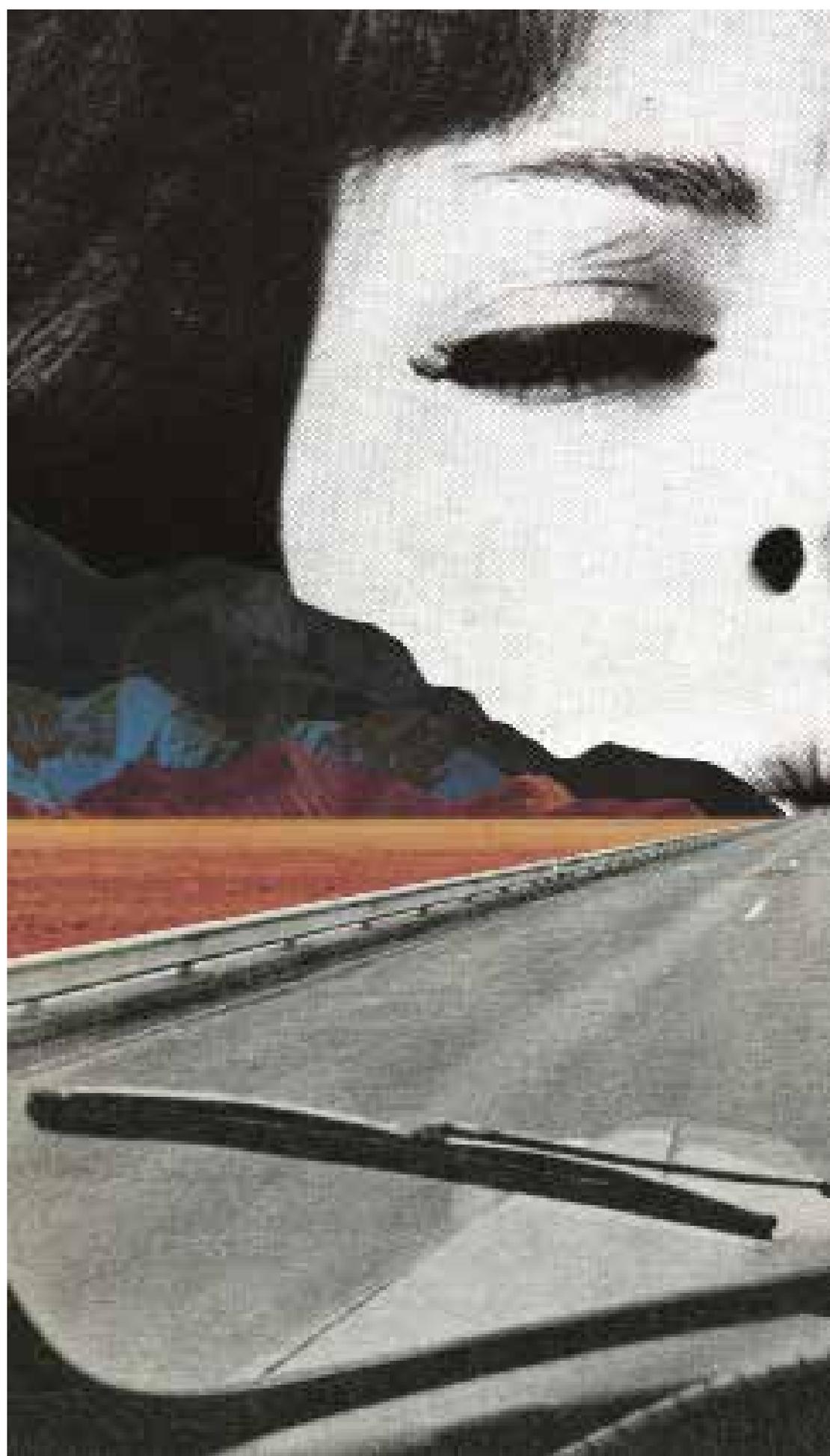
Above and Beyond © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.

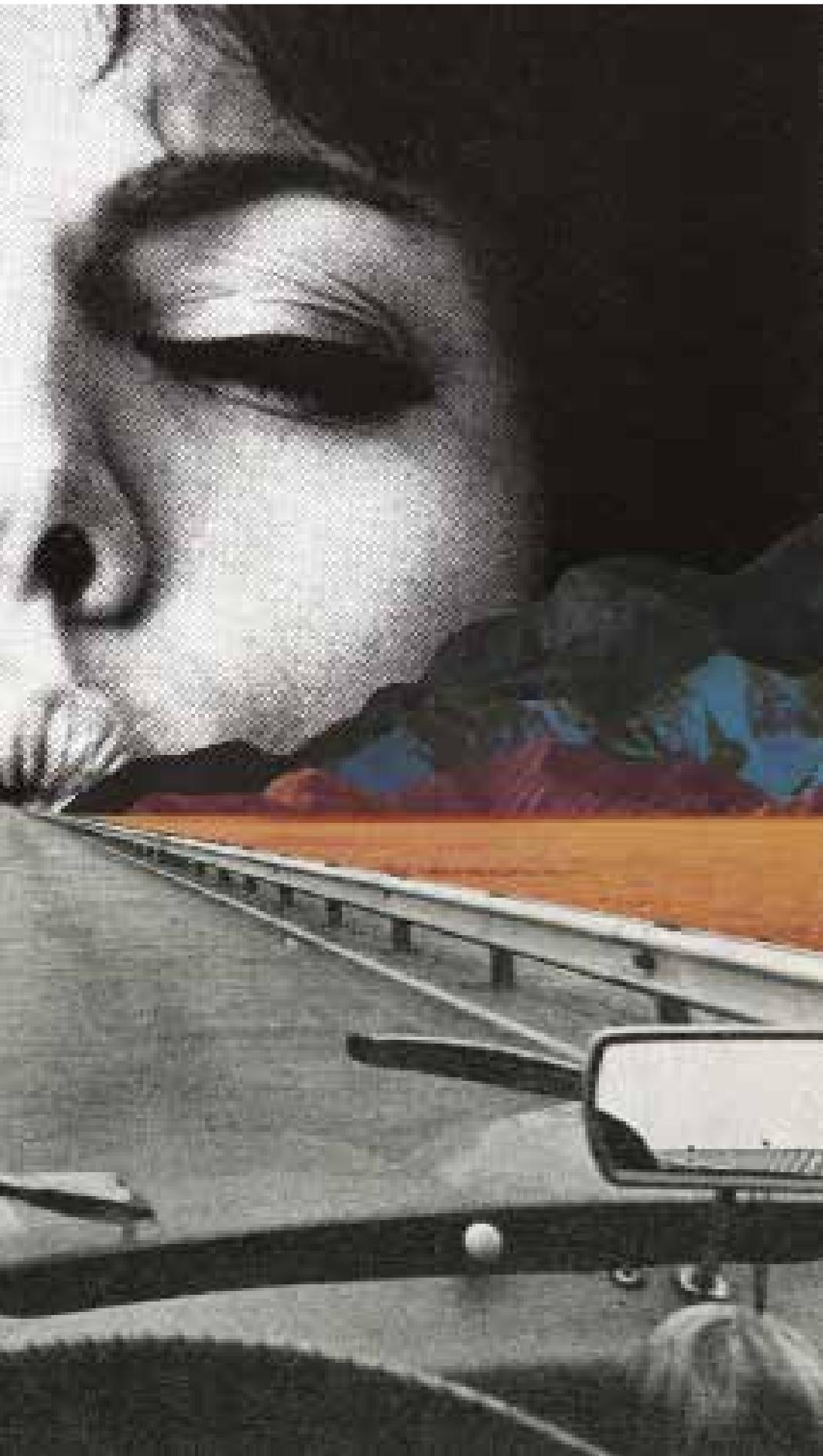


Creating a Galaxy © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.



The Call © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.





Going Nowhere © Sammy Slabbinck. Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery.



Selknam children (1898). Source: Libro Genocidio Ona. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

ASTRAL ENCOUNTERS

A bewitching set of photographs is testament to one of Latin America's lost civilizations, who lived for thousands of years in isolation in the southernmost tip of the world.

Fierce winds and torrential rain batter these lands. In the winter months, heavy snow and frequent storms make them barely habitable. But the godforsaken lands of Tierra del Fuego, in the far south of Chile and Argentina, were home for thousands of years to two of the world's most ancient civilizations: the Selknam and Yamana people.

They lived for centuries in small groups depending on hunting, gathering and fishing. To combat the inclement weather, they hunted and skinned *guanacos* for their skins. The Selknam inhabited northern parts of Tierra del Fuego and were

known as land-dwellers, while the Yamana were nomadic and lived in the islands to south of the region. They travelled by canoe to collect food from different islands and the men hunted sea lions.

The islands to the south of Tierra del Fuego's main island Isla Grande are desolate temples to an ancient civilization. Even in November, which is meant to be spring-like and mild in this remote region, turbulent winds and moody, threatening skies give boat trips down the Beagle Canal a darker edge.



The Koshménk in search of their unfaithful wife, Kulan, woman of the night. Their conical mask, of about 70 centimeters high, is carved into the bark. Hain ceremony, Selk'nam rite, 1923 © Martin Gusinde / Anthropos Institut / Éditions Xavier Barral



Ventura Tenenesk, last shaman to conduct a Hain initiation ceremony in 1923. Selk'nam, 1919-1924 © Martin Gusinde / Anthropos Institut / Éditions Xavier Barral.



Martin Gusinde in Pichilemu, Chile. 1917. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

As we glide out of Ushuaia port, the winds come up and the rain starts crashing down the windows of the catamaran, compromising any picture-postcard view of Tierra del Fuego. Out on deck, the silhouettes of hundreds of sea lions on rocky islands make for a dramatic skyline. This is nature at its wildest, as Charles Darwin discovered. The Yamana lived here, in one of the most uninhabitable parts of the world.

In the very twilight years of their extraordinary civilization – just a few decades before they would cease to exist – the German missionary Martin Gusinde (1886-1969) documented their lives, producing a se-

ries of haunting photographs.

Gusinde, who was ordained as a missionary in 1911, was ostensibly sent to southern Chile to convert the natives of the region but instead he became their friend. Over time, the missionary became an anthropologist. He undertook four research trips to Tierra Del Fuego between 1918 and 1924. Each of these journeys lasted several months.

As Gusinde got to know the native Selknam (previously known as the Ona people) better, he gained a more privileged position from which to observe



Ona people taken to Paris by Mr. Maitre in 1889. Photo: Adolfo Kwasny, Punta Arenas, Chile. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

their private rituals. They allowed him to take part in their initiation rites and let him record their songs and chants. The recordings he made are the only surviving audio recordings of the Tierra del Fuego native people.

Gusinde was the first anthropologist to carry out an in-depth study on Fuegian people, considered the most southerly people in the world. By the time he arrived in Tierra del Fuego, the native population had reduced considerably – decimated by loss of habitat, the arrival of European diseases including measles and smallpox.

The Selknam Genocide, organized by the Romanian engineer Julius Popper, also annihilated hundreds – hunting parties cleared their territory to be used for land for those who flocked to the region for its burgeoning gold rush. Bounties were awarded to hunters who came home with Selknam heads and ears.

Around 4'000 Selknam inhabited the region in the 1880s. When Gusinde first arrived in Tierra del Fuego however, there were just a few hundred left. They lived destitute lives around the mission settlement of La Candelária.

Gusinde's singular journeys were marked by his ability to penetrate these isolated, near-forgotten communities at the end of the world. When Charles Darwin visited Tierra del Fuego in 1832 he was shocked by the primitive way of life of the Fuegian people. "One can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world," he wrote.

The 1200 negatives that remain from Gusinde's trips provide a unique testimony of his journeys. Some of the most beguiling photographs show the Selknam tribe's Hain initiation ceremony, revealing the cultural richness of these once-derided commu-



Clockwise from top left:
Julius Popper during one of his indigenous hunts. At his feet, someone murdered by the militants (1898). Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
Ona person in Chilean Tierra del Fuego (1904). Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Author: G. M. Grossi.
Julius Popper (1898) Source: Genocidio Ona. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Author unknown.



The missionary Thomas Bridges, his wife and indigenous people in Ushuaia (1883). Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Author unknown.

nities.

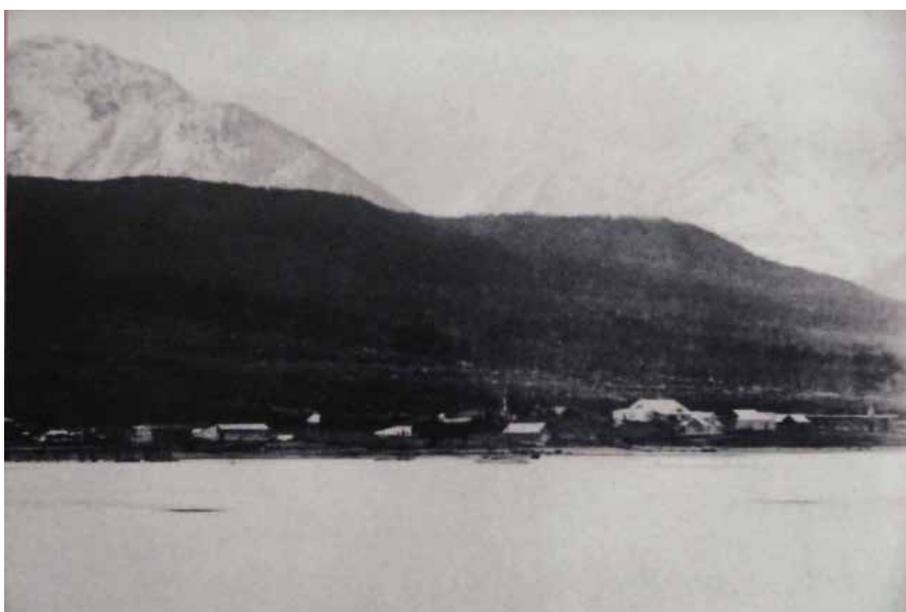
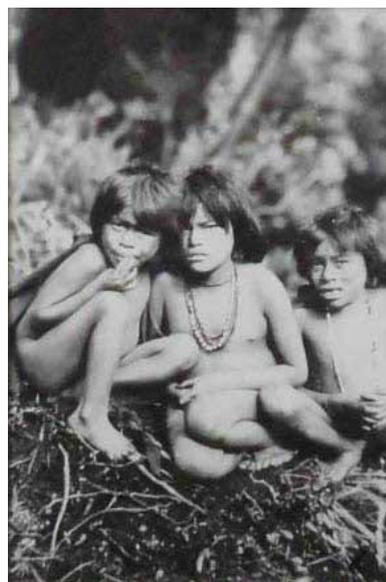
Hain was the Selknam male initiation ceremony celebrating the passage to adulthood. According to scant accounts of the secretive ceremony, young males would be attacked by other tribe members dressed up as supernatural spirits. Their job was to unmask these spirits, thus revealing to them that they were not real – and freeing them of their childhood beliefs. In school, Selknam children were taught to believe in these spirits.

But what is perhaps strangest about this ceremony to contemporary sensibilities is that Selknam women were left in the dark – they were never told in the passage to womanhood that these spirits did not exist, enabling patriarchal Selknam values to persist into adulthood. The so-called ‘spirits’ would go to female encampments, to scare them.

It is believed that before the arrival of the Europe-

ans, these ceremonies would last for long periods – sometimes even up to a year. After it had been revealed to the men that the spirits were just human beings, they would pretend to fight them for the purposes of parading their strength in front of the women. By the time Gusinde arrived in Tierra del Fuego, the Hain rituals were probably only a fragment of what they had once been. It is believed that the Hain rituals that Gusinde photographed were the last to take place, and were in fact re-enacted.

But the knowledge that these photos may have been staged re-enactments of Hain ceremonies does not detract from their powerful mystery. The spirit costumes the Selknam wore can be seen in their full surrealist (and perhaps, nightmarish) glory. Spectral photos show men standing barefoot in the snow, their bodies painted and wearing elaborate, conical headdresses. Ventura Tenenesk, one of the shamans who conducted the 1923 ceremony, is glimpsed in another hallucinatory image. Stern



Clockwise from top left:
View of Anglican mission in Ushuaia (1883). Source: Museu Marítimo de Ushuaia. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
Yamana people (1883). Source: Museu Marítimo de Ushuaia. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
View of Ushuaia (c.1897). Source: Museu Marítimo de Ushuaia. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Ulen, male buffoon. His role is to amuse the Hain spectators. Hain ceremony, Selk'nam rite, 1923 © Martin Gusinde / Anthropos Institut / Éditions Xavier Barral

and otherworldly, he wears a guanaco skin cape known as the *chobn k-oli* and face paint to denote his lineage. The magical thinking and communion with nature that defined this society is glimpsed in these rare records.

Much of the background information of these photos is incomplete and will probably never be known, given that these are now lost civilizations. But these captivating photographs, which were produced using a portable darkroom, capture for posterity the unique rituals and dress of some of the world's remotest tribes. They are monuments to a profound cultural loss.

Trained gradually as an anthropologist, Gusinde's photos reveal that the lapsed missionary had a competing artistic side to his nature. These intimate photos are more than mere documental record; they represent a significant humanistic, as well as scientific, endeavour. Gusinde was one of

the first 20th Century anthropologists to identify personally with the tribes he was studying, breaking with the tradition of detached observation.

Just a few years after Gusinde produced his enthralling photos of the Hain ceremony, a final wave of disease decimated the last Selknam communities. Those few that remained were forced to assimilate into local society.

After Gusinde, other anthropologists continued to research Tierra del Fuego's native peoples and their way of life. The notable Franco-American ethnologist Anne Chapman (1922-2010) visited Tierra del Fuego on numerous occasions since the mid-1960s to study the same tribes as Gusinde. Famously, she got to know the last remaining Selknam people: Lola Kiepja and Angela Loji.

Lola Kiepja grew up among her native Selknam tribe and died in Tierra del Fuego in 1966. In the



Stirling House in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego, which belonged to the Anglican missionary Waite Hockin Stirling. It now houses some of the Martin Gusinde Anthropological Museum. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. © Paula Giraudi.

last years of her life, Chapman spent time with Kiepja, who was a shaman and a singer. The ethnologist recorded her songs and also filmed her for the revealing documentary, *The Onas: Life and Death in Tierra del Fuego* (1977). She described Kiepja as “a person of exceptional richness -- passionate, sensitive -- and possessed a profound knowledge of the mysticism and mythology of her culture.”

After Kiepja’s death, Chapman got to know Angela Loij. She was born at Sara, where her father worked as a sheepherder, to two Selknam parents.

The Selknam civilization was mostly destroyed

by now. Nevertheless, she later lived among old Selknam women in a mission near Rio Grande. Loij died in 1974, and was to be the last full-blooded Selknam. Luckily, we have Gusinde’s visionary record to remind us of what we have lost.

Gusinde’s photographs of the Selknam tribes were shown in 2015 at the Casa Foyer de la Cultura Municipal, Ushuaia. The same exhibition, El Espiritu de los Hombres de Tierra del Fuego, will be travelling to the Centro Cultural Kirchner in Buenos Aires in 2016.

Words by Sophie Davies

The revered Brazilian artist Jac Leirner's new works were developed through the use of Sudoku games that she collected over several months. The São Paulo-born artist was one of the first contemporary artists from Brazil to rise to international prominence in the 1990s. In her new series of work, entitled *métrica mínima*, she set out to give form to abstract processes including logic, reasoning and the lapse of time.

Recurrent themes in the artist's practice, including accumulating and reorganizing, reappear in this latest body of work. With formal rigour, Leirner translates the mathematical logic of Sudoku into highly rhythmic works.

Other works in the exhibition including *Ilustração para um poema*, the artist uses newspaper strips, cut out from the comics section, to create collages. These works take on the characteristics of visual poetry, in the same way that words games do.

Jac Leirner's *métrica mínima* is showing at Galpão Fortes Vilaça, São Paulo, until January 22nd 2016.



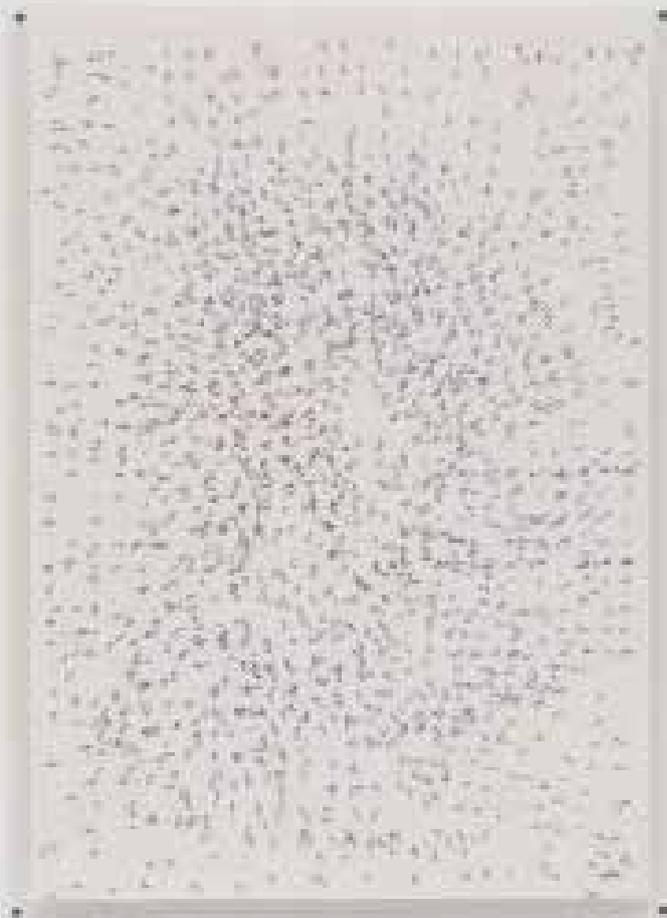
Jac Leirner Free Style, 2015 Jornal sobre papel [Newspaper on paper] 77 x 56 cm. Photo: Eduardo Ortega.

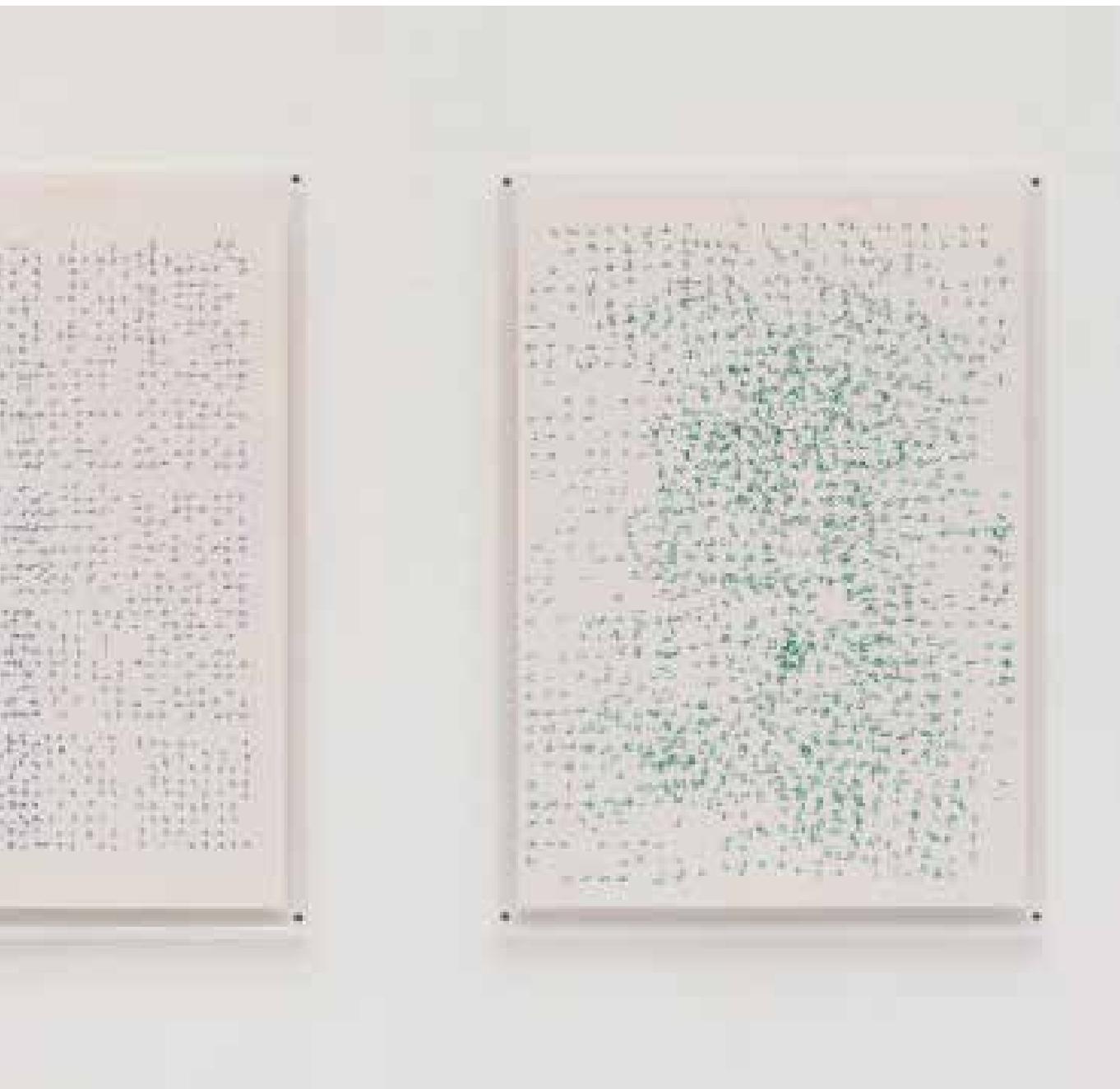


Jac Leirner Ilustração para um poema, 2015 Jornal sobre papel [Newspaper on paper] 77 x 56 cm. Photo: Eduardo Ortega.

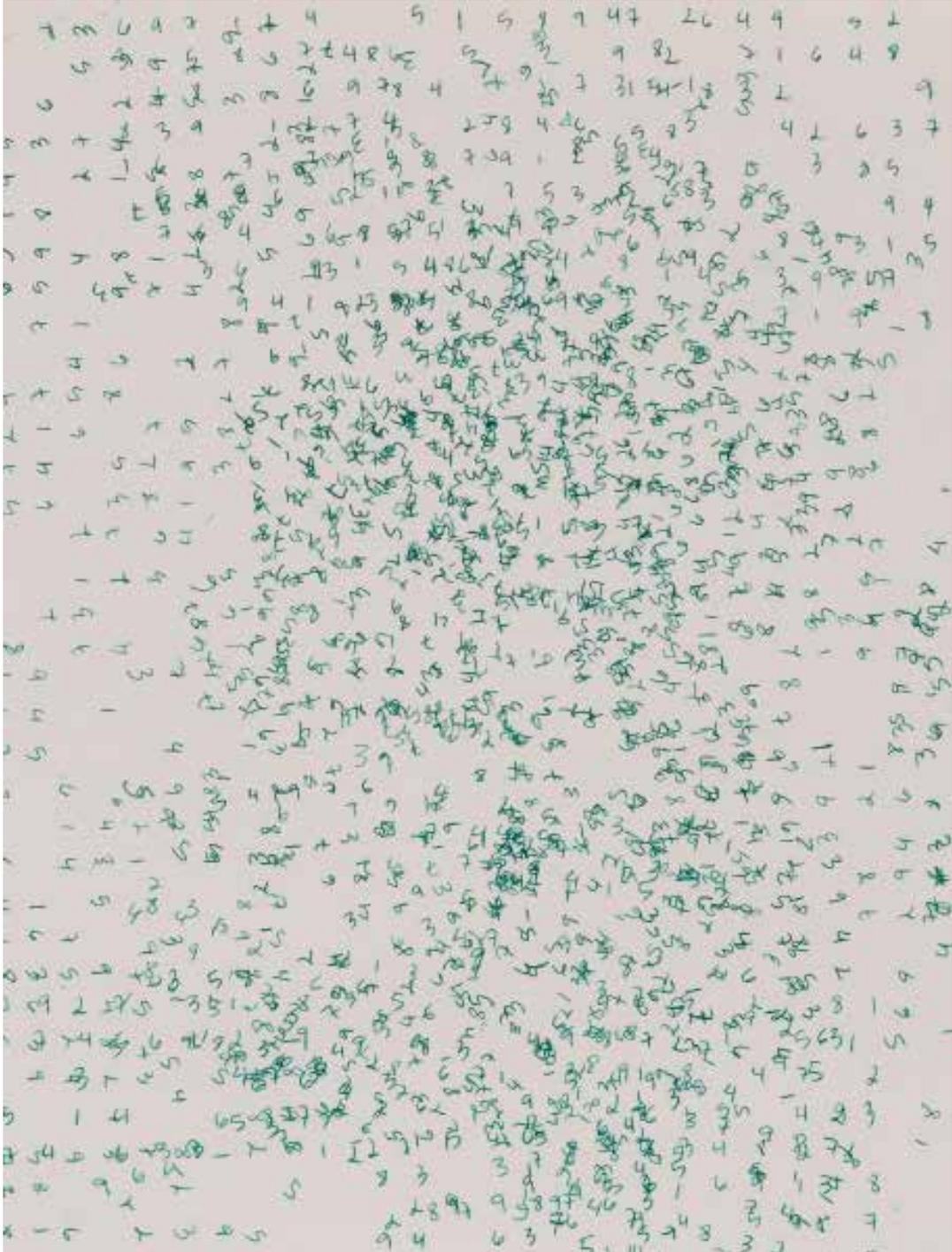


Jac Leirner Fácil, Médio, Difícil, 2015 Jornal sobre papel [Newspaper on paper] Tríptico [Triptych] | 36 x 51 cm cada [each] Photo: Eduardo Ortega.

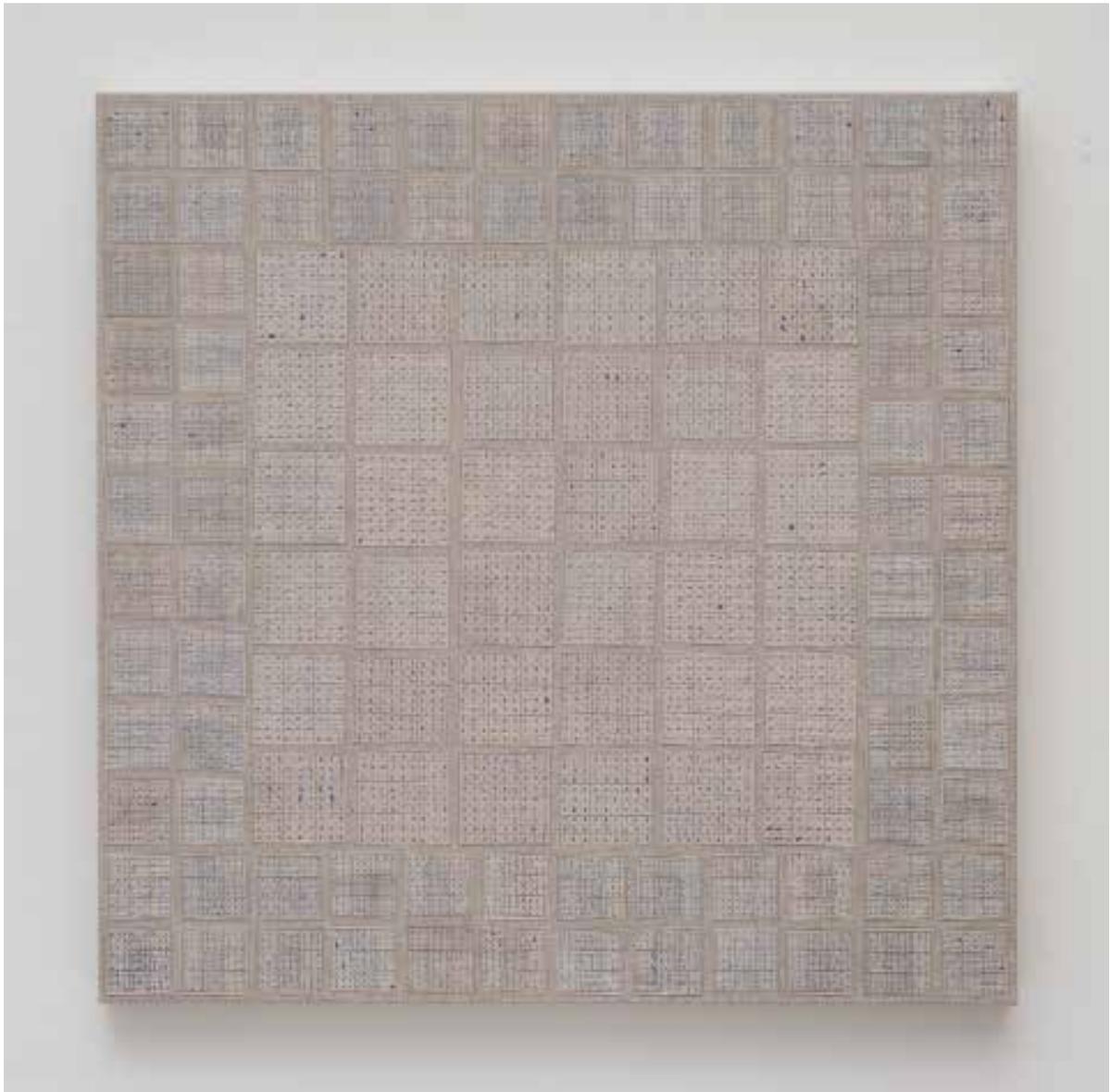




Jac Leirner Números, 2015 Monotipia [Monotype] Tríptico [Triptych] | 34,5 x 24 cm cada [each] Photo: Eduardo Ortega.



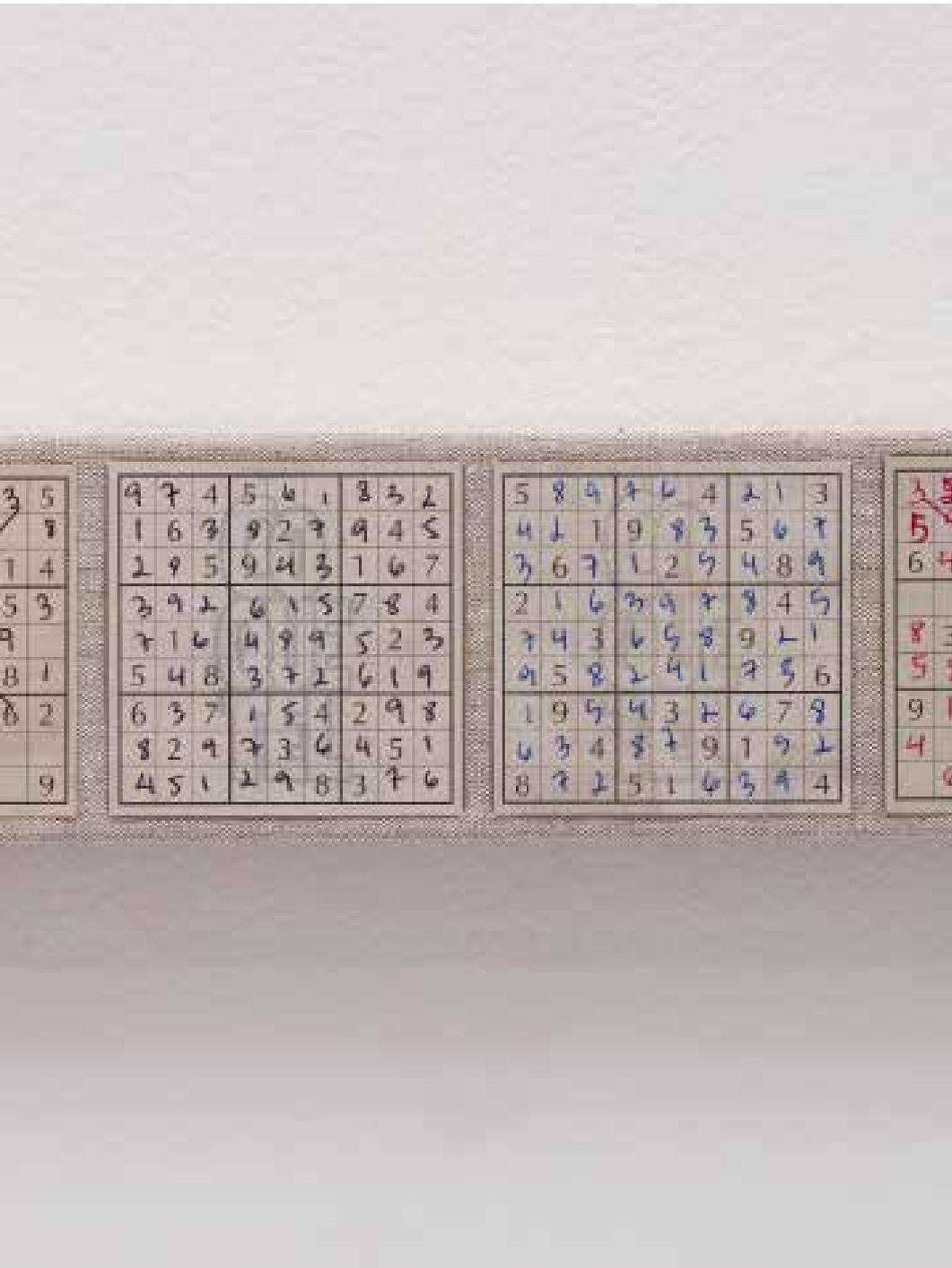
Jac Leirner Números, 2015 Monotipia [Monotype] Tríptico [Triptych] | 34,5 x 24 cm cada [each] Photo: Eduardo Ortega.



Jac Leirner métrica mínima (blue), 2015 Jornal sobre linho [Newspaper on linen] 81 x 81 x 4 cm Photo: Eduardo Ortega.

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Jac Leirner métrica mínima (beauty), 2015 Jornal sobre linho [Newspaper on linen] 7 x 121 x 4 cm. Photo: Eduardo Ortega.



'Evening, when the quiet east flushes faintly at the sun's last look.' c1887. oil on canvas. 50.8 x 76.2 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. W.H. Short Bequest, 1944.

DEFINING AUSTRALIA

The glistening landscapes and skilled portraits of one of Australia's best-loved painters reveal a trail-blazing creativity that helped to define a national consciousness.

Tom Roberts (1856–1931) was Australia's first Impressionist, making works that helped to understand the vast lands of rural New South Wales and other remote parts of the country. His iconic works are now embedded in the national psyche, but Roberts himself started life as an outsider in Australia.

He was born in Dorchester, Dorset, in the south of England and spent the first twelve years of his life there. In 1869, he emigrated to Melbourne with his widowed mother, along with his brother and sister, following the death of his father.

He went on to study at the National Gallery Schools in Melbourne. He also trained at the Royal Academy Schools in London in the early 1880s before returning to Australia. Later he was one of the founding members of the legendary Australian Impressionists, whose other members included Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and Charles Conder.

Between the mid-1880s and the turn of the 20th century, he would work outside with some of the other Impressionists. They frequented sites like



Portrait of Florence. c1898. oil on canvas on paperboard. 66.6 x 38.7 cm. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, bequest of Florence Turner Blake 1959.







Holiday sketch at Coogee. 1888 oil on canvas 40.3 x 55.9 cm. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, purchased 1954.

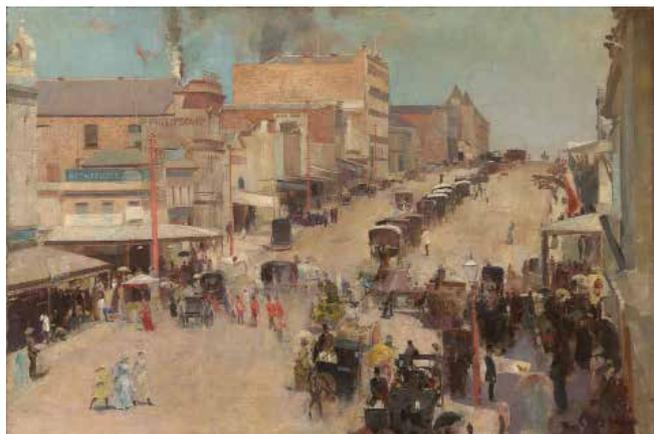
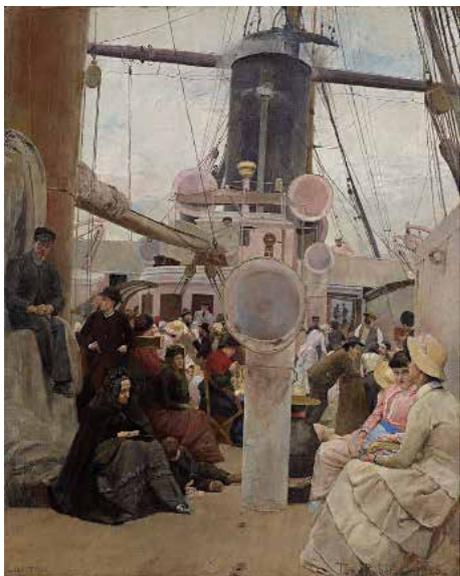
Box Hill, Mentone in Beaumaris, Eaglemont in Heidelberg and Little Sirius Cove. Roberts also travelled extensively around Australia, particularly to remote sheep stations, where he would paint en plein air like the French Impressionists Monet and Pissarro.

These visits produced paintings that would become some of Australia's best-loved works, including *Shearing the rams*, *Bailed up* and *The Golden Fleece*. Roberts' paintings of this period broke radically with a previous generation of Australian landscape painters, who would produce wide panoramic views. Instead, Roberts would focus on a small area of depiction; in the most marked cases, this would be a small segment of a bush. His paintings of this time

were deliberately nationalistic, showing the unique character of the Australian bush.

Roberts himself described the process of painting *Shearing the rams* as "...being in the bush and feeling the delight and fascination of the great pastoral life." Roberts was also intentionally trying to make paintings that were universal, saying: 'By making art the perfect expression of one time and one place, it becomes art for all times and all places.'

Dr Anna Gray, who is Curator of the current exhibition *Tom Roberts* at the National Gallery of Australia, said the artist brought "a new vision" to Australian art. "No artist before Roberts had captured such an



Clockwise from top left: *Coming south* 1885–86 oil on canvas 63.8 x 50.5 cm National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, gift of Colonel Aubrey H.L. Gibson in memory of John and Anne Gibson, settlers (1887), 1967. *Allegro con brio, Bourke Street west* c1885–86/1890 oil on canvas 51.2 x 76.3 cm National Library of Australia, Canberra & National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1920 by the Parliamentary Library Committee. *In a corner on the Macintyre (The bushranger)* 1895 oil on canvas 71.1 x 86.4 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1971. *Opening of the first parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 9 May 1901.* 1903 oil on canvas 304.5 x 509.2 cm. Royal Collection Trust, presented by the Commonwealth in 1904 on permanent loan to Parliament House, Canberra © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2015.



Slumbering sea, Mentone. 1887. oil on canvas 51 x 76.5 cm National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, purchased with the assistance of a special grant from the Government of Victoria, 1979.

impression of the hot Australian glare to the extent that he did," she said.

Landscapes were not the only focus of this multi-talented artist. As well as cityscapes, industrial scenes and figures in the landscape, he was a talented portrait painter. In his later years, he also turned to still lifes and nudes. Etchings and sculptures also made their way into his art.

It was also in these years that Roberts married and started a family. The artist and his wife, Elizabeth Williamson – better known as Lillie – had their only child, Caleb Roberts, in 1898.

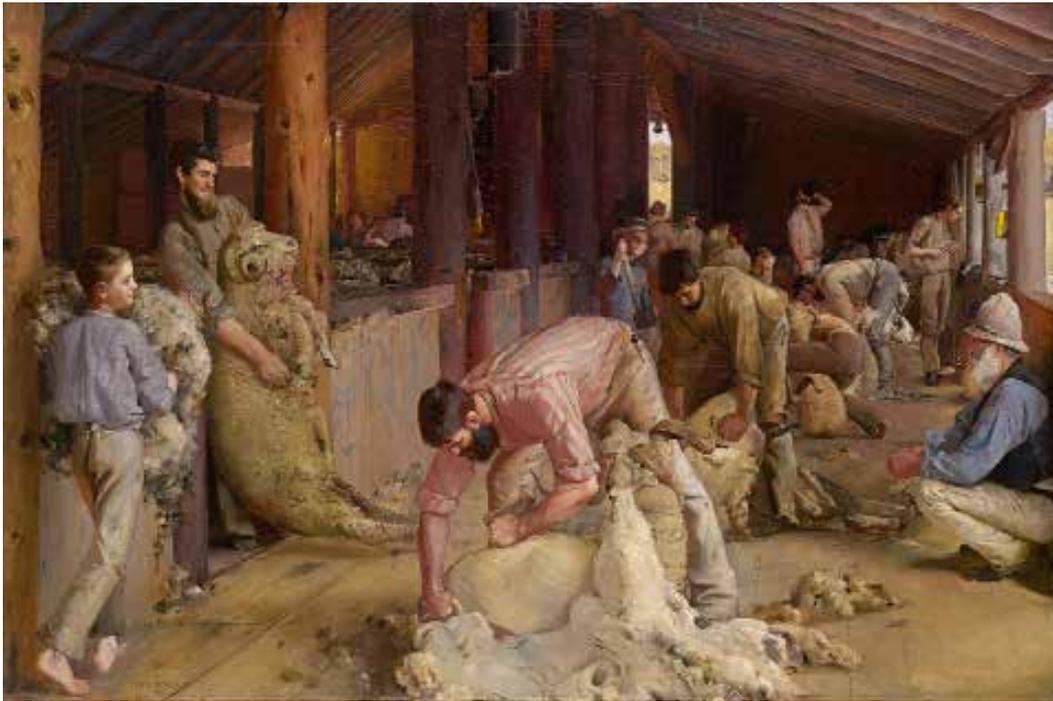
A lively figure, he was known as the 'bulldog' among friends and family and was also known to break into song while painting. The opera

Carmen was said to be one of his favorite sing-along choices.

He became an important painter to younger Australian artists including Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton and the printmaker Jessie Traill (who was featured in Issue 4 of *The Kurios*). Arthur Boyd, who painted Australian landscapes in the 20th Century, said "all Australian paintings are in some way a homage to Tom Roberts."

Though little-known outside of Australia, Roberts' influence on the art of his adopted country was profound, transformational.

Tom Roberts is showing at the National Gallery of Australia until March 28th 2016.



Shearing the rams 1888-90 oil on canvas mounted on board 121.9 x 182.6 cm National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Felton Bequest Fund, 1932.



Bailed up 1895/1927 oil on canvas 134.5 x 182.8 cm Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, purchased 1933.

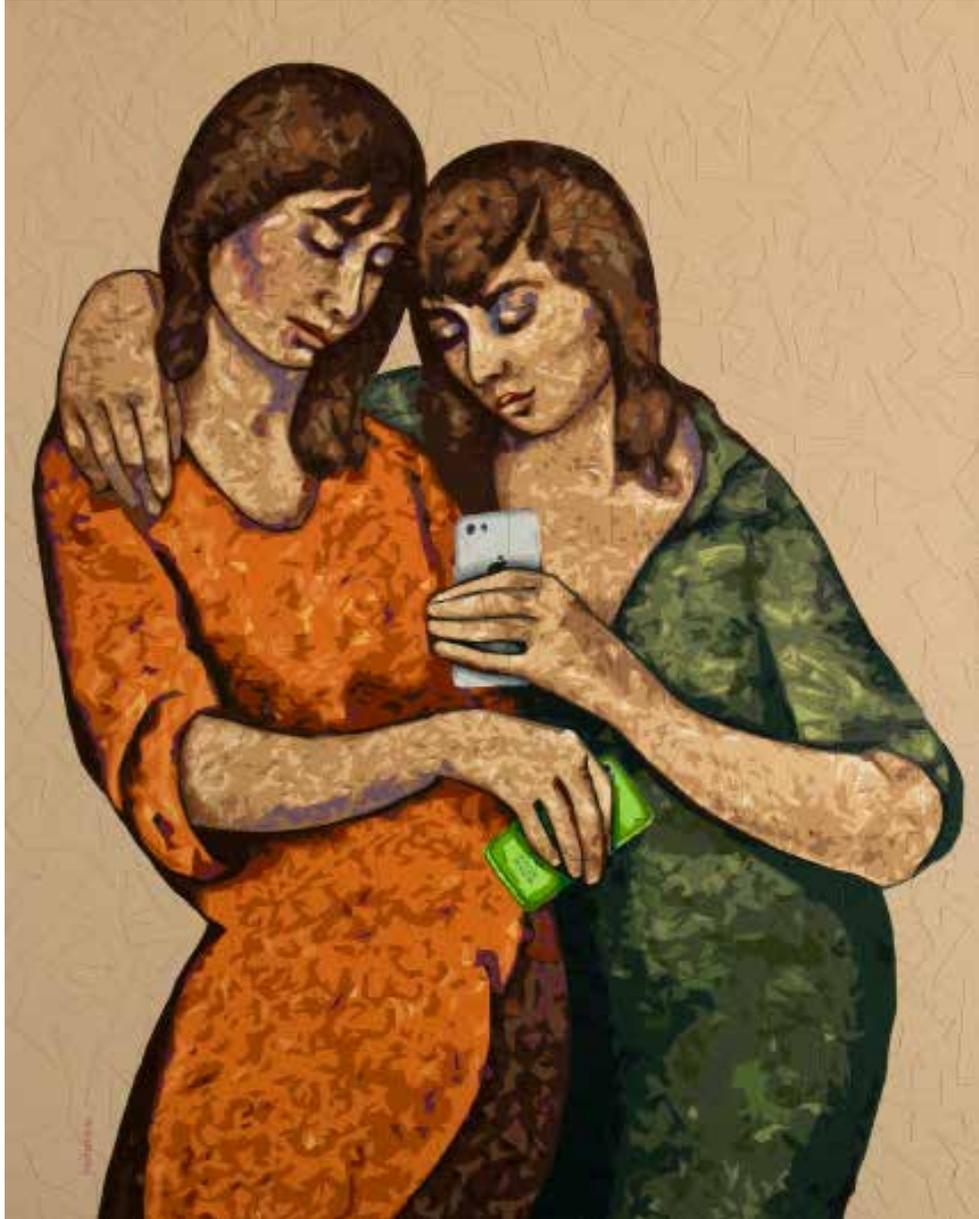
The colourful but fragile works of Syrian artist Elias Izoli offer a psychological insight into contemporary Syrian life. Volume and texture is emphasized, producing an unconventional approach to portraiture.

The Damascus-based painter's work references the imagery of one of Syria's most prestigious painters, Louay Kayyali (1934-1978). Kayyali's ground-breaking figurative works, which were shown widely in Syria during his lifetime, depicted the poor and down-trodden but in the style of Early Renaissance icons.

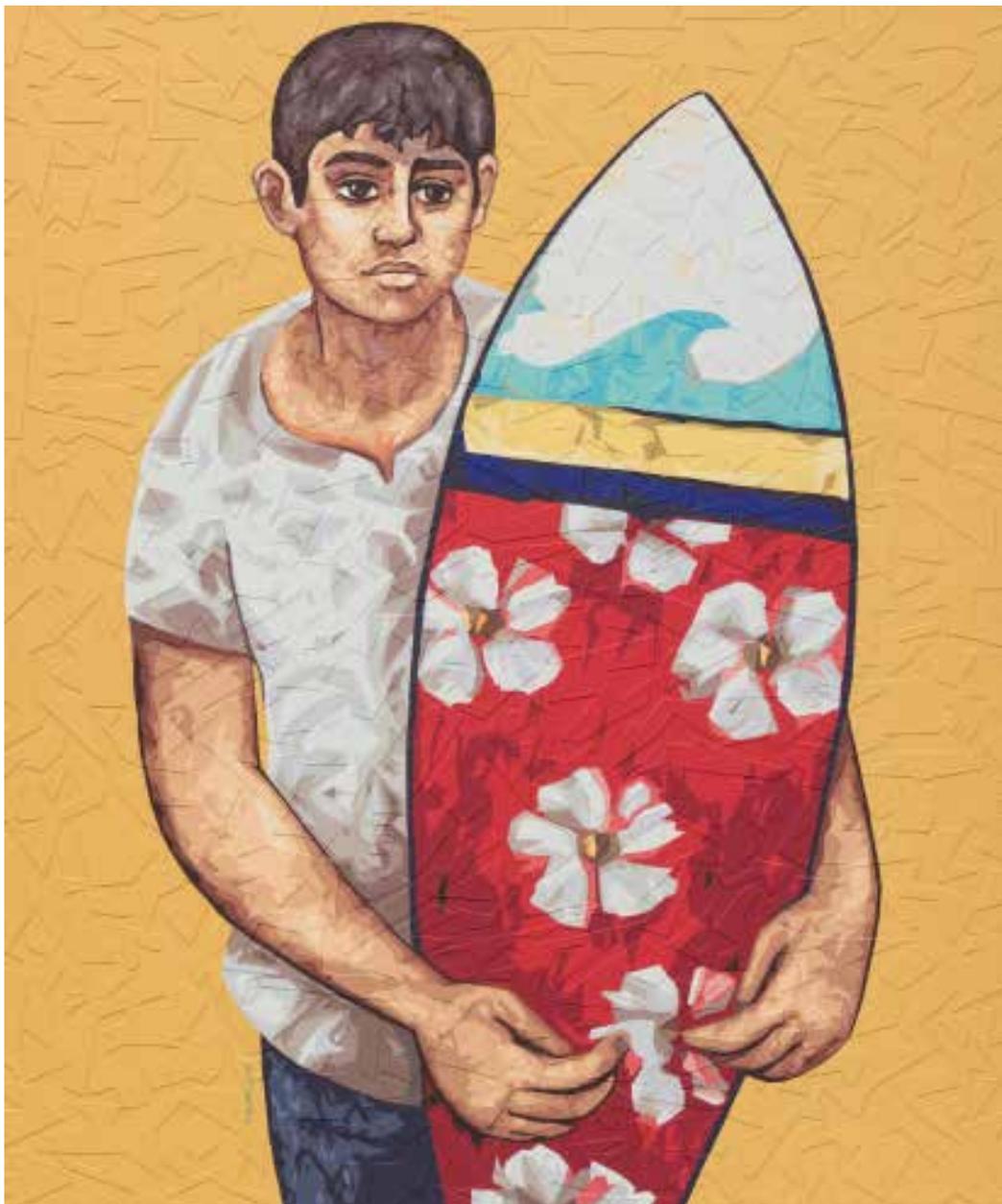
Izoli's elegant images explicitly reference the earlier painter's work, however his gaze is a contemporary one. The digital icons of our times are present in these paintings, including laptops and tablet computers. In one image, a sad figure is clutching a bag branded with a McDonald's logo. The melancholic nature of Kayyali's mid-century portraits is continued in Izoli's work. The artist has said that he made the new works 'with the hope of finding a scene that would be less harsh, perhaps at a later stage.'

Izoli was born in Damascus, Syria in 1976, and still lives and works in the city. The self-taught painter has exhibited regularly since 1993. He is recognised for his strong grasp of draftsmanship, combined with a sensitivity to colour.

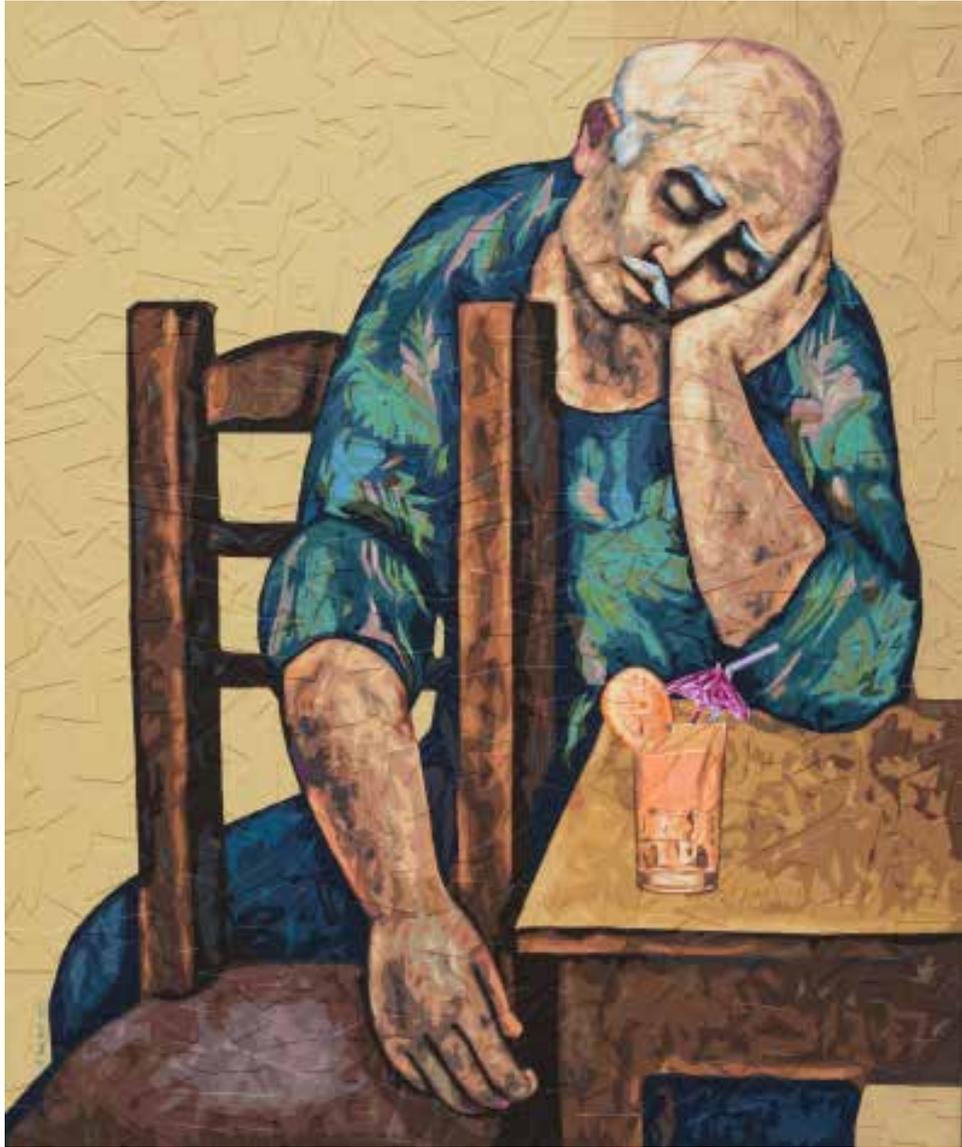
The artist is on show at Ayyam Gallery Dubai until March 3rd 2016.



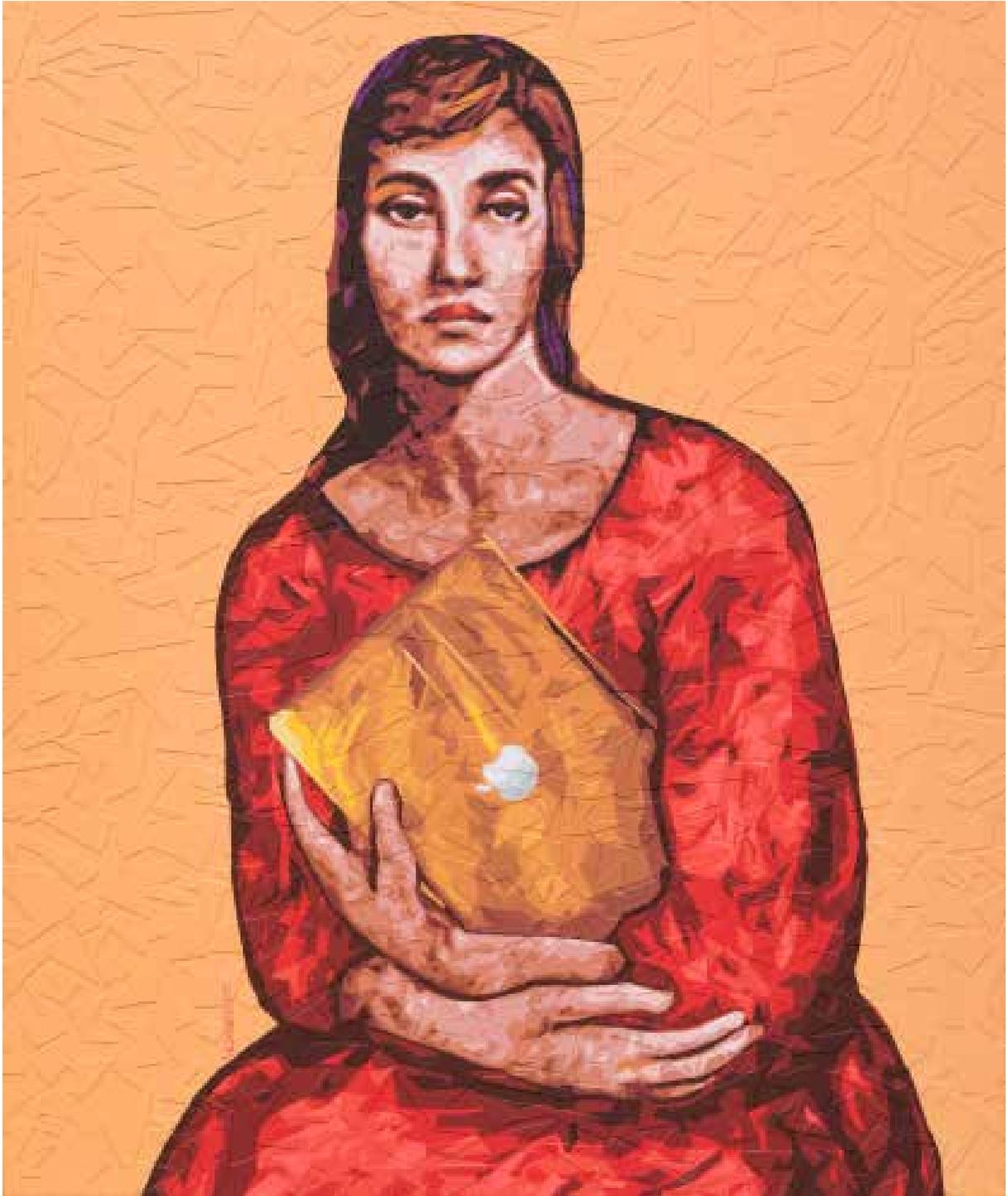
Untitled, 2014. Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas. Photo courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



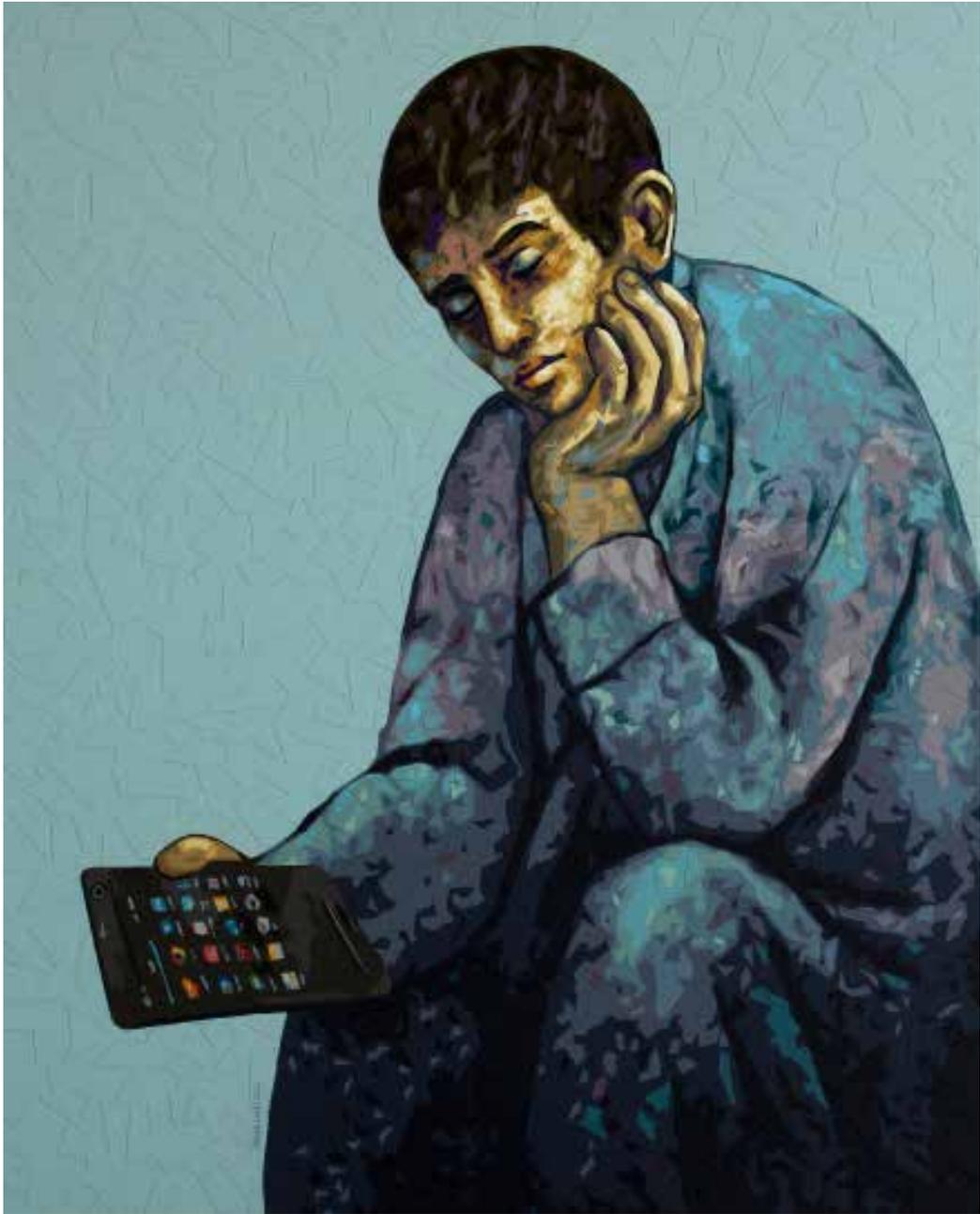
Untitled, 2015. Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas. Photo courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



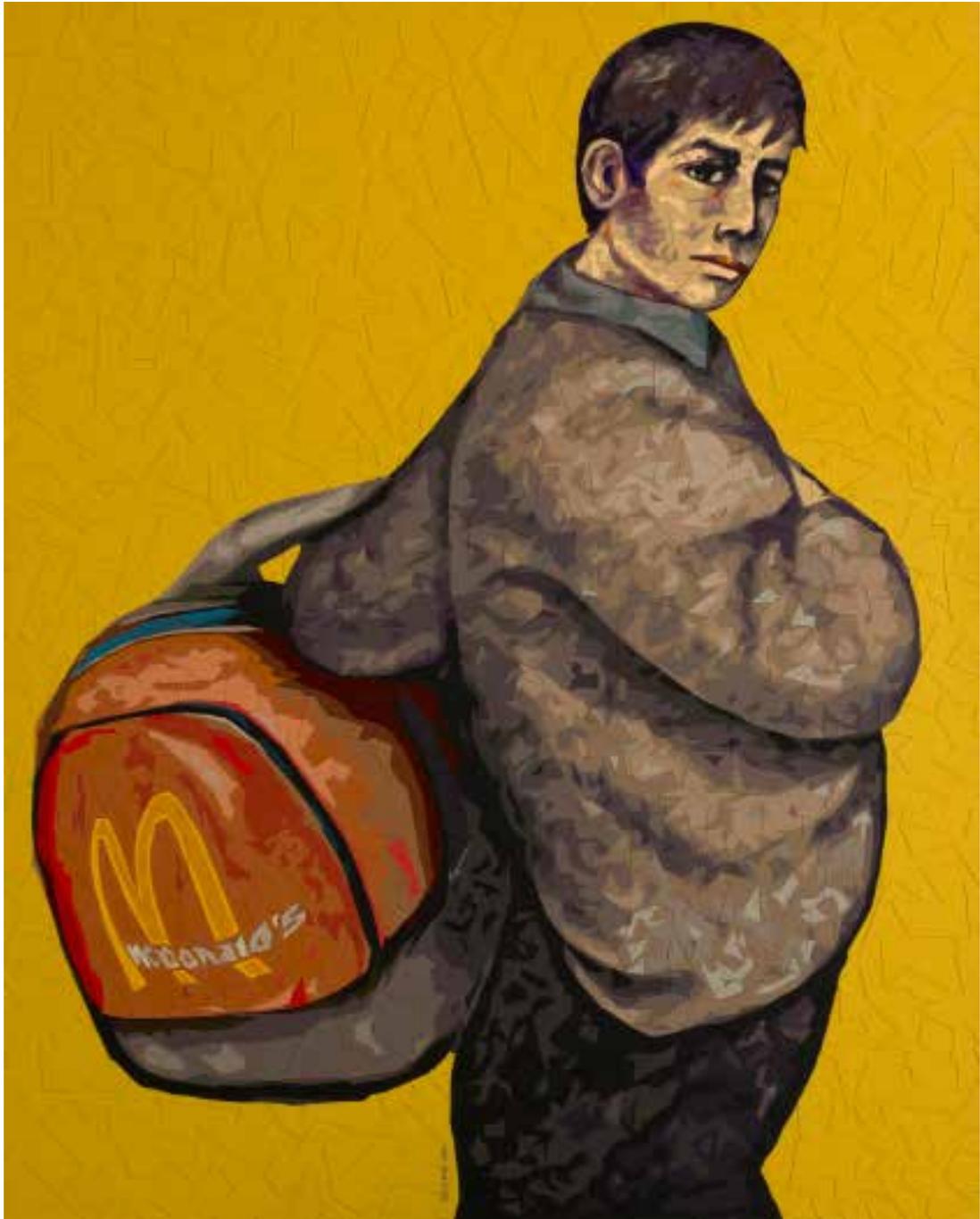
Untitled, 2015. Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas. Photo courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



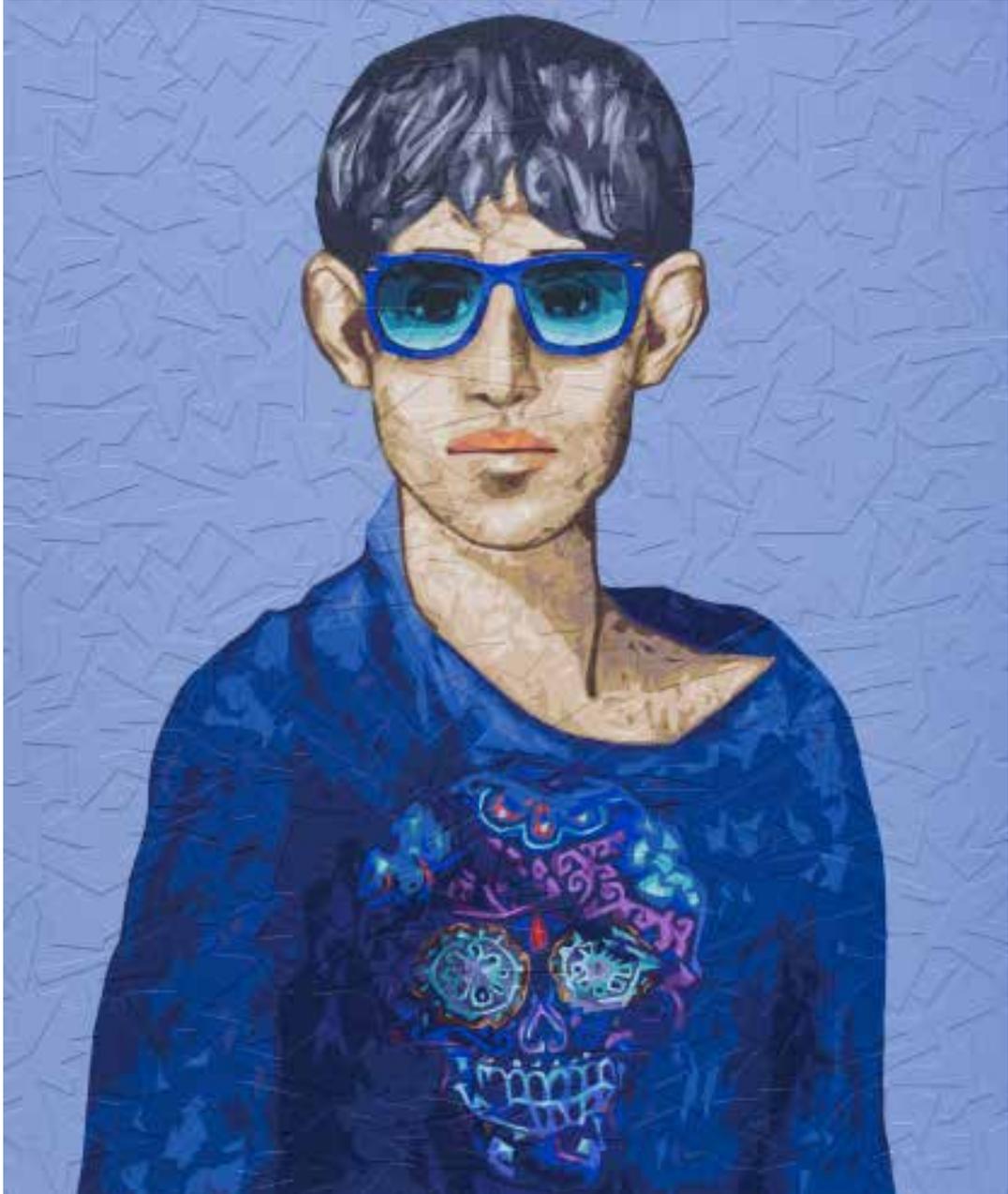
Untitled, 2015. Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas. Photo courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



Untitled, 2014. Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas. Photo courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



Untitled, 2014. Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas. Photo courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



Untitled, 2015. Acrylic and canvas collage on canvas. Photo courtesy of Ayyam Gallery.



Theatre Scene. 1970. Oil on canvas. 115 × 162. Oryol Museum of Fine Art.

ARTIST'S DOUBLE

Russian painter Alexander Tikhomirov was one of the most-celebrated artists of the Soviet Union but in private he nurtured a wildly imaginative side.

The Russian artist Alexander Tikhomirov (1916–1995) would become one of the leading artists of the Soviet Union, but a new exhibition in Moscow reveals that he led a fascinating double life.

During a long and varied career, his state-commissioned works would come to epitomize the most Soviet style of art. Meanwhile, his private experiments with European currents in 'free' art would lead him to produce fantastical universes full of gamblers, musicians, prisoners, acrobats and jesters, to name but a few.

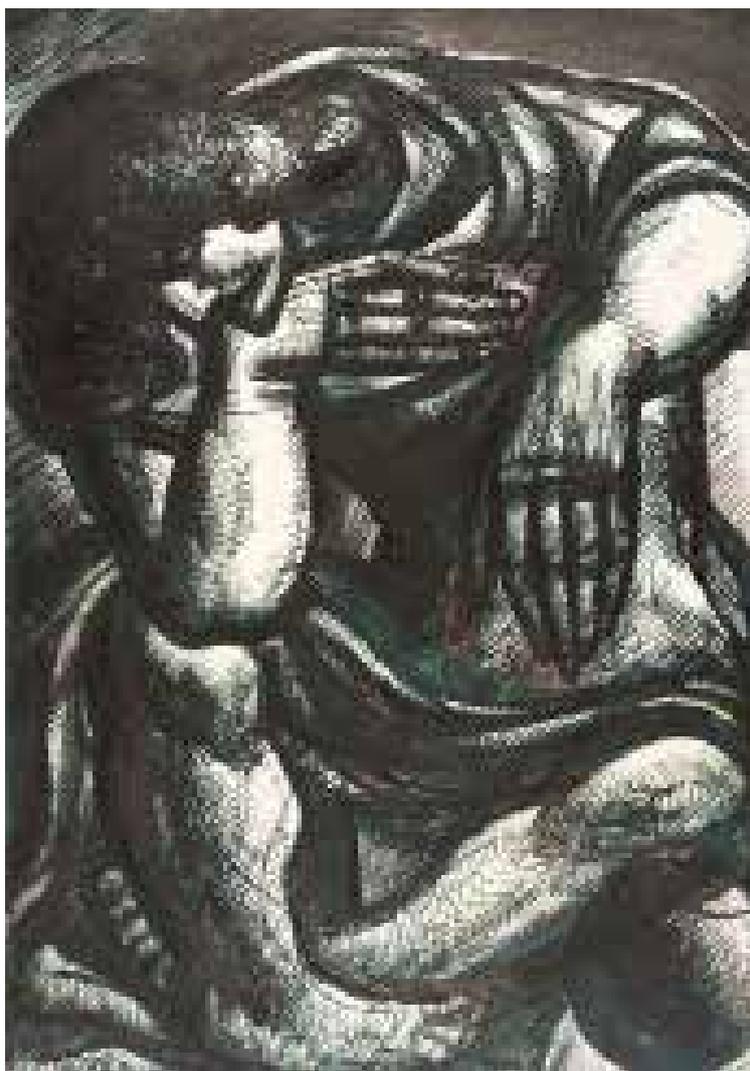
In *Life and Theatre of Alexander Tikhomirov*, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (MMOMA) presents this essential duality in the artist's work. It aims to show the painful search for "a compromise between the official language of state propaganda and the intense creative search of a true artist-experimenter," the curators said.

The exhibition presents more than 100 paintings and prints, documents and photos from the artist's archives, as well as two biographical films.

Tikhomirov was born in Baku, Azerbaijan, in



Clockwise from top: Composition with parrots. 1986. Tempera on canvas. 170 × 130.
Alexander Tikhomirov family collection, Moscow. Theatre. 1972. Oil on canvas. 161 × 130.
Alexander Tikhomirov family collection, Moscow. Acrobat with a parrot. 1985. Oil on canvas.
75 × 100. V. A. Matveyev's collection, Moscow.



Reflection. Version. 1972. Ink on paper. 30 x 21. G. A. Zhigarev's Collection, Moscow.



In the Circus. 1960s. Ink on paper. 27 x 19. G. A. Zhigarev's Collection, Moscow.

1916. In the early 1930s he studied painting at Baku Art School, and in 1938 he became a member of the Union of Artists of Azerbaijan.

In the mid-1940s he entered the Moscow State Art Institute, in the studio of Alexander Osmerkin. In 1948, he was expelled on charges of "formalist tendencies," which was a sign perhaps of what was to come. In the same year, he went to work in the set workshops of the Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre.

In 1951, he started working in the state-run decorative and applied arts department of the RSFSR Art Foundation in Moscow. He would work there for nearly 30 years, during which time he produced iconic and monumental works of Lenin and the leaders of the Communist Party.

In the early 1970s, Tikhomirov became one of the leading Soviet artists, who created and later replicated standard samples of mass agitation, commissioned by the state.

Yet it was during these years that Tikhomirov also experimented heavily with more personal forms of art in the privacy of his own studio, far from the restrictions of ideological control and state commission. He eventually retired from state commissions entirely to concentrate on his own work.

In these private experiments, he was inspired by Matisse and Picasso, as well as by the art of the late Renaissance. A series of large-format works emerged that were devoted to Biblical scenes and to the East, as well as to theatre and circus themes.

These eclectic works were influenced by theatre, cinema and classical music, as well as by European painting traditions. They tell a fascinating story of Tikhomirov's hidden persona during the height of the Soviet Union.

Life and Theatre of Alexander Tikhomirov is showing at MOMA until March 15th, 2016.

The Argentine artist Viviana Blanco (b.1975) is preoccupied with the graphic possibilities of the traditional medium of charcoal on paper. However, the resulting images – which are peppered with mildly disturbing depictions of nature – are far from traditional. Her works, all rendered in black and white, have something of the quality of contemporary fairy tale illustrations.

The artist was born in the magical town of Bariloche, situated in Argentina's Andean region on the border with Chile. Famed for its mountains and lakes, skiing and for Swiss-German chocolate shops, it is a semi-mythical place for the average Argentine. Like her home town, these drawings have a bewitching, indefinable quality.

Blanco, who now lives and works in Buenos Aires, has said that these images all respond to internal logic, whether or not they respond to their surroundings. She sought to “create different tensions and contrasts, so that the laws of composition and balance are altered in an emotional and sensitive way and rather than rationally,” she said of her latest work.

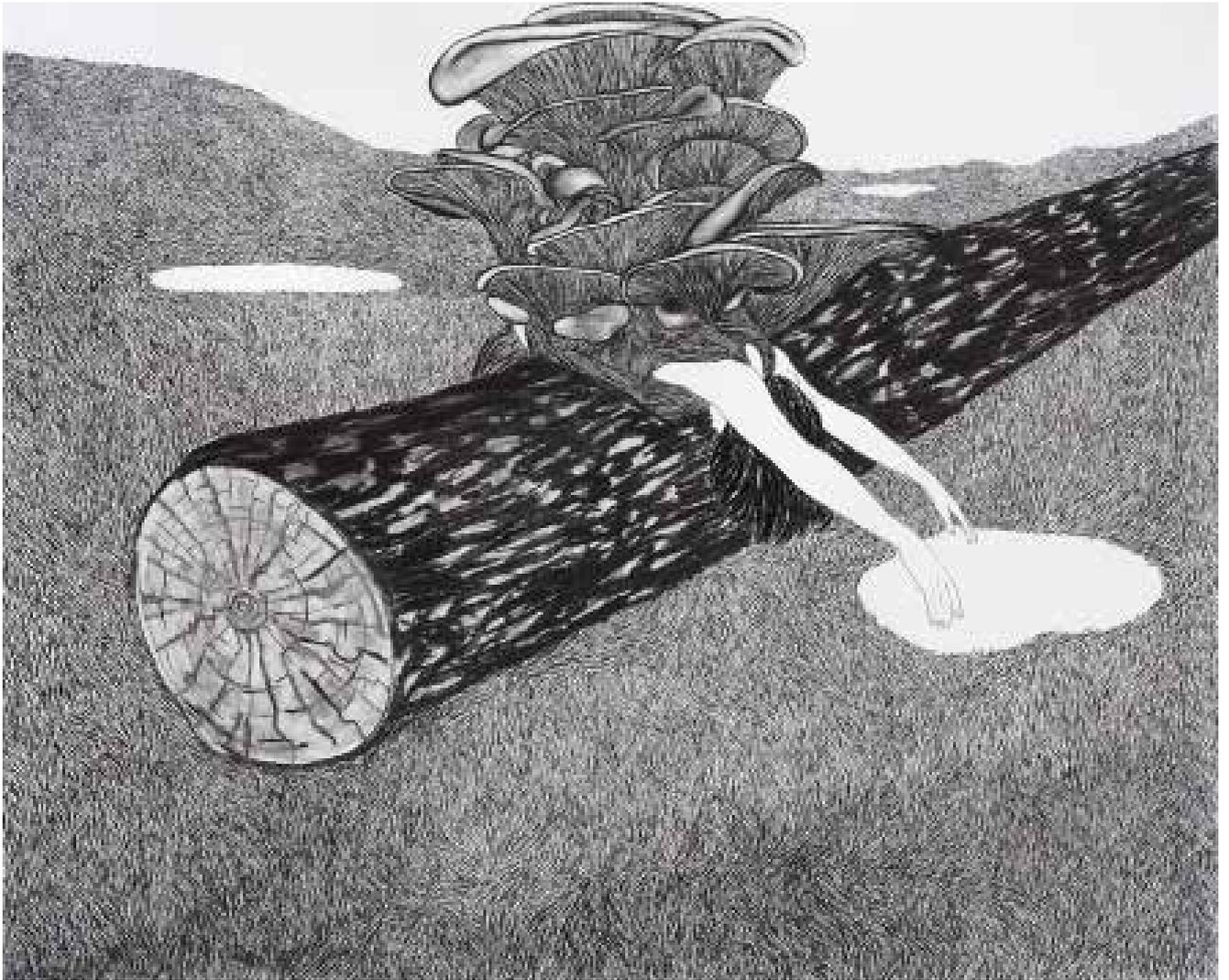
Palatina Gallery, Buenos Aires, recently mounted a solo show of Viviana Blanco's recent work.



Bailed up 1895/1927 oil on canvas 134.5 x 182.8 cm Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, purchased 1933.



Viviana Blanco, *Crecida nocturna*. Photo courtesy of Palatina Gallery, Buenos Aires.



Viviana Blanco, Hongo 2. Photo courtesy of Palatina Gallery, Buenos Aires.



Viviana Blanco, *Casi el Viento*. Photo courtesy of Palatina Gallery, Buenos Aires.



Viviana Blanco, Blanco sobre blanco. Photo courtesy of Palatina Gallery, Buenos Aires.



Contact details

The Kurios Magazine,
El Salvador 4588,
Buenos Aires 1414,
Argentina.
www.thekurios.com

Team

Founding Editor: Sophie Davies
Contributors: Gareth John, Manu Vegas, Emilie Janvrin

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