

Medium
Date
Event
Web address

Web
05.Dec.2023

Publication
Author

New City Brasil
Cynthia Garcia

<https://www.newcitybrasil.com/2023/12/05/reopen-the-wound-rivane-neuenschwander-on-informing-brazils-authoritarian-past/>

NEWCITYBRASIL

Visual Art Culture of São Paulo and Beyond

Home

About ▾

Contributors



Subscribe ▾

Reopen the Wound: Rivane Neuenschwander on Informing Brazil's Authoritarian Past

BY CYNTHIA GARCIA | DECEMBER 5, 2023



Rivane Neuenschwander, installation view of "O fardo, a farda, a fresta," 2023, FDAG/Photo courtesy of the gallery.

Eminently political succinctly describes the solo show "O fardo, a farda, a fresta" [The Burden, the Uniform, the Crack] by conceptual artist Rivane Neuenschwander at Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel (FDAG), one of Brazil's galleries at the forefront of trailblazing art. The exhibition chronicles true stories, all in the name of the fear of communism (under the watchful guidance of Washington D.C.), that took place during the 1964 coup d'état that transformed Brazil, in the blink of an eye, into a military dictatorship that only ended twenty years later. Crafted by the meticulous Minas-born fifty-six-year-old artist and human rights defender with *sui generis* conceptual imagination, among the twenty-two works are wall hangings, installations, a video and a small hole in the gallery wall, titled "M.F. (Road Trip)" (2015), where you can smell gasoline fumes for a sensorial experience.

Medium
Date
Event
Web address

Web
05.Dec.2023

Publication
Author

New City Brasil
Cynthia Garcia

<https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2023/12/05/reopen-the-wound-rivane-neuenschwander-on-informing-brazils-authoritarian-past/>

All stories from the period under the military dictatorship are real and have been meticulously transmuted into artworks. Some occurred within her own circle of family and friends, while others were discovered through extensive research. However, they all exemplify the impunity from the two-decade period to the recent military atmosphere that arrested Brazil under the four-year mandate of the right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022). She, like myself, abhors even the sound of the four-syllable name.



Rivane Neuenschwander, "A.E. Nunca mais Brasil," 2023, acrylic, cotton and felt, 67" x 67"/Photo courtesy of the artist and FDAG.

The well-written critical essay on the exhibition by art historian Tiago Mesquita mentions a quote by poet and diplomat Octavio Paz (1914-1998), who is a Mexican Nobel Prize laureate in literature and a brilliant mind of the twentieth century, from his book "The Labyrinth of Solitude" (1950): "A past that we thought we buried is alive and erupts among us. Whenever it appears in public, it is masked and armed; we don't know who it is, we only know that it is destruction and revenge. It is a past that we did not know or could not recognize, name, unmask."

You may ask yourself, why bring it up now, after all, the right lost the last presidential election. In Rivane's view (and I second it), Brazil's history is being swept under a thick rug of hypocrisy, blinding the new generation, with most youngsters unaware of what it means to live in a nation that infringes civil liberties and disrespects the rule of law. The core imperative suggested by the exhibition "The Burden, the Uniform, the Crack" might be "Keep in mind! We walk a fine line between democracy and authoritarianism."

Medium
Date
Event
Web address

Web
05.Dec.2023

Publication
Author

New City Brasil
Cynthia Garcia

<https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2023/12/05/reopen-the-wound-rivane-neuenschwander-on-informing-brazils-authoritarian-past/>



Rivane Neuenschwander, detail of "M.L. (Mãos amigas, punhos fortes)," 2023, acrylic on stones, 175" diameter/Photo courtesy of the artist and FDAG.

Rivane Neuenschwander has a degree in visual arts. She has completed a two-year scholarship in sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London and has done residency programs in the United States, Sweden and the U.K. Her work features in important public collections, such as ALTANA Kulturstiftung im Sinclair-Haus, Bad Homburg, Germany; Fundación Arco, Madrid; Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City; Tate Modern, London; TBA–Thyssen–Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna; and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and MoMA in New York. In Brazil, her oeuvre is at the Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Brumadinho; MAM–Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo; MAM–Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, and Museu de Arte Pampulha, in her native town of Belo Horizonte.

Among several plans for 2024, one caught her heart, the invitation to the opening of the Kinder Kunst Labor, a new institution specializing in showing art for children in the town of St. Pölten, in northeast Austria, where she will certainly develop a very special project for the little ones and their future on this planet that has past almost all of its safe limits, ethical and environmental.

Medium
Date
Event
Web address

Web
05.Dec.2023

Publication
Author

New City Brasil
Cynthia Garcia

<https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2023/12/05/reopen-the-wound-rivane-neuenschwander-on-informing-brazils-authoritarian-past/>



Rivane Neuenschwander. Courtesy of the artist and FDAG/Photo: Jochen Volz.

Rivane, you were born in 1967, three years after Brazil's 1964 military coup. What happened to your family or friends during the two-decade dictatorship to impel you to investigate our nation's most arbitrary period in history for this exhibition?

Sadly, we had family members tortured, some of whom went missing, and friends seeking political asylum in other countries. It still shocks me. Recently, to bear witness to a large part of today's Brazilian society supporting extreme right groups, openly approving torturers, spreading conspiracy theories, and deleting proven passages from history books is appalling, to say the least. The ignorance and inversion of historical facts that prevail among the young generation in relation to the military dictatorship is one of the main reasons for my research for the exhibition. I'm also interested in diving deep into the ideological specter of a certain guy (i.e. right-wing ex-president Bolsonaro) since I see nothing that justifies an individual voting on a candidate who literally declares "a minha especialidade é matar" [my specialty is to kill]. I even ask myself if there's something in a person's

Medium
Date
Event
Web address

Web
05.Dec.2023

Publication
Author

New City Brasil
Cynthia Garcia

<https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2023/12/05/reopen-the-wound-rivane-neuenschwander-on-informing-brazils-authoritarian-past/>

unconscious libido to justify abiding by certain political, moral or ethical stances. Do people really carry childhood memories with raw materials of such an evil nature good enough to be studied and understood? This adds up to the imperative necessity that we, as a nation, have the obligation to remember what truly happened in this dark period of our history. In my view, we failed to transmit this crucial knowledge to the new generations. Just think how many stories and facts I discovered—which I hadn't the slightest clue—during my research for the exhibition.

For example?

The work "M.C. (Agulhas Conspiratórias)" (2023) is related to a diplomatic affair I didn't know about. This archival material represents the nine members of a Chinese delegation that came to Brazil in 1961 and were arrested and tortured by the DOPS, a Brazilian political police corps responsible for persecuting perceived communist threats. The figures illustrate acupuncture points in which needles are placed, a reference to the healing tools found in possession of the Chinese, considered subversive instruments according to the military police. This case, like others in the exhibition, is an example of how the same tactics are still in use today for the sake of creating panic and hate against internal, inexistent enemies like communism. Authoritarian governments implement their rule by spreading terror.

Now tell us about your work on the Trans-Amazonian highway, a megalomaniacal and much talked-about controversial project in 1972 that crossed several states and aimed at integrating the north and south of the country.

My work, "M.C. (Piracema, Uma Transa Pós-Amazônica)" (2023), simulates the lines of the Trans-Amazonian highway in a reduced scale, resignifying the project and its environmental impact, with cacti, twigs and rocks composing a barren, desert landscape. From north to south, the nation's fantasy was ignited with its massive publicity, millions of articles in the local media to convince the nation the project was a major step toward progress. Millions of acres of forestland were pulled down, destroying the lives of indigenous and riverbank communities. According to the National Truth Commission (Comissão Nacional da Verdade), Brazil's military regime killed approximately eight thousand indigenous individuals from only ten of the indigenous nations studied by the report. Now, nearly six decades later we witness the military, through General Pazuello, Bolsonaro's health minister, denying humanitarian aid to the Yanomami people during the COVID-19 pandemic. We witness that crimes of the dictatorship remain unpunished, and the culture of impunity goes on. Will this continuous historic litany ever come to an end? This is the reason why the title of the exhibition begins with the word fardo, burden.