

# Parque Industrial

September 01 – November 03 2012

## Press Release

Parque Industrial Opening: September 1, 2012, 10AM September 3 to November 3, 2012 Group Show Curated by Julieta González

The exhibition includes works by the following artists: Yael Bartana, Thomas Bayrle, Alexandre da Cunha, Edgard de Souza, Cao Fei, Silvie Fleury, Carlos Garaicoa, Liam Gillick, Terence Gower, Magdalena Jitrik, Joaquim Jordà, Jac Leirner, Renata Lucas, Marepe, Allan McCollum, Josephine Meckseper, Cildo Meireles, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, Antoni Muntadas, Felipe Mujica, Nicolás París, Mai-Thu Perret, Tadej Pogacar, Pedro Reyes, Andreas Siekmann and Alice Creischer, Gabriel Sierra, Mladen Stilinic and The Bruce High Quality Foundation.

The exhibition takes its name and thematic approach from Patricia Galvão's 1933 proletarian novella, which portrays the lives of a group of female textile workers in the Brás industrial sector of São Paulo.

It is equally constructed as a "theater of objects," that references Georges Perec's structural use of the object in his novel *Les Choses, une histoire des années soixante* (1965), and Jean-Luc Godard and Jean Pierre Gorin's recourse to Brechtian stage methods in the film *Tout Va Bien* (1972), exhibiting the apparatus of the film from its financial aspects in the opening titles to the film sets and the actors' acknowledgement of the camera. Borrowing Brechtian stage strategies, such as defamiliarisation, repetition, the use of announcements, and a recourse to the uncanny, the exhibition is structured like a play in five acts; each act can be seen as an autonomous exhibit, and all, except the first, incorporate the title of some of the chapters in Galvão's novel which function as announcements that introduce the theme of each act.

Through the language of objects, the narratives they contain and elicit, and their social agency, Parque Industrial addresses the "secret of commodities," examining how contemporary artists address in their works, the social and labour dynamics as well as the intricate relations between production and consumption that are inscribed in the commodity.

### Act 1: Les Choses

A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it satisfies human needs, or that it first takes on these properties as the product of human labour. It is absolutely clear that, by his activity, man changes the forms of the materials of nature in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more

wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.

-- Karl Marx, *Capital* (1867) The first “act”, titled “Things,” begins appropriately with the commodity, as fetish but also reflecting its dream power, and the way it speaks the language of material forms inaugurated by industrial production. This section of the show is staged in the manner of a shop display, which aims to create a defamiliarizing effect while also highlighting the commercial nature of the gallery space. The works by Josephine Meckseper, Sylvie Fleury, Thomas Bayrle, and Carlos Garaicoa take the material forms of commercial presentation, packaging and commodities themselves to create ambivalent situations that are intensified by the specific use of these forms in their respective works. Meckseper’s *Jaguar* (2010) features slatted displays typical of discount and bargain stores which become the support for a range of diverse objects, from sunglasses and socks to paintings; Bayrle’s wallpaper the repetitive pattern of the Chrysler logo; Sylvie Fleury’s *True Religion* forms part of her readymade series of works that feature shopping bags and other forms of commercial packaging, her bronze casts of Azzedine Alaïa shoes and Balenciaga bags perform an ambivalent role as both sculptures and commodities, accentuating the shop display situation at the entrance of the gallery. A series of works address the “secret” and the “mysterious” qualities of the commodity: Yael Bartana’s *Odds and Ends* (2005) focuses on the irrational behaviour of consumers fixated on a random yet coveted commodity; Edgard de Souza’s tables seem to have originated from Marx’s imaginative account of the commodity in the first chapter of *Capital*. Carlos Garaicoa’s self-explanatory work summarizes the spirit of this first act of the exhibition.

Act 2: Teares / Trabalhadoras de agulha

From the “INDUSTRIAL STATISTICS OF THE STATE OF SÃO PAULO” 1930

—Factories have enlarged their productive capacity and have been working intensely since the second year of the European conflict, according to the statistics. The values jumped from 274.147:000\$000 in 1915 to 1.611.633:000\$000 in 1923. In the three following years this boom was seriously reduced due to the revolutionary movement of 1924 and the great electrical power crisis. But, in 1927, the figures rose above 1.600.000:000\$000 and in the years 1928 and 1929 they topped 2 million contos. The record was reached in 1928 with the elevated amount of 2.441.436:000\$000. Finally, in 1930, the figures fell to 1.897.188:000\$000, due to the global economic depression, whose effects we began to feel since October 1929.

Aristides do Amaral – Director

The statistics and history of the human layer that underpins São Paulo’s industrial park, and which speaks the language of this book, are found under the capitalist regime, in the jails and tenements, in the hospitals and morgues.

Patrícia Galvão – Parque Industrial The second “act,” titled *Looms/Needle Workers*, addresses the loom and the textile factory as a site of exploitation, beginning with the industrial revolution and continuing on to the present-day sweatshops and maquilas. Echoing Galvão’s introduction to Parque Industrial with a statistical description of industrial growth in São Paulo and her reflection on the individuals whose lives are anonymous but nonetheless fuel the city’s economy and transform the statistics, Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann’s *Actualisation of Chapter 15 / Capital Vol 1 Part 4* by Marx (2010/2011) simultaneously takes on the graphic displays of Otto Neurath and Gerd Arntz’ 1931 atlas of statistics, *Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft – Bildstatistisches Elementarwerk*, to present statistical information on post-war worker’s movements from the Italian

Hot Autumn of 1969 at the peak of the Operaista and Autonomist workers movements in Italy to the Bombay textile strikes of 1982, which changed the history of Indian labour movements. Thomas Bayrle's Cotton Fabrik equally employs the small figurine of a female worker to compose a larger image, through serial repetition, of a textile worker at a loom.

The question of visibility of the textile workers' unfair working conditions in an industry that often relies on branding and publicity to promote its products while hiding and minimizing the exploitation that is a trademark of the garment industry in sweatshops around the world, is addressed in the works from Alexandre da Cunha's series Fair Trade (2011) which similarly reflect on this issue but singularly translate the situation to the gallery context by having the owner of the gallery, Luisa Strina, embroider the works herself during an extended period of almost two years. Renata Lucas approaches the theme offering a spatial metaphor by means of a woven carpet partially covered by a concrete slab that blends with the concrete floor, creating only a slight disruption, which could seem to suggest the concealment of the working conditions of textile workers by the garment industry.

The domain of fashion is one of the prevailing sites where the double inscription of labour and consumption prominently takes place, but also the one in which the mystery of consumer desire in modernity is materialized. From the Russian constructivist avant-gardes to work by contemporary artists, fashion has also proved to be a privileged site of engagement by virtue of its indisputable association with femininity. Fashion acquires an activist dimension giving visibility to the difficulties of female sex workers in Tadej Pogacar's collaboration with the NGO Davida (Prostituição, Direitos Civis, Saúde)[1] to develop a clothes design label, DASPU, conceived to raise funds for AIDS related research after Brazil turned town funding offered by the US for that purpose in 2005. This project mobilizes many of the feminist issues and themes explored by Galvão in her novella, particularly through the character of Corina, the textile worker who upon becoming pregnant (her child is born with deformities due to venereal disease) is condemned to a life of prostitution, unable to make a living otherwise.

Act 3: Num setor da luta de classes | Em que se fala de Rosa de Luxemburgo  
Actually, there are two sorts of utopia: proletarian socialist utopias, which have the property of never being realized, and capitalist utopias, which often have the unfortunate tendency to be realized.

Michel Foucault, Truth and Juridical Forms, in Power This third "act" as its title indicates, addresses proletarianisation, class struggle, the factory, the question of organisation, and the alienation produced by working conditions of the industrial production line. Contemporary artists have increasingly dealt with potential of the factory as a site for subject formation, imagination and de-alienation, through a series of works that invoke the idea of leisure activities on factory time, and workers working creatively in the factory environment and thus de-alienating themselves. The situations proposed by many of these works are often reflected in real life experiences in the social and political organization of production, self-organization, and resistance, such as Volvo's Uddevalla Plant experiment in "mindful production" during the 1980s and 90s, referenced in Liam Gillick's works in the exhibition, constructed around the artist's fiction of an "experimental factory in the North of Europe" whose workers return to the abandoned factory and "decide to become productive again, in real terms with specific regard to altering the relations of production that caused them to be part of a collapse of potential." The situation described here and embodied in Gillick's objects could also mirror that of the cooperative experiment of the Numax factory workers in Barcelona recorded in Joaquim Jordà's 1980 film Numax Presenta, commissioned by

the workers of the factory to record their experience. The videos by Beatriz Santiago, *Fábrica Inútil* (2002) and Cao Fei *Whose Utopia* (2006) reflect a collaborative process between the artist and factory workers to produce the work. Santiago, who works within the genre of ethnofiction, creates leisure situations on factory time for the workers to engage in and prompts a discussion on the working conditions and a staged enactment of the factory's closure and what the workers would do in such a situation. Cao Fei resided and worked in an Osram factory for six months during which she made this video (and an installation) with the input of the factory workers. Much like the semi-fictional utopian narratives of the aforementioned works, Mai-Thu Perret creates a fictional communal social experiment, *New Ponderosa*, initiated by a group of women who dissatisfied with society decide to found their own "personal Eden" through a return to nature and craft. The objects fabricated by these fictional women, who perform as a sort of collective heteronym [2] of the artist, are the works presented here, a series of paintings, that are the result of non-alienated labour, and unhindered self-expression. The hammock entitled *The Arts and Crafts Movement (Part One: Blue Tartan)* (2000) addresses the intersection between the Arts and Crafts Movement and socialism (in the figure of William Morris) but also contains in the embroidering on the hammock a reference to the utopian community of Llano del Rio, established in New Mexico in the early 20th century. Thomas Bayrle's *Anarchy in Construction* (grau version) (1971) can be read as a reflection on the role of female workers in labour movements throughout modern history and in particular the figure of Rosa Luxemburg whose spectre haunts this section of the exhibition. Connected to a series of abstract paintings she has made on the subject of work, leisure, and art, Magdalena Jitrik's collages also relate to her engagement with workers movements and the collective experience of the *Taller Popular de Serigrafía* during the economic and political crisis in Argentina in 2001, in the context of which artists united with activist groups in order to give them graphic identities and disseminate their cause by mass reproduced printed matter.

The object-based works by Cildo Meireles and Marepe included in this part of the exhibition contribute to mobilizing the narratives constructed by these artists, while at the same time they add an element of defamiliarization in the form of objects that contradict their function: in the case of Meireles' *Rodos* (1978) by a deformation of the proportions of their parts which render the floor squeegees unusable; in Marepe's *Construção 1* (2010), hammer and sickle are deconstructed and reconfigured in a dynamic form. In Carlos Garaicoa's *Deleuze and Guattari Fixing the Rhizome* (2008) the hammers seemingly guided by the invisible hands of the philosophers stand as metaphor for their dismissal of Marxist dialectic in favour of rhizomatic social forms of organization that can be reconfigured according to circumstances and desires.

Act 4: *Onde se gasta a mais-valia* The fourth "act" places the spotlight on the offices of the gallery; its productive apparatus is put on display similar to the way in which Godard frequently addresses the camera making evident the cinematic apparatus of film, but also in specific reference to the opening credits of *Tout Va Bien* (1972), where we see a hand signing the cheques for each of the actors, and technicians involved in the film. As the intention is to showcase the gallery's workplace, there are but a few works in this section of the exhibition, all of which highlight the operative dynamics of the gallery space and address ideas such as surplus value and expenditure, through defamiliarising operations such as repetition, and the use of surrogate forms, in Allan McCollum's *Five Plaster Surrogates* (1982-1991) and Jac Leirner's, *Fantasma [Ghost]* (1998), which leads the way into the last section of the exhibition. Cildo Meireles' *Ouro e paus – Engradados No. 4* (1995) juxtaposes the unlikeliest of materials, slats of cheap wood held together by gold nails. Antoni Muntadas' *Quarto do fundo* is a reconstruction of his original installation at Luisa Strina's former venue in 1987, for which he installed close circuit cameras and monitors that constantly filmed the gallery's art work storage, the back room, where its symbolic and financial

capital resides. It can be seen upon entering the gallery, in the closed circuit TV system, to then encounter the real situation in this section of the exhibition. Terence Gower's *The Architecture of Shops* takes found material on the correct design of retail stores transforming it into a brief audiovisual manual. Both works act as mirroring devices of sorts, accentuating the strategy of repetition that enable the different defamiliarising effects throughout the exhibition.

Act 5: *Instrução publica* / the comradely object The fifth and last "act", functions as an open end for the exhibition, where the public is invited to reach their own conclusions and alter the physical and visual outcome of the show. For Brecht, epic or dialectical theatre was to be devoid of dénouement, suggesting that the audience would provide an ending once outside the space of the theatre and in the context of everyday life. This is also a space for reading, learning and engaging in a more active relationship with many of the works on display. In many ways the theme of this last act relates to the Brechtian idea that theater must educate, and make people think, but also to the fact that many artists have these ideas in mind producing works that transcend their status as art objects and resist commodification despite the fact that they are susceptible to being exchanged in a commercial transaction. The works by Pedro Reyes, *Red Cart* (2010), *The Bruce High Quality Foundation, Art History With Labor: 95 Theses* (2012), and Nicolás París, *Teoría de la interacción* (2012) function in this way, generating social and group dynamics that imply collective and individual engagement, while they also exhibit a pedagogic intent.

Many of the works presented here are influenced by the legacies of Russian Constructivism, that singular moment in twentieth century art history in which art and politics intersected in their common desire for social transformation. The short-lived movement known as Productivism [3] embraced industrial production as a vehicle for the democratization of the art object setting the precedent for modern industrial design; Vladimir Tatlin designed and produced prototypes for stoves and working garments; Varvara Stepanova and Liubov Popova designed clothes and textiles; Aleksandr Rodchenko designed and built his renowned Workers Club and made advertisements, in collaboration with Vladimir Mayakovsky, for Soviet shops and businesses during the implementation of the NEP (New Economic Policy) which implied a revival of capitalist forms of consumption and thus a new interest in the object. Thus, in this climate of revolution, anticipation but also economic and political uncertainty, mediated by an ambivalent attitude towards the commodity, Boris Arvatov formulated the concept of the socialist or comradely object, that is an object that would fulfil both aesthetic and utilitarian imperatives and that would enable the construction of a revolutionary way of life, and the mass-produced objects designed by Tatlin, Stepanova, Popova, and Rodchenko, all form part of its brief but compelling history. These ideas are revisited in the works included in this last act of the exhibiton, and particularly by those of Gabriel Sierra, Nicolás París, and Felipe Mujica, whose works not only evoke the visual language and ethos of productivism but also the intersection between sculptural forms and industrial design heralded by the soviet artists' utopian visions of the object-as-comrade.[4] [1] Prostitution, Civil Rights, Health [2] I borrow the term from Fernando Pessoa the Portuguese poet who created four heteronyms (Alberto Caeiro, Alvaro de Campos, Ricardo Reis, and Bernardo Soares), through which he engaged in different literary genres and styles.

[3] Integrated by artists, poets and theorists such as Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Liubov Popova, Vladimir Tatlin, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Boris Arvatov, Osip Brik, and Sergei Tretyakov, among others.

[4] Term coined by Christina Kiaer in *Imagine no Possessions, The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2005.

**Link**

[www.galerialuisastrina.com.br/exposicoes/parque-industrial](http://www.galerialuisastrina.com.br/exposicoes/parque-industrial)

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