

Barbara Marcel

5.8.–7.9.20

Barbara Marcel is a Brazilian artist and film-maker. Her works explore historical views of nature and how these relate to colonial imagery. The artist devoted her doctoral dissertation to the essay film as a genre and as a historiographical tool for decolonial thought. Her explicit focus is on issues in history and the links between Germany and Latin America. Parallel to her research, she works regularly with other artists, researchers and activists on projects around public debate in times of growing environmental conflict and social inequality. At the Berlinische Galerie she is screening three essay films: “Victoria Amazonica” (2015, 22 min.), “The Open Forest” (2017, 24:35 min.) and “Arara” (2017, 9:35 min.).

“Victoria Amazonica” is the first chapter in an ongoing project about the Botanical Gardens in the Berlin district of Dahlem and the origins of the tropical plants found there. The artist pits her own voice against historical and contemporary footage on the Amazonian Giant Water Lily drawn from archives and the Web. Marcel addresses a crisis of cultural heritage by questioning her personal knowledge – shaped by colonial thinking – about the Amazon and its water lily.

“The Open Forest” was made after the artist stayed at the Adolpho Ducke Reserve managed by the National Institute for Amazon Research (INPA). This is one of the leading sites for researching into the Brazilian Amazon. Marcel’s film traces a journey from the Sahara to the Amazon; from greenhouse effects to the origins of Europe’s advance across the tropics of the “New World”; from the rubber trade to brega pop music on the streets of the tax haven Manaus. The video, a composition of found footage and images from the Amazon region, reflects on this history of the forest as a commodity, its exploitation by human technologies and its significance as a natural resource.

“Arara” shows a woman absorbed in a game on her smartphone, where her ara macaw avatar has to devour floating gold coins. Surrounded by plants, the protagonist’s movements gradually reveal her whereabouts and contrast these with her

virtual context. What does it mean for humans if they perceive nature increasingly through virtual space?

Biography

Barbara Marcel (*1985, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) studied at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, the Institute for Art in Context at Berlin’s University of the Arts and the Universidade Estácio de Sá in Rio de Janeiro. Venues that have shown her work include ZKM, Karlsruhe; nGbK, Berlin; Savvy Contemporary Berlin; Espacio Pla, Buenos Aires; Tieranatomisches Theater, Humboldt University, Berlin; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; CeNak - Zoological Museum, Hamburg; the Athens Biennale and the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig. She holds a bursary from the Heinrich Böll Foundation and has lived in Berlin since 2009.

Virtual Video Space

In our virtual Video Space, Barbara Marcel is showing “Manioc, I grind you, sister” (2015-19, 2-channel video, 13 min. + 43 min.), a work referencing farm labour in the Amazon made with artist Ana Hupe:
bg.berlin/virtual-video-space

