

ART

After the Olympics and an Impeachment, Brazilian Artists Look to the Horizon

Ian Erickson-Kery | August 23, 2016



Installation view of 'O que vem com a aurora' at Casa Triângulo (photo by Edouard Fraipont, all photos courtesy Casa Triângulo) (click to enlarge)

SÃO PAULO — On Sunday, the [Olympic Games](#) in Rio de Janeiro came to a close with the [conspicuous absence](#) of Interim President Michel Temer, who was met with boos when he appeared at the opening ceremony. On Thursday, the final stage of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment proceedings [will commence](#) in the senate, after which Temer will most likely assume the presidency until 2018. Rousseff's offense amounts to a technical overstepping of her powers in signing off on extra government spending, but the motivations for her ouster run much deeper.



Temer, since he assumed power in May, has initiated a wide-ranging [restructuring of government](#). His first moves were to appoint an [all-white, all-male cabinet](#) and close down several ministries dedicated to social programs. The platform of the new government, never subjected to popular vote, ranges from the curtailing of health and education spending to the sale of land and oil reserves to foreign companies. Such an abrupt power shift in favor of the country's elites and foreign financial interests has not occurred since the two-decade-long military dictatorship that took hold following the coup of

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Ivan Grilo, "Mais um dia" (2016), engraving on plexiglas, wax, and newspapers (photo by Edouard Fraipont) (click to enlarge)

1964. There is overwhelming consensus within Brazil's arts community that the country is once again experiencing a coup. Where does one turn in such

circumstances? How does one think about the future? The prognoses provided by major media outlets do little more than fray the nerves.

Near the entrance of Casa Triângulo, Ivan Grilo's work "Mais um dia" ("Another Day," 2016), consists of a transparent panel propped against the wall, pinning the day's editions of São Paulo's two major newspapers (*Folha* and *Estado*) to the ground. Above the newspapers, thin arcs of color in a yellow-to-red gradient are set into the glass like a record of the sun's movement over the course of a day. The piece is a poignant reflection on how news marks the passage of time, especially in the midst of tumult. Art is one space where we can diagnose the ways in which news mediates our perceptions. Art provides a means of keeping abreast of political events without slipping into despair; there are horizons beyond those outcomes preordained in headlines.



Opavivará!, "REMOTUPY" (2016), electric vessel on wheels and people (photo by Edouard Fraipont) (click to enlarge)

In his statement for the Casa Triângulo group exhibition *O que vem com a aurora* ("What Comes with the Aurora"), Rio de Janeiro-based curator Bernardo Mosqueira explains that an aurora precedes the sun's cresting of the horizon during the dark polar winter. There is a tinge of saccharine optimism here; however, the best of the 26 works by 18 artists in the show display a keen awareness of the complexity of the present and the imperative to formulate responses through making and doing, rather than through dry critique. The works — many of which were made in the past year — share in a radiance that spills outside the gallery's confines.

Parked in the driveway is "REMOTUPY" (2016), an electric-powered canoe on wheels that the artist collective Opavivará! built and drove to the exhibition's opening, navigating São Paulo's notoriously traffic-clogged roads. The canoe conjures the vast waterways of Brazil's interior, as well as the continuously threatened indigenous communities that live on their banks. The vehicle and the performance propose, however fantastically, a way of moving about urban space dependent less on environmental degradation and more on mutual aid.



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Elza Lima, "Untitled" (1990/2000)

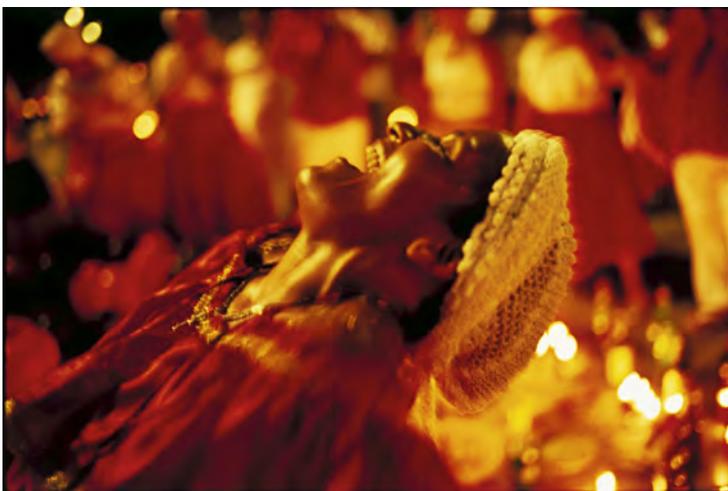


Daniel Lie, "T.D.P." (2016), two tourmalines, hemp rope, jute fabric, cotton fabric, mud, and linseeds (photo by Edouard Fraipont) (click to enlarge)

Inside the gallery, Elsa Lima's three black-and-white photographs of children playing on the banks of rural rivers resonate with the canoe parked outside. Lima's ethnographic, documentary practice is complemented by more speculative and conceptual approaches found elsewhere in the exhibition. [Daniel Lie's](#) sculpture "T.D.P." (2016) extends sinuously from the rafters of the gallery ceiling to the floor: a taut, red cloth loops midway with an unruly assemblage of hemp, jute, mud, and sprouting flaxseed, anchored by two tourmaline rocks gently propped on the floor. No single element dominates the balancing act, which is made entirely of organic and mineral components. There is a fragility to the form, yet it is a literal substrate for life:

a seductive and resilient ecosystem that commands the pristine gallery space, but could just as easily take root in the forest. Plant growth is *à propos* in taking a stand against a pervasive rottenness.

At a juncture where the idea of the public is under attack, the exhibition focuses on the power that can be generated from social encounters. Several works playfully call Casa Triângulo's institutional framework into question, overwhelming clear-cut categorizations and discrete aesthetics. In [Vivian Caccuri's](#) "Automotivo I" (2016), dice and shells bounce up and down inside two subwoofers emitting popular beats that range in genre from Colombian reggaeton to Ghanaian azonto. [Guy Veloso's](#) photograph from the series *Extase* (2011) captures the intensity of a festival in northern Brazil dedicated to the Umbanda deity Exu. The histories of syncretism in Brazil are embodied in narratives and practices that counter the austerity — cultural as well as economic — that has dominated the country's recent political discourse.



Guy Veloso, "Exu" from series 'Extase' (2011)

In his "Pedagogical project for a time of parliamentary, judicial, and mediatized coup" (2016), [Traplev](#) (the *nom de guerre* of a Recife-based artist) culled an amalgamation of texts on the current Brazilian situation and formatted them for different displays. Here, four parts of the 30-part series are placed on two easels positioned at different points in the gallery. "It is part of

the logic of power to produce melancholia, which brings us to believe in our weakness and isolation. But there are many who were, are, and will be like us. ... There is a new political body that will emerge when the oligarchy and its claue least expect it,” reads one of the panels. Another reads: “For the families with two men and no women and those with one woman living with another; for those with three stepfathers and no stepmothers; for those with just one woman; for women that used to be men.” It concludes: “To recreate Brazil it is necessary to see that the peripheries are the center. That our symbolic capital is not São Paulo, but Altamira.”

Altamira is the site of a [massive hydroelectric dam project](#) in the Amazon basin whose first turbines were switched on in April of this year and which is expected to eventually supply power to 60 million people in 17 states. Its construction, however, has displaced 20,000 people, jeopardizes indigenous communities, and presents numerous ecological threats. It is in many ways emblematic of the onslaught of Brazil’s development, which has yielded some social advances but is now mired in crisis.

There is power to be found in the destabilizing of centers, and in the subsequent recognition of co-dependencies. By reframing the gallery as one point of encounter among many, as a place to park a canoe instead of a painting, Mosqueira’s exhibition begins to call forth other possible futures.



Vivian Caccuri, “Automotivo I” (2016), wood, carpet, subwoofer, dice, and shells

O que vem com a aurora *continues at Casa Triângulo* ([Rua Estados Unidos 1324, Jardins, São Paulo, Brazil](#)) through August 27.

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