

# *Rethinking Nature*

Madre Museum

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Maria Thereza Alves (Brazil), Giorgio Andreotta Calò (Italy), Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan (Philippines), Adrián Balseca (Ecuador), Gianfranco Baruchello (Italy), Adriana Bustos (Argentina), Sebastián Calfuqueo Aliste (Chile), Cao Minghao and Chen Jianjun (China), Jimmie Durham (US), Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman (Brazil/Germany), Fernando García-Dory and INLAND (Spain), Ximena Garrido-Lecca (Peru), Gidree Bawlee - Salma Jamal Moushum - Kamruzzaman Shadhin (Bangladesh), Edgar Heap of Birds (Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations/US), Karrabing Film Collective and Elizabeth Povinelli (Emmi, Mentha, Wadjigiyn, Kiyuk and Malakmalak countries/US), Sam Keogh (Ireland), Francois Knoetze (South Africa), Elena Mazzi (Italy), Ana Mendieta (Cuba), Marzia Migliora (Italy), Jota Mombaça and Iki Yos Piña Narváez (Brazil/Venezuela), Sandra Monterroso (Guatemala), Niccolò Moronato (Italy), Tabita Rezaire and Amakaba (French Guiana), Zina Saro-Wiwa (UK/Nigeria), Karan Shrestha (Nepal), Buhlebezwe Siwani (South Africa), Yasmin Smith (Australia), Ivano Troisi (Italy), Tricky Walsh (Australia), Zheng Bo (Hong Kong)

The acceleration of global warming, the rising of the seas, the mass extinction of species, recent weather anomalies, flows and seepages of toxicity impossible to contain—this unfolding predicament cannot be separated from the modern European paradigm that conceives of nature as a reservoir of resources to be freely exploited for profit. *Rethinking Nature* reveals how contemporary artistic practice is contributing to cultural and political processes that collectively rethink the ethical underpinnings of existence in the world, and underline the forms of interconnectedness that bind the entire planet. Featuring more than 40 artists and collectives from 22 countries, the project articulates experimental creative vocabularies that aim to produce alternative bodies of knowledge and social forms centered on political ecology. They demonstrate the urgency of building relationships on the basis of other values and call for radical change to address a cumulative crisis that has long existed in many geographies and that theorist Elizabeth Povinelli of Karrabing Film Collective today defines as “ancestral.”

A critical reading through artists' eyes of the disciplinary separations and determinisms that have dominated the natural and geological sciences across the last centuries, the exhibition reflects on the historical and philosophical roots of an imperialist vision of nature as source of economic gain to be appropriated, and considers how the associated dynamics of domination are perpetuated in today's global economic system. The paintings and sculptures of Argentine artist Adriana Bustos map iconographies relating to the systematisation of the relationships between living beings and analyze how the natural sciences emerged from and also served to naturalise colonial and racializing processes. Karrabing Film Collective present a new constellation of video works and commissioned conceptual mappings—or *Weather Reports*—that show a colonial eye that perfects its cartography as it ravages worlds, juxtaposing the diasporic history of Povinelli's family's move from clan lands in the Italian Alps to settler lands in the United States, with the history of Karrabing expropriation from their ancestral lands in northern Australia. *Weather Reports* spans five centuries to evoke the dramatic upheavals of ecologies and geographies as Europe asserts control over the meaning and destiny of territories, lands and peoples.

Gianfranco Baruchello's project *Agricola Cornelia S.p.A.*, set up in the 1970s near Rome as an artistic experiment in farming and social justice, investigated how art could offer alternatives and respond to realities such as human hunger, propose forms of labour not based on exploitation, and explore relationships with the non-human and the elements. A new generation of artists today develop articulations with small-scale agriculture and community through projects such as INLAND created in 2010 by Fernando García-Dory in northern Spain and Amakaba, recently started by Tabita Rezaire in the Amazonian forest in French Guiana, which will include a cacao farm, beekeeping and a dye garden. These artistic initiatives imagine responses to the ecological crisis, assert collective responsibility, and promote a concept of climate justice.

Other artists in *Rethinking Nature* articulate in their works forms of interconnected thinking that consider as fundamental the intelligence of rocks, water, plants, and animals to disrupt the human-nature divide. Zina Saro-Wiwa's *Karikpo Pipeline* overlays the infrastructure of oil extraction with an evocation of invisible and spiritual energies, setting an Ogoni masquerade performed by dancers with carved antelope masks in a landscape of pipelines. The monotype series *Defend Sacred Mountains* by Edgar Heap of Birds collects the toponymy of North America's indigenous peoples related to places of ritual, worship and healing to illustrate the fragmentation caused by the nation-state and generate a space of cultural resistance. Buhlebezwe Siwani's video installation *AmaHubo* creates a ritual and narrative space that affirms, through performative and corporeal languages, the resilience of spiritual practices linked to land despite the interdictions faced by her forebears in southern Africa. Further extending the exhibition through a large site-specific installation, Filipino artists Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan present *Pillar*, from the series *Project Another Country* inspired by the Badjao, a nomadic seafaring people of the Sulu Sea. The new commission, composed of hundreds of cardboard houses and plants, was developed during workshops with young people in Naples. The cascade of habitations and gardens descends across the floors of the museum, suspended from a Neapolitan sailboat, inverted like a shelter in a storm, in reference to the city's history as a Mediterranean port and to future forms of living on rising waters.

An illustrated exhibition catalogue will be published with new critical writing by Denise Ferreira da Silva and others, as well as a series of discussions with invited artists, thinkers, activists and practitioners collaborating on the associated programs.

*Rethinking Nature* is curated by Kathryn Weir with associate curator Ilaria Conti.

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