

Laura Anderson Barbata Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe Origins

Curated by Madeline Murphy Turner

This exhibition brings together the work of Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe (b. 1971, Sheroana, Venezuela) and Laura Anderson Barbata (b. 1958, Mexico City) to propose a visual dialogue grounded in their historical relationship of communal reciprocity, artistic collaboration, and friendship. An artist from Sheroana, an Indigenous community of the Upper Orinoco River region in the Venezuelan Amazon, Hakihiiwe works with drawing, printmaking, and painting to communicate the ancestral knowledge and living symbols of his Yanomami people. Anderson Barbata is a transdisciplinary artist from Mexico who realizes her socially-based practice through artworks that range from drawing and textiles to performance interventions.

In 1992, Anderson Barbata traveled to the Venezuelan Amazon, where the local Yanomami, Ye'kuana, and Piaroa communities accepted her proposal to initiate a papermaking project in return for sharing their expert knowledge of canoe building. During this time, Anderson Barbata and Hakihiiwe met in Mahekototeri, in the State of Amazonas, where they founded the Yanomami Owë Mamotima initiative. The project invites residents to create paper from local fibers on which they write, illustrate, and publish their oral histories, inscribing a historical narrative that had previously only been recorded by outside anthropologists and missionaries. In 2000, their first publication, *Shapono*, received the Best Book of the Year award from the Centro Nacional del Libro of Venezuela and is now held in prominent library collections worldwide. Following the Yanomami Owë Mamotima project, Anderson Barbata and Hakihiiwe continued to develop their own artistic practices in tandem, traveling together to Caracas, Mexico City, and Chicago to participate in papermaking workshops. The first exhibition to bring together their individual artistic production, *Laura Anderson Barbata and Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe: Origins* elucidates how these two artists maintain a dialogue across space and time.

Featuring drawings, prints, and sculptures, (& photography) this presentation departs from Anderson Barbata and Hakihiiwe's collaboration to explore how each approaches topics of the natural world. At the start of her career, Anderson Barbata's artistic perspective was grounded in the metaphor of the germinating seed, the sensation of something inside of us that suddenly awakens and grows due to unexpected yet catalytic interactions. As a result, her early studio works—drawing, sculpture, and installation—look to nature and the environment as subjects. At the same time, her community projects in the Amazon are highly conscious of environmental protection through the exclusive use of local and natural materials, an awareness that, since 2017, is evident in her series of public interventions in which she calls for the protection of the world's oceans.

In the case of Hakihiiwe, the papermaking expertise he achieved during the 90s continues to impact his decision to only work with



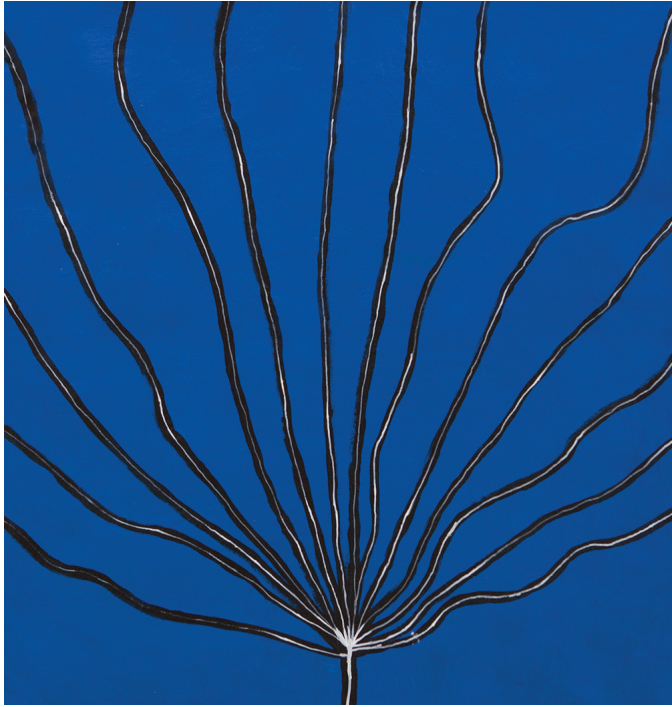
Hakihiiwe and Anderson Barbata, 1997

paper made of natural fibers. On these sheets, he unfolds a worldview that understands all beings—humans, animals, plants, earth, and spirits—to exist in a co-constitutive relationship. This cosmivision contradicts the nature/culture divide central to Western thought, in which nature is distinctly separate from the category of the human. The Yanomami word *Urihi*, often translated as rainforest, is, in fact, a unique word that references the forest not as a singular entity but as the entire community of beings that cohabitate within it. Especially since 2018, Hakihiiwe has focused on the small details of these animals, insects, and plants, depicting the eyes, wings, shells, and many other minutiae of the forest's many beings. Even as he travels to the Venezuelan capital of Caracas and abroad, Hakihiiwe returns to the rainforest, his home, where he executes all of his preparatory drawings.

This interconnected focus on the nonhuman world demonstrates how two artistic practices have developed in parallel, revealing a creative dialogue that persists despite the end of their formal collaboration. Made during the late 1980s and early 90s, Anderson Barbata's exhibited drawings and sculptures represent a period of profound change for the artist. After her initial trip to Mahekototeri and in subsequent returns, she began to draw and paint the landscapes of the Upper Orinoco through semi-abstract compositions that center on the sensations of humidity, splashes of water, gusts of wind, or the billowing smoke of a fire. With titles that often intimate the colonization of the Americas, these works from 1993 and 1994 illustrate the artist's shifting awareness of her position in a world marked by social injustice. Soon after, she would begin to make installations that directly comment on the erasure of Native people from history. In recent years, she has collaborated on large-scale

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Sheroanawe Hakihiwe, *Yamira II / Lightning*, 2021; acrylic on canvas; 36¼ × 35 in. / 92 × 89 cm

public interventions that call attention to the climate crisis and the oppression of BIPOC individuals in her two hometowns, New York City and Mexico City, and beyond.

Hakihiwe's prints and drawings from 2021 and 2022 develop from the intricate pencil sketches he executes while in the rainforest in Mahekototeri, which he later completes in Caracas with the assistance of the master printer Tabata Romero. What may seem like abstract images to nape—the Yanomami word for foreigners—are actually details of the flora and fauna among which he lives or fragments of body paint designs that the Yanomami use to decorate themselves during celebrations. With large format monoprints on mulberry paper, the artist depicts sequences of bare branches or speckled mushroom tops. Relatedly, acrylic-on-woven-paper compositions show intricate lines of marching ants, the alternating color patterns on a serpent's body, and the slight variances that differentiate one palm leaf from another. Unfolding at the crux of what he sees in the forest and what he envisions in the oral histories passed down from his ancestors, Hakihiwe's practice is a unique confluence of present and historical knowledge that persists despite colonial attempts to suppress Indigenous epistemologies.

This presentation speaks to an artistic dialogue that simmers in each figure's individual work. However, it also poses the opportunity to rethink the category of Latin American art, particularly through the consequences of the conquest of the Americas. Hakihiwe's art is immersed in a cosmivision that precedes and exceeds the colonization of the cultural region now widely referred to as Latin America, and Anderson Barbata's practice critiques (neo)colonialism's continuing extraction of life and land. Through the work of these two artists, it is possible to reflect on the ecological consequences that result from the construction of Latin America and, ultimately, to question whether this is a sufficient framework or if it invisibilizes its own violence.

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Laura Anderson Barbata, *Sin título / Untitled*, 1996; wood, feathers, porcupine quills, and wool, unique; 25 × 30¼ × 6½ in. / 63.5 × 76.8 × 16.5 cm

Madeline Murphy Turner is an art historian and curator based between New York and Buenos Aires. Her research focuses on contemporary art from Latin America, with a special interest in topics of ecology, women artists, performance, and the other-than-human. She is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where she is finishing a dissertation on artists' books, mail art, and experimental theater by a network of women artists in 1970s and '80s Mexico City. She is currently a research participant in the Getty Foundation Connecting Art Histories program "Narrating Art and Feminisms: Eastern Europe and Latin America." From 2019 to 2022 she was the Cisneros Institute Research Fellow at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and from 2017 to 2018 the Graduate Curatorial Assistant at the Grey Art Gallery. At New York University, she has taught a number of courses on modern and contemporary art. Madeline has also written exhibition catalog essays for Marlborough Gallery and published texts in *Burlington Contemporary*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Damn Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *Art Margins Online*, *AWARE Magazine*, *post: notes on art in a global context*, *MoMA Magazine*, and in the 2020 Mercosul Biennial publication *Against the Canon: Art, Feminism(s) and Activisms, XVIII to XXI Centuries*.