

JOSEPHINE BAKER AND LE CORBUSIER IN RIO

A TRANSATLANTIC AFFAIR



04.15.14 > 08.17.14



MUSEU DE ARTE DO RIO

The exhibition **Josephine Baker and Le Corbusier in Rio - A Transatlantic Affair**, curated by Inti Guerrero and Carlos Maria Romero, firmly establishes MAR as a museum of processes. In addition to housing works and documents related to the meeting of the performer with the urbanist in Rio de Janeiro in 1929, the exhibition features an intense performance arts program - which includes a significant set of records of performances in various parts of the world. It thus acquires a cross connotation by activating non-traditional reflections, as the elaboration and the condition of the present of some experiences.

The curators claim that Le Corbusier and Josephine Baker were postmodern subjects in a modern era, that is, they were figures that did not limit themselves to a single identity; they invented and produced different subjectivities throughout their



Le Corbusier

Urbanisme, Rio de Janeiro, 1929

Plan FLC 32091 • © Foundation Le Corbusier, Paris

lives. Josephine explored the potential of the "contradictions" of being at once black, woman, mother, American, European. In this sense, she embodied and took to absolutely provocative instances the postmodern condition of provisional and variable identities, informed by migration flows and globalization.

These apparent identity contradictions are therefore the backbone of the exhibition, which confronts the singularity, primitivism, and sexuality of Josephine Baker's dance with the methods, principles and ordering concepts that Le Corbusier worked with in his proposals for architecture and urbanism. Such clashes expand and bring each other up-to-date with the clusters dedicated to Porno Art Movement and the underground actor Mario Montez - curated by Fernanda Nogueira and Conrad Ventur, respectively, - movements that present bodies and their potentialities from a perspective on the margins of society's norms.

In this sense, by dealing not only with the collision of ways of thinking but also with the mutual seduction that appears to exist in the differences, *Josephine Baker and Le Corbusier in Rio - A Transatlantic Affair* asks what are ascribed identities: what is it to be modern? What is it to be primitive? To be colonized? What is gender? These are questions that emerge in regards to current society and about ourselves, every day.

Museu de Arte do Rio

Bord, le 10 Decembre 1929.

LE COMITE.

Messieurs les Passagers desireux
de participer à la formation d'un Comité
ayant pour but d'organiser des Jeux et
des fêtes sont priés de se réunir à
16 heures au petit Restaurant Tribord.



Le Corbusier

Le Corbusier et Joséphine Baker, Rio de Janeiro, 1929

Carnet B4-239 • ©Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris

In 1929, Rio de Janeiro witnessed a meeting between the architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965) and the dancer, singer and actor Josephine Baker (1906-1975). Both were considered major personalities of the vanguard in aesthetics and the history of twentieth-century modernism. Both disembarked at the port (in front of the MAR), after sharing a long journey aboard transatlantic ships.

At first glance, their meeting could represent two opposing ways to understand the body of modernism. Le Corbusier is synonymous with the great paradigm of modern architecture (and a catalyst for Brazilian architects of the period). In this architectural language, the body is disciplined in its behavior by means of the homogeneity and functionalism of design and urbanism. For her part, as the world's first black woman of show biz, Josephine Baker subverted the canons of dance of her time with the nude body, and with a choreography of wild, cathartic and anarchic movements that made a claim for subjective emancipation.

Yet are the aesthetic programs of Le Corbusier and Josephine Baker really so distinct? Could it not be that, on the contrary, they are feeding each other? Would modernism have in fact occurred if there had not been a prior desire to inhabit the skin of the other? The remaking of oneself in the skin of others is not a unidirectional process, but a mutual desire. In it, the racially defined bodies also seek ways to escape the epidermic inscriptions carried since colonial times.

On the voyage to Rio de Janeiro, Le Corbusier was confronted with two alterities. On one side, approaching the primitivist aesthetic of Josephine Baker - who, on the stages of Paris, fetishized the European erotic fantasy of black femininity. On the other, he dove into and became fascinated with the tropics, the blacks of the favelas, with a

“primitive” context from which his most radical urbanism emerged. In the city, the architect didn’t see anything different, but he started to see in a different way. The intrinsic relationship between modernism and primitivism presents us not so much with a way of seeing racial differences, but a way in which these differences teach us to see.

Although this exhibition contains material and works related to the Baker-Le Corbusier meeting, it is not characterized by a biographical or historicist curating. Rather, it is a constellation of documents, contributions from popular culture and contemporary works as much from the visual arts as from dance, performance and cinema. A large installation from the artist Ana Maria Tavares, in one of the exhibition rooms is the museum display device housing works related to transatlantic ships and their close relationship with modern architecture. The second room was projected as a theater similar to the ones inside the ships, a stage space for performances and actions that comprise one of the central lines of the curating. The space is inspired in the commemorative costume ball that occurred when the ship Josephine and Le Corbusier were traveling in passed the line of the equator. At the party, they win the costume contest as clowns.

In this room are works that trace Josephine Baker’s conscious and unconscious emancipatory legacy. They explore how she and several artists after her unsettled and questioned familiar signifiers of race, gender, class and sexual behavior, subverting how those markers position humans on a scale of supremacy. Concomitant with the exhibition, a program of live works and documentation will be presented, exploring artistic strategies such as stripping, cross-dressing, re-appropriation, self-objectification and mockery, with their empowering and destabilizing effects. The second room and its stage are proposed as an ephemeral space where

the traumas and sensual tensions derived from pseudo-rational-functional-patriarchal-evolutionist systems of governance are processed and publicly rebelled against, building a ground for empathy towards the oppressed and an awareness of the privileges and separations caused by it. The exhibit also incorporates two mini-exhibits on the Porn Art Movement, by Fernanda Nogueira, and on the underground actor Mario Montez, by Conrad Ventur. They are specific examples of Baker's legacy found in more recent culture.

Inti Guerrero and Carlos Maria Romero
Curators



Carmen Miranda
Frame of Doll Face (Star Dreams), 1945
Direction: Lewis Seiler
MAR Collection/Fundação Roberto Marinho gift

The Porn **Art Movement**, direct descendent of poetic vanguards, of counterculture and carnivalesque street protests, began in 1980 with The Gang's demo-show For Literary Topless at Ipanema Beach. At that time, the adjective "pornographic" was condemned and replete with negative connotations due the strong morality imposed upon the social body by the military regime that had been in power for 16 years. In this context, the Movement sought to make visible the relations with the usual, customary, intimate and fatal situations faced on a daily basis in those years of dictatorship and with words like torture, murders (committed by forces of the State), censorship, control, poverty, famine. The strategy was thus to subvert everything considered pejorative, immoral and worthy of censorship according to the repressive thinking, a procedure close to that of Josephine Baker in the 1920s. Using stigmatized terms, the Porn Art Movement sought to provoke through performance a radical inversion of the moralist values. They publically encouraged a different kind of sexuality and relation to the body in public space, cross-dressing and denuding indiscriminately and mocking the seriousness of that pretentiously desexualized and, consequently, (hetero) patriarchal and sexist political regime.

Fernanda Nogueira

Curator

The **Montezland** micro-exhibition and screening program celebrates the creative life of legendary underground actor and counter culture figure Mario Montez. (1935-2013). Montez was a favorite subject of the artists Jack Smith and Andy Warhol, and was a founding member of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company with Charles Ludlam in the 1960s. Montez also collaborated with artists and filmmakers such as Leandro Katz, Takahiko Imura, Hélio Oiticica, José Rodríguez-Soltero, among others. While researching Warhol's early films, New York City-based artist Conrad Ventur learned that the reclusive Montez had begun to emerge from retirement after 35 years. They began a friendship through Ventur's re-staging of Warhol's 'screen tests' using the same methods and Factory stars. Mario Montez adopted his name from the movie star Maria Montez, the first Latina Hollywood star before Carmen Miranda.

Conrad Ventur
Curador

Steven Cohen
Chandelier, 2001 • Photo by John Hogg
Steven Cape Town and Johannesburg Collection





Liliana Angulo
Utopic Black, 2001
Artist's collection

Ana Maria Tavares
Enigmas of a Night with Midnight Daydreams
(Dream Station series), 2004/2014
Artist's collection/Courtesy Galeria Silvia Cintra and Galeria Vermelho
Photo João Musa



PERFORMANCES PROGRAM

04.15 > 5 p.m.

Chandelier - Steven Cohen

04.15 > 9 p.m.

*Booty Thrashing -
Tequileiras do Funk, at Kalesa
Rua Sacadura Cabral, 61
Centro, Rio de Janeiro*

05.03 > 4 p.m.

*Twenty Looks or Paris is Burning at
the Judson Church (S) - Trajal Harrell.
Talk with the author.*

05.22 > 4 p.m.

*Monstrous Nature -
Marcela Levi and Lucía Russo.
Talk with the authors.*

08.09 > 4 p.m.

*Guintche -
Marlene Monteiro de Freitas.
Talk with the author.*

MAR

Praça Mauá, 5 • Centro
Rio de Janeiro • RJ • CEP 20081-240
Phone 55 21 3031 2741

OPENING HOURS

April 15 - August 17, 2014
Tue-Sun (including holidays) 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The exhibition presents images of explicit nude
and unadequated language in specific parts.
Not recommended for under 16 years old.

ADMISSION

R\$ 8.00 | R\$ 4.00 (half price)
Tue - free entrance

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Information phone: 55 21 3031 2742
info@museudeartedorio.org.br

Scheduling:
agendamento@museudeartedorio.org.br

STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH WHAT HAPPENS AT MAR

www.museudeartedorio.org.br
www.twitter.com/museuarterio
www.facebook.com/museudeartedorio
www.instagram.com/museudeartedorio

The visual identity of the exhibition was based
on works by Le Corbusier and A. M. Cassandre,
pseudonym of Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron.



CONCEPTION AND REALIZATION



MASTER SPONSERS



SUPPORT



ADMINISTRATION



REALIZATION

Ministério da
Cultura

