



THE FALL OF UTOPIAS AT THE SÃO PAULO BIENNIAL GRACIELA SACCO & MARTA MINUJÍN

Pre-Opening | 29.09.23 - 10am

Opening | 29.09.23 - 6pm

Permanence | 29.09.23 - 29.10.23

Rolf Art | Esmeralda 1353

In the context of the ongoing **São Paulo International Biennial**, **Rolf Art** is pleased to announce the opening of the exhibition *The Fall of Utopias*, offering a historical review and dialogue between two iconic Argentinean contributions to this Biennial: *Obelisco acostado* [Lying down obelisk] (1978) by **Marta Minujín** presented at the I Latin American Biennial of São Paulo, and *Interferencia* [Interference] (1996) by **Graciela Sacco** showcased at the XXIII International Biennial of São Paulo.

In 1978, **Marta Minujín** (b. 1943, Buenos Aires, Argentina) was selected as one of the representatives for Argentina, alongside other artists, at the 1st Latin American Biennial in São Paulo with her project *Obelisco acostado* [Lying down obelisk]. This submission featured a life-sized installation of the Buenos Aires 's iconic Obelisk laid horizontally, measuring 67 meters in length and 7 meters in width, with a gradual decline to 3.60 meters at the tip. This monumental installation allowed visitors to explore and traverse its length and included projections and televisions at the inner end.

In 1996, **Graciela Sacco** (1956-2017, Rosario, Argentina) was selected to represent Argentina at the XXIII International Biennial of São Paulo with the project *Interferencia* [Interference], curated by Jorge Helft. The proposal brought together two central bodies of **Sacco's** work: her emblematic heliographic series *Bocanada* (1993) and her palisades *El incendio y las vísperas* from the *Cuerpo Cuerpo* series [The Fire and the Eve, Body to Body] (1996).

Possessing unique aesthetics that unambiguously lead us to their distinctive viewpoints, both Sacco and Minujín transcend national boundaries to unveil a revelation to the world, a daring, rebellious act, not devoid of violence in the passionate silence of a scream and the crumbling of icons.

Lic. María Carolina Baulo

The **pre-opening** event will take place within the framework of the **VIP program of Pinta BAPhoto Art fair**, featuring an exclusive breakfast on **September 29, 2023, at 10 am at the gallery**. The **official opening** will be held on the same day starting at 6 pm at Esmeralda 1353, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The exhibition, with free admission, welcomes visitors from Monday to Friday, between 11 am and 7 pm, and will continue to be on display until October 29, 2023, at Rolf Art, located at Esmeralda 1353, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

We hope you can join us, and we appreciate your support in spreading the word about the show!

LA CAÍDA DE LAS UTOPIÁS

A mouth and an obelisk. Two images that have evolved into enduring symbols of Argentine art across the ages. Two artists, two women who crafted symbols that, much like great works, stand the test of time, serving as a testament to the zeitgeist. Regrettably, for humanity, they often resurface, resonating in the present, sadly bearing witness to a perspective and voice that feels hauntingly contemporary. They do nothing more than highlight the epicenter of the storm in the collapse of human ideals. Thus, Marta Minujín's 'Lying Obelisk'—representing Argentina's contribution to the inaugural São Paulo Biennial in 1978—and Graciela Sacco's 'Bocanada'—Argentina's submission to the same Biennial in 1996—engage in a timeless dialogue and take on renewed significance as they amplify their message amidst a global reality where their protest is arrested by the inability to materialize lofty social ideals elevated to utopian status.

Possessing unique aesthetics that unambiguously lead us to their distinctive viewpoints, both Sacco and Minujín transcend national boundaries to unveil a revelation to the world, a daring, rebellious act, not devoid of violence in the passionate silence of a scream and the crumbling of icons. A fallen obelisk ceases to be the epicenter of a mighty city; it no longer stands as a triumphant symbol, as a conquest soaring above the rest. This has been the historical norm, from the time of the Egyptians, with each replica in prominent cities throughout the centuries serving as an emulation of dynastic grandeur. A fallen obelisk signifies a negation, a subtraction from the equation, the very antithesis of triumph. It's akin to the statue of a deposed leader left in plain view of the populace to leave no doubt about their failure—the 'fall of universal myths,' as Minujín aptly noted. An open mouth, asking for sustenance, also cries out against injustice, pain, need, cruelty—voiceless when even the dignity of nourishment is denied. An open mouth and an empty spoon, in their heartbreaking simplicity, epitomize the decline of a civilized human endeavor.

This exhibition aims to bring together, within the framework of the São Paulo Biennial – one of the world's most venerable art biennials – two distinct approaches to art, embodied by two artists who have made a lasting impact, individuals with the foresight to anticipate and prefigure the impending demise of the utopias that dwell within our collective social imagination.

Utopias, by their very nature, are unattainable. They continually shift further away as we attempt to draw near; such is their intrinsic quality. This exhibition emphasizes urgency in rethinking what is held as scenarios to be conquered rather than possible ones. It is on these final scenarios that we can act in order to change our reality, to think a world where we can inhabit even in its deficiencies. This perspective is not constraining or a cul-de-sac, but rather a reflection on failures and the poignant collapse of utopias held in fantastical and elusive realms, to serve as a foundation for reconstruction. This is a proposal to regard utopias as propellers, not as ultimate destinations, as we already acknowledge their nonexistence.

To conclude, borrowing from Eduardo Galeano, we ask, What purpose do utopias serve? The answer resounds: 'They are meant for us to walk'.

Lic. María Carolina Baulo

ABOUT BOCANADA BY GRACIELA SACCO

The mouths (fragments of bodies) that Graciela Sacco printed as heliographic posters and pasted around the streets of Rosario and Buenos Aires starting in 1993, make reference to the widening social differences caused by the neoliberal experiment, which ultimately led to Argentina's 2001 crisis. Graciela Sacco reclaimed the relationship between the artistic avant-garde and the political avant-garde, as proposed by the 1968 exhibition Tucumán Arde (Tucumán is burning), an event she researched, publishing in 1987 (together with Silvia Andino and Andrea Sueldo) the first study produced about this movement. She employed the heliography process, printing with light, an old technique used for copying architectural plans. She photographed, projected, and then printed these wide-open mouths on emulsified paper. These are anonymous mouths, distinct and identical. The accumulation of these images in public space, as well as in exhibition spaces, interrupts and challenges. The symbol is as confrontational as it is enigmatic.

Andrea Giunta - Rethink Everything notes, Buenos Aires, 2021

ABOUT LYING DOWN OBELISK BY MARTA MINUJÍN

The Obelisk has often been evoked as a phallic symbol that is activated in different contexts. Just as the Argentine dictatorship turned it into a support for the slogan "silence is health," inscribed in a ring circling the monument, in 2005 it appeared covered by an immense fuchsia condom to make it part of the anti-AIDS campaigns. Marta Minujín laid it on its side and placed it on the sacred stage of the Ibirapuera Pavilion at the first and only Bienal de Arte Latinoamericano, held in São Paulo in 1978. She produced this symbolic repositioning that disrupted the power of the monument to turn it into a structure that anyone could walk through. In its interior, images filmed around and from inside the obelisk, were projected

Andrea Giunta - Rethink Everything notes, Buenos Aires, 2021



OBELISCO ACOSTADO

Obelisco acostado [Lying down obelisk] is an obelisk reclined on one of its sides, assuming a horizontal position. It shares the exact dimensions of the Buenos Aires obelisk located in Plaza de la República in Buenos Aires. Crafted from wood, particle board, and ropes, it measures 67 meters in length and stands 7 meters in height at its base or entrance, gradually tapering to 3.60 meters at its tip.

It is accessible for visitors with a participation circuit, meaning that in addition to viewing it from all sides from the outside, visitors can enter through its base, which serves as an entrance due to the obelisk's reclined position. Visitors enter in groups of 10 and walk along a corridor illuminated with blacklight, with fluorescent panels on both sides. As they walk, their shadows are momentarily imprinted on these panels (achieved with blacklight).

Upon reaching the tip, they encounter two fluorescent chairs facing two TV sets and an 8mm film projection. The films and videos that can be seen are related to images filmed around the Buenos Aires obelisk, interviews with passersby about its significance, references to other obelisks around the world, the interior ascent of the obelisk, and its lying down (fictional scenes depicting the obelisk reclining). After the 10-minute presentations, visitors return to the starting point, which is the entrance, through another corridor that serves as the exit. The obelisk is divided in half, with one corridor for entry and another for exit.

The central idea of this work is to transfer a myth from one country to another, alter the world's law of gravity, change the vertical to horizontal, and create a state of oblique consciousness within the significant symbol of the penetrating spirit and sunlight.

Marta Minujín - Presentation Text, I Latin American Biennial of São Paulo, 1978.

MARTA MINUJÍN | BIO

Marta Minujín (b. 1943), Buenos Aires, Argentina. Between 1955 and 1960, in the same city, she studied visual arts at the Manuel Belgrano School of Fine Arts and the Superior School of Fine Arts. In 1961, she received a scholarship from the National Fund for the Arts that allowed her to settle in Paris. In 1962, another scholarship extended her stay in the city until 1964. A pioneer of happenings, performance art, soft sculpture, and video, Minujín pursues a diverse and irreverent practice that demonstrates a deep rejection of the collectible art object. Her works included the burning of all her works (*The Destruction*, 1963), temporary interventions with live animals (*The Crash*, 1964), and a journey through a maze of situations (*The Menesunda*, 1965).

Influenced by the intellectual environment surrounding the Torcuato Di Tella Institute in the sixties, she created works like *Simultaneity in Simultaneity* (1966). After winning the Guggenheim Fellowship, she joined the countercultural movement in 1970s New York, where she turned to pop art and psychedelic art. After creating the *Sweet Bread Obelisk* (1979), she focused on colossal public sculptures such as the *Joyce Bread Tower* (1980), the *Cheese Venus* (1983), the *Tower of Babel* (2011), the *Agora of Peace* (2013), and the *Rayuela Art* (2014). In 2015, she reconstructed "*The Menesunda according to Marta Minujín*" at the Museum of Modern Art in Buenos Aires. In 2017, she participated in *documenta14* (Kassel) with her work "*The Parthenon of Books*," a reimagining of the Parthenon she created in 1983 in Buenos Aires, made from 100,000 censored books from anywhere in the world and any time in history. In 2019, she recreated "*Menesunda Reloaded*" at the New Museum in New York City.

She has held numerous solo and group exhibitions in Argentina, the United States, Spain, France, Japan, among others. Her work is part of collections around the world, including the Guggenheim Museum (New York), Art Museum of the Americas (Washington DC), Olympic Park (Seoul), National Museum of Fine Arts, MALBA (Buenos Aires), and private collections in France, Italy, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, the United States, Canada, and others.



INTERFERENCE

The multiple image transmitted by the mass media paved the way to new paths for fine arts, allowing many artists to display their work in novel spaces and circuits. It is not within the narrow limits of a museum or gallery that the artistic piece should be sheltered, but it should emerge and materialize itself in a decisive way in all contemporary places - in every one of them. With the resumption of democracy which took place more than 10 years ago, a group of artists which included me shared the wish to gather all the dispersed avant-garde works from Rosario, which played the leading role in Tucumán Arde. For the first time after a long period of silence -16 years- this material which was gathered allowed us to restructure our artistic memory and fill the melancholic void in Argentinean art history; since that moment I believe I was able to think and feel the artistic practice beginning at an everyday-life setting, with a different ethical / aesthetic consciousness. The observation of the urban space and advertisement graphics also led me to recognize the existence of a visual colonization that encompasses the manipulation of mass media; I also became aware that the aesthetic strategies of communication displayed on the streets interact with all citizens and that the contemporary artistic image is a political image; political while it assumes its time both aesthetically and artistically.³ There is no doubt that the discourse on the current hegemony of image is based on the development of state-of-the-art technology, on multiplicity, on the strategic use of public and private spaces, nor that it is rooted in the superiority of a culture which prevalently supports the iconic sign. For artistic practice which is committed to its time there is the possibility for it to interfere with discourse. The interference in an image causes a disturbance, penetrates the interstices, is evoked in the memory of objects and people; it is politically critical when it questions power in relation to human conditions, to the established order, to the formal stance which conveys its materialization. The purpose is to show that other forms, other discourses, other sounds inhabit the room that exists between these voids and that they can pose questions and raise doubts; it would be convenient to ask ourselves: does the system lie? As far as I am concerned, the objects I produce and which generate images are conceived as witnesses which remain in an inner space. The image which is generated by them - nearly always in the form of multiples - paved the way to signaling the urban space, to Helio montajes, which interfere, introduce themselves, get mixed up with the circulating ads, add to the saturation of the manipulated environment; they pry the streets and appropriate the space of a postcard; their support can be a poster, small print, or TV. The juxtaposition of images both announces and denounces. Other times, these images are instantaneously captured from real situations; the appropriation and change in context or stance made by me metamorphoses them into artistic proposals. Therefore, that which is intimate becomes public and that which is public can be appropriated privately. The dematerialization of objects materializes images. Images and concepts give us an account of the world and share the impact of interference.

Graciela Sacco - Catalog of the XXIII São Paulo International Biennial, 1996.

GRACIELA SACCO | BIO

Graciela Sacco (1956-2017). Santa Fe, Argentina. Santa Fe, Argentina. Graduated in 1987 with a thesis dedicated to the Argentine avant-gardes of the 1960s. The artistic expressions of that decade had established strong ties between artistic experimentalism and social commitment, culminating in Rosario, her hometown, with "Tucumán Arde", an internationally recognized experience as a milestone of political Conceptualism. That generation of artists had been harshly repressed by the military dictatorship that took over the country from 1976 to 1983. Their works are related to light and graphics. From her beginnings and throughout her trajectory, her productions invite you to reflect on political and social violence. The use of different photosensitive processes have allowed her to materialize ideas and concepts in a particular way that has made her work carry a strong artistic identity. The transits, the exiles, the migrations, the nuclei of social conflict are present in episodes of different epochal distances. Her work occupies a prominent position today on the world contemporary art scene. She has represented Argentina in various international biennials including Shanghai (2004), Venice (2001), Havana (1997 and 2000), Mercosur (1997) and San Pablo (1996), among others. She has been awarded numerous prizes and recognitions, such as Artist of the Year by the Argentine Association of Critics (2001) and the Konex Award (2002-2012), among others. She has held numerous solo and group exhibitions in Argentina, England, Germany, France, Switzerland, Israel, Mexico, and Brazil, among others. Today, her work is part of both public and private national and international collections.

ABOUT ROLF ART

Rolf Art, located in Buenos Aires and founded by Florencia Giordana Braun in 2009, is the only art gallery specialized in technical image in Argentina. Focused on contemporary Latin American visual arts, the gallery features works exploring photographic media and its boundaries. The selection of artworks considers pieces with an inextricable union between critical density and aesthetic value. The curatorial profile challenges the political context & considers the social and economical background of artistic production as a determining factor for art's interpretation. We are committed to a select group of contemporary established Latin American artists, promoting them on a national and international basis. We support their artistic production together with editorial and audiovisual projects.

In order to contribute to the production and appreciation of contemporary art, looking forward to pushing the boundaries of the Latin American visual arts, the gallery develops an important exhibition and educational program. Working alongside leading researchers, curators, and art critics, the gallery organizes exhibitions in collaboration with national and international institutions & photo festivals; leading the way towards a sustained participation in the most important art & photo fairs worldwide; managing the incorporation of Latin American artists in renowned institutions; in addition to multiple private collections; contributing to the legitimation of the visual expressions from the Latin American region worldwide.

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