

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on March 15, 2019

Allora & Calzadilla: *The Tropical Pharmacy*

Allora & Calzadilla: *The Tropical Pharmacy*

- Dates: March 15–June 23, 2019
- Curator: Manuel Cirauqui
- Film & Video gallery (103)

From March 15 to June 23, 2019, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents the exhibition Allora & Calzadilla: *The Tropical Pharmacy* as part of the 2019 programming of the Film & Video gallery, a space where the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents referential works of video art, video installations, and explores moving images as a key artistic language of our time. This show will feature several works by the artists Jennifer Allora (Philadelphia, USA, 1974) and Guillermo Calzadilla (Havana, Cuba, 1971), who have been working together for over 20 years and are a major reference for contemporary art practices.

Based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Allora & Calzadilla situate their work at the intersection of sculpture, performance, and video, a multiplicity that exemplifies the complexity of their approach. *The Tropical Pharmacy* articulates three videos in an ensemble that has specifically been designed for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's gallery 103. The selected pieces reveal the consistency and diversity of the work Allora and Calzadilla have undertaken on the island of Puerto Rico, a territory which they investigate from multiple vantage points, and through which they question the relationships between cultural history, ecology, and global geopolitics.

The Bell, the Digger, and the Tropical Pharmacy (2013), from which the exhibition's title is inspired, spectacularly documents the demolition of a US-owned, large pharmaceutical processing plant located in Cidra, Puerto Rico. The event is emblematic of the material frailty of a territory defined by its colonial status as an "unincorporated" state of the United States. At the same time, the unstoppable demolition of the facilities by heavy machinery recall the frantic pace of the capital flight in a country that is pummeled by an extraordinarily severe debt crisis. While the title of *The Tropical Pharmacy* evokes the potential for human use afforded by the biodiversity of the Caribbean, it also ironically underscores the precarious healthcare system and lack of support after the recent natural catastrophes in the island, which have only magnified its financial collapse. In the video, the artists replace the bucket of the digger with a huge bell, turning the site demolition into a unique sound performance. As the architecture crumbles, the bell releases a signal we may understand as a calling, a change of era, a mournful event, or the voice of an environmental alarm.

The screening of this film alternates with *Sweat Glands, Sweat Lands* (2006), a work that is part of the Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. The piece was produced in collaboration with the musician René Pérez Joglar, better known as Residente from the band Calle 13, a renowned figure in Latin pop music who has been awarded 25 Grammys in the last years. The short and enigmatic scene places us in a half-built, half-abandoned barbecuing structure, locally known as *lechonera*, where a man

patiently smokes inside a vehicle, which has been hacked as a barbecuing device. The man rotates a pork roast using the gas pedal and we hear Residente's vocal performance of a poem written by the artists, where descriptions of organic processes, prehistory, and capitalism chaotically intermingle with flashes of animal perception in a tropical ecosystem in crisis. This composite situation is rhythmically dominated by the drone of the car's engine, and visually saturated by fumes coming from each character in the scene—car, driver, pig.

The two alternating video projections are in continuous dialogue with *Deadline* (2007)—a film recording made on the wake of hurricane George in San Juan de Puerto Rico. The 16mm film captures a frond precariously dangling midair between two palm trees. Suspended from an unseen kite filament, the floating branch challenges gravity in its arrested fall, introducing a delay—a melancholy, enigmatic, uncanny lapse—in the devastation of the landscape.

As an articulated whole, the three pieces included in *The Tropical Pharmacy* exemplify Allora & Calzadilla's characteristic operations where the functions of everyday objects are transformed, collaged, and reinvented within contexts of urgency. In their transformative drive, their works are responses to material despair and attempts to reactivate hope.

Allora & Calzadilla. Biography

Jennifer Allora (Philadelphia, USA, 1974) and Guillermo Calzadilla (Havana, Cuba, 1971) live and work in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Collaborating since 1995, the artists have been featured in solo exhibitions at El Museo de Arte Moderno de Medellín, Colombia; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, Spain; MAXXI, Rome, Italy (2018); ALT Art Space, Istanbul, Turkey (2016); Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2014); MoMA, New York (2010); The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Norway (2009); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2008); Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2008); Serpentine Gallery, London (2007); and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2006); as well participations in major international exhibitions and art biennials, such as the 56th and 51st Biennale di Venezia (2015, 2005); dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (2012); the 12th and 10th Istanbul Biennials (2011 and 2007); the 29th and 14th Biennial de São Paulo (2010 and 1998); and the 2006 Whitney Biennial. In 2015, they presented a major solo commission of the Dia Art Foundation in Puerto Rico, in collaboration with the Conservation Trust Para la Naturaleza. They are the recipients of various international prizes and grants such as DAAD, Berlin (2008-2009); the Gwangju Biennial Prize (2004); Penny McCall Foundation Grant (2003); and the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2002).

Encounters with artists: Allora & Calzadilla (March 14 at 6:30 p.m.)

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla will talk with Manuel Cirauqui, the curator of the Film & Video program and curator at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, about the exhibition *The Tropical Pharmacy* and their work within the context of creation in the Caribbean region on March 14 at 6:30 pm, at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Auditorium. A colloquium with the audience will be held after the talk.

Film & Video (gallery 103)

The Film & Video gallery features a program of exhibitions exclusively devoted to contemporary practices of the moving image, video art, and film-based media installation. Since it opened in 2016, this space has presented work by unique artists such as Christian Marclay, Ragnar Kjartanson, Rineke Dijkstra, Kimsooja, Shahzia Sikander, Sam-Taylor Johnson, Fiona Tan, Ken Jacobs, Amie Siegel, and Pierre Huyghe. In 2018, its program included presentations by Michael Snow, Javier Téllez, and Diana Thater.

Cover image:

Allora & Calzadilla: *The Tropical Pharmacy*

The Bell, The Digger, and The Tropical Pharmacy, 2013

HD video, color, sound, 20 min. 40 sec.

Courtesy the artists

© Jennifer Allora, Guillermo Calzadilla

For more information:

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

Marketing and Communications Department

Tel: +34 944 359 008

media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus

www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus

All information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus (press room).

Press Images for
Allora & Calzadilla: *The Tropical Pharmacy*
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

Online Photo Service for Press Images

At the press area (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.es/en) you can register and download high resolution images and videos featuring the exhibitions and the building. Sign in to get access. If you are already a user, log in here (you need your username and password).

For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 359 008 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus

Allora & Calzadilla
The Bell, The Digger, and The Tropical Pharmacy, 2013
HD video, color, sound, 20 min. 40 sec.
Courtesy the artists
© Jennifer Allora, Guillermo Calzadilla



Allora & Calzadilla
Sweat Glands, Sweat Lands, 2006
Digital color video, with sound, 2 min., 21 sec.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Guggenheim UBS MAP
Purchase Fund, 2014
© Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla



Allora & Calzadilla
Deadline, 2007
16 mm film transferred to video, 3 min.
Courtesy the artists
© Jennifer Allora, Guillermo Calzadilla

