

ART IN FIGHT

FREE RESEARCH ON ARTIVISM, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE COLLAPSE



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S . F I S C H E R
S T I F T U N G





**THE
UNAVOIDABLE
FUTURE
OF OIL IS UNDER
THE GROUND
THE
UNAVOIDABLE
FUTURE
OF THE FOREST
IS STANDING**

We are rapidly moving towards the warming of the planet by 1.5°C above the normal temperature. This limit is the maximum we can reach, according to scientists and experts, to avoid worse disasters and impacts on life on Earth and extinction of several species, including the human species.

According to studies by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change),
WE ARE ALREADY IN A SCENARIO OF CLIMATE COLLAPSE.
We will face irreversible environmental disasters if we do not slow down the consumption of fossil fuels and the deforestation of the planet's forests, among several other human actions.



TRANSITION OF CULTURAL MODEL

A new draft of the final agreement for the 2021 Climate Summit (COP-26), held in November 2021, in Glasgow, maintained the basic demand for countries to define plans to face global warming. The proposal is for countries to accelerate “efforts towards phasing out coal-fired energy and fossil fuel subsidies”, but in a new amendment, it now points out that nations will recognize “the need to support a just transition”, a reference to requests for financial assistance from developing countries.

The idea of “just transition” emerged in the United States in the 1970s, during the strike that was called the first environmental strike by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) on health and safety issues at Shell refineries. We’ll talk more about Shell throughout the text.

“Just transition” is an economic, political and cultural pact. A new model of society needs to emerge, in all spheres. Public initiative, private and organized civil society, working towards changes that will avoid climate collapse.

THAT’S WHERE CULTURE PLAYS A FUNDAMENTAL ROLE.

Culture is the space where theories, paths and narratives are built in the human imagination.

CULTURE IS THE PLATFORM OF IMAGINATION.

To avoid the point of no return, that is, the climate collapse, activism can be one of the main tools for building the imaginary of transition.



COMMUNICATION AS A WORK OF ART

ARTIVISM

Artivism, as an artistic action, is part of the contemporary scene that, in addition to recording history, intends to provoke political and social engagement. Activist art finds space within artists, collectives and movements. Artivism uses artistic, aesthetic or symbolic strategies to amplify, raise awareness and throw into question, for society, causes and social demands.

Acting collectively means acting in the field of transversality, producing forms of subjectivity, working with cooperation and interactivism. Artivism operates in any space, but the city, the urban space, a place for social interaction in all its dimensions, is the main stage for actions and interventions.

Communication as a work of art, or art seen as a means of communication that occupies a radical media space, causes a great impact of aesthetic and interactive content.

The activity of the activist is not linked only to the artist's rhetoric, engaged discourse, aesthetics or ethics, but also to his engagement with social issues that can, through their practices, produce real changes. "Artivism is a communication strategy to reach the public, bypassing the hegemonic media that lead the narratives. It is one of the most rebellious media we have left."¹.

Regarding the construction of narratives around climate collapse, two things are noteworthy:
ARTWASHING AND GREENWASHING.



ARTWASHING

The washing of the brand through art. Or even using art as a façade of cultural engagement to cover up tyrannical behavior, often in relation to the very cultural sector it makes use of². We will see below an example of activism against artwashing regarding Shell.

GREENWASHING

Activist Greta Thunberg posted a tweet about COP 26 claiming that the event is not a “climate conference” but a “greenwashing festival”. The term greenwashing is used when a company, non-governmental organization (NGO) or even the government itself propagates positive environmental practices but, in fact, acts contrary or neutral to environmental interests and assets. Thus, the intention of greenwashing is to relate the image of those who disclose this information to the protection of the environment, but, in fact, real measures are not really being adopted and can generate negative impacts on the environment.



MICHEL CAMPANELLA/GETTY IMAGES

GRETA THUNBERG, 2018, IN ONE OF HER FIRST PROTESTS: A LONELY START, BUT TODAY WITH THE SUPPORT OF MILLIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE, IN A GLOBAL MOVEMENT CALLED "FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE". ON THE SIDE, THE FAMOUS POSTER: "SCHOOL STRIKE FOR THE CLIMATE"

SHELL CASE

A SMALL RETROSPECTIVE OF COMPLAINTS AND CRIMES



AN INJURY TO ONE
★ IS ★
AN INJURY TO ALL
LOCAL 1-128
OCAW

FROM STRIKES TO ACTIVISM

The fossil fuel industry in recent years has been responsible for three quarters of human-caused carbon emissions on the planet. At the same time, this industry shows a lot of power and knowledge.

1973, USA

The first environmental strike was organized by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW)³, on health and safety issues at Shell refineries. At the time, data registered that more than 100,000 workers died from health problems or unhealthy conditions each year. In 1972, workers were fighting for better working conditions and access to medical care. That same year, Shell made a profit of more than half a billion dollars. The first “environmental strike” took place in this context of reports of crimes against labor and human rights. The impact on the environment and the climate crisis was not yet evident.

OUR LIVES ARE AT STAKE



More than 6 cities and 4 thousand workers joined the strike. A very important factor was the women's adherence to the boycott. Months later, the worker's wives joined the action, and produced a series of posters and demonstrations. With the support of workers, unions and groups, and women, the strike organization won the battle and Shell began the settlement processes based on the workers' requests. This is a very interesting story and one that is worth delving into.

2014, USA

Greenpeace has released a video asking the toy company LEGO to abandon its partnership with oil company Shell. The film portrays an Arctic made entirely of LEGO and imagines an oil spill in this part of the world. Shell plans to drill in the Arctic with the real risk of a massive oil spill that would destroy this unique ecosystem. The creation agency Don't Panic was responsible for creating the movie. It features special characters from the movie "LEGO", the series "Game of Thrones" and even kid's favorite Santa Claus. The movie was called "Everything is amazing" and the campaign motto was "We love LEGO. You love LEGO. Everyone loves LEGO."

A Greenpeace note said: "Each company has the responsibility to choose its partners and suppliers ethically. LEGO says it wants to leave a better world for children and has a progressive environmental policy. But it has a partnership with Shell, one of the biggest polluters on the planet, which now threatens the Arctic. It's a terrible decision and it's bad news for kids. We are calling on LEGO to defend the Arctic – and the children – by abandoning Shell forever." Months later, LEGO announced that it would not renew its contract with Shell. It was a big win, but Shell is still drilling for oil in the Arctic.



VIDEO EXCERPTS

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=QHBLIUQ0_R4&AB_CHANNEL=GREENPEACEINTERNATIONAL](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHBLIUQ0_R4&AB_CHANNEL=GREENPEACEINTERNATIONAL)

2021, BRAZIL

In Brazil, activist protests against Shell took place during the climate strike on September 24, 2021, in front of Petrobras in Rio de Janeiro⁴, with the participation of groups and collectives (Instituto Internacional ARAYARA, Observatório do Petróleo e Gas (OPG), Fridays For Future Brasil, Families For Future Brasil and Extinction Rebellion Brasil). The actions took place through the exhibition of posters and other arts, with denunciations about the risks involved in the new wave of exploration of fossil fuels off the Brazilian coast, demanding the suspension of the 17th Round of Bidding for Oil and Natural Gas.

Until September 22, the ANP (National Agency for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Biofuels) had qualified to participate in the bids the companies 3R Petroleum, Chevron, Karoon, Ecopetrol, Murphy, Petrobras, Shell, Total and Wintershall Dea. Despite the protests, five blocks located in the Santos Basin, totaling an area of 3,425.50 km² were auctioned off in the 17th Round of Bidding for blocks for the exploration and production of oil and natural gas by the ANP. The total bonus collected in the auction was R\$37.14 million and the estimated minimum investment in the exploration phase is R\$136.345 million. Nine companies signed up, but only two companies made offers: Shell and EcoPetrol Oli and Gas.



**# MAR SEM
PETRÓLEO**

NO PETROL IN THE OCEAN

2021, NETHERLANDS

The Fossil Free Culture Collective⁵ emerged five years ago as a group of artists, activists and cultural workers who joined themselves to end 'artwashing' by fossil fuel companies in the Dutch cultural sector. One of their main concerns initially was to raise awareness and create a dialogue that would allow people to see that, despite funding cultural institutions, fossil fuel companies do more harm than good.

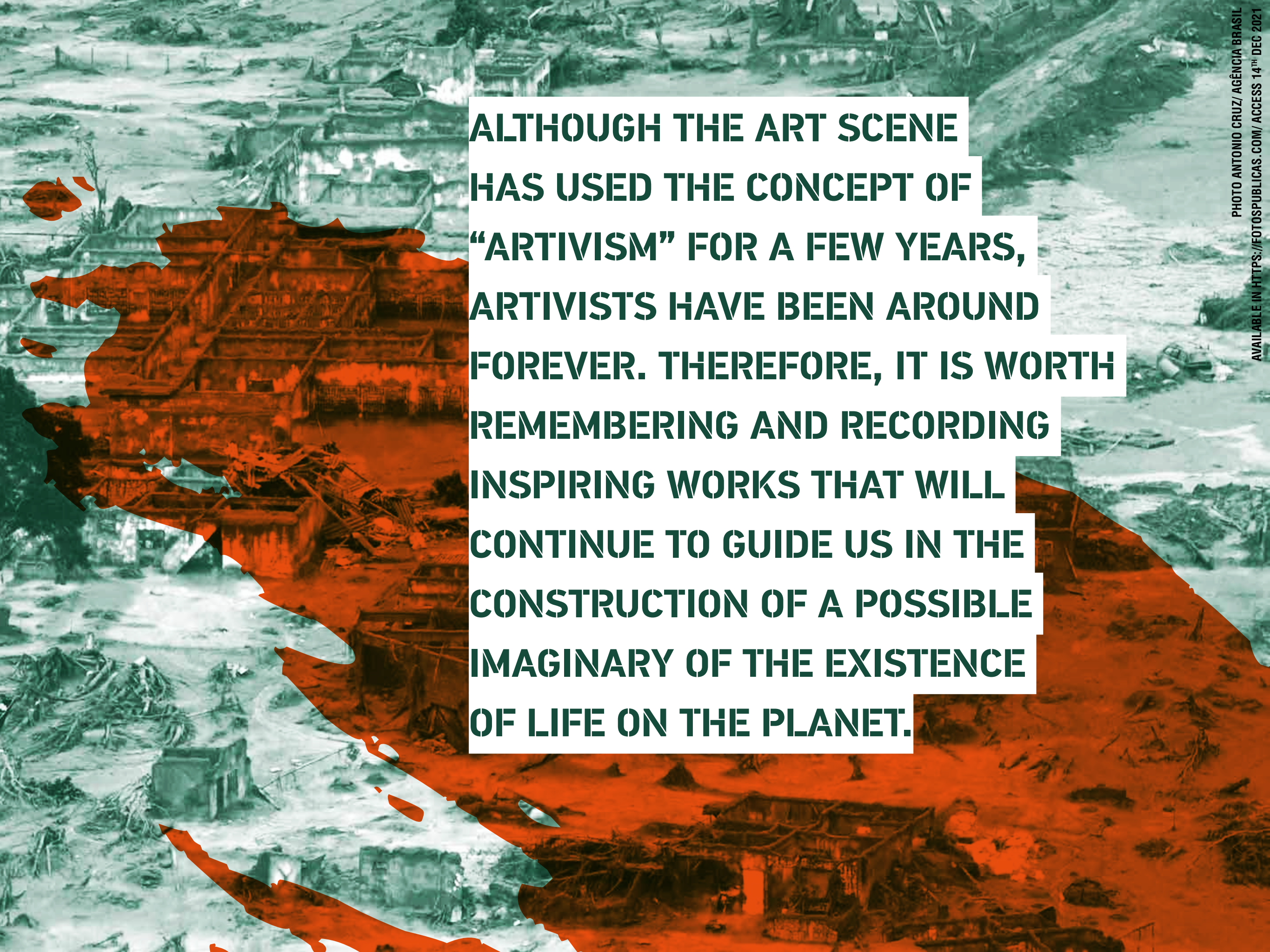
One of the group's performances took place at the Van Gogh Museum with a 12-by-6-meter banner, which was divided into 44 smaller pieces like a jigsaw puzzle, with 40 participants. The action was orchestrated by the group to generate an Impact Photo, which was distributed to the press and to various social media channels. Four months later, the institution ended its sponsorship agreement with Shell.





ARTIVISM

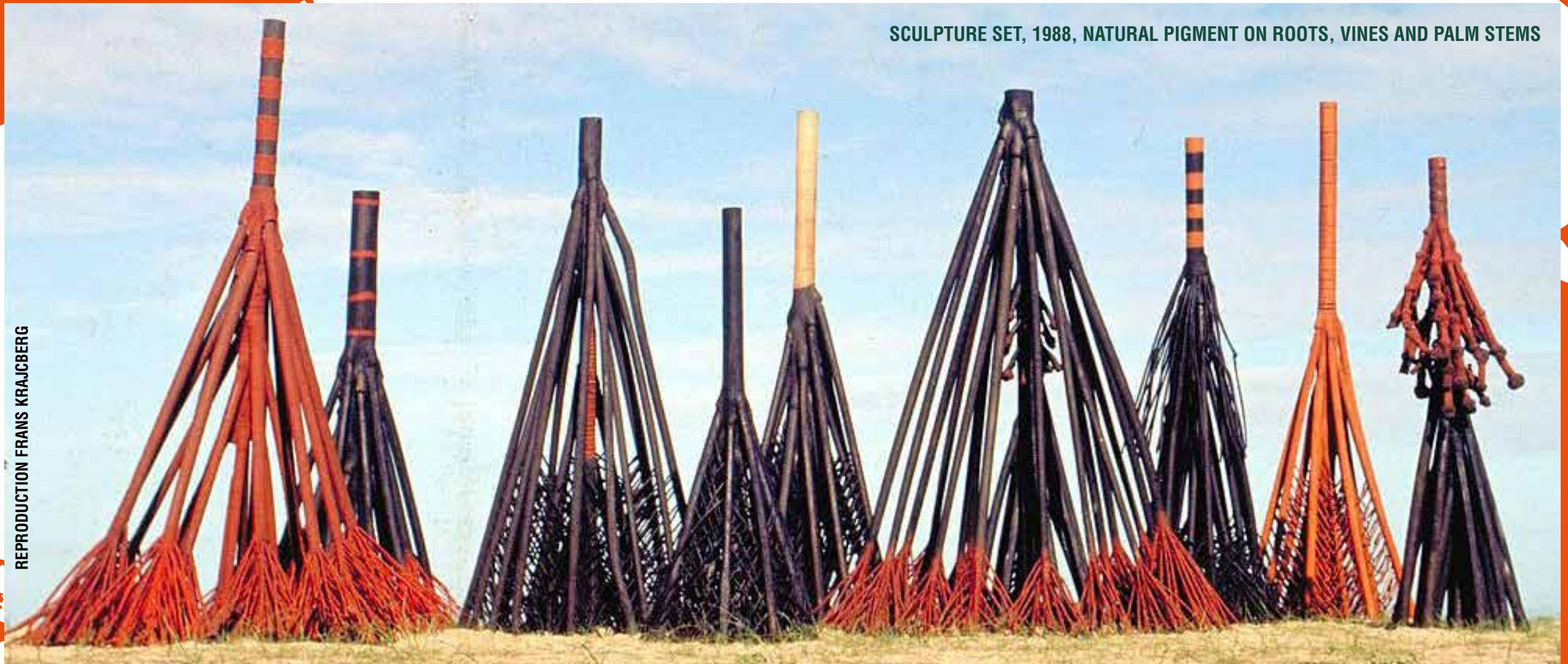
AND DEFORESTATION OF FORESTS

An aerial photograph showing a vast area of urban destruction and flooding. The water is a murky brown, and the remaining structures are skeletal remains of buildings. A large, semi-transparent red silhouette of the map of Brazil is overlaid on the left side of the image. The text is presented in a white, jagged-edged box that appears to be floating over the scene.

**ALTHOUGH THE ART SCENE
HAS USED THE CONCEPT OF
“ARTIVISM” FOR A FEW YEARS,
ARTIVISTS HAVE BEEN AROUND
FOREVER. THEREFORE, IT IS WORTH
REMEMBERING AND RECORDING
INSPIRING WORKS THAT WILL
CONTINUE TO GUIDE US IN THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A POSSIBLE
IMAGINARY OF THE EXISTENCE
OF LIFE ON THE PLANET.**

SCULPTURE SET, 1988, NATURAL PIGMENT ON ROOTS, VINES AND PALM STEMS

REPRODUCTION FRANS KRAJCBERG



THE MANGROVE FLOWER, FRANS KRAJCBERG (IN MEMORIAM)

Frans Krajcberg was a sculptor, painter, printer and photographer. Krajcberg's work denounces violence against nature and the devastation of forests. The raw material of his works are roots and trunks burned by fires caused in dense green areas for the production of pastures. The artist collected and transformed the material left by the fire as a way of asking for help on behalf of the forest. "I try to express myself with this broken, murdered material, all this to show: look, yesterday it was a beautiful tree, today it's a burnt stick", he said. The destruction of forests and the fires were also recorded by Krajcberg in thousands of photographs.

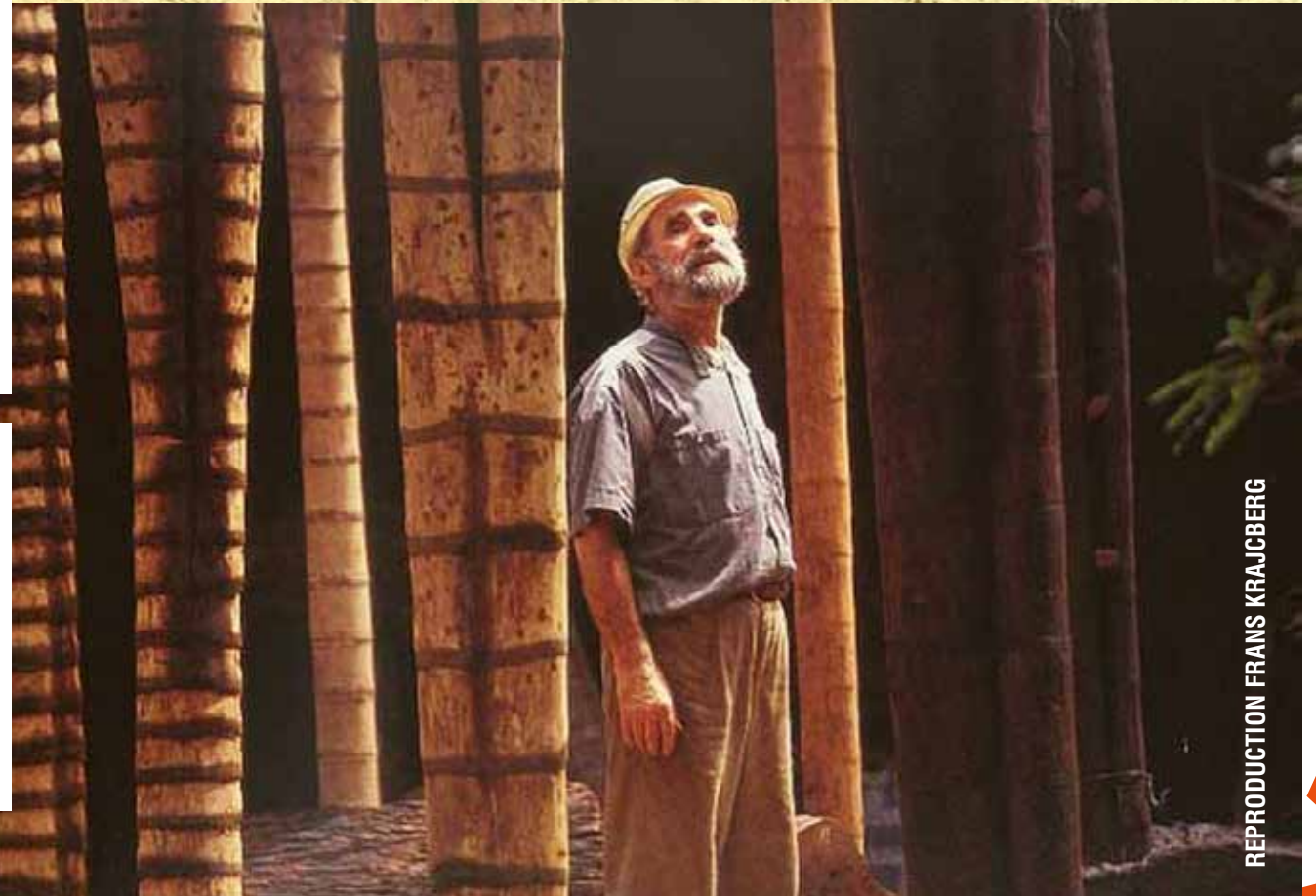
Krajcberg was born in Kozenice, Poland. He lived for four years under the environment of World War II. He moved to Brazil in 1948 after losing his entire family in the holocaust. In the 1960s, he lived in the countryside of Minas Gerais, in the region of Itabirito, in a cave, from where he extracted the pigments for his paints. Then, at the invitation of his friend and architect Zanine Caldas, he visited Nova Viçosa, in southern Bahia, where he found a refuge for life. “I thought: How much wealth there is, movement there is, that art ignores. I’ll stay here”, he told in the documentary Nature’s Cry, produced by TV Brasil (Empresa Brasil de Comunicação – EBC).

In 2001, the artist started building his Ecological Museum, still in Nova Viçosa (BA). Krajcberg died in November 2017, aged 96, leaving his cultural space at Sítio Natura.⁶

MANGROVE’S FLOWER, 1970
FRANS KRAJCBERG, WOOD,
900,00 CM X 300,00 CM



REPRODUCTION ROMULO FIALDINI



REPRODUCTION FRANS KRAJCBERG

GENEALOGY OF STRUGGLE, CAROLINA CAYCEDO

Carolina Caycedo turns her practice to the discussion of contexts impacted by major infrastructural works of a developmental nature. In her recent research, she analyzes the environmental and social damages linked to the construction of dams and the control of natural water courses. Through her involvement with groups and communities affected by these transformations, the artist investigates ideas of flow, assimilation, resistance, representation, control, nature and culture.

PHOTO: LENA HAWKINS

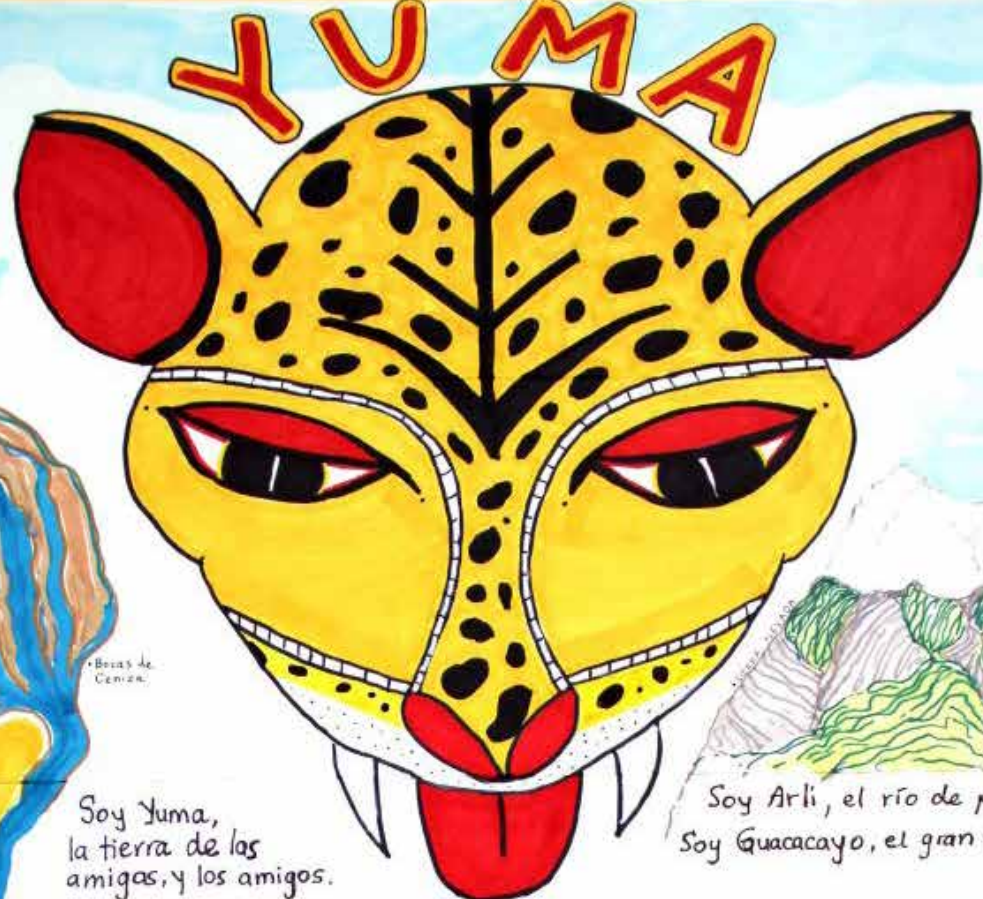




“Genealogy of Struggle”, the piece presented here, belongs to a series (2017– in progress) of drawings made directly on the walls of the exhibition spaces. In the form of a family tree, it reports the names of environmental activists who have been killed in recent years and the locations and dates of their deaths. Her homeland, Colombia, along with Brazil and the Philippines, are the countries with the most incidents. Although the United States, where he lives, is absent from the list, this omission reflects a different form of persecution, which is the legal harassment of water and land protectors.⁷ In each presentation, “Genealogy of Struggle” adapts to different contexts, unfortunately adding new names to its leaves and roots during the presentation.

YAGUI,
YUMA,
ELWHA,
2016

A GENTE RIO—BE DAMMED [A Gente Rio—Barrado seja] (2016) is a project that comprises archival research, field studies and activities with riverside communities stricken by the privatization of water. A Gente Rio (2016), research produced for the 32nd Bienal, deals with the life involved in these rivers and on their banks. The work is made up of different elements, such as assemblage of satellite photographs of the hydroelectric power plants of Itaipu and Belo Monte, and the before and after the Bento Rodrigues dam rupture (Mariana, MG); a video made by Caycedo in these regions; cast nets collected during his field studies inserted in the spans between the floors of the Bienal Pavilion; and drawings that tell the narratives of the Yuma (Colombia), Yaqui (Mexico), Elwha (USA), Watu – known as Rio Doce – and Iguaçu (Brazil) rivers **AS LIVING ENTITIES ENDOWED WITH THEIR OWN STORIES.**



Soy Yuma,
la tierra de los
amigos, y los amigos.

Mi cuerpo nace en una pequeña laguna, en donde los páramos forman un nudo
y las quebradas se abrazan en una estrella hídrica.

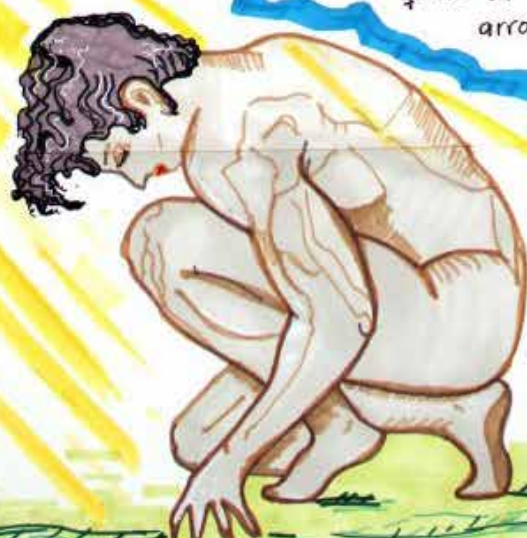
Atraviezo con fuerza la Cordillera de los Andes, y fluyo hacia el norte
cargando cieno y limo, limpiando y reviviendo los valles y los bosques.

Mi boca tiene mil lenguas que depositan densos sedimentos
en el Mar Caribe.

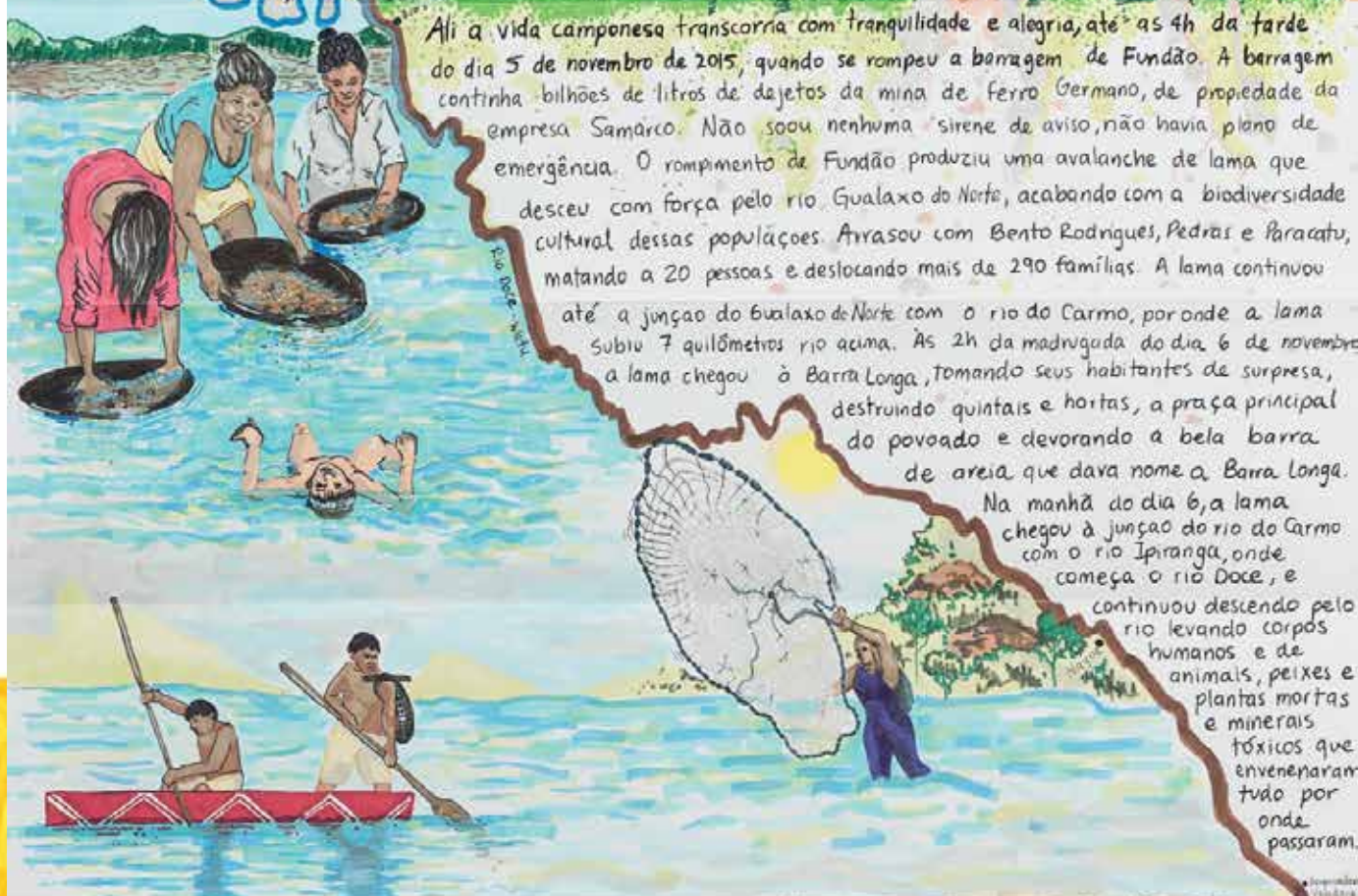
Cerca de mi desembocadura, el Pueblo Tairona fue asolado por
Matambo, un gigante que se comía el maíz y los animales.

Desesperados, los Tairona invocaron a Mirtayú, su
princesa guerrera, para que detuviera al gigante.

Mirtayú pintó su cuerpo con los colores del
amor universal y enfrentó a Matambo,
quien al ver tanta valentía se
arrodilló ante la princesa,
rendido de amor.



Soy Arli, el río de peces.
Soy Guacacayo, el gran río de tumbas.



Ali a vida camponesa transcorria com tranquilidade e alegria, até as 4h da tarde
do dia 5 de novembro de 2015, quando se rompeu a barragem de Fundão. A barragem
continha bilhões de litros de detritos da mina de ferro Germano, de propriedade da
empresa Samarco. Não soou nenhuma sirene de aviso, não havia plano de
emergência. O rompimento de Fundão produziu uma avalanche de lama que
desceu com força pelo rio Guaxupé do Norte, acabando com a biodiversidade
cultural dessas populações. Arrasou com Bento Rodrigues, Pedras e Paracatu,
matando a 20 pessoas e deslocando mais de 290 famílias. A lama continuou

até a junção do Guaxupé do Norte com o rio do Carmo, por onde a lama
subiu 7 quilômetros rio acima. Às 2h da madrugada do dia 6 de novembro
a lama chegou à Barra Longa, tomando seus habitantes de surpresa,
destruindo quintais e hortas, a praça principal
do povoado e devorando a bela barra
de areia que dava nome à Barra Longa.

Na manhã do dia 6, a lama
chegou à junção do rio do Carmo
com o rio Ipiranga, onde
começa o rio Doce, e
continuou descendo pelo
rio levando corpos
humanos e de
animais, peixes e
plantas mortas
e minerais
tóxicos que
envenenaram
tudo por
onde
passaram.

A cultura ribeirinha ficou em pausa com a onda da lama.
Já não há água limpa para beber, nem para banhar-se,
nem para o ritual. O trabalho entrou em descanso
forçado. Já não se pode pescar porque todos os peixes
morreram, já não se pode garimpar em busca de ouro, nem
tirar grãos porque a água é tóxica. Os terrenos mais



ENTITIES, JAIDER ESBELL (IN MEMORIAM)

Jaider Esbell became enchanted*. The activist was a curator and one of the main artists of the 34th Bienal de São Paulo. Artist, writer and indigenous cultural producer of the Makuxi ethnic group. He was born in Normandia, state of Roraima, and lived, until the age of 18, in what is now the Indigenous Land Raposa – Serra do Sol. The artist has become one of the main figures of contemporary indigenous art in the country. Combining painting, writing, drawing, installation and performance, which intertwine indigenous myths, criticisms of hegemonic culture and socio-environmental concerns.

*TO BECOME ENCHANTED MEANS "TO DIE"
IN SOME INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES.



Entitled “Entities”, Jaider Esbell’s work consists of two snakes 24 meters long floating across the lagoon in Ibirapuera Park at the 34th Bienal de São Paulo, in 2021.

The work represents the fantastic being *Îkîimî*, which crosses several worlds and has neither beginning nor end. “I invite native cultures that have already lost their language or had their connection disrupted by colonization to rediscover their own language. Brazil has not been discovered, it has been invaded and it continues to be looted.”⁸ “We, indigenous peoples, defend ourselves in every way possible, and now we’ve arrived in the field of art with elaborate arguments to address these issues”, said Esbell. His death brought a deep sadness to all who followed and admired his charms.

ART IN MOURNING

Denilson Baniwa puts his art in mourning. He sends us a letter, welcomes our grief and astonishment.⁹ November 2021

Hello,

I hope you stand firm even in these difficult times we've been through.


As you may know, this week we were surprised by Jaider Esbell's enchantment. Since he and I met each other in this world, we've lived and built paths together that I think were important for the scene we can see today.

He was a friend I called little bro, a loving way of calling a brother in the region where I was born. As a brother, we loved each other, we argued, we discussed, we played, we traveled together through the heat and cold of the world, we laughed, we cried, "we have rocked the boat" as they say here, we stopped talking to each other, then resumed talking to each other, we worked, we jumped in many rivers and seas, we agreed on many things, we disagreed on many other things, but in one thing we were incorruptible: in the desire to build an art where indigenous people could have an active voice and chances of perhaps reaching the top, a place we've never been before. Jaider arrived at this place, and what for white people is considered success (or the best phase of their career, as I read in the news), for both of us, this fake-white-success was day by day becoming a burden. Unfortunately it was too heavy for him, but it could have been for any of us, indigenous artists.

The demand for answers to save the art, the pressure not to fail in our journey nor with our indigenous relatives, the uninterrupted hunger of those who see us as a devourable novelty in the market, everything that is considered success and the peak of the career is a wall that surrounds us and takes us away from what is most important: a healthy life.

The moment we felt the hands of the Western world pulling us into it, I pulled back to slow down and to think about what was going on. First of all, the social media, which I left, then went back, because people called me, sent me messages requiring me to be online all the time, and worse, available all the time. Then I deleted my number and bought a new cell phone number just for friends or whoever I wanted to pay attention to. A few weeks ago I deleted my social media accounts again in order to get out of this pressure of always being available and being forced to respond how to "decolonize the world". As if it was our responsibility to save the world on our own. As if it wasn't everyone's responsibility.

Oh no! We are obliged to save a world that never wanted us, but when they need us, they turn to us and demand us to be available.



It took thirty-two years for the world to pay attention to me, I know that a lot of hugs and kisses today are just part of white social etiquette. Before that, the world only gave us contempt. But this indigenous blood that holds a grudge, but at the same time wants to love the world, makes us accept this white etiquette. I saw Jaider last week, we didn't talk much because our emails were full, our mailbox was full, our hours were full. Even spending all day together, from breakfast to bedtime for a whole week, we didn't talk much. And in the few times we talked, our complaints were the same, the desire to punch in the face the next person who asked for a webmeeting. Jaider was tired. I am tired. We are tired. What is posted on social media does not represent how much pain we are going through daily. Jaider Esbell offline was not the same as the one online. Denilson Baniwa offline is by far not what you see in the live streams. How many live streams have I made forcing myself to seem okay so as not to making anyone worried. How many live streams have I done literally sick, with fever, in pain. But this was not posted. And neither I, and most certainly not Jaider, did this to please the white people or to become famous, the reason was mainly to build a path for other indigenous people, to build possibilities for us. We were the mirror for those who are indigenous and who still dream of being an artist or being something different from the horrific reality that indigenous children and youth live today. We forced ourselves to be available for a world that, as a baniwa, I believe in: for those who are yet to be born. But that is a heavy load. Therefore, I ask you with great respect, to Jaider and to the past-present-future indigenous artists, that we take care that this path opened by us is never interdicted, that we never let the bushes close the way. May we, you and I, always clear the way and that, in the near future, it will be easier to walk through it. Let's take care of the memory of Jaider Esbell. And above all, let's ease the walking, for us and for others. Because when we understand that, if the success and the summit that we struggle so badly to reach, result in tragedy, I feel that I need to think even more about what kind of indigenous art I have to build. And if the reception that the Western art world has given us has brought one of us to this end, I need to think even more about what kind of relationship I want to keep with Western art. I'm going to slow down even more, to the point where it's a jogger, not a triathlon. My work will continue in honor of Jaider Esbell, as it was before, in memory of so many other indigenous relatives before me. If it is through the art that we will resist, it will be through it then. But for my part, it won't be to satisfy the hunger of any glutton for art. With affection and admiration.

Denilson Baniwa

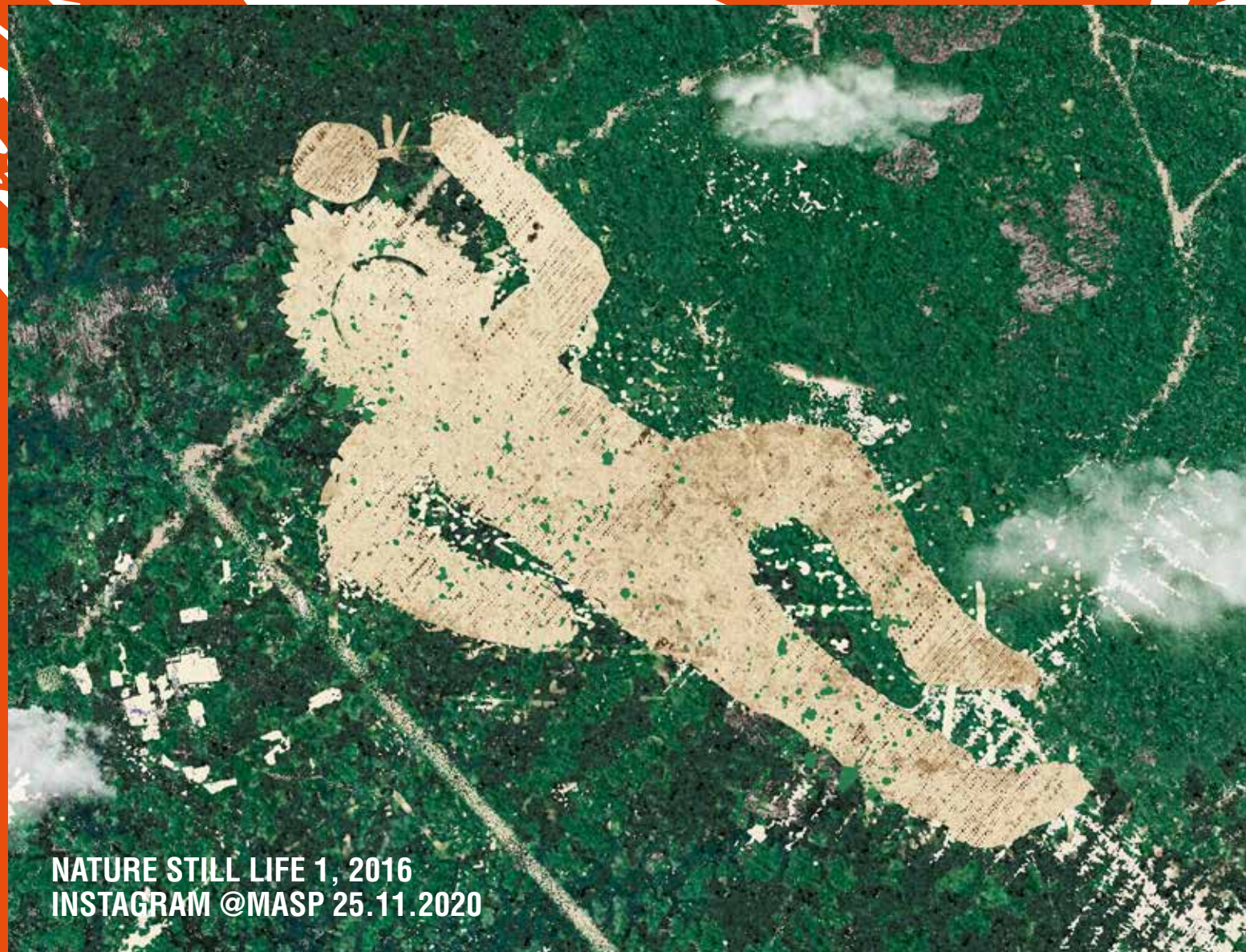




NATURE STILL LIFE, DENILSON BANIWA

Brazilian activist who inspires the search for a decolonizing culture. He belongs to the Baniwa indigenous people, and by using Western languages he creates new contexts to decolonize them in his work. The artist, in his contemporary trajectory, consolidates himself as a reference, breaking paradigms and opening paths for the protagonism of the indigenous people in the national territory.





“Nature Still Life 1”, photographic montage in which the artist outlined the silhouette of a shaman with a pose that suggests a ceremonial dance based on a collage of satellite images of deforested areas of the Amazon rainforest. The title of the work refers to the 17th century Dutch painting genre that stood out for the virtuous representation of exuberant tables full of abundance (nature) about to receive its diners, but whose perishable character of the food and

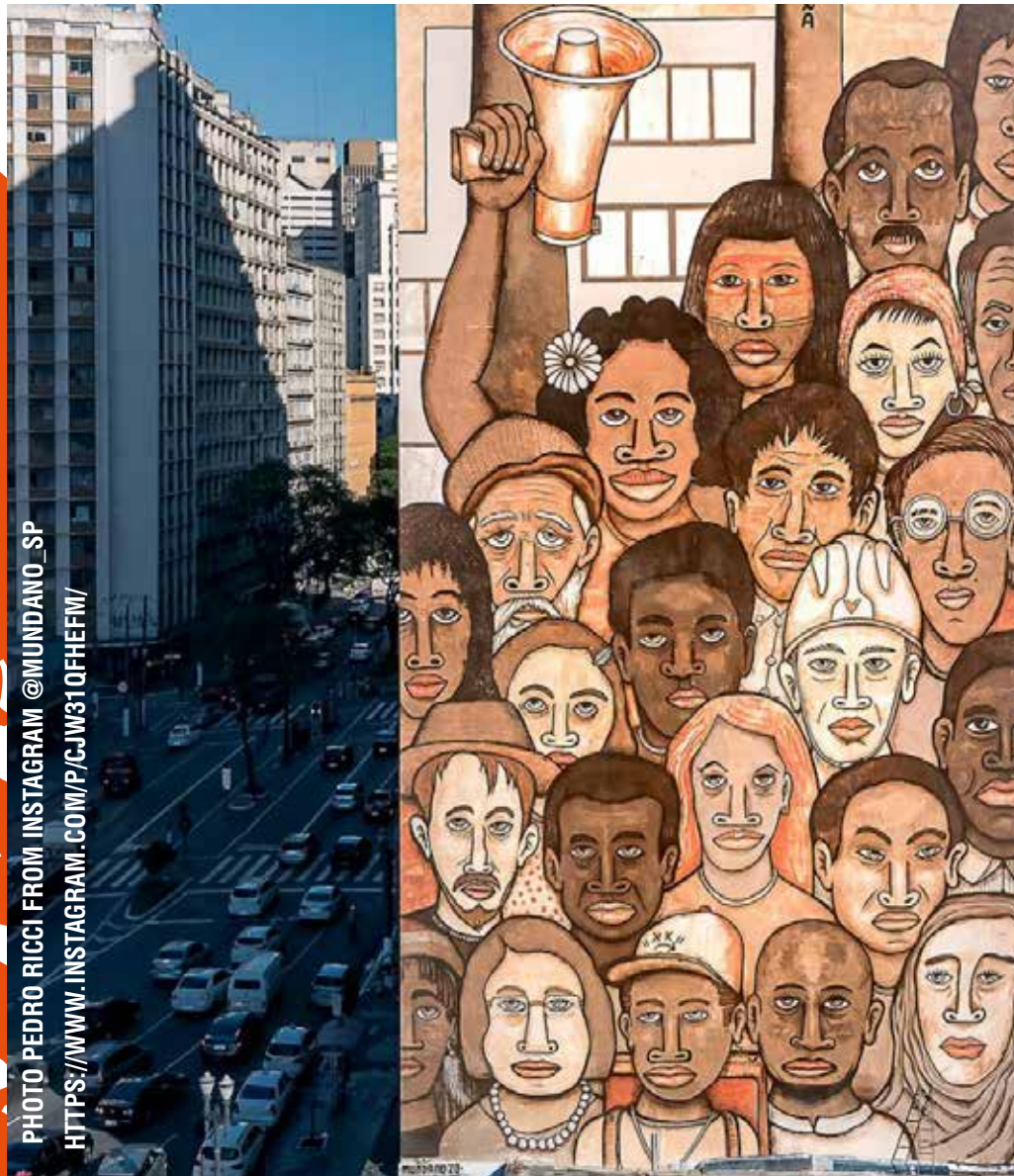
other objects disposed also symbolized the finitude of life (death) and the futility of these human pleasures. Faced with the ghostly silhouette of the shaman in the forest, Baniwa’s still life literally takes on the contours of a denunciation against deforestation and the genocide of indigenous peoples promoted by the rampant exploitation of the Amazon.”, Olivia Ardui, assistant curator, MASP, 2020.

BRIGADIER OF THE FOREST, MUNDANO

Deforestation is also the agenda of the activist Mundano. Ashes, animals and charred tree remains were the raw material for the paints used by the activist Mundano to paint the panel in the center of São Paulo, called “Forest Brigadier”, 2021. The work sheds light on the destruction of the great Brazilian biomes, which are literally being reduced to ashes.

“Brigadista da Floresta” (Brigadier of the Forest) is a reinterpretation of a work very representative of Brazil painted by Portinari: “O Lavrador de Café” (The coffee farmer), 1934. It has a Black worker as the protagonist, a cut tree and the landscape of a monoculture that has a direct connection with the logging.



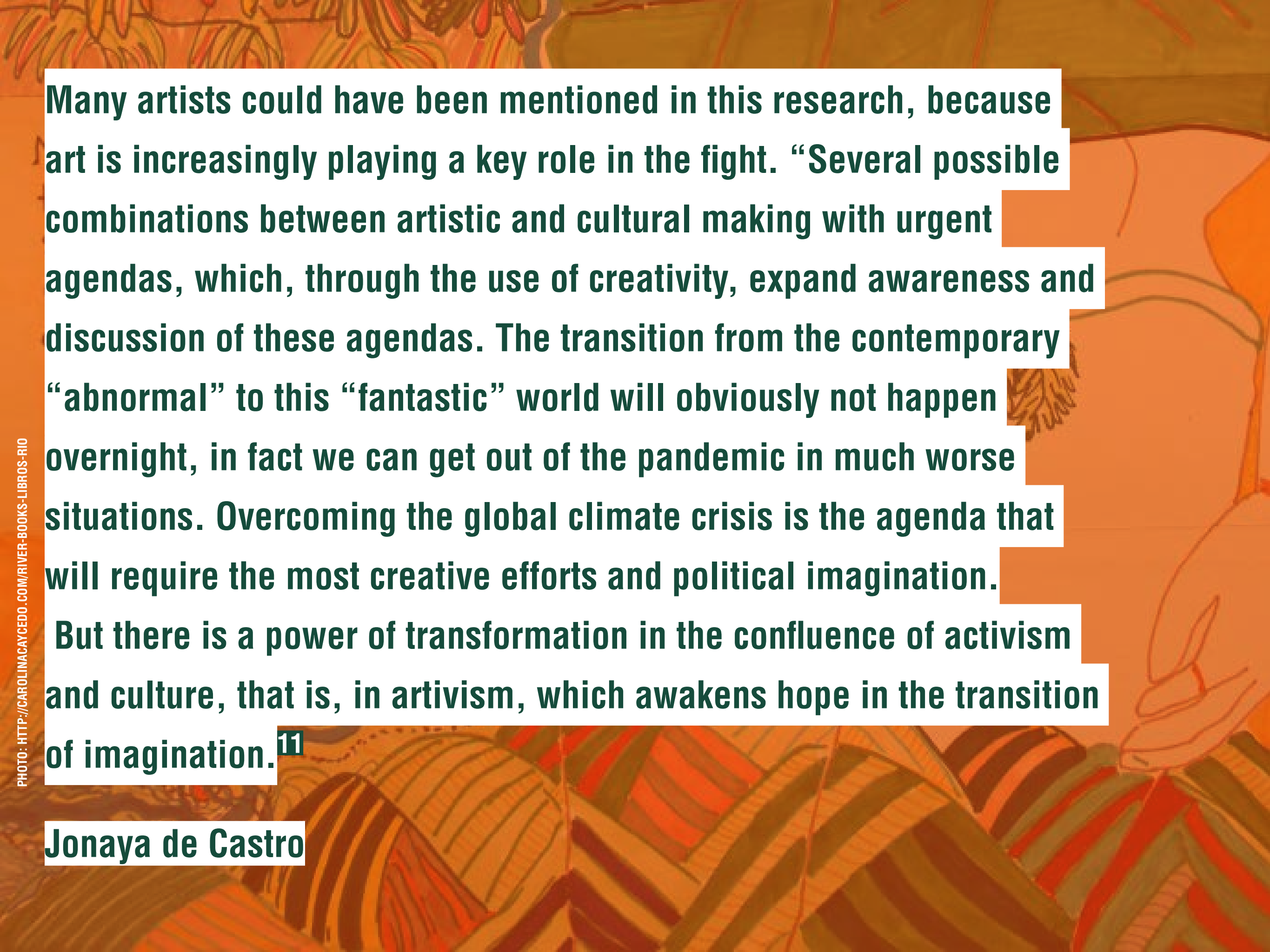


The beginning of the multimedia project was an expedition that covered 10,000 kilometers across 4 biomes: Amazon, Pantanal, Cerrado and the Atlantic Forest, to seek knowledge, stories and inspiration. The 1,000 square meter panel was completed in October 2021 and the project's documentary should be out in 2022. Every year, forest fires increase in Brazil. Over the past two years, the country has set new records and has been impressive. Pantanal lost 30% of the entire bioma, burned in just one year.

Another work by the activist Mundano who also uses residues from environmental crimes is the mural “Trabalhadores de Brumadinho” (Workers from Brumadinho), 2019, a reinterpretation of the work “Trabalhadores” (Workers), by Tarsila do Amaral. The work is located in São Paulo city downtown and was produced using the paint from the Brumadinho dam's mud. The rupture of the dam in Brumadinho on January 25, 2019 was the biggest work accident in Brazil in terms of loss of human life and the second biggest industrial disaster of the century. It was one of the biggest environmental mining disasters in the country¹⁰.



ARTIVISM AND THE FIGHT



Many artists could have been mentioned in this research, because art is increasingly playing a key role in the fight. “Several possible combinations between artistic and cultural making with urgent agendas, which, through the use of creativity, expand awareness and discussion of these agendas. The transition from the contemporary “abnormal” to this “fantastic” world will obviously not happen overnight, in fact we can get out of the pandemic in much worse situations. Overcoming the global climate crisis is the agenda that will require the most creative efforts and political imagination.

But there is a power of transformation in the confluence of activism and culture, that is, in artivism, which awakens hope in the transition of imagination.¹¹

Jonaya de Castro

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