

sional singularity of an intuitive work of art: “never using the original color from the tube, the artist creates uncommon luminosities in a compulsive search for color.”

In fact, Waters’ chromatic exercises can be followed in her preparatory studies, exhibited in the gallery as a welcome complement to the purposes of the main show.

*Jandyra Waters. Ritmo do Tempo* renewed public contact with the artist’s inexhaustible creative vein and it brought us to a new awareness of an artist who never ceased to believe in her project and registered with great precision the nuances of a significant chapter in the history of Brazilian art.

CLÁUDIA FAZZOLARI

## Gui Mohallem

Galeria Emma Thomas

In *Terra* (“Earth”), an exhibition at Emma Thomas Gallery curated by Gabriel Bogossian, Brazilian artist Gui Mohallem proposes a specific game, which basically consists in bringing the outside, inside. Or, in other words, bringing what is exterior to the gallery into the space between its walls.

This is, in a sense, the task of the landscape painter: take the mountain to the living room. This incursion, however, is always mediated by the frame, which operates as a window. Thus, seen from a couch, a landscape painting is the fiction of a window offering us a view of something far away.

In *Terra*, meanwhile, the window-like function of the landscape is nullified; the frame is broken and the gallery invaded. The genre’s characteristic distancing is subverted by two key elements. First, a geometric, regular cube, unadorned and made from over a ton of dirt and paraffin, posed directly on the gallery floor. The second, a video (in a 14-minute loop) of a cloud that gradually changes as electrical charges prepare a storm inside it. The cube would undoubtedly

delight Donald Judd, the minimalist, and the could would fascinate Turner, the Romantic (both, let us note, extraordinary landscape painters/artists).

Immediately after entering the exhibition, visitors are confronted with the outsize cube and its rotund weight; a mere turn of the head and they find the cloud, floating in the video. The cloud is the sky; the dirt is the ground: that seems obvious enough. But those immense sky and ground are now inside the tiny space of a São Paulo gallery. The vast outside world has entered the room. The horizon is the edge of the cube, and the celestial dome has arrived in the form of the cloud.

Yet, the image of the cloud has been shot frontally, which dislocates the viewer’s position, making it as though we were atop a mountain. In sum, we see the cloud from above, but at the same time we see the dirt from below, since its surface—the cube’s—begins below the viewer’s line of sight.

There is, then, a profound distortion of the location and the point of view (inside and outside; above and below). This led an employee in the gallery to exclaim: “Gui, I wish your show ended soon so that I can stand on the cube.” I am with her. We want a return of order: looking at the ground from above and the cloud from below. We want, in other words, to know where we are.

This problem of geographic location implies a different question: we want to know how we are. And this issue, in fact, is ever-present in the exhibition, as it is in a good portion of Gui Mohallem’s work. In 2012, he traveled to Lebanon to search for his father’s family. His father had left that country in 1952, fleeing a war whose repercussions continue to be felt even today, for instance in the Syrian migrations of recent months—a process that is the mirror of so many human diasporas, so many waves of people in exile that traverse our present era. People banished from their land, people who have lost their land, and with it the documents of their *identity*, with all that implies.

“Nobody leaves their land because they want to,” says Mohallem, adding that it is impossible to know what is harder, the condition of those who remain there through a war—like his own uncles and aunts—or the nostalgia of those who left. *Tcharafna*, the exhibition he presented in 2013, after returning from Lebanon, is suffused with just that nostalgia, an inherited melancholy that belongs and at the same time doesn’t belong to the artist: the feelings of a son as he tries to treat and cure his father’s wounds. Now, in 2015, Mohallem turns his gaze to Brazil, his own land. Not by chance does the curator, Gabriel Bogossian, begin his exhibition text with a mention of Ithaca, nor is it a coincidence that the dirt used for the cube comes from Minas, the region where Mohallem’s family settled and the artist’s point of geographic provenance.

But it is a land marked by ambivalence. The pictures in the exhibition or videos like *Paisaje no. 2* (Landscape # 2)—which shows the motion of the shadows of trees, and, with it, the wind that moves them—are impossible to locate geographically. What the observer sees could be taking place anywhere in the world.

Through his own history, Mohallem depicts a loss of land, identity, and origin to illustrate the condition of the contemporary individual. Confronted with such loss, the artist has two responses. First, to make the land portable, carrying it with us like Dracula in Bram Stoker’s novel (the count can only rest in his own land, so he travels from Transylvania to England with more than 30 boxes of it, weighing over 60 tons). Second, to turn towards ourselves, building an Ithaca

**Gui Mohallem.** Exhibition view: *Diáspora No. 2*, 2015. Earth and paraffin. Video in loop, 14 min. Variables dimensions.



there, within us. There resides the force of this exhibition's attempt to bring the landscape into the gallery, fitting the vastness of the world inside four walls.

JULIA BUENAVENTURA

WESTCHESTER / NY

## Teresa Margolles

Neuberger Museum of Art / State University of New York at Purchase

As we walked from the parking lot to the exhibition space where Teresa presented her performance, she told me that the indigenous community—isolated from the outside world—with whom she had been developing a relationship in Mexico, had agreed—after a long period of getting to know them to gain their trust—that the money made from the sale of the work resulting from her time there would be used toward the purchase of a couple of washing machines that the town needed. But the police showed up one day and savagely beat a young man who, although drunk, had not really done anything wrong. Fear closed doors of that interaction between the artist and the town. We started this conversation in Madrid, in February 2015; Now, in August 2015, in the state of New York, the narrative that is part of the performances by students of the SUNY campus at Purchase, once deals with the tragic referent of violence. Margolles's works always deal with the most difficult and volatile conditions. In "We Have a Common Thread," her work covers various Latin American countries, and this time incorporates the United States and an event involving the growing criminal escalation in that country.

A semi-dark room, five supports, a diagonal room divided by a series of monitors showing women embroiderers from Recife (Bra-

**Teresa Margolles.** *American Juju for the Tapestry of Truth*, 2015. Mixed media on stained textile produced by an imprint technique on the spot in Staten Island where Eric Garner died while being placed under arrest. Created by members of the Harlem Needle Arts cultural arts institute—Sahara Briscoe, Laura R. Gadson, and Jerry Gant—under the direction of Michelle Bishop. 66 x 98 in. (165 x 247,5 cm). Photo courtesy of Teresa Margolles and Galerie Peter Kilchmann



zil). This town, along with the cities of Panama (Panama), Managua (Nicaragua), Ciudad Juárez (Mexico), Staten Island (US), and Santa Catarina Palopó (Sololá, Guatemala) are the places connected by "the common thread." In Harlem, Teresa Margolles showed the video of the embroiderers in Guatemala; Upon watching it, Michelle Bishop, leader of that group, said: "We have a common thread," which became the title of this exhibition.

Tracy Fitzpatrick, director of the Neuberger Museum of Art, summed the exhibition up and the importance of its content for that institution in one sentence. "'Teresa Margolles: We have a Common Thread'"—critical, defiant and timely—reflects our goals as a university museum: to unravel and face those themes that are the most pressing and complex today, including violence in marginalized communities in the United States and Latin America." This defines Margolles's work and the work of the devoted Mayan embroiderers Masaya and Rarámuri from Recife; Kuna, from Harlem—affiliated with Harlem Arts—and members of the Asociación de Desarrollo de la Mujer K'ak'a Naoj of Santa Catalina Papoló, who collaborated in the implementation of these works in six places. Teresa Margolles also works with three assistants, and this time, with local curators. The solid catalog published by Patrice Giasson—the associate curator for Art of the Americas, founded by Alex Gordon—mentions each one of them, which we would have done here if the space permitted.

In the last ten years, Margolles has been raising a conversation in her country (Mexico) about the reason behind being named the face of contemporary art in Mexico when the media was so occupied with the unwelcoming violence that permeated her work. Since she worked with the group SEMEFO (1990-1999)—Servicio Medico Forense—that she founded with Arturo Angulo, Juan Carlos López-Orozco and Luis García-Zavaleta, aside from integrating music, they worked with organic material from dead bodies, in an aesthetic of the counterculture. They were not addressing the popular celebrations of death in Mexico, but the corpses; in a way they were working with remnants, with what could be recoverable from a lost life: blood and the water from washing the bodies. The counterculture, a component of the art of Postmodernism, attends to the work with concepts, objects and the body in the visual arts. It neglects technology but embraces urban folklore, mass communication and concerns for nature. But in the 21st century and in transmodernity, all these factors have been stereotyped, globalized; everything is provisional, unstable and rapidly loses the immeasurable value that it showed at birth before being released to the market. The work of art as legible political discourse already demonstrated its limited effect. Now, the world has several common threads that express similar human anxieties.

As always, Teresa Margolles offers strips of prepared fabric. To create *American Juju for the Tapestry of Truth* (2015), she took a large fabric to Harlem, with a strip of red cloth sewn on it with images of bullet holes and small African-style metal masks. The other strips have pieces of quilt; a strip was fashioned from ties, another from red stamps and others yet from stencil drawings created with spray paint. There are faces and phrases. It is a work that expresses the anguish caused by the number of African Americans who have been killed by the police. This is inserted into the larger context in which Margolles has been working, which is the tragedy of violence against women. *Juju* is an amulet, the embroidery is an offering, each stitch is a tear, and if counted, each stitch represent a life.

GRACIELA KARTOFEL