

The São Paulo Bienial Endures, Despite Brazil's Political Uncertainty

Ann Binlot OCT 23, 2016 @ 07:00 AM

“Fora Temer!” A group of artists connected to the collective Opavivará wearing t-shirts that read “Direct Now,” and “Never Temer” interrupted the press conference to open the 32nd São Paulo Bienial on September 6, protesting the country’s new president, Michel Temer, who officially took office on August 31, replacing Dilma Rousseff, who was impeached for breaking budgetary laws. “Fascist conquest won’t pass through!” the protesters chanted as they walked through the room.

Luis Terepins, the president of the [São Paulo Bienial](#), was not deterred by their efforts. “The Bienial is a space for dialogue and accepts all different opinions as long as there is respect to the civil rules of coexistence,” he later said in a statement. “If the protesters had prevented the press conference of happening it would be a problem, but gladly it was not the case”

Incertiza Viva (Live Uncertainty), the theme of the 2016 São Paulo Bienial, the second oldest biennial in the world after Venice, may be appropriate, given the country’s political and economic uncertainty, but its curator, Jochen Volz, says that theme was selected for the nature of the work of artists. “To talk about uncertainty was very much influenced by the work that artists do,” said Volz. “I think artists are always so precise with our time, just looking at what artists do you see that uncertainty is somehow a theme that is lingering around.”



Ebony Patterson's installation at the 32nd São Paulo Bienial

But that’s not to say that the issues that plague the country did not pop up in discussions. “Many of the themes that have been key to the project as a whole have been present from the very beginning and maybe even now more relevant because much more beyond the parliamentary power struggle, the real interests of the real subjects at stake are probably education, environment, ecology, or thinking about our relationship to our surrounding, to nature, different forms of knowledge coexist, so I think those are the key things.” said Volz. “The themes are all there and they probably are the real questions around this current situation.”

Volz and his team selected some 81 artists from around the world, including Jamaican Ebony Patterson, Belgian Francis Alÿs, Puerto Rican Michael Linares, Colombian Carlos Motta, American Rachel Rose and Brazilians

Lais Myrrha, [OPAVIVARÁ!](#), and Luiz Roque, to exhibit in the Oscar Niemeyer-designed Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion in Ibirapuera Park through December 11, 2016.