

Ministry of Culture, Bienal and Itaú present

32nd BIENAL DE SÃO PAULO INCERTEZA VIVA

7 Sept - 11 Dec 2016

CATALOGUE



bienal são paulo

With imagery that borders on alchemy and magic, artist Susan Jacobs uses her work to present physical-chemical phenomena as protagonists and agents for transforming the materials which she uses. Her installations reference architecture, science and sculpture, while also at times including elements of photography and video in their composition. In these installations, Jacobs unites materials of distinct origins – natural and artificial – in the same space, subjecting them to operations which question such conventions as the measurements of weight, resistance, magnetism and gravity.

In *Through the Mouth of the Mantle* (2016), presented at the 32nd Bienal, the artist employs chemical and physical transformations in a sort of arena comprised of compressed sand, metals, mirrors, projections and objects. In this piece, she presents a trajectory marked by a network of relationships between each of these elements. The installation's components include shovels cast in aluminum – resembling a squid's mantle –, a pool of the elemental metal Gallium corroding through the shovels, a motorized marble "Lazy Susan" disc that spins a bowl of molten Gallium to form a parabolic mirror which reflects back the viewer's eye, and videos projected onto glass panels that show the ink and mucus of a squid as it moves over a surface in a rocking boat, a squid's head that rotates on a marble disc, and a homemade chemistry experiment known as the "Black Snake".

Jacobs is interested in the processes in which inanimate bodies seem to come to life. Exploring these unsettling reactions, the artist points to the distinct relationships between the species, similarities between nervous systems, gestures and the recognition of vitality in forms considered dead. These transformations expose our certainties to yet unknown energies, provoking a nearly instantaneous displacement in relation to that which we take for granted.

In this way, the installation shelters changing forces, inactive elements which have latent potential that can be unleashed at any moment. The course in this arena, or rather this alchemic experiment expanded in space, is conducted by compressed sand which enables elements, objects and projections to be progressively and gradually encountered, blending together and making the course a kind of gray area where everything transforms. Misconceptions and logical judgments might lead spectators to assume false readings of what they are viewing. As such, the artist evokes a series of contingent events which may or may not take place, bringing to the surface anticipation and unease in the face of doubt regarding experiences as transformative as a chemical reaction between one element and another.

— Ulisses Carrilho





