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THE MIDDLE EARTH

Mediterranean Project

MARIA THEREZA ALVES

JIMMIE DURHAM

MARCH 2ND - 27TH MAY 2018

**INSTITUT
D'ART CONTEMPORAIN**
Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes

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In the spring of 2018, the IAC is devoting its entire space to artists Maria Thereza Alves and Jimmie Durham, for the project *The Middle Earth*, dedicated to a poetic and critical approach to the Mediterranean.

This new collaboration grew out of the desire on the part of these itinerant citizens to probe their current living territory together in a transcultural and transhistorical mode.

Following a long journey that led them outside of the American continent and as far as Europe, Alves and Durham settled at the edge of the “inner sea”.

Similar to Jimmie Durham’s *Eurasian Project*, initiated in 1994 as soon as he left America and the *Seeds of Change* project launched by Maria Thereza Alves in the Port of Marseille in 1999, the idea of the *Mediterranean Project* was gradually formed, setting out in search of this vast continent that is by no means defined by its borders, but well and truly imagined, dreamed, and hence, limitless. *The Middle Earth* thus constitutes its first phase.

The two artists, who each have a distinct and internationally renowned art practice, revealed intersecting influences based firstly on their political commitment, which fuels their respective work and, secondly, on shared research topics based on the notions of territory and authority. We find these questions in the work of both artists and in both cases these investigations bear the same critique of the ideological and normative frameworks that shape our relationships to the world.

Maria Thereza Alves pays particular and proactive attention to the history of a given territory and directs her research, between poetry and ethnology, towards migratory phenomena and displaced populations.

In Europe, Durham's work mainly focuses on the relationship between architecture, monumentality, and national history, by deconstructing stereotypes and official narratives. Viewing history as a process, he seeks the reality of objects, or even their intentionality, within their evolutive context, running counter to any fixed categorisations applied to them.

Based on the matrix-like relationship between their art practice and the areas that they travel through, at the IAC, the two artists are embarking on a new and collaborative quest revolving around the hybrid heritage of this "Middle Earth"¹.

Designed as a "tragic poem" and a "mosaic", *The Middle Earth* is organised around a series of "sections" that resonate among themselves: *Food & Music, Writing, Dyeing, Glass, Mermaid, Temple, Flint, Plants, Trees, and Iron.*

Each of these components broaches a different dimension of this *Midi* [South] considered as both an area² and an era³, as finite and infinite. Far from any encyclopaedic notion, the following elements do not mix with any form of hierarchical relationship: Paleochristian archaeological remains and plants, Greek myths and contemporary paintings, flints and typed documents, detritus and Egyptian effigies. Swept along by the song of the mermaids and the notes of the oud, the visitor is thus encouraged to weave connections between each of the elements, forming original relationships.

¹ The Mediterranean Sea owes its name to the fact that it is literally a "sea in the middle of land", in Latin: *mare medi terra*.

² Geographic sphere with political and natural definitions.

³ Transhistorical period from Ancient Greece and Rome to the recent migration.

The Mediterranean Project nonetheless poetically deconstructs the codes of this cradle of Western civilisation. Through this horizontal approach, liberated of any anthropocentric Western conceptions and dualistic principles separating humans from nature, Maria Thereza Alves and Jimmie Durham redefine a new cosmogony* here.

Although it is transhistorical, this project does not however avoid the horrific current events of the Mediterranean, which still conjures up contradictory projects in the collective imagination. At once an idyllic territory and a conflict zone, a site of inclusion and exclusion, this sea shared by so many peoples constitutes an indefinable, vertiginous zone.

Taking as “guides”, like tutelary figures, four things that share the fact of having almost disappeared from memory or off the face of the Earth – murex, ibis, arbutus and monk seals – it is therefore with a tone that is both tragic and selective that the artists compose this poem.

While the idea that everything is fading is present – that everything is disappearing where it is reborn in the Mediterranean – it is precisely by activating the potential porosities between the living and the historical that different stories are created and that poetry becomes action.

Curator : Nathalie Ergino

Assisted by Magalie Meunier, curator’s assistant, in charge of art and research projects, and Sandra Lorenzi, artist, in charge of research for the project.

* In this capacity the *Mediterranean Project* encounters the explorations of the IAC laboratory, the Laboratoire Espace Cerveau, within the framework of its new research cycle *Vers un monde cosmomorphe* [Towards a Cosmomorphic World].

Maria Thereza Alves

Born in 1961 in Brazil

Lives and works between Naples and Berlin

Maria Thereza Alves has worked and exhibited internationally since the 1980s, creating a body of work investigating the histories and circumstances of particular localities to give witness to silenced histories. Her projects are researched-based and develop out of her interactions with the physical and social environments of the places she lives, or visits for exhibitions and residencies. These projects begin in response to local needs and proceed through a process of dialogue that is often facilitated between material and environmental realities and social circumstances. While aware of Western binaries between nature and culture, art and politics, or art and daily life, she deliberately refuses to acknowledge them in her practice. She chooses instead to create spaces of agency and visibility for oppressed cultures through relational practices of collaboration that require constant movement across all of these boundaries.

Maria Thereza has exhibited at Sharjah Biennale (2017), Sao Paulo Biennale (2016), (d)OCUMENTA, Paris Triennial, Guangzhou Triennial 13 in Kassel, the Taipei Biennial, Manifesta in Trento, the Prague Biennial, the Lyon Biennial where she received the Prix de la Francophonie.

She has had two major solo exhibitions in the Centre Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC), Seville, Spain (2015) and in the Contemporary Art Museum of Mexico (MUAC) in 2014.

Maria Thereza Alves has recently received the Vera List Center Prize for Art & Politics 2016-2018 and has exhibited *Seeds of Change: New York - A Botany of Colonization* at the Parson New School of Design (2017).

Maria Thereza Alves is represented by gallery Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels

Jimmie Durham

Born in 1940 in the USA

Lives and works between Naples and Berlin

Early 1960's, active in theater, performance, and literature in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. First solo art exhibit in Austin, Texas in 1965. Moved to Geneva, Switzerland in 1969, returned to U.S. in 1973. Political organizer in the American Indian Movement, 1973-1980, Director of the International Indian Treaty Council and representative at the United Nations.

Director of the Foundation for the Community of Artists (FCA) New York City, 1981-83.

Moved to Mexico in 1987, returned to Europe in 1994.

Exhibited in Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in the Museum for Contemporary Art in Antwerp, Centre national des arts plastiques, SMAK in Ghent, Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, ICA London, Hamburg Kunstverein, FRAC in Reims, Wittgenstein Haus in Vienna, Whitney Biennial, Kunstverein in Munich, Venice Biennale, among others. In 2009 the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris presented a solo show by Jimmie Durham and he participated at the Lyon Biennale.

In 2012 The Muhka Anvers host a retrospective of the artist's work, and he participated in (d)OCUMENTA 13 and 9.

In 2017, Jimmie Durham had a touring major survey (his first one in the USA) at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and Whitney Art Museum, NYC.

Jimmie Durham is represented by gallery Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels and kurimanzutto gallery in Mexico.

Exhibition rooms



room 1 / Food & Music

The first room establishes the exhibition's mode of operation from the outset: elements with different statuses (art objects, archaeological objects, texts, vernacular objects) are juxtaposed, based on the notion of the Mediterranean. Their layout has been designed as a collection so as to accommodate the visitor within the project and create an atmosphere conducive to discovery.

We start this "journey" into the Mediterranean through the evocation of the fertile, nutritive and refined qualities of this land. Thus seating, music, dried fruit, and other sweetmeats are made available to the visitors.

Araignée, 2018

[Spider]

Maria Thereza Alves designed this set of chairs. Veritable sculptures with arachnidan lines; they nonetheless conserve a utilitarian function and are made available to visitors.

Inanna, 2018

An iconographic type that was widespread from the Palaeolithic¹ era onwards, the goddess of fertility or Venus features among the oldest and most universal of human representations.

Maria Thereza Alves suggests an updated version of it here in the form of a female sculpture made of coloured glass and sporting a string of pearls. Known as Inanna by the Sumerians (in Mesopotamia) or

Ishtar, in the Babylonian pantheon, she is the goddess of life and fertility and many myths are devoted to her.

Mediterranean, 2018

A huge abstract mosaic with shimmering colours takes pride of place in this room. Directly referring to an ancestral decorative art prevalent in the Mediterranean during the classical era, Maria Thereza Alves and Jimmie Durham free themselves of the traditional technique that imposes the calibration of fragments and highly specific modes of assembly, and create a composition based on disparate elements, some of which were gathered on Mediterranean beaches.

Mediterranean Monk Seal Skull (Replica)

An object stemming from Jimmie Durham's personal collection, this replica of the skull of a monk seal evokes the distressing situation of this species endemic to the Mediterranean, now threatened with extinction.

The shrill cry of this seal was renowned for its similarity to the female voice; it is easy to imagine that in different times, sailors might have confused them with the infamous mermaids that Homer depicts in his *Odyssey*.

Corbezzolo, 2018

Caper, 2018

Hermit Ibis, 2018

Ecology, botany, and the representation of nature in general hold a prominent position in Maria Thereza Alves' practice. The artist's interest in them mainly resides in their capacity for adaptation: plant species – seeds in particular – are perceived as metaphors for the construction of human identities.

¹ Among the most famous, we can cite *the Willendorf Venus*, a limestone statuette from the Upper Palaeolithic period discovered in 1908 on the site of a former brickworks in Lower Austria.

Within the continuity of her project *Seeds of Change*, undertaken between 2012 and 2016, the artist produces numerous paintings representing animals or plants chosen for their symbolic scope or evocative power. Therefore, throughout the exhibition, these evocations punctuate the visitor's programme, now in the form of images, as here with the *sacred Ibis*² or these common Mediterranean trees (caper bushes, arbutus, kermes oak, etc.), or in the form of songs or texts pronouncing scientific³

room 1bis

Mediterranean Alphabets

The diversity of Mediterranean languages and cultures is evoked here through the multiplicity of alphabets, outlining the elements of the birth of writing presented in the next room.

room 2 / Writing

Considered the birthplace of writing, the Mediterranean Basin is shown here through printed and scriptural techniques. Various archaeological objects reflecting the sources of writing and refinement in Mesopotamia are presented in these display cases: a series of scrolls, cuneiform tablets, and period necklaces from various locations. The oldest traces were discovered in the south of modern-day Iraq, between Euphrates and Tigris (clay tablets: birth of cuneiform writing for utilitarian purposes, to establish accounts for trade interactions).

² In Ancient Egypt, the Ibis is a mythical and sacred bird that represents knowledge and religion.

³ The longest names are animal names, the smaller ones refer to plants.

Pleas in Stone, 2018

Maintaining a very intense rapport with the materiality of the objects that he chooses for their plastic, energetic, and symbolic properties, Jimmie Durham presents a dialogue here between cylindrical and spherical objects (pearls and seals) with remarkable and meticulous care and refinement, suggesting that they originate from a shared gestural language.

The artist also offers the visitor a tactile confrontation with a necklace that he created himself and that he invites us to "tell" [to count the beads with the fingers], as though to replay an archaic and mechanical gesture shared by many populations.

room 3 / Dyeing

Here, the artists have devised an installation around the colour purple (shades ranging from crimson red through to violet) that has existed since the classical age.

Porpora, 2018

The purple is obtained in the classical era through the maceration of *murex*, a Mediterranean mollusc. Used as a dye, it was more precious than gold at the time and quickly associated with a symbol of royalty and power.

Produced for the glory of the human species to the detriment of another living species (now virtually extinct), this colour assumes an exemplary character for artists in testifying to the ambivalence of human nature, torn since our origins between refinement and cruelty.

Unrejected Wild Flora, 2014

In her series *Unrejected Wild Flora*, Maria Thereza Alves uses plant life as both a subject and a material. Weeds, generally denigrated and ripped out, are rarely considered plants but rather as parasites: they sprout spontaneously and, unless they are controlled, invade everything. Back from a trip, the artist found weeds pulled from her own garden as though they represented a threat for the neighbouring plants. This incident, seemingly banal, served as a pretext for the creation of paintings whose vitality seems to have inherited the tenacity of these plants.

room 4 / Glass

Glass is showcased here : a material whose production dates back to Antiquity on the perimeter of the Mediterranean (in Mesopotamia and Egypt with the manufacture of flasks, pearls, inlay elements, or sculptures for jewellery or decoration).

Durham's Glass Collection

A selection of glass objects and fragments from the artist's personal collection are combined with archaeological objects that bear witness to the earliest techniques of glass transformation. The properties of the material – opacity, transparency, fluidity, and luminosity – are highlighted.

Four Fish Flasks, 2018

Jimmie Durham presents glass-blown sculptures in the form of fish. Their form resembles flasks and echoes the vases in a conic shape and the phials presented in nearby display cases.

north hall / Mermaid

A strange, thrilling sound welcomes the visitor in the north hall space. This sound is reminiscent of ancient myths and the power of mermaids to attract sailors with their songs. As the archaeological figurine in terracotta evokes, presented under glass, these chimeric creatures had a part-human, part-animal appearance with a female head and a bird's body.

We Know Everything That Happens Over All The Generous Earth, 2018

Maria Thereza Alves presents a visual and sound installation. The large-format watercolour work echoes Homer's *Odyssey* (Book 12) in which Ulysses, attached to the mast of his boat, manages to resist the mermaids' song. Realising that he will not succumb to them, the mermaids kill themselves by hurtling themselves off the top of their rock.

The high rocks represented are also a reminder of the origins of the mermaids' birthplace, which differs according to the versions of Mediterranean civilisations. For Latin peoples, they apparently came from the islands near the bay of Naples.

Hanging by a steel cable, a glass sculpture representing a foot with sharp claws looms over visitors, appearing to threaten them as potential prey. Complete with a soundtrack, this sculpture confers an oppressive dimension to the installation.

room 5 / Temple

In Antiquity, blue was not really considered a colour: at that time, only black, white, and red held that status⁴. The exception was Pharaonic Egypt, where it was thought to bring good fortune and where innumerable examples exist of statuettes and inlays of blue-green stones.

Durham's Blue and Green Stone Collection

Piece of stone

Five Snakes Stones, 2018

In display cases or on pedestals, the artists set out a stone collection in gradations of blue (azurite, lapis lazuli), faience tiles, and painted potsherds.

Nearby, a massive wood beam set directly on the ground (metonymic object designating the temple⁵) and a group of snake-shaped sculptures (by Jimmie Durham) also form part of this installation.

To the precious archaeological elements and the potential energy of the minerals is added the symbolic charge of the snake figure, also closely associated with Egypt⁶, the

4 Not until the Renaissance and Christian painting (that of Lippi in particular) would blue become the precious and predominant colour we know today. Michel Pastoureau, *Le Petit livre des couleurs* (Paris: Seuil, 2014).

5 The Latin word *templum* designates a religious and divinatory practice in use in Etruscan culture, intended to delimit a sacred space (to build a sanctuary, or define the limits of a city, domain, or house) through taking auspices, as practiced by augurs. By metonymy, *templum* gives the name temple to the building whose site has been defined by this practice, which will host the representation of a divinity, or even a non-religious gathering place.

6 The shedding of serpents' skin was a fascinating event for the ancient Egyptians. Many goddesses could appear in the form of a rearing

whole ensemble giving this room the aspect of a sanctuary or tomb.

Shaushka, 2018

This glass sculpture of a female figure recalls the goddess *Inanna* shown in room 1.

It is the equivalent of the latter, goddess of Love and War in the Hurrian pantheon of the southern Caucasus.

room 6

Mediterranean Sea, 2018

In this room, the artists present a disquieting installation: a barrel of water from the Mediterranean seems to float among waste objects scattered on the ground, creating a desolate landscape reminiscent of certain coastal beaches on which souls and objects are continually washed up.

cobra (uræus).

room 7 / Flint

A selection of archaeological objects (stones, flint, tools) from Egypt, Algeria, and Iran (Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon).

Durham's Flint Tool Collection

Personal flint collection of Jimmie Durham.

For the artist, a stone is the ultimate sculptural form, for each stone is itself an anthropic, changing sculpture, shaped over time by the elements. Jimmie Durham is fascinated by the way apparently static objects like stones may become incredibly "active". Stones recur in his practice, as both objects and tools. (*Saint-frigo* 1996, *The Museum of Stones* 2011/2012)

south hall / (Plants)

Maria Thereza Alves and Jimmie Durham invite us to explore this space, open to the outside, from a vegetal perspective.

Chanson Florale, 2018

Diverse varieties of plants and shrubs are arranged around a wooden module where the visitor may settle and be transported by the sonorities of female and male voices enumerating diverse varieties of plants from the Mediterranean Basin. Paintings from the *Unrejected Wild Flora* series, as well as a sculpture by Jimmie Durham, punctuate our wanderings through the south hall.

room 8 / Trees

Two massive tree trunks, olive and walnut, are arranged on the ground. Recognizable by its gnarled trunk and creviced brown bark, the *Olea europaea*, more commonly known as the olive tree, has been cultivated for millennia around the Mediterranean. It is highly symbolic for Mediterranean peoples of Antiquity and the present, particularly in Greece, where it is associated with the legend of the founding of Athens.

Olea europaea, 2018

For *The Middle Earth*, Maria Thereza Alves produced a series of paintings on paper, a pendant to *Unrejected Wild Flora* of 2014. Alves uses olive branches here, covering them with paint and recording their traces through a performative praxis of rubbing the branch against the paper medium.

Palestinian Fear Cup, 2018

Ceramic in the shape of a goblet by Maria Thereza Alves, illustrating an ancestral superstitious tradition. A goblet filled with water is placed in the light of the moon and the stars for several nights, and then given to a frightened person to drink, in order to chase away fear.

room 9 / Iron

The artists present a group of elements relating to the ancestral use of iron. In certain traditions, touching iron is like “touching wood”, a lucky charm.

Iron, 2018

Taking up the idea of a superstition, Jimmie Durham provides certain objects from his own collection to see and touch.

The material is presented here in different forms (figurative elements: tools or a child's wagon; rough or worked-up abstracts: ornament, iron scrap, or horseshoe).

Self-Imposed, 2018

Atypical installation by Jimmie Durham, like a totem of wood, bronze, and steel, opening a temporal dialogue with an archaeological object, an oval Etruscan mirror.

Red/Red (Untitled) Diptych, 2015

As a pendant to the installation on the colour purple presented in Room 3, Jimmie Durham and Maria Thereza Alves invite Asli Çavusoglu, a young Turkish artist, to exhibit two drawings from the *Red/Red* series, which traces the history of the colour red. The shade used by the artist is a specific pigment, traditionally manufactured from an insect called the “Ararat cochineal” or “Armenian cochineal”, *Porphyrophora Hamelii*, native to the plain of Ararat⁷.

Asli Çavusoglu, born 1982 in Istanbul (Turkey), where she lives and works, produces pieces questioning the way cultural and historical facts are transformed, represented, and interpreted by individuals. Through various media, the artist often assumes the role of interpreter, writer, or mediator in her projects, to underline the precarious and subjective nature of our shared histories.

⁷ The Armenian cochineal is an insect that lives in the roots of the plant *Aeluropus litoralis*. The latter grows on the banks of the Aras River, which marks the natural border between Turkey and Armenia.

List of works

Room 1 - (Food & music)

Maria Thereza Alves, *Araignée*, 2018

Steel, Cotton, Plastic, Wood
99,5 × 70 × 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Map of the Mediterranean Bassin

282,5 × 163,5 × 2,5 cm

Maria Thereza Alves, *Objets trouvés dans les racines d'un acacia jouxant la plus vieille église de Naples*, 2018

Ceramic Shards, Lightbulb, Ink on Paper
6,5 × 6 × 2 cm - 5,5 × 5,5 × 1,5 cm - 4,5 × 3,6 × 1 cm - 4,5 × 2,5 × 2,5 cm
Collection of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Hermit Ibis*,

2018
Watercolour Painting
48 × 34 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Inanna*, 2018

Glass, seed-necklace
25 × 24 × 34,5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie

Durham, *Mediterranean*, 2018

Mix Media Mosaic
156 × 156 × 9 cm
Courtesy of the artists

Mediterranean Monk Seal Skull (Replica)

31 × 22 × 16 cm

Maria Thereza Alves, *Corbezzolo (1)*,

2018
Watercolour Painting
39,8 × 39,8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Corbezzolo (2)*,

2018
Watercolour Painting
39,8 × 39,8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Caper*, 2018

Watercolour Painting
39,8 × 39,8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Funeral model: bark

End of 11th dynasty, begin of 7th dynasty
Egypt, Wood, 50,7 × 12,3 × 20 cm
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Vénus à la coquille

First quarter of the 3rd century BC
Italia, Terracotta, 12,7 × 23,2 × 8,5 cm
Collection of Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne, Marseille

Room 1 bis

Mediterranean Alphabets

68 × 100 cm

***La Condition Humaine*, 2018**

Text of the artists

Figurine: character holding a vase

1850 B.C - 1550 B.C- Cypriot Medium
Terracotta, 6,8 × 5 × 18,5 cm
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Figurine: woman

Fifth century BC, Terracotta
10,5 × 7,35 × 3,3 cm, Cyprus
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Figurine woman's torso

Seventh century B.C, Terracotta
11,15 × 8,4 × 3,6 cm, Cyprus
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Room 2 - Writing

Jimmie Durham, *Pleas in Stone*, 2018

Stone, Wood, Stainless Steel
255 x 9,5 x 13,5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

4 cylinders-stamps, Variable datation
Chlorite, Serpentine, Jasper
Mesopotamia
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Cuneiform tablet, Abi-eshuh (Reign),
Clay, Mesopotamia
7,3 x 4,8 x 2,5 cm
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Lot of cylinders-stamps,
Unknown datation, Clay, plaster, Asia -
Turkey
Collection of Musée des Confluences, Lyon

Necklace, Late period
Glass, 76 cm, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

3 necklaces, Late period
72cm - 48 cm - 75 cm, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Necklace, New Empire
Carnelian, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

2 necklaces, Ptolemaic period
Roman era, Egyptian earthenware, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Figurine : man
fifth century BC. - Third century BC
Iberian Peninsula, Bronze, 9,8 x 4 x 3,3 cm
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Room 3 - Dyeing

Maria Thereza Alves, *Unrejected Wild*

Flora, 2014
Peinture acrylique, papier
112,5 x 82,5 x 4 cm
Courtesy of l'artiste

Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie

Durham, *Porpora*, 2018
Peinture acrylique, lin, 190 x 190 cm,

Impression sur papier
Murex, 24,5 x 22,2 x 2,5 cm
Collection de l'artiste
Courtesy des artistes

Room 4 - Glass

Jimmie Durham, *Broken mirror*, 2018
Courtesy of the artist

**Jimmie Durham, *Four Fish Flasks*,
2018**
Glass
Courtesy of the artist

Durham's Glass Collection

Glass
Collection of the artist

4 balsam jars in glass
Glass
Syro-Palestinian coast
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Gobelet en verre, Coupe en verre
Glass
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

North Hall - Mermaid

**Maria Thereza Alves, *We Know
Everything That Happens Over All
The Generous Earth*, 2018**
Installation : Glass, Watercolour, Paper, Sound,
Stainless Steel, Acrylic Paint
Participation : Yoali Yescas Amaro
Courtesy of the artist

Figurine : mermaid, early 5th century
B.C. Greece
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Room 5 - Temple

Maria Thereza Alves, *Shaushka*, 2018

Glass, seed-necklace
26 x 24 x 32 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Jimmie Durham, *Templum*, 2018

Wood
295 x 20 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Unrejected Wild*

***Flora*, 2013**
Acrylic Paint, Paper
59 x 42 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Jimmie Durham, *Five Snake Stones*, 2018

Stone, Wood, Hemp, Glass, Wood, Cotton,
Plastic, Steel
137 x 73 x 10 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Durham's Blue and Green Stone Collection

Stone
30,5 x 15,6 x 8 cm
Collection of the artist

Durham's Antique Broke Tile Collection

Collection of the artist

Lava stone

Stone and ink on paper
21 x 23 cm

5 turquoise's stone, Azurite

Collection of Musée des Confluences, Lyon

Scarabée d'Amenhotep II, Reign

Amenhotep II, Stone, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Amulet: muge (fish), Eighteenth

dynasty, nineteenth dynasty
Egyptian earthenware black & blue, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Figurine: Lion, Unknown datation

Terracotta cast (ceramic)
11,5 x 16,5 x 6,5 cm

Collection of Musée Archéologie
Méditerranéenne, Marseille

3 animal's hanging chain, Iron Age

Luristan, Bronze
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Spoon: oryx

XVIII^e dynasty - XXV^e dynasty
Egypt, Stone, 3,5 x 8 x 1 cm
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Figurine: boar, Second Iron Age

Bronze, 4,6 x 6,8 x 2,1 cm
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Figurine: Cat (Head), Late period

Bronze, Egypt, 3,3 x 4,5 x 5 cm
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Pig, *bas relief*, Unknown datation

Terracotta cast (ceramic), 11,6 x 19 x 4 cm
Collection of Musée Archéologie
Méditerranéenne, Marseille

Bulls figurine (Head) , Unknown

datation, Terracotta
13 x 11,5 x 8,8 cm
Musée of Archéologie Méditerranéenne,
Marseille

3 Funerary servants

Egyptian earthenware, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Bust figurine of Dea tyria gravida,

Period Chypro-archaic, Terracotta
7x 4,6x 3,1cm, Cyprus
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Bull's figurine, 3rd-2nd century BC

Terracotta, 15 x 7 x 14,1 cm, Greece
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

Room 6

Jimmie Durham et Maria Thereza

Alves, *Mediterranean Sea*, 2018

Auto Paint, Stainless Steel, Water
58 cm diameter, 87 cm height
Courtesy of the artists

Room 7 - Flint

Jimmie Durham, *Firestonefish*, 2018

Flint, Plaster, Paint, Metal, Ink on Paper
50 x 33 x 10 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Jimmie Durham's flint Collection (6)

Flint
50 x 40 x 1 cm
Collection of the artist

Jimmie Durham's flint Collection (5)

Flint
50 x 40 x 6 cm
Collection of the artist

Lot of flint, Unknown datation

Flint, Egypt
Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon

South Hall - (Plants)

Bench with plants

Various variety of plants, wood
840 x 250 cm

Jimmie Durham, *Helèns*, 2017

Chestnut wood, a chickpea can, onyx, metal,
paper, 40,5 x 34,5 x 165 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Michel Rein,
Paris/Bruxelles

Maria Thereza Alves, *Unrejected Wild*

***Flora*, 2017**
Acrylic Paint, Paper
112,5 x 82,5 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Unrejected Wild*

***Flora*, 2014**
Painting on Paper
83 x 113 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist

***Chanson Florale*, 2018**

Son
Participation : Romain Bonne, Laura Langlet,
Samuel Mecklenburg, Ida Mininni, Jeanne
Rivoire, Morgane Roumegoux, Floraine Sintès.
Courtesy of the artist

Room 8 - Trees

Cypress's Atlas twigs

Donation of Jardin Botanique, Lyon

Maria Thereza Alves, *Olea Europaea*

(1), 2018
Painting on Paper
66 x 51 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Olea Europaea*

(2), 2018
Painting on Paper
66 x 51 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Olea Europaea*

(3), 2018
Painting on Paper
66 x 51 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Kermes Oak*,

2018
30 x 30 cm
Watercolour Painting
Courtesy of the artist

Maria Thereza Alves, *Palestinian*

***Fear Cup*, 2018**
Ceramic
18,5 x 16,5 x 7 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Walnut Wood

Wood, 130 x 75 x 56 cm

Olive Wood

Wood, 124,5 x 77 x 60 cm

Oak

Wood, 15 x 26 x 9 cm

Room 9 - Iron

Durham's Iron Tool Collection

Iron

Courtesy of the artist

Durham's Childhood Toy Collection

Iron

Courtesy of the artist

Asli Çavusoglu, *Red / Red (Untitled)*

Dptych, 2015

Armenian cochineal ink on Turkish paper

70 x 100 cm (each)

Courtesy of the artist

Collection LAURASAR, France

Maria Thereza Alves & Jimmie

Durham, *Self-Imposed*, 2018

Bronze, Wood, Steel

171 x 50 x 49,5 cm

Courtesy of the artists

Jimmie Durham, *Lost in Space*, 2018

Iron

Courtesy of the artist

Mirror,

Etruria period, Bronze, Etruria

21 x 15,6 x 0,5 cm

Collection of Musée des Beaux-Arts de

Lyon

To our sea, *mare nostrum*

By Sandra Lorenzi

Jimmie Durham and Maria Thereza Alves summon up the words of the past. They reach us, fragmented but whole, dispersed but total. They are embodied in archaeological vestiges from the Mediterranean Basin, dug up and reunited in a single intention: to free the murmurs of the ages. Archaeology and art, tuned together here like the two voices of a single composition, orchestrate a long, protean story: *The Middle Earth*, with, we like to think, the kindly concurrence of the ancients, Virgil, Dante, Homer... The poetic paradigm brings into the present the sites where human destinies intersect. Are we in an epic, a farce, or a tragedy?

You will find neither answer nor moral in this History. The ineluctability of myth is abandoned in favour of the great enigma of the Mediterranean. A vast song for a vast field. The intention is to the measure of its scope. How can we find our way in chaos?

“What can take shape first, in this melting pot, what is the mysterious substance, already spirit, from which might be born the gold we hope for from these shores¹?”

Space becomes web, becomes almost fibre; a territory sketches itself beyond established maps, beyond expected themes. If not spatially, we must seek the clues scattered on site, an ancient object here, a representation of a plant, a shell, a pigment... A trans-historic and transcultural cosmogony is constituted as we explore these rooms. The artefacts and ecofacts are there to show us not the possible paths, but the very inextricabilities that we all, citizens of Europe, harbour within ourselves. *The Mediterranean Project* of Jimmie Durham and Maria Thereza Alves engages the social transversality of these objects. When the artists choose archaeological remnants, they do not read them simply as antiquities inscribed in an age of iron or bronze, but work to bring out the multiple dimensions of their use.

Thus, beads or cylindrical seals from Mesopotamia become tools for seeing hand, writing, power – confronting us with our own evolution, our own antagonisms of homo sapiens and homo ludens.

The artists seek above all to avoid any attempt at levelling; it is precisely in the layered strata of meaning that the issues of our contemporaneity are to be found.

¹ Yves Bonnefoy, “Moins une mer que des rives” in *Les Poètes de la Méditerranée* (Paris: Poésie / Gallimard Culturesfrance, 2010), 11.

These vestiges are the silent witnesses of this long formation of identities. They are given the last word, like *the memory of the being*².

“The Mediterranean is a great clear figure, which neither politics nor religion has been able to pierce with enough rays. What future, then, for what knew this past, already as much shadow as light³?”

How can there be made a “city” otherwise than in a State? Jimmie Durham and Maria Thereza Alves are also citizens of wandering. They move about in the execution of their task, bearing no weight but that task, belonging to nothing. Their roots are elsewhere, not concentrated in any particular point on a map. They invite us here to touch the reticulated tissue of that *polis* which, ideally, could exist without walls or borders. Fractured knowledge and knowhow are brought together again, brought into cycle and sharing, totalising not the sum but the singular in all its richness and diversity. The encyclopaedic dimension of the exhibition should be questioned not in its verticality, but for the borderless horizontality it offers us, a convergence line for all who desire to and can appropriate culture as the vector of their liberation. A message in a bottle thrown into the sea? The word has the last word. In Greek thought, the “city” – *polis* – is pre-existent to the human being, just as knowledge is contained in the vessel that is the mind, without its diffusion being suspected. For the “learned ignorant” there is no point of attachment, we might think, if not that of the politics that pre-exists being. Socrates deploys this method; Jimmie Durham and Maria Thereza Alves as well. And in these things offered to our observation, the facts gathered contain the effective power of politics, not as message, but as methodology. Socratic and labouring, maieutics operates between things, between these silent and speaking beings of our worlds in crisis.

Sandra Lorenzi, artist.
Researcher, *Mediterranean Project*.

2 Op. cit., 12.

3 Op. cit., 14.

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

MARIA THEREZA ALVES, JIMMIE DURHAM

The Middle Earth

From March 2nd - 27th May 2018

OPENING HOURS

Exhibition open from wednesday to friday, from 2 pm to 6 pm
and on weekends from 1 pm to 7 pm

Free guided visits on Saturday and Sunday at 4 pm and on weekdays by appointment

ACCESS

Bus C3 (stop Institut d'art contemporain)

Bus C9 (stop Ferrandière)

Bus C16 (stop Alsace)

Subway line A (stop République)

Station vélo'v 1 minute away on foot

The IAC is located approximately 10 minutes from the Part-Dieu train station

PRICE

• Full price : 6€ • Concession : 4€ • free access : -18 years old • Pass IAC 2018 : 15€

BOOKSHOP

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Fridays, March 23rd and April 27th 2018 at 1 pm : *Visite sur le pouce*, quick visit and luncheon on site

Saturdays , March 31th and May 19th 2018 : *Visite Posture(s) à l'œuvre*

Saturday, May 19th : Late opening until 10 pm

Sundays, April 8th and May, 13th 2018 : *Family Sunday*, Family visit followed by a nice afternoon snack!

The Institut d'art contemporain is assisted by the Ministère de la culture et de la communication (DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes), the Conseil régional Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and the Ville de Villeurbanne

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