



# ROSÂNGELA RENNÓ

## GOOD APPLES | BAD APPLES

OPENING 14 MAY 10 PM

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### Archive and Entropy

The relationship between photography and the perception of history has always been at the heart of Rosângela Rennó's artistic inclinations and reflections. Her interest on mnemonic processes, and especially on the notion of archive (as a system of discursive accumulation and regulation), focusing also on the possible conceptual, moral and aesthetical articulations between history, art, and politics, allow us to place her work in the context of artistic tendencies that reclaim a critical and analytical stance towards our present times, calling for memory within contemporaneity and for an understanding of our times in the context of history.

This exhibition is coherent with this set of concerns, which are now explored under the light of recent phenomena, namely the technological and sociocultural transformations that seem to be bringing significant changes to the way we are accustomed to perceive the passage of history through photographic images. One of the first reasons for this reflexive and self-critical moment comes from the fact that, since the late 20th century, photography went through an inexorable process of technological transformation as an entire system of techniques, methods and equipment of photographic production was progressively replaced by another superstructure of modes and devices (electronically or digitally based, as it is usually said) that have overwhelmingly changed and expanded the possibilities to capture, edit and disseminate images.

Among the works in the show, *A imagem persistente* [The Persistent Image] is a composition of photographs that configures a gaze upon objects, toys, gadgets and images that refer to a notoriously dated technical and material culture. The artist convokes memorabilia that is reminiscent of the old popular attachment to the paraphernalia of analog photography, symptoms that refer to an archeology of modern photography. We must ask: what remains of this world and of the visual modes that photography has sedimented in the last two centuries? How can we re-think and update the practice of the archive in this new digital and virtual system, in which everything seems fated to algorithmic indexation and placed somewhere in a cloud?

It is important to note that the consequences of this digital (r)evolution are not limited to the changes triggered by a new typology of photographic production. In fact, its effects are even more radical if we consider their impact in a wider societal plane, as they solidify their role in a new communicational paradigm that is characterized by a profusion of fluxes and sharing of visual signs and data. Like in no other time, we live surrounded by images, even if we are blind to most of them, simply because the attention we give them is more and more erratic and short-lived. Hence our questioning of the value of the singular image in a

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moment in which it appears to be a minimum element, doomed to irrelevance amidst a superabundant and unstoppable network of imaginary merchandise.

Today, we use photo cameras to take pictures (which, symptomatically, allow us to capture and edit photographs and films), but even more often, we use smartphones. Everything (images, words, objects, places...) seems to be destined to cybernetic transcoding. It is a system whose organization follows the primacy of ubiquity, procedural ease, connectivity, extreme fluidity and circulation. What should one say, when according to recent data 1.8 billion images are uploaded every day, which means that 657 billion images will be uploaded in the current year, a scenario that completely surpasses Jean Baudrillard's best (or worst) estimates in the early-1980s, when he wrote his seminal book, *Simulacra and Simulation*.

The largest piece in the show is *Good Apples | Bad Apples* [proposal for a document-monument], an installation that comprises approximately 700 images, mostly taken from the Internet. The images represent sculptural monuments dedicated to Lenin (in several countries) that were destroyed after the breakup of the Soviet Union, as well as some that persist, although many of them have been moved to less relevant places. The artist also includes historical photographs that show the sculptures in their original locations.

On each one of these images, handwritten signs add more information. Authors and publishers are written on the frames. The color choice for each frame is coded according to the physical state of the monument: red frames for the photos with the complete monument in their original place; black frames for the images that suffered iconoclastic interventions; white frames for the pictures representing displaced monuments or monuments which were somehow re-signified. The photographs are organized alphabetically according to city names (from A to Z or from Z to A, depending on the visitor's perspective), and are spread horizontally in the exhibition space. Finally, the images are stamped with red, black and white apple figures. Ambiguous markings that entangle the spectator in a speculative evaluation of the historical figure of Lenin, between myth and infamy – or, according the popular idiom, between “good” and “bad” apples.

From monument to anti-monument, Lenin's image is subjected to the confrontation between idolatry and iconoclasm. The choice is far from being an accident. It is inevitable to see this installation as a reaction to the political, institutional and social crisis Brazil is going through right now, with the historical process of Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, which lead to the election of Jair Bolsonaro. In summoning the figure of Lenin, the artist seems to raise the question: What happened to the left? What remains of its legacy? A sculpture with two right flip-flops, dated from 2019, seems to point toward an empty, pessimistic and desolate answer.

The artist associates the entropy of the image with the entropy of political discourse. We live in a technological, communicational and cultural environment that exacerbates the erosion of meaning – be it the meaning of images, words or ideologies. Framed as such, the artist attempts to reaffirm one of the most demanding functions of the contemporary visual artist: to collate, to (re)position and to (re)edit images, to change their meaning and status, assuming a compromise between the creative, the archivist, the editor, the historian and the critic of images; someone who understands that their work is truly a medium between practice and theory, art and social reality, between the genealogies of art and the contemporary cybernetic media culture.

**ROSÂNGELA RENNÓ** (Belo Horizonte, 1962) lives and works in Rio de Janeiro.

She studied Plastic Arts at the Escola Guignard and Architecture at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. She holds a PhD in Arts, granted by the USP. Her work is based on the appropriation of found images, from flea markets and other places, and on her research on the relationship between memory and forgetfulness. In her photos, objects, videos or installations, she works with family albums and images collected in public or private archives. She also creates artist's books.

**Solo Exhibitions** (Selection):

Appel Foundation (Amsterdam, 1995); Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, 1996); Australian Centre for Photography (Sydney, 1999); Instituto Tomie Ohtake (São Paulo, 2001); Museu de Arte da Pampulha (Belo Horizonte, 2002); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 2003); Museu de Arte Moderna Aloisio Magalhães (Recife, 2006); Prefix Institute Contemporary Art (Toronto, 2008); Pharos Centre for Contemporary Art (Nicosia, 2009); Bazar Mitre, Centro de Fotografia (Montevideo, 2011); Centro de Arte Moderna CAM - Fundação Gulbenkian (Lisbon, 2012); FotoMuseum (Winterthur, 2012); Soirée Nomade, Fondation Cartier (Paris, 2014); Centro Atlântico de Arte Moderno CAAM (Las Palmas, 2014); Photographers' Gallery (London, 2016); Oi Futuro (Rio de Janeiro, 2016); #rioutópico [em construção] (IMS, 2017).

**Group Exhibitions** (Selection):

Aperto93, 45th Venice International Biennial (1993); Insite97 (San Diego and Tijuana, 1997); Johannesburg Biennial (1997); 2nd Berlin Biennale (2001); Brazilian Pavilion, 50th Venice International Biennial (2003); Histoires des Amériques, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal (2004); Panorama da Arte Brasileira, Museu de Arte Moderna (São Paulo, 2005); Phantasmagoria, Specters of Absence, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Bogotá, 2007); 1st New Orleans Biennial, (New Orleans, 2008); ArtesMundi 3, Museum of Art of Wales (Cardiff, 2008); Óscar Muñoz y Rosângela Rennó. Crónicas de la Ausencia, Museo Rufino Tamayo (Mexico City, 2009); Elle@centrepompidou - Artistes femmes dans les collections du Musée National d'Art Moderne (Paris, 2010); 22nd and 29th São Paulo Biennial (1994 and 2010); Magical Consciousness, Arnolfini (Bristol, 2011), A sense of Perspective, Tate Liverpool (2011); 12nd Istanbul Biennial (2011); BES-Photo Award 2012, Museu Berardo (Lisbon, 2012); Intense Proximity - La Triennale de Paris, Palais de Tokio (Paris, 2012); América Latina 1960-2013, Fondation Cartier (Paris, 2014); Paris Photo-Aperture Foundation Photobook Awards Short List Exhibition, Aperture Foundation (New York, 2014); Cruzamentos: Contemporary Art in Brazil, Wexner Center for the Arts (Ohio, 2014); Fundación Proa (Buenos Aires, 2015); The Centre Pompidou (Paris, 2015); Autophoto, Fondation Cartier (Paris, 2017); Confusing Public and Private, The 3rd Beijing Photo Biennial, CAFA Art Museum, (Beijing, 2018); 23rd Photobiennale Festival, Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, (Greece, 2018).

**Recent Awards:** CIFO Grants & Commissions (2014), Paris Photo - Aperture Foundation Photobook award - Photobook of the year (2013); ALICE Awards – Arte Política (2012).

**Recent books:** #RioUtópico [em construção]: São Paulo, 2018; Espírito de Tudo, Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2017; Rio-Montevideo, Montevideo: Centro de Fotografia, 2015; Todo aquello que no está en las imágenes, Las Palmas: CAAM, 2014.