

A black and white photograph of a forest. Several tree trunks are visible, with heavy metal chains wrapped around them in a crisscross pattern. The chains are dark and appear to be made of thick links. The background is filled with more trees and foliage, creating a dense, somewhat somber atmosphere. The lighting is natural, highlighting the textures of the bark and the metallic sheen of the chains.

EXHIBITION GUIDE

GB

LES IMMÉMORIALES

02 MARCH
23 JUNE
13

AGNES DENES
MONIKA GRZYMAŁA
CECILIA VICUÑA

YOUR VISIT

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“We are now pushing the earth to a very dangerous unsustainability, so it is time for us to hear the ancient voices in a new way.”

Cecilia Vicuña

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Environmental movements, which emerged in the 1960s in response to the excesses of the consumer society and sprawling industrialization, have fundamentally transformed our relation to the world. They have managed to imprint in our consciousness the idea that human beings are responsible for the general degradation of the planet: the depletion of natural resources, the drying up of water supplies, exploitation of ancestral lands, disappearance of indigenous populations... Millennial oral traditions are becoming extinct, and, along with them, entire segments of human culture and history pass into oblivion.

To refuse oblivion and disappearance in order to reinvent being-in-the-world based on equality, respect, and freedom: this desire captures well the ambition of **Agnes Denes, Monika Grzymala, and Cecilia Vicuña**. These three artists share an ethical and aesthetical consciousness which guides their approach to the world and to others. Their art is the ephemeral, the passage, and the transmission, inhabited by the living memory of indigenous peoples.

AGNES DENES *Born in 1931 in Budapest (HU). Lives and works in New York (US)*

Rice/Tree/Burial, 1977/2012

39 b&w photographs, diagram and text.

49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine Collection

Manifesto, 1969

A pioneer of environmental art, Agnes Denes made her first “eco-logical” intervention, *Rice/Tree/Burial*, in 1968 in the state of New York. The intervention consisted in three actions which embodied an “allegory of a life cycle.” The plantation of a rice paddy illustrated the beginning of life; the chaining of trees in a sacred forest, formerly an Indian burial ground, represented a link between the natural elements and life and the influence of the former on the latter; the burying of a haiku by the artist signified a communion between human consciousness and the earth, as well as symbolized the return to the place where everything had started.

In 1977, Denes recreated the ritual over the Niagara Falls. This time, she buried a time capsule (meant to be opened in 2979) containing a letter addressed to “Homo Futurus” and a questionnaire on human values, accompanied with several responses. In addition, she enhanced her performance with a film shot from a ledge by the famous falls and meant to immortalize this moment of fusion with nature.

Agnes Denes’s actions have paved the way for thinking and constructing the future man. Awakened toward, conscious and respectful of all forms of life, the future man must “striving to surpass human limitations by searching the mysteries and probing the silent universe, alive with hidden creativity” (*Manifesto*, 1969)*.

→ www.agnesdenesstudio.com

* This Manifesto is available in its entirety on the wall in the documentation space.

CECILIA VICUÑA *Born in 1948 in Santiago de Chile (CL). Lives and works in New York (US)*

The engaged poet and artist Cecilia Vicuña has been creating ephemeral installations that summon the spirits of the first inhabitants of the Andes. In 1966, she created her first *PrecaRIOS*—small, fragile sculptures made up of objects and debris found in nature (feathers, twigs, etc.) which she treats as visual poems. Starting in the 1970s, she oriented her work towards the symbolism of weaving—an ancestral, ritual practice among the Andean people, in which contraries meet and unite. In her performances as in her poems, the line and the thread become essential motifs in the evocation of invisible connections governing the universe.

Parti si Pasión, New York, 1981

4 Photographs. 49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine Collection

Cecilia Vicuña's *Parti Sí Pasión*, which can be translated as "Share-Yes-Passion"—the result of a phonetic dissection of the word "participation"—was written in the street, in the shadow of the World Trade Center, in Manhattan. Vicuña's practice of deconstruction of language has produced a body of works she calls *palabrærmas*, which can be translated as "armswords," a portmanteau word containing "armas" (arms, weapons) and "palabras" (words). Vicuña thus confronts Manhattan, the stronghold of capitalism and dehumanized production, with the romantic force of her prayer that human beings share in Passion—that is, love and suffering.

Vaso de leche, Bogotá, 1979

3 Photographs. 49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine Collection

A metaphor of life and growth, milk is today processed, modified by chemical substances, and sometimes even contaminated. That is what happened in Colombia in the 1970s, causing the death of many children in the capital Bogotá. In order to denounce the scandal, the artist made a public performance in which she spilled, using a red thread, a glass of milk on the road. A metaphor for the crime itself, this act akin to a ritual embodied an ephemeral and symbolically charged memorial.

¿Qué Es Para Ud. la Poesía?, 1980

Video colour, sound, duration: 23'. 49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine Collection

In 1980, Cecilia Vicuña paced up and down the streets of Bogotá, camera in hand, and asked its residents (prostitutes, workers, and traders) the question: "What is poetry to you?" This was an existential question, which put the human touch back into the urban landscape rife with violence and poverty.

Quipu Austral, 2012/2013

Installation, unspun wool, sound

Cecilia Vicuña's *Quipus* give form to the Andean people's systems of "writing" which were banned by the Spanish conquerors. The installation is accompanied by the sound of the artist's voice which addresses, as shamans do, the earth and the streams.

Quipu Austral is a poem set in space, an ode to the ancient peoples and to water, so precious in the time of climate change and pollution. The colours of *Quipu Austral* (created for the first time in Sydney in 2012) are inspired by the Aboriginal palette relying on the warm hues of the Australian soil. To the artist, everything is encounter, exchange, and connection. The lines of her *Quipu*, symbols of a vital connection with the Earth, are intermixed with the Aboriginal dream tracks, the Songlines,* blending the arts of the Southern hemisphere.

→ www.ceciliavicuna.org

* In the Aboriginal cosmology, Songlines criss-cross the Australian continent. According to the myth of Dreaming, these paths were traced by the Ancestors when they traveled across the country at the dawn of creation. They brought forth the world by singing the names of everything they encountered in their path: birds, animals, plants, rocks, water holes. For the Aborigines, the entire Australian land may thus be read as a musical score, without any borders. These Songlines are always alive and transmitted from generation to generation.

MONIKA GRZYMALA *Born in 1970 in Zabrze (PL). Lives and works in Berlin (DE)*
& EURABA ARTISTS AND PAPERMAKERS

The River II, 2012/2013

Site specific installation. Handmade cotton rag paper, monofilament, paper coated aluminum wire

The German artist of Polish origin creates site-specific “architectural interventions” which arise from mental and physical lines and simple, fragile materials (handmade paper, tape, lead tape...). She created *The River* for the first time in 2012 in collaboration with Euraba Papermakers, an art collective of Australian Aboriginal women manufacturing artisanal paper using offcuts from the cotton industry established on their ancestral grounds.

Water, indispensable in the manufacture of paper, is at the heart of the Goomeroi culture. *The River II* floods the space of the exhibition with thousands of suspended white paper leaves—a river of tears evoking the lost spirits.

→ www.t-r-a-n-s-i-t.net

→ www.eurabapaper.com.au



