



FUGA

Some homes of artists, designers, and architects of the 20th century have been turned into spaces that the public can visit. They hold a tension between preserving the historical in a frozen state and suggesting the movements of the daily life once lived there. *Fuga* explores how the experience of such spaces can be translated into an exhibition and how the inconsistent, yet characteristic, actions that arrange the everyday objects can become visible to a viewer. Thus, to evoke the liveliness of these spaces, the objects in this exhibition need to be in motion.

The title “fuga” refers to the Spanish term for a musical fugue, in which successively entering voices repeat or imitate the leading themes contrapuntally. These voices continuously chase, overlap, and flee from each other. The works in this exhibition follow two themes. The first comprises historical avant-gardist pieces: namely, early modernist toys by artist Joaquín Torres-García, and melodies by composer Carmen Barradas from 1922. The second theme is that of a contemporary novel, specifically a book within a book by artist Gabriel Sierra. Two commissions in turn form counterpoints to these leading themes: the artist group Proyecto Deatres responds to the toys, the compositions, and the novel’s tale, and the designers Manuel Raeder and Rodolfo Samperio provide furniture pieces and a graphic design that frame the arrangements of the works on view.

The exhibition *Fuga* does not replicate any specific artist's or designer's home. Rather, it suggests the moment of encountering such a space. These homes exist as arrangements of objects that grow piece by piece over time. The objects within them are used daily according to function and personal affection. With these movements, the arrangements change, and one's attention to them also varies day by day. The objects themselves fulfill a designated function, yet, at the same time, they transcend it within the space: the bench is there to sit down on, to be looked at, but also to help tell a story; the toys are educational tools, but also abstract shapes and figurines.

If pieces from these arrangements were willfully dislocated, their ambiguous appearance would vanish, and they would quickly be reduced to a single function. They would become either a practical bench or an art object with some meaning. The modern gallery is a space laid out for objects to be looked at and interpreted by a visitor. It carries the risk of flattening pieces that stem out of a lively environment. In this exhibition, the toys, the compositions, and the tale point to the larger body of the artists' work. The commissions of the interpretations and the furniture serve to keep them in motion in the gallery and play with its staging character. The objects on view are actors on this stage, and they take on multiple roles: as interpreters, protagonists, and support structures to one another.

Roma Cortina,
Lucas Scandinavia



The artist Gabriel Sierra is currently writing a novel that engages with the histories of craftsmanship, architecture, and art-making in places as diverse as Mexico City, Stockholm, San Francisco, Kyoto, and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia. Within Sierra's novel, one of the characters, Roma Cortina, writes a story about a mole and his many homes in the late 1960s. This mole experiences difficulties in orienting himself in time, living as if in a dream where the boundary between reality and memory has collapsed. To hold onto the space around him, the mole builds seven houses, one for each day of the week. Cortina's story is written in the form of a tale altering reality. Through its language, it functions like a mirror that changes the perceptions of those who gaze upon it.

While Sierra's novel remains unpublished, the artist has already published Roma Cortina's tale in Spanish, under the title *El Topo y la Tetera*, with illustrations attributed to Lucas Scandinavia—another character in Sierra's novel. The exhibited works on paper by Scandinavia are copies of natural phenomena, like light, wind, cold, or warmth, that one can feel but cannot grasp. After an instant, they are lost again.

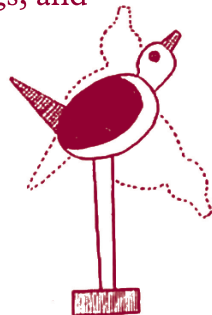
The book *El Topo y la Tetera* can be purchased at the bookstore of the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, throughout the exhibition period.

Joaquín Torres-García



From 1907 to 1914, the Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García worked as a kindergarten teacher in the progressive school Mont D’Or in Barcelona. The institution’s pedagogical approach was influenced by education reformists such as Maria Montessori and Friedrich Fröbel. Until 1932, Torres-García designed and sold toys that took up these progressive educational strategies, such as combining abstract forms and emphasizing haptic experience. Torres-García’s wooden objects consisted of interchangeable parts that could be disassembled and put back together again. The aim of each object was not to have their users mimic an image of reality, but rather to encourage them to observe their surroundings and dissect the components of reality. In combining abstract forms and imagining them as a figure, those playing with the “transformable toys” would establish links between their inner world and the external one.

The drawing on view, *The Best American Toys* (c. 1922), is a draft for an advertisement of Torres-García’s manufacturing company in New York, where he lived from 1920 to 1922. The transformable toys are an important link to understanding Torres-García’s multifold artistic practice, which was never confined to one medium nor to a single sphere of production. In the spirit of the avant-garde, his practice incorporated aspects of educators’ and craftsmen’s labor, and the toys equally informed his famous sculptures, drawings, and paintings.



Carmen Barradas



In the space of *Fuga*, a woman is humming a melody composed by Carmen Barradas. As a child, Barradas loved the buzz of the sawmills near her home in Montevideo. When living in Spain in 1922, she composed a triptych inspired by the sonic world of machines, titled *Fabricación*, *Aserradero*, and *Fundición* (Fabrication, Sawmill, and Foundry). In performances of these pieces, Barradas would attach bells to her wrists and insert small objects into the piano to modify the instrument’s timbre. These experiments with polytonal systems were informed by her involvement with the avant-gardist Vibrationists group, who, according to the scientific theories of their time, considered both light and sound as vibratory phenomena and sought to capture these movements of air. Accordingly, Barradas described her early compositions as “sound and nothing more than sound.”

The notations of *Fabricación* presented in this exhibition were not only a means to record the composition and share it for future performances—they also function as graphic pieces on their own terms. By using unconventional symbols and formal elements as notation marks, Barradas made space for improvisation and chance in the interpretation of her work.

Proyecto Deatres



Joaquín Torres-García’s formal language has been widely taken up in Argentina and Uruguay. Within the curatorial framework of *Fuga*, the collective Proyecto Deatres was invited to consider Torres-García’s legacy from a contemporary perspective. It seemed equally important to investigate the musical experiments of Carmen Barradas, who frequented the same circles as Torres-García in Montevideo, and to connect them loosely to the tale of Roma Cortina.

The members of Proyecto Deatres are educators, artists, and performers who regularly organize interventions in public and domestic spaces around their hometown of Santa Fe, Argentina. They take place as collaborations between the artists and members of the community the work is being presented in. The group describes these events as interferences of a sense of neighborhood to spaces that are conventionally reserved for art, as well as those that are not. One time they flew self-built kites, another time they initiated a local plant exchange, and yet another time they staged performances on the sidewalk and produced exhibitions for their local museum.

For *Fuga*, Proyecto Deatres built figures after the “transformable toys” of Torres-García. They sourced readily available material and drew on imagery of local fauna living around the rivers that surround their town. They also interpreted Barradas’s abstract musical notations, learning the melodies by heart until they could hum them casually in the everyday. In the recording for this exhibition, they have emphasized the rhythmic quality of their humming, which eventually turns into a reading of Cortina’s story about the mole and his seven houses.

Project
(Studio Manuel Raeder and Rodolfo Samperio)

The furniture in this space seems peculiar. Its dimensions are off, and its organic shapes are hard to place. Overall, the pieces are more like surfaces and less like objects. They are not part of a museum's regular furniture inventory, nor do they require the usual distance between a viewer and an artwork. Together with his collaborator Rodolfo Samperio, Manuel Raeder designed these pieces for *Fuga* to function as seating and display structures in one. Raeder and Samperio carry out interdisciplinary work that exists between graphic design, furniture, textiles, and exhibitions. Their furniture designs are often modular and multipurposed, fulfilling their expected function while wittily altering it.

For *Fuga*, their work points to the gallery's purpose as a staging ground of sorts, in which the visitor's gaze is usually guided toward the displayed objects. In this gallery, you move between the large objects and your gaze touches upon their surfaces. Studio Manuel Raeder also did the graphic design for this exhibition. Between the texts runs a zigzag line, which, in Barradas's compositions, indicates an elevated movement. I like to imagine that the drawing of the line extends to encircle the space here. You can sit down and listen to it or go through to the next gallery.

List of Works

Carmen Barradas, *Fabricación*, 1922
Reproduction of musical score, 11.7 × 8.3 inches
Courtesy of Archivo Néffer Kröger, Montevideo

Proyecto Deatres, *Bestiario del Litoral*, 2023
Wood and clay, 22 pieces, each approx. 6 × 1.5 inches
Courtesy of the artists

Proyecto Deatres, *Partituras para una Fuga*, 2023
Audio, 9 minutes
Courtesy of the artists

Probject (Studio Manuel Raeder and Rodolfo Samperio) were commissioned to design the exhibition furniture for *Fuga* and contributed six wooden pieces. They can be assembled through their interlocking parts and do not require the use of glue or screws.

Lucas Scandinavia, *Untitled*, 1968
Paint on paper, 23 pages, each 13.8 × 9.8 inches
Courtesy of Gabriel Sierra and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City and New York

Gabriel Sierra, *El Topo y la Tetera*
(Mexico City and Brussels: Zolo Press, 2019)
Text by Roma Cortina, illustrations by Lucas Scandinavia
This book can be purchased at the bookstore of the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, throughout the exhibition period.

This exhibition features a wall drawing from Joaquín Torres-García's illustration *The Best American Toys* (c. 1922). It was published in Carlos Pérez, ed., *Aladdin Toys: Los juguetes de Torres-García* (Valencia: IVAM Centro Julio González, 1997), 130.

April 1–May 28, 2023

Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

Fuga is curated by Ursula Pokorny as part of the requirements of the master of arts degree at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College.

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Graphic design by Studio Manuel Raeder.

Images contributed by Gabriel Sierra on page 6 and by Vicente De Stefano on page 10.

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Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies,
Bard College, New York



**CARMEN BARRADAS, ROMA
CORTINA, PROYECTO DEATRES
(CRISTI AIMARETTI, RAQUEL
MINETTI, MAGALÍ MOYANO, MARÍA
PAULA OLIVIERI, PEDRO SOSA,
VICENTE DE STEFANO), PROBJECT
(STUDIO MANUEL RAEDER,
RODOLFO SAMPERIO), LUCAS
SCANDINAVIA, GABRIEL SIERRA,
AND JOAQUÍN TORRES-GARCÍA**

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