BAMPFA Mounts First Major US Solo Exhibition of Cecilia Vicuña

On View July 11–October 14, 2018

*Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen* Showcases Four Decades of Vicuña's Art, Poetry, Videos, and Performance

"Berkeley, CA" May 17, 2018—The first major US solo exhibition of works by Cecilia Vicuña opens this summer at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), featuring four decades of work by the internationally acclaimed artist, poet, and filmmaker. Opening at BAMPFA on July 11, *Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen* marks the nationally touring exhibition’s West Coast premiere, which includes readings and a live performance by the Chilean-born artist as well as new site-specific installations created specifically for the BAMPFA presentation.

Organized by the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans (CAC), *Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen* captures the breadth of Vicuña’s multidisciplinary practice, which encompasses performance, sculpture, drawing, video, text, and land art. Invoking the overlapping discourses of Conceptual art, poetry, and feminism, Vicuña’s body of work resists categorical distinctions, operating fluidly between concept and craft. Much of her work incorporates discarded materials as well as indigenous art-making practices, often incorporating themes of displacement, economic disparity, and climate change.

For her exhibition at BAMPFA, Vicuña is installing more than one hundred of her signature *precarios*: miniature sculptures precisely assembled from found materials and displayed together in lyrical juxtaposition. The *precario* series at BAMPFA includes a selection of works created between 1966 and 2017, installed on the gallery walls and floor in a display that emphasizes the ephemerality and...
“precariousness” of these delicate objects. In an evocative contrast of scale, the exhibition also includes a massive sculpture that Vicuña created out of scavenged materials from the ever-diminishing Louisiana coast—created during her residency at the CAC earlier this year—as well as large-scale textile installations designed for the BAMPFA space.

In addition to her studio practice, Vicuña has also published more than twenty collections of poetry. Excerpts from her poems are printed on the walls of the gallery, alongside book art installations of Vicuña’s poetry in English translation. Vicuna appears at BAMPFA on Sunday, July 8 at 3 p.m. to read from her newest collection *New and Selected Poems of Cecilia Vicuña*, published by Kelsey Street Press in Berkeley.

Complementing Vicuña’s work in the galleries is a rotating series of six experimental films created between 2012 and 2015, which screen continuously in BAMPFA’s Theater 2 throughout the exhibition. Often portraying Vicuña scavenging creative materials from natural surroundings, the films provide deeper insight into the artist’s deep connection to the landscapes she works in—a theme that resonates throughout her multidisciplinary practice.

On Wednesday, July 11 at 7:30 p.m., Vicuña inaugurates the exhibition with a performance that incorporates poetry, music, and audience interaction, inviting visitors to expand their perceptual faculties as they enter the exhibition for the first time. The artist is joined in conversation immediately after the performance with the exhibition’s cocurators, Andrea Andersson, Helis Foundation Chief Curator of Visual Arts at the CAC; and Julia Bryan-Wilson, professor of modern and contemporary art at UC Berkeley. The cocurators also present a curators’ talk at 6 p.m. prior to the performance.

“In every aspect of her kaleidoscopic practice, Cecilia Vicuña exemplifies the type of creative spirit we celebrate at BAMPFA—inclusive, socially engaged, and ambitious about the possibilities of artistic expression,” said BAMPFA Director and Chief Curator Lawrence Rinder. “We’re thrilled to welcome her back to BAMPFA in person to kick off the West Coast premiere of her first US survey.”

“As the first US museum to present Cecilia Vicuña’s work with her focused MATRIX presentation in 1992, BAMPFA is proud to renew and deepen audiences’ awareness and appreciation of this singular artist with this unprecedented survey,” said Apsara DiQuinzio, curator of modern and contemporary art and Phyllis C. Wattis MATRIX Curator, who organized the exhibition’s presentation at BAMPFA. “Cecilia’s formally innovative,
restlessly creative practice encourages viewers to consider our shared relationship to the planet, and to the economic and environmental disparities of the twenty-first century.”

Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen is accompanied by a catalog published by SIGLIO that contains original scholarship on the artist’s practice by the exhibition’s cocurators, as well as art scholars Lucy Lippard and Macarena Gomez-Barris. The catalog is available to purchase in the BAMPFA Store.

About the artist
Born and raised in Santiago de Chile, Cecilia Vicuña left in exile in the early 1970s, after the military coup against elected president Salvador Allende. A poet, visual artist, and filmmaker, she exhibits and performs internationally and is the author of more than twenty books of poetry. Vicuña also cofounded oysi.org, a site for the oral cultures and poetries of the world. Her work is included in the collections of the Tate Gallery (London), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Chile (Santiago de Chile), the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), and the Museum of Modern Art (New York). She divides her time between Chile and New York and is represented by England & Co Gallery in London. Her work was presented in Documenta 14 (Kassel, Germany and Athens, Greece) in 2017.

Support
Cecilia Vicuña: About to Happen is organized by the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans (CAC), and cocurated by Andrea Andersson, The Helis Foundation Chief Curator of Visual Arts at the CAC, and Julia Bryan-Wilson, professor of modern and contemporary art at UC Berkeley. The BAMPFA presentation is organized by Apsara DiQuinzio, curator of modern and contemporary art and Phyllis C. Wattis MATRIX Curator, with Valerie Moon, curatorial assistant.

Above


Visitor Information
Address
2155 Center Street, Berkeley, CA 94720
Hours
Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

$13 general admission
$11 non-UC Berkeley students, disabled, 65+
FREE BAMPFA members; UC Berkeley students, faculty, staff; 18 & under; one adult per child 13 & under

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About BAMPFA
An internationally recognized arts institution with deep roots in the Bay Area, the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA) is a forum for cultural experiences that transform individuals and advance the local, national, and global discourse on art and film. BAMPFA is UC Berkeley’s premier visual arts venue, presenting more than 450 film screenings, scores of public programs, and up to twenty exhibitions annually. With its vibrant and eclectic programming, BAMPFA inspires the imagination and ignites critical dialogue through art, film, and other forms of creative expression.

The institution’s collection of more than 19,000 works of art dates from 3000 BCE to the present day and includes important holdings of Neolithic Chinese ceramics, Ming and Qing Dynasty Chinese painting, Old Master works on paper, Italian Baroque painting, early American painting, Abstract Expressionist painting, contemporary photography, and Conceptual art. BAMPFA’s collection also includes more than 17,500 films and videos, including the largest collection of Japanese cinema outside of Japan, impressive holdings of Soviet cinema, West Coast avant-garde film, and seminal video art, as well as hundreds of thousands of articles, reviews, posters, and other ephemera related to the history of film.