



Jac Leirner May 10 – August 27, 2023

Swiss Institute presents the first major institutional solo exhibition in New York of Brazilian artist Jac Leirner (b. 1961, São Paulo). The exhibition encapsulates a wide chronological span of the artist's experience, with works ranging from the 1980s to today.

In stacks, piles and layers, Leirner's selective accumulation of everyday objects follows an accretive logic. Leirner's process, at once controlled and compulsive, leads to partially obscuring the very nature of the materials she gathers as they mutate to the sculptural. The paradoxical performance of erasure through accrual echoes the disappearance of Leirner's objects of choice over the years: plastic bags, cigarettes, banknotes and business cards, once ubiquitous and seemingly irreplaceable, are increasingly pushed out of circulation.

Anchoring the ground floor gallery at SI is Leirner's *Blue Phase* (1992), a looped sculpture made of cruzeiro banknotes, whose stacked form conceals the former identity and function of the now-worthless currency. References to minimalism are also found in several wall-based sculptures throughout the gallery, where collections of everyday objects, including notebook spirals, bubble levels, pencils from art institutions and nail files, among other materials, are methodically turned into lines and rows.

The vault gallery brings together a key piece from Leirner's *Lung* series (1987) and the newly produced *July 4th* (2023). While the new work consists of a mound of antiqued faux parchment replicas of the original, handwritten United States Declaration of Independence, *Pulmão/Lung (Vegetal/Mineral)* is a pile of hundreds of aluminum-lined papers, painstakingly extracted from cigarette packets. The conflating of histories, from the personal to the political, the diaristic to the systemic, points to the artist's interest in the materials that underpin daily social interactions.

Crossing the building, *Straight with Rounds* (2023) brings together a large selection of objects that Leirner chose by virtue of their circularity, lightness and modest size. Like disparate beads on a stretched, seemingly endless tension cable, taken away from their context of use and extracted from what the artist describes as "the infinity of materials," the wheels and rings invite wonder and examination, as if seen for the first time.

The second-floor gallery features *Village Inside I* and *II* (2023), made of printed matter culled from across the East Village. Covering two canvases, the myriad leaflets, menus, napkins, matchboxes and more offer a painterly rendition of the storied neighborhood's vibrant daily life. Its raucous quality resonates in *Hardcore Drummer (Talco) I* (2023), a new piece made from broken drumsticks once used in São Paulo's 1980's punk scene. These objects echo examples of the artist's early geometric experiments in two watercolors displayed side by side in the same space.

Tethered between an essential urge to amass and incidental forms of serendipity, Leirner's commitment over more than 40 years to gathering materials, objects and products composes "an idealist lexicon of signs wherein the will to live itself is discernible in an ever-receding materiality," as Baudrillard wrote of objects of consumption.¹ Her continued formal tribute to expendable materials elevates the ephemeral to the biographical, the collective and the sublime.

¹ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996), 203.

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This exhibition is organized by Simon Castets, former SI Director, and Alison Coplan, Senior Curator and Head of Programs.

About Jac Leirner

Jac Leirner was born in 1961 in São Paulo, where she lives and works. In 1984, she received her BFA in Fine Arts from the Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado, in São Paulo. Selected solo exhibitions include: *2019 Wolfgang Hahn Prize*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2019); *Jac Leirner: Add It Up*, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2017); *Institutional Ghost*, IMMA Dublin (2017); *Borders are Drawn by Hand*, MoCa Pavilion, Shanghai (2016); *Jac Leirner. Functions of a variable*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2014); *Jac Leirner: Pesos y Medidas*, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (2014); *Jac Leirner, Hardware Silk*, Edgewood Avenue Gallery, Yale University School of Art, New Haven (2011); *Jac Leirner, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo (2011); *Adhesive 44*, Miami Art Museum, Miami (2004); *Projeto Parede*, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, São Paulo (1999); *Directions*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. (1992); *Jac Leirner*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1991), *Currents*, ICA, Boston, (1991), *Viewpoints*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1991), and *Hip-Hop*, Bothen Foundation, New York (1998). She has been awarded numerous grants and residencies, among them: 2012 APCA Award: Best Exhibition of the Year - Estação Pinacoteca, São Paulo; 2012 artist in residence at the Yale University School of Art; 2001 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship; 1998 visiting artist at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam; 1991 visiting artist at the University College, Oxford; 1991 visiting artist at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Arts, University of Oxford; 1991 artist in residency at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, and the 1991 artist in residency at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, Swiss Institute (SI) is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions, education, and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new perspectives on celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. SI is committed to being an organization that is diverse, equitable, and accessible in its work, structure, and programming. Open to the public free-of-charge, Swiss Institute seeks to explore how a Swiss context can be the starting point for international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design, and architecture.

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