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Claudia Andujar: The Yanomami Struggle

The Curve / The Pit / Barbican Foyers

Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS, UK

Thursday 17 June – Sunday 29 August 2021

Media View: Wednesday 16 June 2021

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Claudia Andujar, Susi Korihana thëri swimming, Catrimani, 1972-1974. Infrared film. © Claudia Andujar

Barbican Art Gallery presents ***Claudia Andujar: The Yanomami Struggle*** – an exhibition dedicated to the work and activism of Brazilian artist **Claudia Andujar**. For over five decades starting in the 1970s, she devoted her life to photographing and defending the Yanomami, one of Brazil's largest indigenous peoples. At a time when their territory is threatened more than ever by illegal gold mining, and as Covid-19 continues to sweep the globe, this major exhibition is especially relevant in the context of the humanitarian and environmental crises exacerbated by the pandemic.

Claudia Andujar: The Yanomami Struggle is curated by **Thyago Nogueira**, Head of Contemporary Photography at the Instituto Moreira Salles in Brazil. Based on years of research into Andujar's significant archive, the exhibition explores her extraordinary contribution to the art of photography as well as her major role as a human rights activist defending the Yanomami's rights. Over 200 photographs, an audio-visual installation, a film and a series of drawings by the Yanomami are brought together in The Curve, The Pit and the Barbican's foyers. The exhibition will reflect the dual nature of Andujar's career, committed to both art and activism. Photographs from her first six years living with the Yanomami, showing how she grappled with the challenges of visually interpreting a complex culture, will be featured alongside the work she produced during her period of activism, as she used photography as a tool for political change.

Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican said: *"We are really thrilled to present Claudia Andujar: The Yanomami Struggle at the Barbican this summer. The work of this inspirational artist and activist provides an unparalleled insight into the lives of the Yanomami and shines a light on the violence perpetrated against them through illegal activities, hostile forces and corporate greed. The visceral power of Andujar's photography has never been more relevant, as the climate emergency and the impact of Covid-19 continues to threaten the Yanomami and the Amazon basin."*

Claudia Andujar said: *"I started working with the Yanomami in the 1970s and they quickly became a second family to me. When I saw the threats they were facing, I decided to devote my time to helping them obtain the demarcation of the land they occupied so that it would be*

officially recognized by Brazilian law. After many years of struggle, we succeeded in our efforts. Sadly, their lands have once again been invaded by gold miners and so I hope that my work will continue to raise awareness of the dangers facing the Yanomami."

Thyago Nogueira said: *"Through Claudia Andujar's art, this show tells the story of a collaborative fight that managed to protect the Amazonian Yanomami people from a massacre caused by economic greed in the 80s and 90s in Brazil. I am afraid to say history is repeating itself with Covid-19 moving quickly into Yanomami lands and the failure of the Brazilian government to react. If we don't act, another major humanitarian disaster will take place here."*

Davi Kopenawa, Shaman and Yanomami leader said: *"Claudia came to Brazil and the Yanomami lands, thinking about her project. Though not Yanomami, she is a true friend. She took photographs of childbirth, of women, of children. I did not know how to fight against politicians and non-indigenous people, but she gave me the tools to defend our people, land, language, customs, festivals, dances, chants and shamanism. It is important to me and to you to see the work she did and respect the Yanomami people of Brazil who have lived in this land for many years."*

Fiona Watson, Director of Advocacy and Research, Survival International said: *"Claudia Andujar's iconic photos allow us to enter the rich, diverse and complex world of the Yanomami. Today, they take on a new urgency as a humanitarian catastrophe is rapidly engulfing the Yanomami whose forest, lives and livelihoods are being destroyed by illegal goldminers who are also spreading Covid-19 among their communities. A huge public outcry was fundamental in persuading the Brazilian government to recognise Yanomami land rights in 1992. The exhibition is an urgent call to stand once more with the Yanomami people in their campaign to protect their rainforests and way of life in the face of a mounting threats and genocidal government policies."*

Claudia Andujar first met the Yanomami in 1971 while working on an article about the Amazon. Fascinated by this isolated community, and in receipt of a Guggenheim Fellowship, she decided to embark on an in-depth photographic essay of their daily life with the support of the Italian missionary Carlo Zacquini.

From the beginning, Andujar's approach differed greatly from the documentary style of her contemporaries. The photographs she made during this period show how she experimented with a variety of photographic techniques in an attempt to visually translate the shamanic culture of the Yanomami. Applying Vaseline to the lens of her camera, using flash devices, oil lamps and infrared film, she created visual distortions, streaks of light, and saturated colours. She also developed a series of black and white portraits that capture the grace and dignity of the Yanomami. Focusing closely on faces and fragments of the body, she tightly frames her images, using a dramatic chiaroscuro to create a feeling of intimacy and draw attention to individual psychological states.

By the late 1970s, Andujar had reached a turning point in her career. The construction of a transcontinental highway in the Amazon, initiated by Brazil's military government, opened up the region to deforestation as well as invasive agricultural programmes, bringing epidemics to the Yanomami and leading to the decimation of entire communities. Andujar was reminded of the genocide in Europe, in which her own father and paternal family perished, and this deepened her commitment to the Yanomami struggle.

In 1978 she founded the Pro-Yanomami Commission (CPPY, formerly known as the Commission for the Demarcation of the Yanomami Park), with the Italian missionary Carlo Zacquini, the French anthropologist Bruce Albert and the Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa and began a fourteen-year-long campaign to designate the Yanomami homeland. At this point Andujar put aside the artistic element of her photography to focus on using photography primarily as a means to raise awareness and support her cause.

In the early 1980s, Andujar took a series of black and white portraits of the Yanomami as part of a vaccination campaign. In the portraits, they wear numbered labels to help identify them for

their medical records. The artist was struck by how these labels recalled the numerical tattoos of those “branded for death” during the Holocaust. She later revisited these portraits and created the *Marcados* series, which reveal the ambiguity inherent in this act of labelling even though it was ultimately for their survival.

In 1992, following the campaign led by Claudia Andujar, Carlo Zacquini, Bruce Albert and Davi Kopenawa among many others, supported globally by Survival International, the Brazilian government agreed to legally demarcate Yanomami territory. Recognised on the eve of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, this territory is still threatened by the Brazilian government’s inaction towards the 20,000 illegal miners operating in indigenous land and their tolerance of deforestation.

Claudia Andujar was born in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, in 1931 and grew up in Transylvania. During the Second World War, Claudia’s father, a Hungarian Jew, was deported to Dachau where he was killed along with most of her paternal relatives. Andujar fled with her mother to Switzerland, immigrated first to the United States in 1946, then to Brazil in 1955 where she began a career as a photojournalist, before becoming an activist. She currently lives in São Paulo.

ENDS

Notes to editors

The Hutukara Yanomami Association is campaigning to reduce the spread of Covid-19. They have said: “We, the Yanomami, do not want to die. Help us expel more than 20,000 miners who are spreading Covid-19 throughout our lands.” Members of the public can donate to help the fight at <https://minersoutcovidout.org> and show support on social media: #MinersOutCovidOut.

Press Information

For further information, images or to arrange interviews please contact:

Angela Dias, Senior Communications Manager +44 207 382 7168,
angela.dias@barbican.org.uk

Jemima Yong, Communications Assistant +44 207 638 4141 ext 8280,
jemima.yong@barbican.org.uk

Daisy Robinson-Smyth, Communications Assistant +44 207 382 7254,
daisy.robinson@barbican.org.uk

Press images available online from the Barbican Newsroom

A link to the image sheets can be found in the ‘Downloads’ box on the top right-hand side of the page from www.barbican.org.uk/claudiaandujarnews

Opening Hours

Monday-Sunday: 10am – 7pm

Ticket Prices

Standard (anytime): £16
Members and Members Plus: Free
Young Barbican: £5

Concessions & discounts

Unwaged: £12
Students: £12
NHS staff: £12
Over 65s (weekday): £12
Art Fund Members: £8
Access Members: £8
Under 14s: Free

Important Notes

Young children need to be supervised at all times.

Large bags, rucksacks and luggage are not permitted in the gallery. All bags are subject to search. Food and drink are not permitted.

Exhibition

The exhibition is curated by Thyago Nogueira/Instituto Moreira Salles, Brazil in partnership with Hutukara Associação Yanomami and Instituto Socioambiental, and supported by Survival International. After the Barbican the exhibition travels to Fotomuseum Winterthur, Switzerland in October 2021 to February 2022.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a generously illustrated English-language catalogue, published by Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, edited by Thyago Nogueira with contributions from Bruce Albert, Claudia Andujar and Thyago Nogueira alongside an illustrated chronology. Price £36. ISBN: 978-2-86925-154-0

Barbican Art Gallery and The Curve

Our visual arts programme embraces art, architecture, design, fashion, photography and film. Many of our exhibitions explore the interconnections between disciplines, periods and cultures, and aim to imagine the world in new ways. Designers, artists and architects are our collaborators in this process.

Our exhibitions are complemented by comprehensively researched catalogues and a full range of public events. We develop engaging online content for audiences and offer special tours for schools. In partnership with renowned museums and art galleries, many of our exhibitions travel to reach both national and international audiences.

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A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over a million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, public spaces, a library, the Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court, and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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About Survival International

Survival International is the global movement for tribal peoples and the only organization that champions tribal peoples around the world to help them defend their lives, protect their lands and determine their own futures.

Survival International exists to prevent the annihilation of tribal peoples and to give them a platform to speak to the world so they can bear witness to the genocidal violence, slavery and racism they face on a daily basis. By lobbying the powerful it defends the lives, lands and futures of people who should have the same rights as other contemporary societies.

Survival International's vision is a world where tribal peoples are respected as contemporary societies and their human rights protected.