



Digital simulation of the upcoming installation at New York's Thomas Paine Park

SEEDS

(13 MOONS)

A PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION

THOMAS PAINE PARK
MANHATTAN, NEW YORK CITY

SPRING – AUTUMN
2022

ARTIFICER

JAIME MIRANDA-BAMBARÉN

CURATOR

GUSTAVO BUNTINX

BY SPECIAL INVITATION OF THE

NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION



ABSTRACT

Starting on Spring 2022 and until Autumn of that same year,
New York's Thomas Paine Park in Manhattan
will nurture Jaime Miranda-Bambarén's art installation
Seeds (13 MOONS)
[*Semillas (13 LUNAS)*, in Spanish].

This monumental initiative will root into that public space
thirteen grand and textured wooden spheres,
each one of them sculpted out of single pieces of wood.
All the works involved originate in the systematic rescue
of the remains of eucalyptus trees
illegally plundered in diverse points of the Peruvian territory.

The size of each *Seed* varies
between 180 and 230 cm (5'10" to 7'6") in diameter.

Their specific weight goes from 800 kg to 5,000 kg
(1,800 to 11,000 lbs.)

The present document summarizes the history and the meaning
of that project.

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Location map of Thomas Paine Park in Manhattan, New York



Digital simulation of the upcoming installation at New York's Thomas Paine Park



Remains of illegally plundered trees being rescued
by Jaime Miranda-Bambarén's Seeds project
2013
(Photographer: Juan Manuel Olivera)

THE BROKEN BOUGH (REBORN)¹

Gustavo Buntinx

“While at rest on a summer’s noon”, Walter Benjamin famously wrote in 1931, “to calmly follow with the gaze the profile of a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch which casts its shadow on the observer, until the moment or the hour become part of their apparition —this is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch.”

¹ The almost explicit association in this title refers, of course, to *The Golden Bough*, James George Frazer's questionable but always inspiring masterpiece (1890 – 1915). Other works alluded to are Walter Benjamin's *Small History of Photography* (1931) as well as Martin Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935 – 1953). And, in a more slanted way, Dylan Thomas's terminal poem, *Do not go gentle into that good night* (1947 – 1951).

That branch is fallen. Fractured. The Broken Bough. Both in a literal and in a terribly metaphorical sense: the deforestation of the Earth is also the devastation of our soul.

Our personal and collective spirit: damned we are —and blessed— with the unmasked privilege of travailing through life in these liminal, perhaps terminal times for the human condition. Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin, now strangely twinned by the complementary opposites of their premonitions. The hollowing out of the earth, the darkening of the world, the flight of the Gods. The grinding away of the aura.

But in confronting that abyss heed must also be paid to the afterlife of it all. Its posthumous illuminations, its other epiphanies.

The respiration, the inspiration. The phantom breath that might also expire into that deep night. But not without a battle: art, too, is reborn in the agony of art, in its fight to the death with death itself.

A furtive, almost hallucinatory struggle.

As in the anguished harvesting of the "hidden bones of the forest" through which **Jaime Miranda-Bambarén** exhumes the truncated roots of so many mutilated trees in the towns and in the fields of a Peruvian landscape that sees its natural splendor increasingly plundered. Centennial arbors, sown perhaps since viceregal times, and now systematically razed by our failed modernizations, our degrading "modernity"

In the rescue of such remains Miranda affirms, to be sure, an ecological claim. But, above all, he projects a metaphysical vision, a resurrectional act: to grant those desecrated remnants a symbolic dignity. And to transfigure those fields of sown death into breathless, but almost breathing images of life.



Remains of illegally plundered trees being rescued
by Jaime Miranda-Bambarén's Seeds project
2013
(Photographer: Juan Manuel Olivera)

Sacred icons of every tradition: our disperse human spirituality yearns to be condensed in these syncretic sculptures. Moribund nature transformed into a nascent art that Miranda sometimes returns to nature. A few of the resulting pieces are recognizable in their figurative intent, with insinuations that often seem overtly Buddhist, or even Christian. But also archaic: in other works —of different origin, but similar essence— primordial anatomies appear barely sculpted out of the textures of the corroded timbers that supported the Victorian docks in East London. *The Pillars of the Empire* (2011) —such is the title of these pieces— abandoned in front of what is today the great financial center of Canary Wharf, the new "City".

The capital of capitalism, disturbed by this public and at the same time clandestine art. The totemic transformation of the ruinous piles that submerge and emerge —"hauntingly", in the words of the artificer— amongst the shifting waters of the great river. The grand tides through which the Thames fantasizes becoming again the Ganges.

Enshrouded by that pulsional drift those eroded poles still stand erect. Like forlorn gods, like forgotten idols, like corroded phalluses. The other, tacit title of this ghostly piece could well be *Driftwood*. The marooned scaffolding of the shipwreck of the West.

And the drowning away of the human condition.



One of Miranda-Bambarén wooden sculptures returned to nature
In the jungles of Peru
2011
(Photographer: Lena Huber)



Detail of Miranda-Bambaran's sculptural intervention on the corroded piles
of London's abandoned docks
2011
(Still from the video *The Pillars of the Empire*)

In a different transfiguration, other pieces by Miranda propose esoteric abstractions. As in the sensorial overflow of creviced fragments of wood, sometimes immense, that are spheres that are planets that are cells. That are Seeds, as the author calls them. The seminal power of the symbolic.

Cosmic beads of a rosary unraveled and dispersed. But recomposed.

"A poetics of resurrection," Miranda himself explains, "in a twisted metabolization of the Catholic and baroque aesthetic project." The result is a thaumaturgic art. Its ultimate beauty not only resides in the splendid forms of these eccentric pieces, but also emanates from the free associations and energies activated by the frictions derived from the variable surroundings of their emplacements: some artistic venues of well-established importance, but above all several suggestive public spaces and environments.

The quiet plaza in front of the solemn façade of a cathedral, for example (the Iglesia Matriz of El Callao, 2016). Or the disturbed landscape of the ocean tamed into a port (Ilo, Moquegua, 2012). Or the seigneurial edifice of a transformed manor house (Casa Hacienda Moreyra, Lima, 2014). Or the sharp contrast offered by the most polished commercial architecture (Las Begonias and Miguel Dasso Streets, Lima, 2011 - 2020). And, at the extreme opposite, by the severe geometry of the 18th century garrison built for the royal escorts of the Bourbon kings (Conde Duque Cultural Center, Madrid, 2019).

Next pages:

Views of Miranda-Bambarén's Seeds in six distinct installations:
at the Plaza Matriz of El Callao;
at the Peruvian port city of Ilo;
at Torre Las Begonias (Lima's first "green" corporate building);
at Miguel Dasso Street, in Lima;
at the Casa Hacienda Moreyra (Moreyra Manor House), in Lima;
and at the Conde Duque Cultural Center in Madrid (two views)











Or by the vulgar tile and the bleak cement of a saddened gallery-floor, which in a crucial exhibition these *Seeds* dramatically fracture (*Darśan*, Raul Porras Barrenechea Gallery, Lima, 2016). In search of the earth.

For the Earth.

Next page:

View of the deliberately broken tile floor
at Jaime Miranda-Bambarén's *Darśan* exhibition
Raúl Porras Barrenechea Gallery, Lima, 2016





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But it is undoubtedly in Manhattan's Thomas Paine Park where this sculptural sowing will reach its most poignant germination: thirteen monumental wooden spheres will be therein installed, in gravid allusion to the annual cycle of human ovulation.

That number, and their impressive dimensions —between 180 and 230 cm in diameter— will allow the complex handling of the rhythms necessary for a subtle yet incisive resignification of the chosen ground. An impregnation with no fixed or preestablished meanings, but prolific in suggestions poetically unleashed. As in the reemergence of that which has been interred. By nature, or by history.

A sense of latency already inscribed into the very materiality of these entangled pieces, in their formal exuberance so sharply in contrast with their destined surroundings. The dramatic expression of the fissures and textures of these sidereal, these telluric orbs will establish an essential, primordial tension with the modern and neoclassical architectures erected around what was once the main colonial cemetery for Afro American slaves.

A counterpoint in which the *Seeds* of Jaime Miranda-Bambarén will secrete their most radical senses.

More rooted and extreme.

Resurrectional.

"WOOD AND CLAY ARE LIFE"

A TESTIMONY BY THE ARTIFICER

(Fragments)

"All my *Seeds* are made by rescuing the remains of eucalyptus trees depredated in the wildly different territories of Peru. Those razed forests resonate with the emotion of what I want to symbolize.

I am interested in eucalyptus because, although highly resistant to weather conditions, its cracks and fissures make beautifully evident the passage of time, enhancing the germinal spirit that enlivens the surface of my spheres. Also, this species can be found in vast areas of my country, and I am intent in associating diverse landscapes through works that disseminate—inseminate—those condensed experiences into the very psyche of the modern urban dweller.

In procuring the raw material for my *Semillas* I have traveled extensively throughout the Peruvian jungles and highlands looking for the abandoned roots of torn away trees. Through the experience of those wanderings a special sense and sentiment has grown within me and is transmitted not only by the sculpted materiality of my work, but also in countless photographs, videos and journal entries that document that process. The edited results of it all are an integral part of what the *Semillas* finally become.

There is a particular method implied here. A lived system of art making that has gradually forged my personal character. I have no problem with going into the jungle for several weeks in search of the fallen military plane supposedly turned into a totemic source of energy by Benigno Ramos: a mythical ecologist and shaman now disappeared by the dark mafias of illegal loggers. Such stories move me, and I act on those emotions. When I arrived at the small and now ghostly hamlet of Benigno and saw the wrecked military plane on his altar, like an object of shamanic power, I felt I was confronted by a Vision.



Remains of illegally plundered trees being rescued
by Jaime Miranda-Bambarén's Seeds project
2013
(Photographer: Juan Manuel Olivera)

The photos and videos of that revelation are my spiritual treasure. For security reasons they are stored in three external memories in three different places. Someday I will find the reason—or the call—to publish them.

The use of wood has to do with my empathic relation with that material. Brian Catling—the British Joseph Beuys, according to Iain Sinclair—once confided to me that, for him, in sculpture, wood and clay are Life. Plaster, on the other hand, is Death. And, therefore, bronze is Resurrection. But then he quickly added, with a wink of the eye and a half smile, that resin and fiberglass are *the zombies of sculpture*.

I like to think that I am continuously putting those tenets to the test, exploring their variants and frontiers. In both an artistic and spiritual sense. But perhaps what is also being expressed through these *Seeds* is a twisted metabolization of the Catholic and baroque aesthetic project.

What, in contemporary and *material* terms, can be a truly lived poetics of resurrection?"

Next page:

A close-up detail of one of Jaime Miranda-Bambarén's *Seeds*
(Photographer: Sergio Fernández Majluf)





Map with some of the places of origin of the plundered trees rescued for Jaime Miranda-Bambarén's Seeds project: Cajabamba, Huancayo, Pisco, Cangallo.

SOME FIGURES

- The installation at Thomas Paine Park will consist of thirteen sculptures ("Seeds") of cracked and textured woods with spherical shapes.
- The size of each Seed varies between 180 x 230 cm (5'10" to 7'6") in diameter.
 - Their specific weight ranges from 800 to 5,000 kg (1,800 to 11,000 lbs).
- The total combined weight of the shipment will be around 31,000 kg (68,300 lbs)



Views of Miranda-Bambarén's Seeds
at the Conde Duque Cultural Center in Madrid
2019
(Photographer: Claudia Alva)

VITA

JAIME MIRANDA-BAMBARÉN (www.jaimemiranda.com) is an artificer linked to various expressive forms (sculpture, installation, photography, video, performance). His works are generally associated with ecological and spiritual themes. He was born in Lima in 1982. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP, 2007). In 2011 he completed a graduate degree at Chelsea College of Arts in London.

In Peru he has held two solo exhibitions: *Darśan*, and *Cargo Cult*. He also has a significant trajectory in public art proposals, including almost clandestine interventions in abandoned spaces in London, as well as highly visible occupations in streets and plazas in Lima and Madrid. He is also the author of an important monument to the victims of terrorism in Peru.

Various installations of his *Semillas* (Seeds) have occupied such significant sites as the Plaza Matriz in El Callao (Peru), and the central courtyard of the Centro Cultural Conde Duque (Madrid, Spain). The most ambitious development of that complex project will be displayed, between April and November 2022, at Thomas Paine Park in Manhattan, New York City, specially invited by the Department of Parks & Recreation of that city. That specific placement is of particular relevance, both civic and historical, as it is surrounded by important public buildings and by the memorial to the African and Afro American slaves buried there during colonial times.

Works by Miranda-Bambarén can be found in the Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) and Micromuseo, as well as in various collections in Peru, England and Spain.

GUSTAVO BUNTINX (www.micromuseo.org.pe) is a curator, art historian, cultural theoretician, and museum activist. He was born in 1957, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, but grew up in Lima and his main identity keys are Peruvian. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Harvard University (1978) and taught at various Latin American graduate and undergraduate university programs. His books and exhibitions often explore the relationship between art and violence, art and politics, art and religion, as well as the deconstruction of established narratives on the subject of Native American subjects and cultures.

In Lima he has directed the Museo de Arte Italiano, the Museo de Arte de San Marcos and the Centro Cultural de San Marcos. He was Chief Curator of Lima's first Photography Biennial (2011) and of the Peru Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2019). Since the early 1980's he has been the founder and "chauffeur" (driver, i.e., conductor) of Micromuseo ("*al fondo hay sitio*"), a museutopia conceived as a response to what he then diagnosed as the Peruvian *museum void*: an institutional lack to be confronted by an *alter museality*: plebeian, promiscuous, hybrid, *mestizo*. Some aspects of that experience are reflected in his role as coeditor of the book *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures / Global Transformations* (Duke University Press).

In addition to multiple interventions in its own local scene, Micromuseo was specially invited to produce ample and complex exhibitions in the last Valencia Biennial (2007) and in the first Chilean Triennial (2009).

At present Buntinx is involved in various projects of historical research, while deepening his interests in returning the experience of art to its primordial origins.

Art outside (the world of) art.

