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PRESS RELEASE | Pavilion of Spain | Biennale Arte 2024

Migrant Art Gallery Exposes Historically Silenced Narratives and Proposes a More Accessible, Diverse and Sustainable Institutionalities

The pavilion will bring together a hundred paintings based on artworks in Spanish heritage collections from the time of the Empire to the Enlightenment, as well as an installation composed of twelve sculptures symbolises the history of the former colonies.

Giardini della Biennale, from 20 April to 24 November 2024

Artist: Sandra Gamarra Heshiki | Curator: Agustín Pérez Rubio

Commissioner: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (AECID)

Collaborator: Spanish Cultural Action (AC/E)

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The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain**, through the **Spanish Agency for International Development and Cooperation (AECID)**, in collaboration with **Acción Cultural Española (AC/E)**, presents further details of the ***Pinacoteca Migrante/ Migrant Art Gallery***, developed by **Sandra Gamarra Heshiki** for the Spanish Pavilion in the **60th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia 2024**. As the first migrant artist chosen to represent Spain, Gamarra Heshiki uses the museum as the main axis of the project as a narrator of great stories, whose methods of representation have been assumed to be “universal”. *Pinacoteca Migrante/ Migrant Art Gallery* is curated by **Agustín Pérez Rubio**.

Gamarra Heshiki will transform the Spanish Pavilion into a historic gallery of Western art where the notion of “migration”, in its many facets, will be the protagonist. The Western concept of the art gallery, which was exported to the former colonies, is inverted, exposing a series of historically silenced narratives. Thus, ***Pinacoteca Migrante/ Migrant Art Gallery*** responds to accessibility, diversity and sustainability within an institutional framework and inserts contemporary contexts in relation to racism, migration or extractivism. The protagonists are the migrants, both human and not: living organisms, plants and raw materials that often made the round trip by force.

The extensive research carried out by Gamarra Heshiki will also be reflected in a series of new works whose starting point are paintings, from the time of the Empire to the Enlightenment, from art collections and museums throughout Spain. These works interfere with the lack of decolonial narratives in museums and will analyze the biased representations between colonizers and colonized. Sociology, politics, art history and biology are intertwined in this research.

The central open space of the Spanish Pavilion will be occupied by the ***Migrant Garden***, which is presented as a counter-narrative to the historical museum. This garden is inhabited by twelve monuments that



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remember key characters from colonised communities. On the reverse side of each sculpture, you can read about the figures or cultures they refer to.

The first five rooms, which will lead to the garden, will feature different themes from classical painting traditions such as landscape, still life, scientific illustration, and portraiture, among others, viewing them as tools with political agendas that promote monolithic constructions of nation states. For Gamarra Heshiki, the narrative of the project elaborates a continuous cycle between construction and deterioration. For this reason, these paintings are presented as sketches, finished works, or in a state of permanent restoration, as a metaphor for the open colonial wound.

The first room, titled *Virgin Land*, will deal with landscape paintings that belong to different Spanish museums and refer to the current Spanish territory, as well as the former colonies of Latin America, the Philippines and North Africa. Quotes from writers, ecofeminist thinkers or intellectuals will be superimposed on each painting.

It will be followed by the room titled *Cabinet of Extinction*, which will link colonialism with extractivism by showing the “treasures” of European botanical expeditions during the 18th and 19th centuries. Gamarra Heshiki will paint some of the facsimiles of the illustrations from the “Royal Botanical Expedition to the Kingdom of New Granada” including human hands as part of the same interdependent survival system.

The space entitled *Cabinet of Illustrated Racism* will present the way in which anthropology and science were used as tools of racial discrimination. It will include illustrations and objects labeled “scientific” at the time, to support the idea of classification and impose the Western will for hierarchical superiority over the Global South.

The room titled *Mestiza Masks* will delve into the colonial practices of portraiture, which were conceived as time capsules that seek to immortalize political and social norms. Each work will expose the way in which societies accept or marginalize their subjects. Consequently, it will displace gender divisions to question the patriarchal structure as a naturalized norm.

The central gallery, titled *Altarpiece of Dying Nature*, will show still life painting as a genre that synthesizes the themes of the previous rooms and, in turn, shows the ways in which we inhabit the world. This great polyptych will reveal notions of accumulation and ostentation that are promoted by Western society.

Finally, the *Migrant Garden* will be inhabited by painted copies of monuments, as well as representations of alien or invasive plants. This patio is presented as a place of restitution of works not made visible in the metropolis. Those represented here have made a symbolic journey, like alien plants, they have found soil to stay. It presents the view that the alteration of ecosystems should be valued and measured from a perspective in which all species live harmoniously without hierarchies.

Pinacoteca Migrante/ Migrant Art Gallery aims to provide a model that updates protocols in the accessibility, diversity and sustainability of institutions, dismantling the structures that perpetuate the hegemonic hierarchies of colonialism.



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On the occasion of this project, the **AECID** will publish a 240-page **publication** edited by **Agustín Pérez Rubio** with **Antoine Henry Jonquères** as editorial advisor and **Laoficina** as editorial coordinator. The work will include texts by **Françoise Vergès**, **Yayo Herrero**, **Gabriela Wiener**, **Yeison F. García López**, **Neferti X. M. Tadiar** and **María Berríos**, as well as a conversation between the artist, the curator and **Esther Gabara**. The design will be carried out by **Eugenio Simó's** graphic studio, and the publication will be distributed internationally by **Walter Köning Books**.

ABOUT THE SPANISH PAVILION

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, through the AECID, once again organize Spain's participation in the International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, as they have been doing since 1950.

Since 1895, painting, sculpture, artistic installation, drawing, video art, performance and other disciplines executed by the most important contemporary artists from Spain have been represented at this important event. Spain's participation in the International Art Exhibition aims to guarantee the presence of our creators and artists in prestigious international events, this being one of the main lines of foreign cultural action developed by the Directorate of Cultural and Scientific Relations of the AECID.

In this 60th edition our pavilion will be curated by Agustín Pérez Rubio and the presence of the Spanish-Peruvian artist Sandra Gamarra Heshiki. His project, Pinacoteca Migrante, has been conceived specifically for the Biennale Arte 2024 and was chosen, among other candidates, by an advisory committee made up of various independent personalities from the Spanish contemporary art scene.

The project is commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (AECID) with Acción Cultural Española, with the sponsorship of Inelcom Collection and Exhibify and the support for the artist from the Botín Foundation.

ABOUT SANDRA GAMARRA HSHIKI

Sandra Gamarra Heshiki (Lima, 1972) uses figurative painting to question art and its mechanisms of representation, exhibition and commercialization. Based on appropriation, her work functions as a mirror that displaces exhibition formats, alters the circuit of images, subverts the appropriation of culture, as well as the narrative between the art object and the viewer. Within this field of research, the legacy of her country of origin generates a syncretic view where pre-Columbian, colonial and Western cultures collide. Gamarra Heshiki participated in the 11th Berlin Biennale; the 29th São Paulo Biennial; Mundus Novus, Pavilion IIIA, of the 53rd International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia; and the XI Cuenca Biennial. Her work is in collections such as the MNCARS – Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; the MACBA – Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, Barcelona; the Tate Modern, London; the Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin; MoMA, New York; MALI, Lima; the MAR, Rio de Janeiro; and MASP, São Paulo, among others. Gamarra Heshiki lives and works between Lima and Madrid.



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ABOUT AGUSTÍN PÉREZ RUBIO

Agustín Pérez Rubio (Valencia, 1972) is a historian, professor and curator with extensive curatorial experience and nearly 200 exhibitions in museums and institutions in Latin America and Europe. He was curator—along with María Berríos, Lisette Lagnado and Renata Cervetto—of the 11th Berlin Biennale (2018-20). Previously, he was the curator of the Chile Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2019); artistic director of MALBA (Buenos Aires, 2014-18); and chief curator and director of MUSAC (León, 2003-13). He was a member of the Istanbul Biennial Council (2017-22) and actively continues his work on the CIMAM Council (2016-present). He has been part of important curatorial committees of museum collections such as the Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin; the TATE, London; the MALBA, Buenos Aires; the FRAC Piedmont, Turin; MALL, Lima; and MUSAC, León, among others. He has been distinguished as a visiting professor at the Institut für Kunst im Kontext (Universität der Künste Berlin, 2019-20) and at other international universities and study centers.

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