

Press release

Sergio Vega

## Shamanic Modernism: Parrots, Bossanova and Architecture

Opening: Friday 30 September 2016 from 7pm to 10pm

Duration: until 18 November 2016

Exhibition space: Galleria Umberto Di Marino - Via Alabardieri 1, 80121, Napoli

Opening hours: Monday - Saturday 3 pm / 8 pm – by appointment in the morning

Umberto Di Marino is pleased to announce Sergio Vega's exhibition titled: *Shamanic Modernism: Parrots, Bossanova and Architecture* opening on Friday, September 30th. The exploration of contemporary Latin American culture, focusing specifically on the post-colonial debate, has been one of the key themes of the gallery's program for several years. The gallery's 2016-17 season offers a careful collective form of reflection, starting with one of the fundamental critiques of new forms of cultural colonialism.

On a trip to Mato Grosso (Brazil) that took place in 1999, the Sergio Vega came across an avenue in the city of Cuiaba and wrote: "Tall buildings were distributed alongside as if they were in a carnival parade, but instead of dancing to the deep sound of African drums they seemed to be swinging to the smooth sound of Bossanova; their monumental presence ostentatiously announcing the triumph of modernity over the jungle.

The organic facades of those buildings had pure colors and featured curved balconies. This tropical architecture established a dialogue with nature not to camouflage itself, but to contend with it. In some cases, it acquired an emblematic presence that not only competes with mango trees, coconut palms, and parrots, but also imitates them. Even if this extravagant degree of belief in the symbolic function of form deviates from the marriage of form and function, it must have made no use of avant-gardist rupture to establish itself, since its grace relies in the deviation of high modernism towards the regional."

This chance encounter signified a kind of "profane illumination" for the artist that led to the interpretation of modernist architecture in relation to shamanism and marked the beginning of a series of investigations that took place over the course of several years.

"Thus modernist architecture went someplace else, and by forgetting Cartesian logic entered a sinuous terrain that left it under the shelter of shamanism. It is hard to tell how this detour started, if whether as a formalist exercise or as the result of heat stroke. In any case, it drove architecture into a performative space, to cross-dress as animal or plant.

When the shaman impersonates animals, speaks their tongues and emulates their movements, his actions are not just a manifestation of hysteria, but the careful construction of a sign, one that indicates to the tribe that he had entered the "edenic stage." He now embodies the spirits of the animals and the plants and much more, because in that process of transformation he has gone up a ladder or a tree with a request from the tribe and is coming down with a message from the creator. However modern, a building cross-dressed as something else and presented as a message from above is indeed an ancient idea."

Following these ideas, the artist researched key elements of Brazil's modernist architecture and urban design and its aesthetic and conceptual relationship to bossanova music. The works presented in the exhibition explore the paradisiac dimension of Brazilian modernism associated with shamanistic practices and interpretations of nature. In addition, the exhibition approaches the dynamics between a modernist program dictated from above (capital) and a marginal post-aesthetic approach arising from the edges of society (poverty). In parallel tasks, while high Modernism constructs, the periphery deconstructs, developing organically, finding the empty spaces, slots and gaps that play such an important role in the deconstructionist theories of Jacques Derrida. The precarious shanties are built with urban waste: surplus building materials, advertising hoardings, abandoned furniture, temporary cables...

The series "Social Landscape" is made of photographs of shantytowns with overlapping geometric abstract compositions. A new series of humorous collages titled "Interventions on a book" takes the pages of the book *Brazil's Modern Architecture* (Phaidon, 2007, a milestone in the study of the topic) as readymade and juxtapose objects and photos, painting, and drawing over the text and images of the book producing uncanny associations. The installation "Modernismo Chamánico (Cathedral-Pineapple-Bossanova)" consists in black and white photographs combined with covers of bossanova records and a scale model of the Cathedral of Brasilia by architect Oscar Niemeyer rotating on top of a turntable. The gallery thus becomes a single installation where images, sounds, photography, architecture and nature are organically integrated into a modernist tropical environment.

**Sergio Vega**

Born in 1959 in Buenos Aires (Argentina). He lives and works in Gainesville, FL - USA

Selected solo and group exhibitions:

2016

*Florida Prize in Contemporary Art*, Orlando Museum of Art, Florida, curated by Hansen Mulford

2015

*Latin American Art Museum, Department of Parrots*, 2015, Jenielift, Miami, USA

*When Clouds Enter the Forest and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France

*Theorem*, curated by Octavio Zaya, Mana Contemporary, Jersey City

2014

*Encontro de Mundos*, curated by Paulo Herkenhoff, Museu de Arte do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

2013

*Disassembling Paradise*, Kabe Contemporary, Miami, USA

2012

*Sublime Entropies*, Galerie Karsen Greve, Cologne, Germany

dOCUMENTA 13 - *Worldly House*, project curated by Tue Greenfort, Kassel, Germany

2010

*Paradise: real time*, Ikon Gallery Eastside, Birmingham, England

2009

*hashish in Naples*, Galleria Umberto Di Marino, Napoli, Italy

*3rd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art: Against Exclusion*, curated by Jean Hubert Martin Moscow, Russia

2008

*Excerpts from Paradise in the New World*, curated by Hermann Arnhold, and Marcel Schumacher, LWL-Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, Germany

*Distance and Proximity*, curated by António Pinto Ribeiro, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa, Portugal

*Greenwashing- Environment: Perils, Promises and Perplexities*, curated by Ilaria Bonacossa and Latitude, Max Andrews and Mariana Cánepa Luna, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Italy

2017

*Sharjah Biennial 8, Still Life, Art, Ecology & the Politics of Change*, curated by Jonathan Watkins, Sharjah Expo Center, United Arab Emirates

2006

*Tropicalounge, Monumentum Series*, curated by Bennett Simpson, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, USA

*Crocodilian Fantasies*, curated by Aikiko Miki, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

*Utopian paradises: modernism and the sublime*, Galleria Umberto Di Marino, Napoli, Italy

*ARS06, Sense of the Real*, curated by Jari-Pekka Vanhala, Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland

2005

*Always a little further; 51 Biennale di Venezia*, curated by Rosa Martínez, Arsenale, Venice, Italy