

GALLERY 400

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Traduttore, Traditore

November 3–December 16, 2017



Paulo Nazareth, untitled, from *Notícias de América* series, 2011/12, photo printing on cotton paper, 7.1 x 9.4 in., courtesy the artist and Mendes Wood DM

Traduttore, Traditore

Curated by Karen Greenwalt and Katja Rivera

November 3–December 16, 2017

Artists: **Bani Abidi, Arturo Hernández Alcázar, Carlos Arias, Luis Camnitzer, Alejandro Cesarco, Bethany Collins, Brendan Fernandes, Dora García, Emily Jacir, Katia Kameli, Harold Mendez, Paulo Nazareth, Sherwin Ovid, Michael Rakowitz, Raqs Media Collective, Thamothersampillai Shanaathanan, Edra Soto, and Stephanie Syjuco**

September 18, 2017—Chicago, IL—*Traduttore, Traditore*, curated by **Karen Greenwalt and Katja Rivera**, brings together a group of artists from around the world who employ processes of translation to expose, question, and challenge global circuits of economic and cultural capital. Emerging from the reality that uninhibited travel, communication, and trade are available to a privileged few, the exhibition uses translation as a means of exploring the transformation—of language, customs, currency, and even memory—that occurs when people cross borders. Taken from the Italian aphorism that roughly translates to “translator, traitor,” the title of the exhibition speaks to the misunderstandings, losses, and fragmentation that manifest during this process of exchange.

A groundbreaking exhibition that explores translation beyond its linguistic meaning, *Traduttore, Traditore* considers the political dynamics of power and infrastructure that influence the movement of people, goods, ideas, and language across borders. It employs a liberal understanding of translation in order to focus on themes of place, migration, nationalism, and identity and to address the tensions that emerge from encounters across time and space. Anchoring the exhibition are three key themes that expand the definition of translation to explore shifts in language, cultural practices, and economic transactions. Shaped by their cultural histories and geographic locations, the artists offer unique perspectives on the difficulties of translation in the so-called global world.

Traduttore, Traditore reveals how contemporary artists navigate and expose issues of difference. The exhibition proposes translation as a method by which to understand contemporary artistic practices, reflecting an inclusive vision of art history. Many of the artists featured in the exhibition, who hail from across the world, have received little exposure in the U.S. Indeed, many of them have never shown in Chicago and several of the works will make their American debut.

Several artists in the exhibition use language as a means of exploring not only the difficulties inherent to processes of translation, but also the productive possibilities that accompany these moments. In *Insults* (2009), **Luis Camnitzer** (b. 1937, Uruguayan, born Germany) reproduces in vinyl on the gallery walls the phrase “All those who can’t read English are stupid” in the six official languages of the United Nations: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. Although Camnitzer ostensibly provides a faithful translation of the original phrase, he is in fact always preferencing the language in use, exposing the biases—and humor—inherent to language. Other artists included in the exhibition expose how the global economy creates systems of value and exchange. For example, in *Economy of Collapse* (2014), **Arturo Hernández Alcázar** (b. 1978, Mexico) uses sculptural intervention to expose the disparity between labor and wage in the immigrant community in the United States, highlighting the often invisible labor of the migrant. Another group of artists considers the translation of cultural production and practices that accompany the movement of people. These artists seem to suggest that connections are forged through long histories of colonization, occupation, and exploration. *Shan Pipe Band Learns the Star Spangled Banner* (2004) by **Bani Abidi** (b. 1971, Pakistan) records a brass pipe band in Pakistan learning to play the American

National Anthem from a recording. The pipe band is a colonial legacy that still exists and performs in Pakistan. Abidi, therefore, not only reflects on the many layers of imperialism in Pakistan's history, but also the ways cultures absorb foreign influences and make them their own.

Of note, the exhibition features several Chicago-based artists, including **Bethany Collins** (b. 1984, United States), **Brendan Fernandes** (b.1979, Kenya), **Sherwin Ovid** (b. 1978, Trinidad), **Michael Rakowitz** (b. 1973, United States), and **Edra Soto** (b. 1971, Puerto Rico), and Chicago-born artist **Harold Mendez** (b. 1977, United States). These artists advance conversations on translation by examining familial histories of border crossing (Ovid and Soto), the transmission of skill across generations (Rakowitz), and the translation of political and cultural histories (Collins, Fernandes, and Mendez).

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue that reaches beyond the scope of the exhibition to gather scholarship and artist interviews on the topic of translation. Contributors include Esra Akcan, Cornell University, whose groundbreaking research extends the notion of translation beyond language to the field of architecture, and writer Aruna D'Souza, whose work focuses on modern and contemporary art and globalism, and whose essay will address mistranslation as a productive, creative space. Greenwalt and Rivera will supplement these essays through an introduction as well as artist interviews that address the particular social, historical, and cultural contexts of the artworks featured in the exhibition.

Karen Greenwalt is a PhD candidate in art history at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), where her research focuses on contemporary Pakistani art. She has received several awards in support of her dissertation—*Beyond the Nation: Rasheed Araeen, Bani Abidi, Hamra Abbas, and the Art of Migration*—including the Dean's Scholar Fellowship from UIC (2016–2017) and a junior fellowship from the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (2015). Greenwalt has worked at the Art Institute of Chicago in the Department of Contemporary Art and as a curatorial graduate assistant at UIC's Gallery 400.

Katja Rivera is a PhD candidate in art history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research focuses on 20th century Latin American and Latino/a art, particularly as it relates to issues of exile and migration. She is the recipient of a Getty Library Research Grant (2014) and an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant for participation in the Summer Institute of Technical Art History (2014). Rivera is currently a research associate in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. Prior to that, she was a curatorial assistant at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University.

Traduttore, Traditore is the pilot exhibition in a new program at Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois to support the production of in-depth exhibitions developed out of the research work of PhD candidates or recent PhD graduates of UIC's Department of Art History. UIC Art History candidates are in the process of producing significant new scholarship on a wide range of art and cultural practices. Exhibitions developed out of that work bring that new thought to a broader audience, while providing the PhD

candidates mentorship in curatorial practice and the opportunity for engaged publishing in exhibition catalogues.

Gallery 400 Traduttore, Traditore Programs:

Thursday, November 2, 6pm—**Voices: Harold Mendez**

Friday, November 3, 5–8pm—**Opening Reception: Traduttore, Traditore**

Tuesday, November 7, 5pm—**Forms & Features: Translation | Poetry Foundation Workshop**

Thursday, November 9, 6pm—**Voices: Bani Abidi**

Wednesday, November 15, 6pm—**Screening: Rising Voices/Hótharjipi**

Thursday, November 30, 6pm—**Curator and Artist Conversation at UIC MFA Open Studios**

Additional program details to be announced. For a complete list of programs visit <http://gallery400.uic.edu/events>

Tours:

Gallery 400 also offers guided tours for groups of all ages. Tours are free of charge but require reservation. Please complete our online form (accessible at gallery400.uic.edu/visit/tours) to schedule a tour of *Traduttore, Traditore*. For more information, or to discuss the specific needs and interests of your group, please contact us at 312.996.6114 or gallery400@uic.edu.

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Founded in 1983, Gallery 400 is one of the nation's most vibrant university galleries, showcasing work at the leading edge of contemporary art, architecture, and design. The Gallery's program of exhibitions, lectures, film and video screenings, and performances features interdisciplinary and experimental practices. Operating within the School of Art and Art History in the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Gallery 400 endeavors to make the arts and its practitioners

accessible to a broad spectrum of the public and to cultivate a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives. Gallery 400 is recognized for its support of the creation of new work, the diversity of its programs and participants, and the development of experimental models for multidisciplinary exhibition.