

In the Eye of the Storm



26.09.21 – 23.01.22

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Vleugel 19

In the Eye of the Storm

Allora & Calzadilla
Candida Alvarez
Alvaro Barrington
Minia Biabiany
Ramiro Chaves & MAOF
Jean-Luc de Laguarigue
Daniel Lind-Ramos
Manuel Mathieu
Beatriz Santiago Muñoz
Ada M. Patterson
The Living and the Dead Ensemble

How can we cope with storms?

Climate change is everywhere, yet it is largely invisible in our daily lives. It is as if we have been thrust into the eye of the storm, a threatening silence surrounded by crushing winds. This image holds true especially for the Caribbean, where hurricanes have caused great damage and revealed deep inequalities. These storms are often exacerbated by political and economic storms, as the colonial past has created an uncertain future.

In the Eye of the Storm explores how Caribbean artists respond to climate change and destruction in their environment. Through their work, we can sense what binds them to a given place: the communities formed there, the memories attached to it, or the living knowledge of its natural features. These works bear witness to emotionally and historically charged landscapes in danger of disappearing.



Allora & Calzadilla, *Graft*, 2019. Courtesy the artists and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.
Photography by David Regen.

① Allora & Calzadilla

*1974, United States / *1971, Cuba
Live and work in Puerto Rico

Graft, 2019

Thousands of yellow blossoms from roble amarillo trees, an oak species native to the Caribbean, appear as though the wind has swept them across this space. Created through a fabrication process originally developed for scientific purposes, the blossoms' hand-painted petals are reproduced in seven degrees of decomposition, from freshly fallen to wilted and brown. *Graft* alludes to environmental changes that have been set in motion through the interlocking effects of colonial exploitation and climate change. Systemic depletion of Caribbean flora and fauna is one of the primary legacies of colonial rule. Nonetheless, the region remains a biodiversity hotspot. In their plastic and unnatural stillness, these flowers reflect this fragile ecological predicament.



Daniel Lind-Ramos, *Figura Emisaria*, 2020.
Courtesy the artist and Max Levai.
Photography by Greg Kessler.



Daniel Lind-Ramos, *María de los Sustentos*, 2021.
Courtesy the artist and Max Levai.
Photography by Greg Kessler.

② Daniel Lind-Ramos

*1953, Puerto Rico
Lives and works in Puerto Rico

María de los Sustentos, 2021
Figura Emisaria, 2020

Daniel Lind-Ramos created these imposing figures from everyday materials found in his immediate environment. They evoke the history of Loíza, the Afro-Caribbean community where he has lived for his whole life. *María de los Sustentos* (Mary of Sustenance)—made of various materials, including fishing nets, cooking pots and pans, tarp, and debris—refers both to the Blessed Virgin and to the eponymous hurricane of 2017. This work is an allegory of how ancestral knowledge and customs help communities during catastrophic times.

Figura Emisaria (Emissary Figure) alludes to ancient knowledge passed down from generation to generation that not only sustains people economically, but also helps them to survive during food crises.



Alvaro Barrington, *Jamaica, green background*, 2021. Perío Collection. Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London. Photography by Eva Herzog.

③ Alvaro Barrington

°1983, Venezuela
Lives and works in New York and London

Grenada 2, 2021
Jamaica, green background, 2021

Barrington's paintings of hibiscus flowers refer to the landscape of his childhood in Grenada before he moved to New York. These compositions include the national colors of Grenada and Jamaica, and symbolize the solidarity between the Caribbean islands and the diaspora. They are part of a series inspired by the parallel migration of the Jamaican author and pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey. The artist's frames are made from typical Caribbean building materials.



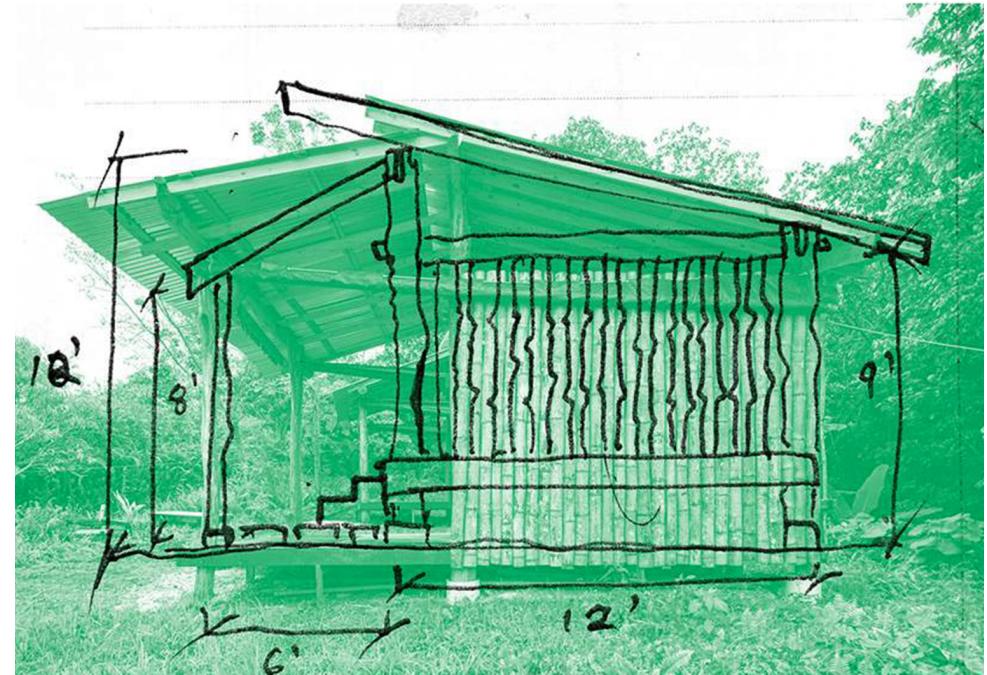
Beatriz Santiago Muñoz, *Gosila*, 2018. Film still. Courtesy the artist.

④ Beatriz Santiago Muñoz

°1972, Puerto Rico
Lives and works in Puerto Rico

Gosila, 2018

This film records the days after the monstrous Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico in September 2017. It shows a world being taken apart and then slowly put back together as people re-establish some kind of order in their lives. Although we see the devastated landscape, the storm itself does not appear. How can you film an event that is characterized by crushing winds and complete darkness? In this film, the artist conveys the sense of disorientation by filming certain scenes upside down or askew.



Ramiro Chaves & MAOF, risograph print from the publication *MAOF*, 2018. Courtesy the artists.

⑤ Ramiro Chaves & MAOF

°1979, Argentina. Lives and works in Mexico
MAOF founded in 2014. Based in Puerto Rico

Risograph prints from the publication *MAOF*, 2018

The collective Materiales y Oficios (materials and crafts, abbreviated MAOF) develops sustainable applications for local and waste materials in Puerto Rico. For example, its members collect and recycle wood from different sources and process it with traditional techniques. Following the devastation of hurricanes Irma and Maria, MAOF used fallen trees for diverse reconstruction projects in the country. Ramiro Chaves has followed MAOF since its foundation in 2014, and published a book about its work in 2018.



Candida Alvarez, *Jellow*, from the series *Air Paintings* (2017-2019), 2018. Courtesy the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago.

⑥ Candida Alvarez

°1955, United States
Lives and works in the United States

Jellow, 2018
Here to There, 2018
Lomas, 2018
From the series *Air Paintings*,
2017-2019

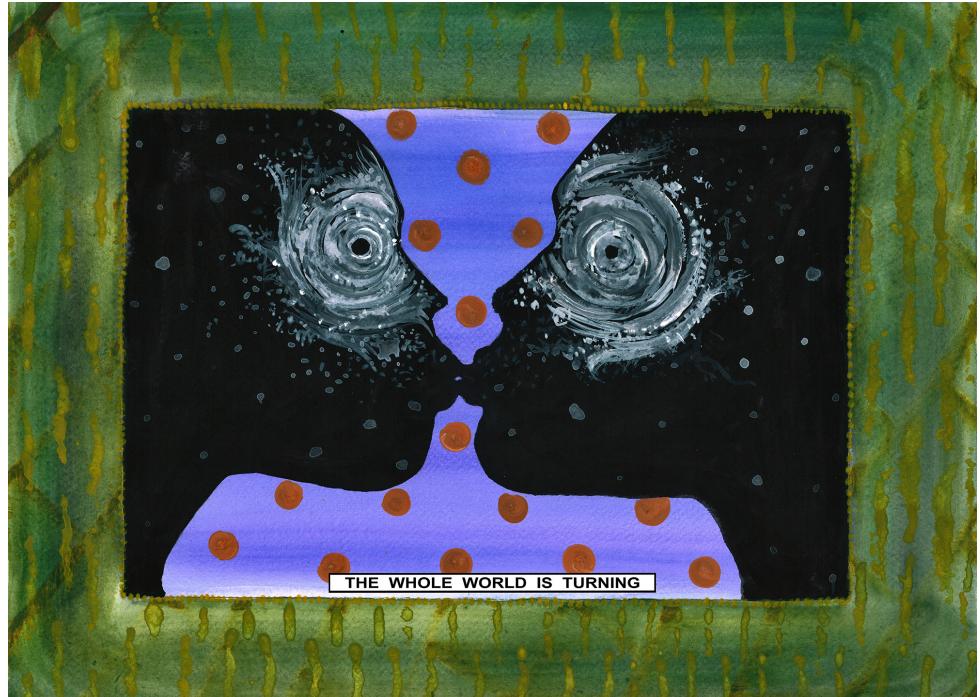
Candida Alvarez created her *Air Paintings* series in response to Hurricane Maria, while she waited in her studio in Chicago for a sign of life from her family members in Puerto Rico. For her, the creative process was also a mourning process after the destruction of the island and her father's recent passing. These paintings can be interpreted as mental maps in which places and memories are blended together. The compositions are double-sided, made by pressing paint through a canvas of PVC mesh, to form an interplay of light with blocks of colour that appear to float.

⑦ Minia Biabiany

°1988, Guadeloupe
Lives and works in Guadeloupe

Breathings of the Wind, 2021

Minia Biabiany creates a web of associations between places and objects. Her weaving practice is a metaphor for the connections between thoughts and gestures, while the rhythmic interplay of lines is by turns dynamic and tranquil. In this instance, the eye of the storm is depicted as a pause for breath between a hurricane's arrival and its departure. The perishable materials, such as banana leaves, evoke the natural environment of Guadeloupe. In this case, however, they refer to the poisoning of banana plantations under the negligent French government. Yet banana plants also have healing qualities. Through her poetic gestures, the artist proposes a path to recovery for the island and its residents.



Ada M. Patterson, *Kanga for the Present*, 2019. Courtesy the artist.

⑧ Ada M. Patterson

°1994, Barbados
Lives and works in the Netherlands

The Whole World is Turning, 2019
Kanga for the Present, 2019 (ongoing)

A group of lovers is visited by a familiar guest: a hurricane. The lovers realize how much they, their guest, and their world are changing. How will they receive this turn of events? Every year, people in the Caribbean prepare for the hurricane season, but rising and warming sea levels are leading to more violent storms. Made in the emotional aftermath of Hurricane Dorian in 2019, this video is a queer retelling of how climate crisis destabilizes both a community's relationship to its environment and alters its capacity to live and love meaningfully.

The lovers wear *kanga* around their waists, a printed textile popular in East Africa. Each *kanga* has a name that can hope, bless, laugh, mock, warn, protect, or curse. Patterson started making *kanga* during Hurricane Dorian, in search of words to express the turbulence being faced by the Caribbean. These *kanga* are gifts that struggle to speak to what is happening in worlds queered by climate crisis.



Jean-Luc de Laguarigue, image from the series *Nord-Plage*, 2001–2014. Courtesy the artist.

⑨ Jean-Luc de Laguarigue

*1956, Martinique
Lives and works in Martinique

Images from the series *Nord-Plage*, 2001-2014

Photographer Jean-Luc de Laguarigue focuses on the life of the Creole community of Martinique. His series *Nord-Plage* documents the slow decline of a fishing village that was in danger of collapsing into the sea at the beginning of this century, then ultimately had to be evacuated. When heavy sea winds and high salt waves eroded the cliffs under the houses, the village was completely at the mercy of the elements. De Laguarigue sees *Nord-Plage* as a symbol for the whole of Martinique, where traditional ways of living are disappearing due to rapid modernization.



Manuel Mathieu, *Windchime*, 2015. Private collection. Courtesy the artist and Maruani Mercier Gallery, Belgium.

⑩ Manuel Mathieu

*1986, Haiti
Lives and works in Canada

Manuel Mathieu's work reflects a world in motion. Figures and landscapes merge seamlessly. Internal and external storms are inextricably bound together. Mathieu was inspired by the country of his birth, Haiti, which is marked by political and economic instability, frequent natural disasters, and vigorous cultural dynamism. In this installation he evokes that changeable environment. His burned canvases render the transience tangible. At the same time, his paintings exude a dynamic spirit in which figures appear and disappear in a swirling mass of colors and forms.



The Living and the Dead Ensemble, *The Wake*, 2021. Video still. Courtesy the artists.
Coproduction: Z33; Berlinale Forum Expanded; Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Brussels; Le Théâtre de l'Usine, Geneva;
Les Ateliers Médicis, Clichy-Montfermeil; SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin; and Spectre Productions, Rennes

⑪ The Living and the Dead Ensemble

Founded 2017
Based in Haiti, France, and the United Kingdom

The Wake, 2021

Night has fallen on a world on fire. Demonstrations, earthquakes, forest fires: fire is everywhere. The fires of struggle and pain, of chaos and rebirth. *The Wake* is a place for dreaming and mourning, a journey across time and space, an attempt to reconstruct an exploded geography, like the broken mirror of a chaotic world that will be consumed by raging rains. A cacophony of voices—an assembly of people trying to understand one another. Is there a future, beyond the recurring disasters? *The Wake* transforms a polyphonic cry of the Caribbean into a call to heal the world.

Colophon

Artists

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Minia Biabiany, Ramiro Chaves & MAOF,
Jean-Luc de Laguarigue, Daniel Lind-Ramos,
Manuel Mathieu, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz,
Ada M. Patterson, The Living and the Dead Ensemble

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Graphic Design

Studio de Ronners, Antwerp / Rotterdam

Thanks to the whole team of Z33.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the artists,
galleries, and lenders.

Published by Z33. This brochure is published on the
occasion of *In the Eye of the Storm* (26.09.21–23.01.22)
at Z33, Hasselt, Belgium.

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