

ARTS

On Exhibit: Mandeville focus on decolonization

"A Decolonial Atlas: Strategies in Contemporary Art of the Americas" to open

[Indiana Nash](#) [@Indijnash](#) | January 17, 2019



Eamon Ore-Giron, *Morococha* (video still), 2014, 2-channel HD video, 23 minutes.

PHOTOGRAPHER: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

An exhibit that raises questions about decolonization is slated to open this week at the Mandeville Gallery in the Nott Memorial.

The Memorial, which was built in 1858, houses a circular exhibit space.

Viewers can almost see the entire exhibit from wherever they stand (provided they have perfect vision or corrective lenses). It's interesting space for "A Decolonial Atlas: Strategies in Contemporary Art of the

Americas.” The exhibit, which opens on Friday, highlights works from modern-day artists who engage with the impacts of colonization and post-colonization.

In one photo, a statue of Christopher Columbus confidently pointing to the south is draped with a serape and there’s graffiti all over the bottom portion of the statue. The photo, called “Turistas (Christopher Pointing Out the South)” is from a series in which artist Iván Argote drapes serapes over historical statues, asking viewers to question what they’ve learned about the historical figure’s life.

“The caliber of artists here is really impressive,” said Julie Lohnes, the director and curator of art collections and exhibitions at Union College.

When she saw “A Decolonial Atlas,” which was curated by Pilar Tompkins Rivas, at Tufts last spring, she immediately wanted to bring it to Union. Small wonder, as it packs in quite a lot. With its focus on films, the exhibit requires a bit of time to look through, and it’s one that viewers are going to want to stay for.

In one film, by Eamon Ore-Giron called “Morococha,” a hand using a copper trowel continually digs at what looks like dry and barren earth. That scene is juxtaposed with shots of homes that have been destroyed, with grimy bed sheets attempting to cover enormous holes in the walls. Centered around the town of Morococha, a town in Peru, which was ultimately destroyed when an international mining company came in and relocated the residents. The film evokes desperation and it speaks to one of the exhibit’s guiding themes: countering extractivism. Works in this section make the impersonal and corporate, personal, by revealing the impacts of what the exhibit calls “private extractive economic practices.”

On the other side of the gallery, images of stereotypical indigenous symbols are brought together with common western products—most of which are made abroad. In Raul Baltazar’s “Botanica Deer, House, Coyote, Conejo,” a strainer and a hammer are given soft leather covers with feathers, dream catchers and even figures of Jesus’ head dangling from them. It speaks to another theme or guiding point of the exhibit, recasting indigeneity.

A young man in a white t-shirt turned into a jersey, declaring “New Breed 21” in another piece in that section. He holds a basketball and gazes intently at the camera, a dimly lit basketball court behind him showing blurred players. The piece, “New Breed” Roni Roy (Pawnee) Pawnee, Oklahoma, is one of several in the exhibit that subverts stereotyped versions of indigeneity.

In another film—this one relatively short—scenes from appropriated YouTube videos are strung rapidly together, mixing mythologies from various cultures.

There’s a brief time lapse of a bunny carcass decaying, then equally quick shots of the sun setting, of a flower blooming, of trash and debris flowing through streets. The film, “Tochtli’s Vision” by Raul Baltazar, touches on another guiding point of the exhibit: dislodging time.

In another film, called “Antropologia do Neger II (Black Anthropology II)” by Paulo Nazareth, a figure buries himself with human skulls, one at a time. The skulls were remnants of a mental institution in Salvador, in which thousands of indigenous Brazilian people as well as people from African descent, were placed, including the artist’s grandmother.

Nazareth’s work, as well as Argote’s, represent the final compass point in the exhibit: intervening the archive.

The exhibit opens on Friday and closes on June 16. Later this month there will be a chance to hear from the curator, Pilar Tompkins Rivas, along with artists Pablo Helguera and Martine Gutierrez, who are both featured in the exhibit.

Helguera will give a talk from 12:55 to 1:45 p.m. at the Feigenbaum Center for Visual Arts on Thu. Jan. 31. Then, starting around 5 p.m. there will be a discussion with Rivas, Helguera and Gutierrez. For more information visit muse.union.edu.

While you’re there check out the photography exhibit by Donna Fitzgerald and Mark McCarthy in the Crowell and West Galleries. There will be an artist talk at 3:30 p.m. on Thu. Jan. 24 at the Feigenbaum Center for Visual Arts room 204, followed by a reception from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. For more information visit muse.union.edu.