

Times

Art Center

Berlin

Más Allá, el Mar Canta
Diasporic Intimacies and Labor

16 September – 19 December 2021

Opening: 15 September 2021, 4–8 pm

Artists: Esvin Alarcón Lam, Sybil Atteck, Nicole Awai, Mercedes Azpilicueta, Andrea Chung, Colectivo Hapa, Christopher Cozier, Richard Fung, Mimian Hsu, Peng Zuqiang, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, Humberto Vélez, David Zink Yi

Curated by Pablo José Ramírez

The exhibition *Más Allá, el Mar Canta* (Beyond, the Sea Sings) at Times Art Center Berlin explores the Chinese diaspora in Central America and the Caribbean as a starting point to consider systems of kinship and ontologies of encounter.

Diasporic intimacies are seeds growing amid the contingency of pain and emancipation. They are the dialectical side of colonial labor, concealing places of healing, care, and love from colonial technologies of alienation. Within historical recounts of colonialism, narratives of diasporic intimacies are registered as minor events or as private conundrums, obliterating their existence as creative forces that sustained the reproduction of communal life-forms and cultures of resilience. Alongside the violence of colonial labor, people first found one another and lived together.

By the late 19th century, thousands of Chinese workers had immigrated to the recently discovered gold mines in California (1848–49). From there, many moved to Mexico in search of better opportunities, working on banana plantations, agricultural plots, mills, and in the construction of massive railroad systems. At the turn of the 20th century, facing extreme exploitation, discrimination, poverty, and the Mexican Revolution's (1910) establishment of new migratory policies, many Chinese workers continued south to Central America and the Caribbean, where they met other independent workers from the ports of Hong Kong, Amoy, Fuzhou, Macao, and Shanghai who had arrived in Latin America via Japan and California.

Chinese labor was instrumental in constructing the Panama Canal, a colossal engineering project that dramatically altered maritime trade across the Atlantic. Chinese workers also helped develop the logging industry in Belize and worked alongside African and Indigenous workers on CIA interventionist company UFCO's (United Fruit Company) banana plantations in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. The modernization venture of the 20th century was only possible through colonial labor exploitation and cross-oceanic South-South diasporas.

The exhibition *Más Allá, el Mar Canta*, curated by Pablo José Ramírez, borrows its name and takes inspiration from the book by the Afro-Chinese Cuban writer Regino Pedroso. With this work, Pedroso won the Cuban Poetry Prize in 1939, earning him acclaim as a truly unique voice of Latin American literature.

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The artists' work in the exhibition speaks from the conundrum of diasporic subjectivities, powered by either personal explorations or by collective motifs whose common ground is the always poignant reminder that there is no political imagination without community. The artworks in the exhibition are a unique testimony of an alchemic procedure that invokes agency from within the ruins of coloniality.

The exhibition takes place as part of Berlin Art Week.

Times Art Center Berlin

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Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 12–7 pm

Free admission

To ensure a safe and healthy environment, visitors are kindly asked to book their visit in advance via www.timesartcenter.org/visit-us.

Founded in 2018 and supported by the Guangdong Times Museum, Times Art Center Berlin is the first parallel institution set up overseas by an Asian art museum. It operates as an autonomous nonprofit organization and dedicates itself to developing new models of a contemporary art institution.

Press contact

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