

Feast on Your Life



Feast on Your Life

WORKING TITLE

Entre confetes e serpentinas,
passou um enterro invisível.
Among confetti and streamers,
an invisible funeral passed by.

Cecília Meireles
Morto no Carnaval

Carnival occupies a paradoxical place within cultural imagination: globally recognisable as a celebration of exuberance and sensory excess, yet deeply rooted in practices of inversion, mourning, and resistance. In Brazil, that symbolic profuseness is especially pronounced. While Rio de Janeiro's parade garners the most international attention, Carnival in Brazil is not a singular entity but a constellation of regionally forms — from the Afro-Indigenous-inflected traditions of the North to the insurgent street 'blocos' of the urban South. These diverse iterations reveal Carnival not simply as entertainment, but as a dynamic social ritual where collective memory, satire, and survival converge.

The very etymology of the word 'Carnival' — derived from the Medieval Latin *carnem levare* ("to remove meat") or *carne vale* ("farewell to meat") — signals a temporal threshold between indulgence and abstention, corporeality and spiritual introspection. This duality is reflected in its dramaturgy: a liminal time in which normative social hierarchies are suspended, often through parody, bodily excess, and performative transgression.

The Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin famously conceptualised carnival as a mode of radical temporality — a "second life" of the people, grounded in laughter, grotesque realism, and communal ambivalence. Although not an anthropologist, Bakhtin's analysis provides a fertile lens through which to examine the carnivalesque as a cultural logic that resists fixity, embracing contradiction and flux.

Feast on Your Life builds upon these frameworks, drawing its title from Derek Walcott's poem *Love After Love* to offer Carnival not only as public spectacle, but as a deeply interior mode of reckoning. The exhibition stages a meditation on ritual, release, and return: on what it means to rejoice while grieving, to surrender while asserting, to feast while fasting. In so doing, it interrogates the boundary between spectacle and subjectivity, and asks what forms of knowledge — political, spiritual, embodied — emerge through performance and festivity.

The works included explore carnival not as a theme, but as a method and metaphor. They investigate ecstasy as a technology of survival; choreography as an archive of resistance; satire as a mode of mourning. From the spectral rituals of Baraky Diallo's *Tomo* to the collective euphoria captured in Angélica Mesiti's *Rapture*, from the re-mythologising of spectacle in Coletivo Madeirista's *Alegoria* to the syncretic gestures of gender and class in Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca's *Faz Que Vai*, these pieces traverse the terrain between the political and the intimate, the sacred and the profane.

Ultimately, *Feast on Your Life* does not propose Carnival as an object of nostalgic recovery or exotic celebration, but as a critical form through which to question the conditions under which joy is possible — and the exclusions, violences, and absences it may conceal. What is permitted to be seen, to be grieved, to be performed? What remains after the feast?

Marcio Junji Sono
curator

SELECTED ARTISTS & WORKS



Diego Bresani
Raparigueiros (2018–2019, photographic series)

Bresani's series documents revellers at the Raparigueiros street party, photographed during the 2018 and 2019 editions. Predominantly attended by residents of Brasília's satellite towns, yet held in the affluent Plano Piloto district, the event becomes a convergence of multiple social dynamics. Bresani's portraits, made only at the request of the photographed subjects, are juxtaposed with images by Chichico Alkmim (1886–1978), an early 20th-century Brazilian photographer. Despite a century separating the two bodies of work, striking similarities in gesture, gaze, and physiognomy reveal resonances between the everyday and the festive, the prosaic and the ceremonial.

Gabriela Biló (Brazil)
Work(s) TBD



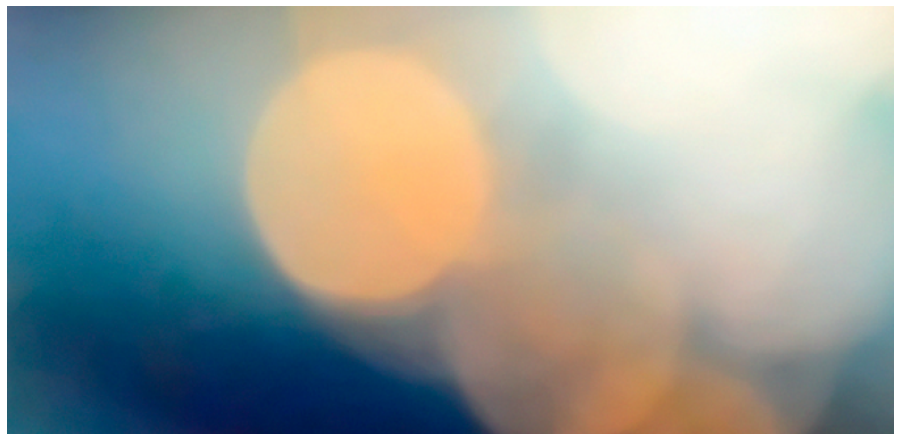
The young, award-winning photojournalist from São Paulo has been dedicating most of her time to political journalism. With an acute grasp of what Cartier-Bresson called the 'decisive moment' in image-capturing, Gabriela Biló has created some of the most iconic images in Brazil's recent history. The selection of images included in the show suggests a timeless and poetic approach to her topical yet prosaic gaze, capturing moments that blend societal insurgence, celebration, unrest, and epiphany.

Baraky Diallo (Mali)
Tomo (2012, video, 6'53")



Although *Tomo* addresses the civil war that erupted in Mali in 2012, its visual metaphors extend beyond specific conflict to condemn the senseless violence that fractures the social body. Symbolically cathartic, the film's title — meaning "scorched earth" in the Bambara language — evokes collective trauma. Through the terrified eyes of the protagonist, the viewer encounters a village seemingly deserted but, in fact, inhabited by ghostly figures ablaze, going about their daily rituals. Their measured movements contrast starkly with their burning silhouettes, offering a haunting meditation on survival and memory.

Coletivo Madeirista (Brazil)
Alegoria (2012, video, 3'33")



Drawing on Carlos Castañeda's accounts of peyote-induced visions — where human figures appear as primordial ovoid shapes — the artists recompose footage from a samba school parade. Altered to evoke a mythical, pre-cultural imaginary, *Alegoria* seeks to deconstruct and re-mythologise a popular festivity often diluted by mass consumption, pointing back toward a magical, original form.



Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca (Brazil)
Faz Que Vai (2015, video, 11'54")

In four acts, dancers blend movements of frevo — a traditional Carnival dance from Pernambuco — with those from contemporary genres such as funk, swingueira, electro, and vogue. By challenging the purity attributed to frevo by governmental narratives that frame it as an authentic popular expression, the work destabilises categories of folklore, popular culture, and mass culture, while touching upon issues of race, class, and gender.



Angelica Mesiti (Australia)
Rapture [Silent Anthem] (2009, video, 10'17")

Shot with a high-speed camera, *Rapture* presents slow-motion, high-definition close-ups of teenagers in the front rows of a rock festival. Unaware of the hidden camera placed beneath the stage, and facing something unseen by the viewer, the subjects display expressions of intense emotional fervour, evoking iconic images of religious ecstasy. *Rapture* explores the sources of collective catharsis and the continued presence of ritualistic experience within contemporary secular culture.



Ayrson Heráclito (Brazil)
Funfun (2012, video installation)

Funfun is a requiem for Estelita de Souza Santana, perpetual judge of the Sisterhood of Our Lady of the Good Death in Cachoeira, Bahia, who passed away at the age of 105. Inspired by a local myth linking black priestesses to white herons, the narrative explores the symbolism of the colour white — "funfun" in Yoruba — commonly associated with purity, maturity, and wisdom, mourning in Eastern cultures, and the orisha Obatalá. Through a rich profusion of symbolic layers, Heráclito constructs his own funerary ritual.



Sonia Boyce (United Kingdom)
Crop Over (2007, Two-channel video installation. 15')

A vibrant and evocative artwork that explores themes of identity, diaspora, and cultural celebration. The piece draws inspiration from the Barbadian festival of the same name, which originated in the 18th century to mark the end of the sugar cane harvest. Boyce intertwines photography, performance, and installation to capture the lively spirit of the festival while also reflecting on the complexities of post-colonial heritage and Black British experience. Through vivid imagery and dynamic composition, Crop Over invites viewers to consider the intersections of tradition, memory, and contemporary life, offering a rich commentary on how cultural practices evolve and endure across time and geography.

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

Performance / Puma Camillê – Capoeira Travesti

After discovering the Vogue scene while traveling to capoeira events, Puma noticed similarities in their shared philosophy of affirmation and rebellion. From that revelation, the São Paulo-born artist created her very own form of performance combining capoeira—a historical form of resistance from slavery—and voguing—a celebration of queer identities amid the LGBTQIA-phobic landscape of 1980s Harlem.

Music / Tetine

In 30 years of music career, Eliete Mejorado and Bruno Verner have traversed genres while maintaining a fun and celebration ethos that combines a multitude of sound works, from atonal orchestral pieces to electro punk/bailefunk/miamibass-driven tunes. They have also made a series of ritualistic performances and have extensively exhibited art films and video throughout Europe and South America.

Public talks / Jamille Pinheiro Dias and guests

Director of the Centre of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies (ILSC) at the University of London's School of Advanced Study, Jamille will draw from her extensive work in academia and cultural projects around themes such as environmental issues, racism, indigenous rights. She and her guests will discuss how non-hegemonic cosmogonies, celebrations and rituals can inform societal engagement and knowledge.

