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## Miriam Cahn and Claudia Martínez Garay: Ten Thousand Things

Curated by Weng Xiaoyu

November 8, 2020 - May 23, 2021

Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing

Sifang Art Museum presents *Miriam Cahn and Claudia Martínez Garay: Ten Thousand Things*, the first major two-person exhibition of Swiss artist **Miriam Cahn** (b. 1949, Basel, Switzerland; lives and works in Stampa, Bregaglia) and Peruvian artist **Claudia Martínez Garay** (b. 1983, Ayacucho, Perú; lives and works between Amsterdam and Lima) in China. This exhibition is organized by Weng Xiaoyu and will be on view from November 8, 2020 to May 23, 2021.

*Ten Thousand Things* brings artists Miriam Cahn and Claudia Martínez Garay into an idiosyncratic encounter across generations, geography and culture. Conceived as a two-person exhibition, *Ten Thousand Things* features works of painting, drawing, installation, sculpture, video, collage and site-specific mural that span both artists' careers. The title of the exhibition borrows the ancient Chinese cosmological view of the world as exemplified in the *I Ching*: "Heaven and Earth interact perfectly, and the ten thousand things communicate without obstacle." This view poetically connects the works presented in this exhibition and foregrounds the shared aspects of the artists' practices: they rethink how we as humans connect to nature, other sentient beings, the non-human environment, and man-made systems, and how to represent such relationships.

Mainly known for her works on canvas, Swiss artist Miriam Cahn has committed over four decades of her artistic practice to the exploration of translating emotions into the language of image-making. Contemplating contemporary human conditions, Cahn always places her human subjects in an intrinsic web of worlds of animals and plants that extend our human-centric imaginations. The resulting images are imbued with intensity that respond to trauma, war and violence, and social conflicts. Cahn describes: "I am fish, bird, hedgehog, horse," and "my body remembers older epochs of planetary and natural history. [The glow of] the skin(s) of animals and women shows me how close I can get to animals, to women. But glowing is related to radiate, radiation, irradiated."

Claudia Martínez Garay's works reflect on indigenous mythologies and artifacts, particularly from pre-Columbian cultures. Culminating in layered and iterative installations, her research-based practice investigates how power and violence persist through narratives fabricated by colonialist frameworks. The presentation of her work in this exhibition combines existing work and new commissions including murals, tufting tapestries and rattan animal sculptures that bridge her native Peruvian heritage with craftsmanship from local artisans. These new works and the symbolic elements imbedded in them are inspired by "Pachakuti," a concept from Andean Cosmvision that signals a return to the initial point—as revolution, change and transformation—in a cycle that occurs in time and space.

Cahn and Martínez Garay are both storytellers in their respective and distinguished modes of representation. As Cahn disavows the conventional categorizations and oppositions by creating

hybrid representations of beings unidentifiable at first glance as animal or human, body or plant, female or male, horror or allure, Martínez Garay shades light on what we can relearn from ancient cosmologies to imagine new ways to understand time and space, and to relate to both beings and things. Underneath their colorful and even whimsical aesthetics, fluctuating and metamorphosing, are dynamic and uncompromising energy and force.

The exhibition is supported by Pro Helvetia Shanghai, Swiss Arts Council.