

**Concreto Contínuo**  
***Gian Spina Solo exhibition***

The urban landscape holds a spatial dimension of history. Paulo Mendes da Rocha states: "The city is a mentality and a thought"<sup>1</sup>. Among the elements of the landscape, there are those politically designed to transmit memory. These, imbued with past values, persist in the present determined to continually celebrate its principles, transform themselves into devices of subjectivism directed towards the community. Like all memory space, these elements become a field of dispute and resistance, testifying to the living set of social relations historically shared by members of a society.

In the tension between narrative and audiovisual resources, Gian Spina subverts representations of memory in public space and shows the brutality and incoherence of embodied and naturalized figures in the urban landscape. All the work presented in the exhibition comes from the artist's research around the apologetic historiography that sustains symbolic policies, exercised by public authorities to fabricate idealized and / or consensual images of national order. With each work, Spina reminds us of the ideological function of these myths, forged to sustain power, while *instrumentalizing* silences and forgetfulness.

As a prelude, in *Spomenik*, the artist pronounces his encounter with a Yugoslav public monument isolated in the region of Macedonia. He presents poetic reveries about the ways power tries to perpetuate itself from matter. A few steps ahead, we are led to a succession of heritage monuments contested in cities like Raqqa, Moscow, Cape Town, Skopje, Baghdad, Paris and others. In *Tombamento*, from records captured on the Internet, Spina sews small narrative plots that involve the conflicting presence of symbolic representations, reminding us of the constantly unfinished character of history. These works reflect the itinerant nature of his artistic practice, which periodically investigates and experiments in an immersive way different places in the world.

A gesture of transgression erupts in the centre of the gallery. A body interacts with an urban allegory, adding a new element to its meaning. Spina turns his attention to São Paulo, his hometown, where praise for perverse colonial practices is sustained by society with monuments and memorials. We proceed, clips and zoom-ins of images emphasizes the celebratory and naturalized incorporation of

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<sup>1</sup> Mendes da Rocha, P. *Cidade das Ideias. Ideas City. São Paulo*. São Paulo: Edições Sesc São Paulo e New Museum; 2017. p. 27.

the figure of the Bandeirante<sup>2</sup>. By the side, tributes present in the daily life of the city - from objects and pamphlets to images captured by Google Street View - are gathered by Spina and contradicted by the bloody stories of Montoya<sup>3</sup>. These elements, rarely contextualized in the city, are combined in the exhibition with contrary perspectives, referring to the entrenched colonial mentality of the Brazilian people, spoilt by exploitation and violence. Here the artist examines the delinquent character of the heroes of São Paulo, the narrative dissimulation of official monuments, and scrutinizes the resilient colonialism that our *Concreto Contínuo* reveals about us.

Juliana Caffé

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<sup>2</sup> Name given to the men of the colonial period, who, from the beginning of the sixteenth century, penetrated the interior of South America in search of mineral wealth, indigenous to enslavement and extermination of quilombos.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (Lima, Peru, 1585 - 1652) was a Peruvian Jesuit priest. He was notable for his missionary work in the present territories of Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, and for having written and published in 1640 the *Tesoro de la lengua guarany*, a dictionary of the ancient Guarani language.