

PEDRO NEVES MARQUES  
YWY, VISIONS



Image: Pedro Neves Marques, *YWY, a androide*, 2017 © Pedro Neves Marques

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## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Exhibition title:  
Pedro Neves Marques. YWY, Visions.

Organized by:  
1646  
Fundación “La Caixa”  
Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo

Curator:  
Rosa Lleó

Dates: 13 May – 11 July 2021

Opens: Thursday, 13 May at 11 am

Publication: YWY, Visions. YWY, which means land or territory in Tupí Guaraní, is the name of a fictitious android who is the protagonist of several of Pedro Neves Marques's films. But where does it come from and where does it go? Who is she really? Based on a reflection on this character, the book invites indigenous and non-indigenous authors to think about her through stories, poetry, essays and science fiction, allowing unpredictable paths to be opened to talk about cosmopolitics and relationships with the non-human. Being represented by the actress and artist Zahy Guajajara and settling in a Brazil taken over by the extractive industries and the agriculture of large estates, it also involves reflecting on ecology, indigenous peoples and colonial relations. Years after the excellent volume “The Forest and the School”, Neves Marques composes a new reader with texts by key authors on indigenous peoples and the creation of worlds such as Marisol de la Cadena, Grace Dillon, Pedro Cesarino, the New Red Order collective, among others.



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## PRESENTATION

Pedro Neves Marques created a character, an android played by the Indigenous actress and activist Zahy Guajajara, who named her *ywy*, a term that means ‘land’ or ‘territory’ in her indigenous Tupi-Guarani language. Inhabiting a futuristic, yet eerily familiar Brazil taken over by monocultures, mining, and other extraction industries, *YWY* became a way to complicate expected roles and imaginaries about indigeneity, gender, technology, environmentalism, and science fiction.

After wrapping up Neves Marques’ two earlier films, the artist asked themselves: Who actually is this woman? Where does she come from? How does she speak both to a Western imaginary of robots and the localized livelihood of Native people? *YWY, Visions* makes public a new phase of dialogue between Neves Marques and Guajajara, resulting in a series of new artworks, collaborations, and a publication on the same project by Sternberg Press. Central to the project is the android *YWY*, as protagonist in the narrative, as plot device, and wholly as an artwork.

The character’s co-invention by Neves Marques, a White European author, and Zahy Guajajara, a Native artist from the north of Brazil, sets in motion a dynamic that cannot be resolved solely by one person, but only by giving it away and sharing it with a plurality of voices. First and foremost through Guajajara, in her interpretation of what the character means, and through indigenous authors, but also non-indigenous accomplices, who will be contributing to the publication.

The android as a typical sci-fi figure blurs the lines between human and nonhuman beings, and therefore also inclusion and exclusion, what is deemed natural and

artificial. Engaging in strategies of worldbuilding, *YWY, Visions* combines sci-fi elements with Amerindian cosmologies to contest a linear claim on the future, offering instead a conflict of many worlds and visions in-between indigenous and White perspectives. In doing so, it explores how works can open imaginaries beyond postcolonial tensions, neoliberal policies and the ecocide we are currently living.

*YWY Visions* is an exhibition that displays a great deal of the futuristic and dystopian world created by Pedro Neves in 2017, set in a Brazil that has experienced an environmental disaster. The main character of this sci-fi narrative is the android YWY, played by the indigenous female actor and activist Zahy Guajajara, who has had a very active role in the artist's creative process for the entire project. She was the one who gave the character her name, with YWY meaning 'land' or 'territory' in the indigenous Tupi-Guarani language. Through the character of YWY, a whole series of reflections emerge on indigenous cosmologies; the relationship between the technological, the human and the natural; gender; post-colonial theory; climate change; and the very concept of science fiction.

The characters of the scenarios created by Pedro Neves live in a world dominated by extractive industries, such as the oil industry and soya monoculture. It is a violent imaginary, with strict political and economic control that is actually not a far cry from today's reality. In this universe, the android YWY questions her own condition as a machine and identifies with transgenic crops, with which she establishes a dialogue and which, like her, are artificial and cannot reproduce. The figure of the android – a robot with human form – which is at the centre of so many works of the science fiction genre globally, is paradigmatic of the blurred boundaries between human and non-human beings, and also between inclusion and exclusion, race and gender, and what is considered natural and artificial. Neves's work is immersed in a world of science fiction that explores different ways of understanding life and biology from a more social perspective, showing that the dichotomies between human and non-human, man and woman, and friend and foe make no sense today. In fact, it is an essay on other possibilities of organising the world expressed in different formats.

Pedro Neves's narratives are expressed in different formats, particularly audiovisual, but also in sound and text instal-

lations, and through writing. Owing to their awareness of their white European background and the cross-cutting nature of the project, Neves works with a wide network of collaborators, including Brazilian indigenous communities, illustrators, musicians and thinkers. Zahy Guajajara herself plays a very active role throughout the entire project, which is why she even appears in the title of the exhibition as a collaborator.

The core of the project is an audiovisual trilogy in which the android character YWY links the different parts. The origin of the trilogy lies in the short film *Exterminator Seed* (2017), which opens with a spill from an oil rig that has contaminated the sea, land and air of the Brazilian coast and is spreading to the entire world. One of the workers on the rig is evacuated to Rio de Janeiro, where he meets YWY – the first appearance by the android in the saga – who convinces him to look for a job in the plantations growing transgenic soya and corn, plants as artificial as she is.

The second part of the trilogy, *YWY, the Android* (2017) is practically an intimate portrait of the character. We see YWY speaking to a field of transgenic corn in the agricultural inland region of Brazil. The woman and plants discuss bodily rights, infertility, work and monocrops. The android and the transgenic crops share the fact that they are both sterile and the result of genetic engineering designed for maximum economic gain. This work focuses on the notion of transgenic crops, which is now known to be contributing to the deforestation of the land, because sterile transgenic seeds can only be used once, and if they spread to neighbouring lands through pollination, they lead to infertility. The conversation that YWY holds with the plants connects with the Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's philosophical theories of Amerindian perspectivism, which relativise the separation between humanity, other species and all the elements of nature, as in Amerindian cosmologies. In this context, a human being, an animal, a plant and

a mountain would have the same rights. Pedro Neves works within the framework of this philosophy, which is very close to environmental thinking.

The companion piece to *YWY, the Android* is the video *Learning to Live with the Enemy* (2017), which focuses on the geopolitical context of the story and in which the character of YWY does not appear. It is more of a documentary in nature and follows the process of transforming soya crops into biodiesel. The third part of the trilogy is currently being made by Pedro Neves and will end in Portugal, as a result of the hiatus in filming and restrictions brought about by the pandemic.

Despite this, the exhibition includes a piece that acts as an epilogue to the journey. It was made by Neves in 2020 with the title *YWY, Searching for a Character Between East and West*. Because Neves was unable to shoot in natural settings or with actors, they opted for a digital animation video based on a story of the same name they created for the Guangdong Times Museum in Guangzhou. While travelling through China's Guangdong province, the artist imagined a transgeographical story between Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro, as they found many similarities in the landscapes of both places. And the fact that China is the world's largest consumer of transgenic soya cannot be overlooked. With an aesthetic close to that of Japanese anime, the piece was drawn and animated by the illustrator Hetamoé. In it, the characters of Zahy Guajajara and Pedro Neves Marques appear together for the first time both as themselves and as their fictional counterparts.

The other three works in the exhibition are also part of the universe that surrounds YWY. The piece that welcomes

spectators to the Barcelona exhibition is the also very recent *YWY, Visions – Hekepe*, from 2020. It is a sound installation in which the voice of Zahy Guajajara is heard explaining a narrative from the point of view of indigenous people and based on the experience of an indigenous woman in relation to the life cycle. The artist speaks Ze'egete, the language of the Tenetehára-Guajajara people who live in the northern region of the Brazilian state of Maranhão, to which she belongs. The actor intentionally chose not to translate the original language because, in her opinion, it is impossible to accurately communicate the experience of another culture. The artist wants viewers to feel strange when they hear sounds, words and emotions that are unfamiliar to them, and from there to create their own experience.

The work *Android Loop*, on the other hand, consists of a series of texts that cover the walls of the exhibition spaces where it is shown, like a vicious circle. It includes phrases in Catalan, Spanish, Portuguese and Tupi-Guarani written by Pedro Neves himself, but also quotations from literature and film that show that our vision of the android is not neutral when it comes to race, gender and class. In fact, the first time the word robot – from the Czech *robot*, meaning 'work' – appeared was in the 1920 play *R.U.R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots) by Karel Čapek, in reference to a female machine and linked to the concept of servitude.



### PEDRO NEVES MARQUES

Pedro Neves Marques (they/them) is a visual artist, filmmaker, and writer. They have had solo shows at 1646 (The Hague), Castello di Rivoli (Turin), High Line and e-flux (New York), Gasworks (London), Pérez Art Museum of Miami, and Museu Coleção Berardo (Lisbon), and have shown at Liverpool Biennial, Gwangju Biennial, Guangzhou Image Triennial, Tate Modern Film, Serpentine Cinema, Hamburg Kunstverein, Kadist Foundation, Fundación Botín, SculptureCenter, Matadero, VAC Foundation, Guangdong Times Museum, Yinchuan Biennale, New Museum Triennial, NTU CCA Singapore, and in film festivals like Toronto International Film Festival and the New York Film Festival, among many others.

They have published widely between art, anthropology, and ecology in magazines and publications by MIT Press, Sternberg Press, and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, as well as edited the anthology *The Forest and The School* (Archive Books, 2015) and guest-edited e-flux journal's special issue *Supercommunity* for the Venice Biennale (2015), since available by Verso. They are the author of two short story collections, most recently *Morrer na América* (2017) and a poetry collection, *Sex as Care and Other Viral Poems* (2020) by their poetry publisher pântano books. They are also co-founders of [inhabitants-tv.org](http://inhabitants-tv.org), an online channel for experimental reporting. They were awarded the Present Future Art Prize at Artissima in 2018 and have been short-listed for the Pinchuk Future Generation Art Prize 2021, and their films have been awarded prizes at MixBrasil, Sicilia Queer Film Festival, Short Wave, Go Short, and Moscow International Experimental Film Festival. Born in Lisbon, Portugal, they have lived in London, São Paulo, and New York. For more info: <http://pedronevesmarques.com/>

### ROSA LLEÓ

Rosa Lleó is a curator and writer based in Barcelona. She is founder and director of the small-scale organization The Green Parrot. Since its opening in 2014, it has established itself as a reference space with a collection of exhibitions, publications and activities with local and international artists. The project has also been curator in residency at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies from 2017-2019 producing a series of programmes and events in collaboration with other institutions and the City Council. The Green Parrot's aim is to create a space for dialogue and exhibition in the city of Barcelona working very close to artists and thinkers. It has open a new venue in Spring 2021. For more information: [www.thegreenparrot.org](http://www.thegreenparrot.org) .

Other recent projects of her include An Oasis at Sunset (MAAT, Lisbon) conceived as a major exhibition for the 20th Anniversary of the EDP Prizes and Right Now, a survey of moving image works made in Barcelona (Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona). She writes occasionally for newspaper supplements and other magazines and she teaches Contemporary Art at the Degree of Communications and Media at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona.



## WORKS EXHIBITED

*YWY, Visions – Hekepe*

2020

Zahy Guajajara and Beto Lemos

Stereo sound installation

Voice by Zahy Guajajara

Music performed by Beto Lemos

7 min 56 s

With the support of 1646

This sound piece is a provocation based on the artist's concern about the emergence of the world/universe. It is narrated from the perspective of indigenous people and based, in particular, on the experience of an indigenous woman (colonised and decolonial at the same time). The story unfolds sequentially in three moments: the beginning/birth/appearance, followed by evolution/transgression and, finally, the future/the end/the present. It is an encounter between the artist's two worlds: her ancestral roots versus Western modernity.

The artist speaks Ze'egete, the language of the Tenetehára-Guajajara people who live in the northern region of the Brazilian state of Maranhão, to which she belongs. Zahy Guajajara felt that there was no need to translate the original language because, in her opinion, a translation can never properly communicate the experience of another culture. This opacity is intentional and seeks to cause discomfort in relation to the literal incapacity to understand the content of the piece. The artist wishes the audience to feel and navigate through sounds, words and emotions that are unknown to them and from there to create their own experience.

*Semente Exterminadora*

[*Exterminator Seed*]

2017

Short fiction film

2K, colour, sound

Portuguese with English subtitles

28 min

Written and directed by Pedro Neves Marques

Featuring Zahy Guajajara and Luiz Felipe Lucas

Produced by Capivara Filmes (BR) and Curtas Metragens CRL (PT)

With the support of Fundación Botín and Instituto do Cinema e do Audiovisual Português

An oil spill contaminates the Brazilian coast. Capivara, an oil rig worker, is evacuated to Rio de Janeiro, where the local population is still unaware of the impending disaster. Despite the danger, Capivara only wants to return to offshore

oil rigs. In the city, he is helped by YWY, a woman who convinces him to travel to her homeland of Mato Grosso do Sul to look for work in the soya and corn plantations. Once there, YWY speaks to him about infertility, a characteristic of these transgenic plants and androids like her. However, as Capivara is human, he is incapable of understanding her. This was the first part of the YWY series, in which the characters are introduced together with their backgrounds and contexts. Many of the other films and artworks stem from this and focus on specific elements, such as the protagonist, YWY (*YWY, the Android*), geopolitical context (*Learning to Live with the Enemy*) and the creation of new narratives (*Searching for a Character Between East and West*).

*Learning to Live with the Enemy*

[*Learning to live with the enemy*]

2017

Video

Colour, sound

9 min 30 s

Written and directed by Pedro Neves Marques

Produced by Capivara Filmes (BR)

With the support of Fundación Botín, the Øreggaard Museum and Museu Coleção Berardo

Filmed in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, in a landscape transformed by the monoculture farming of transgenic soy, corn and sugar cane, the video follows the process of transforming soya crops into biodiesel: from the moment of harvest to the work flow of one of the main biodiesel processing factories in the region and the subsequent transport of the fuel and soya flour by train to the Brazilian coast, from where it is shipped to the rest of the world. A series of notes and reflections made by the author are superimposed onto the moving images revolving around two questions: What kind of life lies in transgenic seeds? And what does it mean to live with the enemy?

*YWY, Searching for a Character Between East and West*

[*YWY, Searching for a Character Between East and West*]

2020

Pedro Neves Marques and Hetamoé

Digital animation video, monitor, sound

6 min 30 s

With the support of 1646 and "la Caixa" Foundation

This digital animation video is based on a story of the same name written by Pedro Neves Marques for the Guangdong

Times Museum in Guangzhou. While travelling through Guangdong province, the artist imagined a transgeographical story between Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro. Finding similarities between the two landscapes (both with their iconic steep-sided mountains), they devised the concept of geomimicry. What may at first seem surprising finds a common link in the fact that Macau and Hong Kong were founded as a Portuguese and British colony, respectively, in the growing trade relations between Brazil and China: the gold and silver of Latin America in the past have become soya in the present. Drawn and animated by artist and illustrator Hetamoé imitating Japanese anime, this style is cleverly used to connect YWY to Far Eastern depictions of androids and robots, as well as to Eastern and Western animistic traditions. It is also the first time that Zahy Guajajara and Pedro Neves Marques decide to appear in the pieces both as themselves and as their fictional counterparts.

### *Android Loop*

[*Android Loop*]

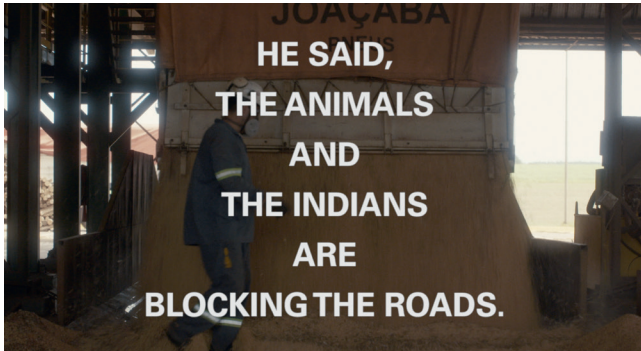
2020–present

Pedro Neves Marques

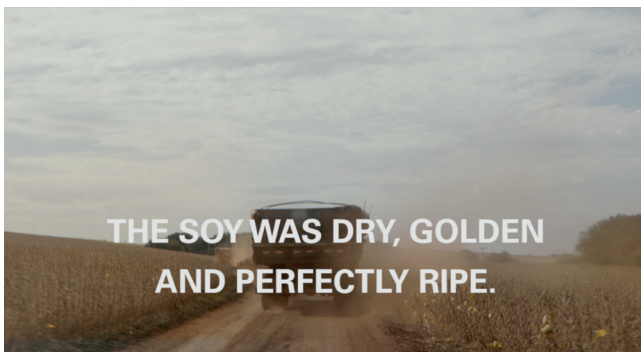
Vinyl lettering on wall

These custom-made wall texts remind us of how the history of androids has always been determined by race, gender and class. An android is a human-like robot that replicates not only minds, but also bodies. Like a vicious circle, this work covers the walls of the exhibition spaces in which it is shown as it questions the political history of androids through the use of poetic language, quotations and paradoxical anecdotes. The feminisation of automatons, robots or androids gained particular significance from the eighteenth century onwards, when not only the Cartesian mechanical philosophy of time, but also the seeds of Victorian gender oppression were brought to light. This servitude became explicitly sexualised in the twentieth century, no longer as a natural urge in need of repression, but as a seductive eroticisation, particularly in artificial intelligence. At the same time, industrialisation and class struggle only served to masculinise the stories featuring androids, eclipsing their long-standing role as sublimations of racial discrimination. In the end, the android can never just be what it is: a being with rights like any other.

## SELECCIÓN DE IMÁGENES



Pedro Neves Marques, *Learning to Live with the Enemy*, 2017 © Pedro Neves Marques



Pedro Neves Marques, *Learning to Live with the Enemy*, 2017 © Pedro Neves Marques



Pedro Neves Marques, *Exterminator Seed*, 2017 © Pedro Neves Marques. Produced by Capivara Filmes, Curtas Metragens CRL and Pedro Neves Marques.

## SELECCIÓN DE IMÁGENES



Pedro Neves Marques, *Exterminator Seed*, 2017  
© Pedro Neves Marques. Produced by Capivara Filmes, Curtas Metragens CRL and Pedro Neves Marques.



Pedro Neves Marques, *Exterminator Seed*, 2017 ©  
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Pedro Neves Marques y Hetamoé, *YWY, Searching for a Character Between East and West*, 2020-21  
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## SELECCIÓN DE IMÁGENES



Pedro Neves Marques y Hetamoé, YWY, *Searching for a Character Between East and West*, 2020-21  
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