

## galeria nara roesler melanie smith

### **Melanie Smith ponders the nature-civilization clash in paintings and a video inspired by the Amazonian region**

Exhibition features the *Fordlandia* video, shot in an area purchased by United States industrialist Henry Ford in the 1920s, along the banks of the Tapajós River

The British-born, Mexico City-based artist Melanie Smith showcases the development of her chromatic research work as she addresses the nature-civilization clash. The *Fordlandia* exhibition, set to run from November 18 to February 1, features a video and several paintings from her more current output.

*Fordlandia*, the video, takes its name from the 14,000-plus square meter area which Henry Ford (1863-1947), the United States automotive industrialist, purchased in the 1920s in Brazil's Pará state, along the banks of the Tapajós River. Now a part of the Aveiro municipality, the area was then a city destined to thrive on rubber extraction for making tires for Ford's cars, an alternative to latex extracted in Malaysia.

#### opening

18.11.2014 19h > 22h

#### exhibition

18.11 > 31.01.2015

seg > sex 10h > 19h

sáb 11h > 15h

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Due to culture clash between native workers and American executives, the barrenness of the soil and the foreigners' inexperience in rubber tree farming, the venture proved a complete disaster. As a consequence, the area, which was supposed to become a thriving city, was left abandoned, the ruins of buildings gradually overrun by the dense vegetation.

In her pictorial research, whose primary focus is the use of color, Melanie Smith appropriates a gamut of shades of green and the forest emerges as a thick, sovereign mass, devoid of the conciliatory approach that drives current eco-friendly thinking. In Smith's paintings, the forest does not yield to human whims; it is, first and foremost, a mammoth living organism.

The video opposes green tones and elements such as trucks, aged concrete and roads carved into the forest, which, instead of bowing down to man's civilizing impulse, imposes itself in its power to resist and reintegrate. Being in the forest means letting go of culture's totalitarian impulse in the constant struggle for adaptation between natural and urban characteristics.

### About the artist

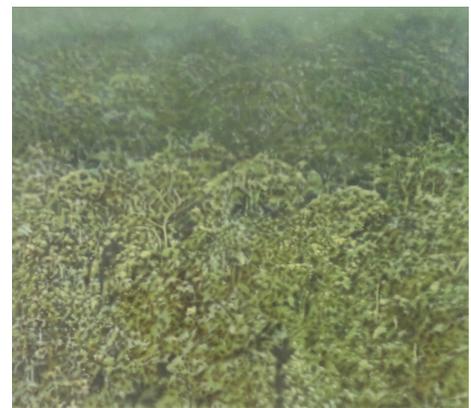
Melanie Smith was born in 1965 in Poole, United Kingdom, and later moved to Mexico City, Mexico. She has been featured in the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Italy (2011); the 8<sup>th</sup> Mercosul Biennial, in Porto Alegre, Brazil (2011); and the 8<sup>th</sup> Havana Biennial, Cuba (2003). Recent group shows include: Under the Mexican sky: Gabriel Figueroa – art and film (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, USA, 2013); Mexico inside out: themes in art since 1990 (Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, USA, 2013); Salvajes - digesting Europe piece by piece (Traneudstillingen Exhibition Space, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2012); Another victory over the sun (Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, USA, 2011); The Smithsonian effect (Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, USA, 2011); and The twentieth century (Tate, Liverpool, England, 2009); solo shows include Melanie Smith (MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, England, 2014); Melanie Smith



**fordlandia VI**, 2014  
acrylic enamel on acrylic  
150 x 180 cm



**fordlandia**, 2014  
video full HD  
29'42"



**fordlandia IX**, 2014  
acrylic enamel on acrylic  
140 x 180 cm

(Contemporary Art Museum Houston, Houston, USA, 2014); Xilitla (FLORA ars+natura, Bogotá, Colombia, 2013); Irretratabilidad, ilegibilidad, inestabilidad (Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico, 2013); Melanie Smith (Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Recife, Brazil, 2012); Short circuit, Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany, 2012); Bulto (Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru, 2011); and Xilitla (El Eco, Mexico City, Mexico, 2010).