

nara roesler

brígida baltar



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b. 1959, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

d. 2022, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The work of Brígida Baltar spanned across a wide range of mediums, including video, performance, installation, drawing, and sculpture. Baltar's artistic production began in the 1990s with small poetic gestures, developed in her studio-home in Botafogo, a neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro. During nearly ten years, the artist collected items of domestic life such as the water dripping through small cracks on her roof, or dust falling from the bricks of her walls. This act of collecting subsequently expanded into the outside world, giving rise to the *Coletas* series, an attempt at capturing mist, dew and ocean breeze—an ultimately impossible or rather, intangible task. In the meantime, she also created a variety of works using the collected brick dust, ranging from landscape drawings on paper, or ornate compositions drawn directly on walls or floors, to sculptures, proposing pieces that uniquely intertwined her past and present practice until her passing.

The artist recurrently based her artistic process in fabulation, intertwining and often embodying human and animal characteristics as a tool to redefine our relationship with nature. This is notably visible in works such as *Ghost Crab*, *Bee House* and *Voar*. Her later work with ceramic engages with the relationship between body and shelter, one of the main themes in her work, proposing shapes of sea shells that merge with those of the human body. In her late years, the artist focused on embroidery, producing works related to her body and her skin, re-affirming her career-long ability to use her personal experience to address philosophical concepts and sensations.

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selected solo exhibitions

- *Brígida Baltar (1959-2022): To make the world a shelter*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2023)
- *Brígida Baltar: Filmes*, Espaço Cultural BNDES, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)
- *A carne do mar*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2018)
- SAM Art Project, Paris, France (2012)
- *O amor do pássaro rebelde*, Cavalariças, Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2012)
- *Brígida Baltar – Passagem Secreta*, Fundação Eva Klabin, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2007)

selected group exhibitions

- *Terra abrecaminhos*, Sesc Pompeia, São Paulo, Brasil (2023)
- *Meu corpo: território de disputa*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2023)
- *The Fold in the Horizon*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2022)
- 12th Mercosul Biennial, Brazil (2020)
- *Alegria – A natureza-morta nas coleções MAM Rio*, Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2019)
- *I Remember Earth, Magasin des horizons*, Centre d'arts et de Cultures, Grenoble, France (2019)
- *Neither-nor: Abstract Landscapes, Portraits and Still Lives*, Terra-Art Project, London, UK (2017)
- *Constructing views: experimental film and video from Brazil*, New Museum, New York, USA (2010)

selected collections

- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
- Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH), Houston, USA
- Museu de Arte do Rio (MAR), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Museum of Contemporary Art of Cleveland (MOCA), Cleveland, USA

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the house and brick dust

1990s–2000s

From the mid-1990s, Brígida Baltar turned to her own house as a source of inspiration finding in it the thematic and materials to develop a body of work that she would continue working with for decades to come. From her home, the artist experienced and developed ideas around the house's structure, its relationship with the body, inhabitation, and intimacy, engaging with and employing the building's physical elements to materialize her propositions. Baltar describes the process as follows: 'I started performing short actions and photographing myself through space, as I increasingly began to dig several holes everywhere—I opened windows—and made the piece *Abrigo* [Shelter] (1996) in which I drew and excavated the shape of my own body on the wall, with the exact profile and depth. At that time, dust, drips from roof leaks, chips of paint, wood, and pieces of the wall began to be part of my work. With bricks, I developed a series of sculptures, and when I had to leave that house I carried with me the bricks I had taken out, now crushed into dust.'



Untitled, 2005
photo-action
30 x 40 cm | 11.8 x 15.7 in



Abrigo [Shelter], 1996
photo-action
4 photographs of
60 x 40 cm | 23.6 x 15.7 in each



Through this process, Brígida Baltar began to investigate the process of disappearance, or dematerialization by challenging the concept of owning a home as a fixed, stable, localized matter. By extracting dust and bricks from the walls, the house was suddenly able to travel, and serve as a medium to build other objects—in *Casa* (1997) for example, she placed the dust collected from the walls of her home into glass bottles. Alternatively, in *Torre* (1996) the artist extricated entire bricks from the wall and repurposed them to create another shelter in a smaller-scale so as to closely encapsulate and embrace her body.

Casa [Home], 1997
20 glass bottles filled
with brick dust on wood box
50 x 30 x 7 cm | 19.7 x 11.8 x 2.8 in



Torre [Tower], 1996
 photo-action
 5 photographs of
 14 x 10 cm | 5.5 x 3.9 in each

 →
A horta da casa
[The Home Garden], 1996/2019
 seasoning and herbs
 planted on 21 bricks
 variable dimensions



In 2005, the artist moved to a new home but took parts of her old house with her. Baltar began to use the materials and the dust as a medium to draw images on walls, on the floor, and on paper, as well as construct small sculptures, many of which depicted landscapes from Rio de Janeiro. According to art critic Moacir dos Anjos, 'The fact that they were made with brick dust from her home, make these images about asserting conviviality, rather than descriptive pieces of topographies and flora. The drawings are not meant to reproduce realistically that which meets the viewer's eyes; rather, they are meant to render an affective record of geography and botany to which they feel a sense of belonging.'

Brígida Baltar continues to explore brick dust and the brick's own form through several different artistic iterations. On the occasion of her exhibition at Juazeiro do Norte and in Fortaleza, she notably mixed dust from her home with soil from other regions, such as that of Cariri.



Floresta vermelha
[Red Forest], 2009
brick dust on paper
90 x 140 cm | 35.4 x 55.1 in

→
exhibition view
Pó de casa, 2007
Galeria Nara Roesler,
São Paulo, Brasil





Flora do sertão
[Flora from Sertão], 2008
dust from region of sertão on
paper, wood and stamp
200 x 300 cm | 78.7 x 118.1 in

exhibition view
The Peripatetic School:
Itinerant Drawing from
Latin America, 2011
The Drawing Room, London, UK





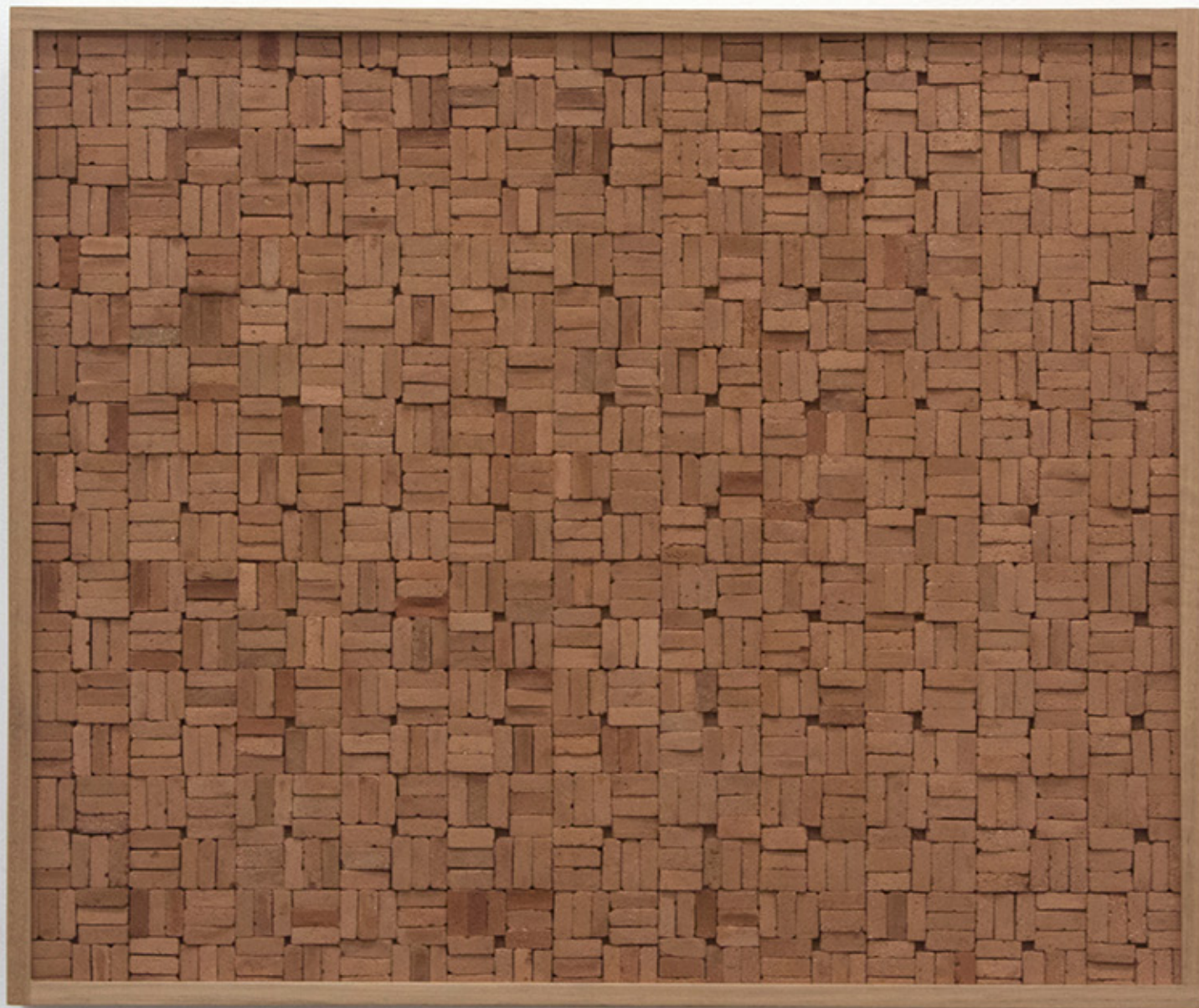
Sem título [Untitled], 2010
brick dust on paper
29 x 21 cm | 11.4 x 8.3 in



Sem título [Untitled], 2010
brick dust on paper
29 x 21 cm | 11.4 x 8.3 in



Sem título [Untitled], 2010
brick dust on paper
29 x 21 cm | 11.4 x 8.3 in



Chão [Floor], 2018
molded brick dust
48,5 x 58,5 cm | 19.1 x 23 in



exhibition view of
*Um céu entre paredes / An Indoor
Heaven*, 2006
Firstsite, Colchester, UK
molded brick dust and brick dust
in floor fissures



The idea for Brígida Baltar's *Canto brocado* stemmed from an ephemeral installation where she laid out brick dust throughout the exhibition space on the occasion of Brígida Baltar – *Passagem secreta* at Fundação Eva Klabin in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2007. The dust was minutely spread from a corner of the exhibition floor, recreating the motif of the institution's wallpapers. She later installed subsequent versions of *Canto Brocado*, occasionally reproducing alternative designs in dialogue with the exhibition space. Notably, in 2011, Baltar created a *Canto brocado* at Galeria 713 in Buenos Aires, that evoked the gallery's hydraulic tiles' design. The work is therefore not only ephemeral, but also adaptable to different spaces, their particular designs and architecture, and thus, their particular histories. In recreating structural motifs by using brick powder, the artist once more offers an alternative to the rigidity of the shelter as a concept by balancing its transient counterparts.

Canto brocado
[Corner Brocade], 2007
brick dust on floor
variable dimensions

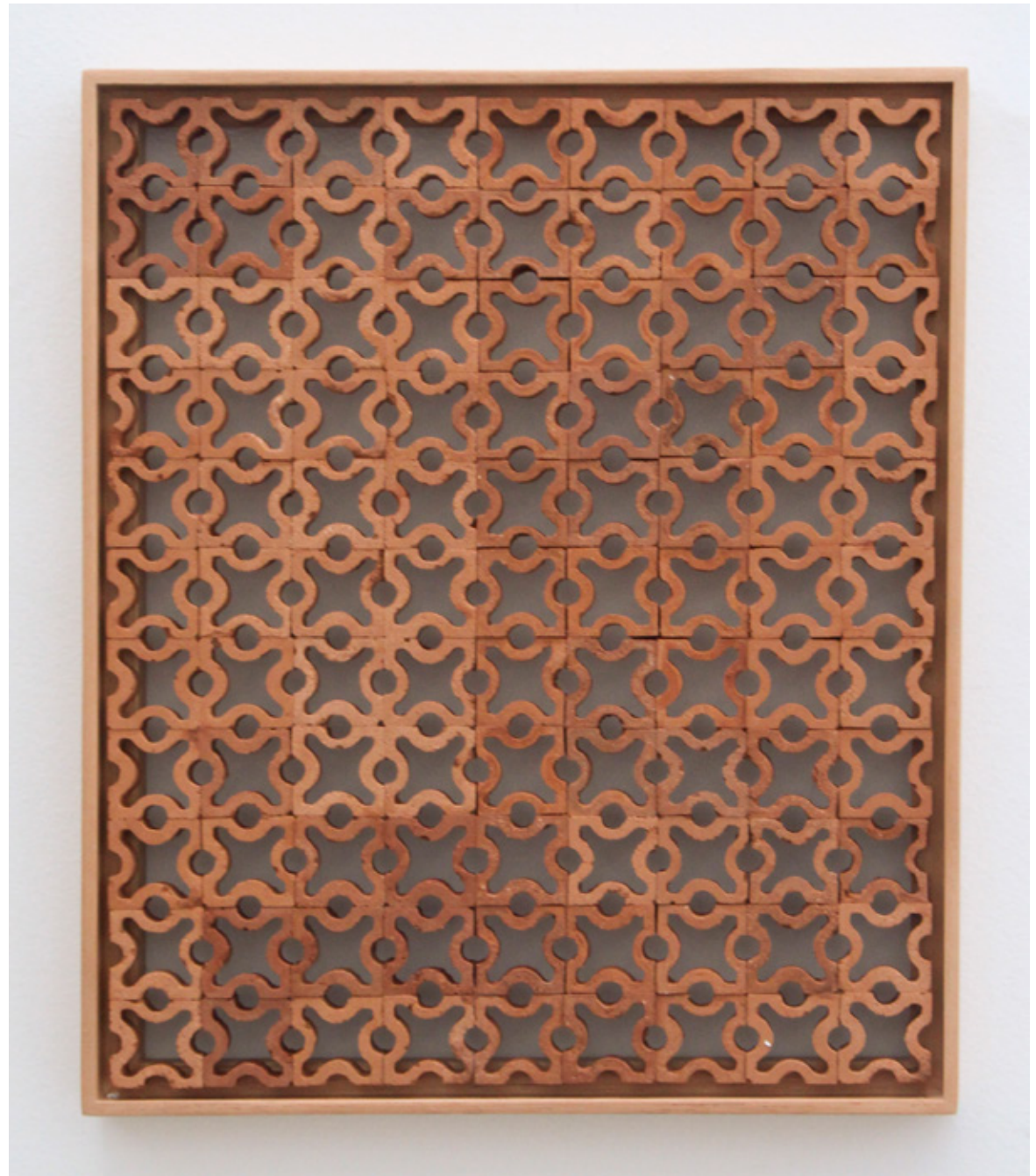
exhibition view
Brígida Baltar –
Passagem Secreta, 2007
Projeto Respiração – Fundação
Eva Klabin, Rio de Janeiro,
Brazil (detail)

→
Sala brocada [Room Brocade], 2010
exhibition view of
Um Céu Entre Paredes, 2010
Galeria Baobá, Fundação Joaquim
Nabuco, Recife, Brasil



Renda cobogó is an example of Brígida Baltar's repurposing of brick dust as part of an endeavor to redefine the rigidity of walls, or the home, into a more fluid, less divisive concept. This work is the result of the artist placing some of the powder gathered from her house into cobogó brick molds. This particular type of brick was created in the North-East of Brazil in 1920, yet, it is characteristic of Brazilian Modernist architecture—it is acclaimed not only for its effective ventilation, allowing for the wind to blow through the walls but also for its unique filtering of light. During the day, the bricks allow for sunlight to beam through its cavities, casting mosaics of light and shadow onto the interiors, while at night the darkness entwines with domestic illumination, continuously creating ever-changing plays on luminosity. Baltar's use of cobogó is perhaps best explained as another way for the artist to engage and interact with the transience of nature—of wind, of light and shadow—in creating a structure that may join two spaces, rather than divide, and allow for the ephemeral to invade one's intimate space.

Renda cobogó [Cobogó Lace], 2012
molded brick dust
33,5 x 25 cm | 13.2 x 9.8 in





collections 1993–2005

The artist's research within the house—, of selecting and storing materials, of keeping dust and drips from roof leaks inside flasks— was eventually expanded into nature. Indeed, over a decade, Brígida Baltar carried out several performative activities whereby she attempted to capture and collect fleeting substances such as dew, fog, or seawater mist. In her own words, 'My work is essentially about selection, storage and organization.'

The performances were documented through photographs and videos, both analog and digital, which produced intimate shots of the artist's scoutings of Rio de Janeiro's mountains and coasts at dawn. Glass flasks used to collect the mist, vinyl disks, drawings, watercolors and costumes are all emblematic elements within Baltar's investigations.

A coleta da neblina #24
[Mist Collecting #24], 1996–1999
photo-action
21 x 32 cm | 8.3 x 12.6 in



A coleta da neblina
[*Mist Collecting*], 1996–1999
photo-action
24 photographs of
21 x 32 cm | 8.3 x 12.6 in each



A coleta da neblina
[Sea Air Collecting], 2001
photo-action
40 x 60 cm | 15.7 x 23.6 in



A coleta do orvalho
[Dew collecting], 2001
photo-action
40 x 60 cm | 15.7 x 23.6 in

Collections is one of the artist's most important bodies of work, having been exhibited in numerous institutions worldwide. According to curator Lisette Lagnado, 'It was a criticism of current society's speed and endless blabbering, but it was also a whisper in thick woods. Ironically, these were the actions that made her known in the milieu of art.' While curator Andrea Giunta places it as a continuation of Lygia Clark's investigations: 'we cannot forget about Lygia and her touchable objects, in her research about the texture of stones, of sand, of textiles. Brígida touches humidity, the opaque, the vague, the diluted and dampened color, hidden in exhalation. Touching the intangible, the color detained in white hues.'

[Watch the video.](#)



Coletor de orvalho
[Dew Collector], 2005
blown glass and wood
9 x 67 cm | 3.5 x 26.4 in

→
exhibition view of
Brígida Baltar - Collecting
Humidity, 2002
Kunsthhaus Baselland,
Muttentz, Switzerland







beehouse 2002

In 2002, Brígida Baltar was invited to participate in the 25th Biennial of Sao Paulo, titled Metropolitan Iconographies and curated around the theme of the city by Alfons Hug and Agnaldo Farias. With this in mind, Baltar chose to investigate the honeycomb as a means of further developing her recurrent explorations of the home and of collectivity. The artist was interested in understanding how bees organize collectively and build such structures with the common objectives of obtaining shelter and food. Beehouse began with the artist choosing a honey-colored textile, which she sewed following the smocking technique, known as 'beehouse' in Portuguese. The artist placed the resulting structure onto different parts of her body, entwining bodily and domestic matters. She performed this work both within her house and in nature, recording her actions through photos and videos. Beehouse also consists of a series of drawings through which the artist further explored the structure and physicality of the honeycomb.

[Watch the video](#)

←

Neblina maresia orvalho coletas,
[Mist Sea air Dew collections], 2001
vinyl record
31,5 x 31,3 cm | 12.4 x 12.3 in

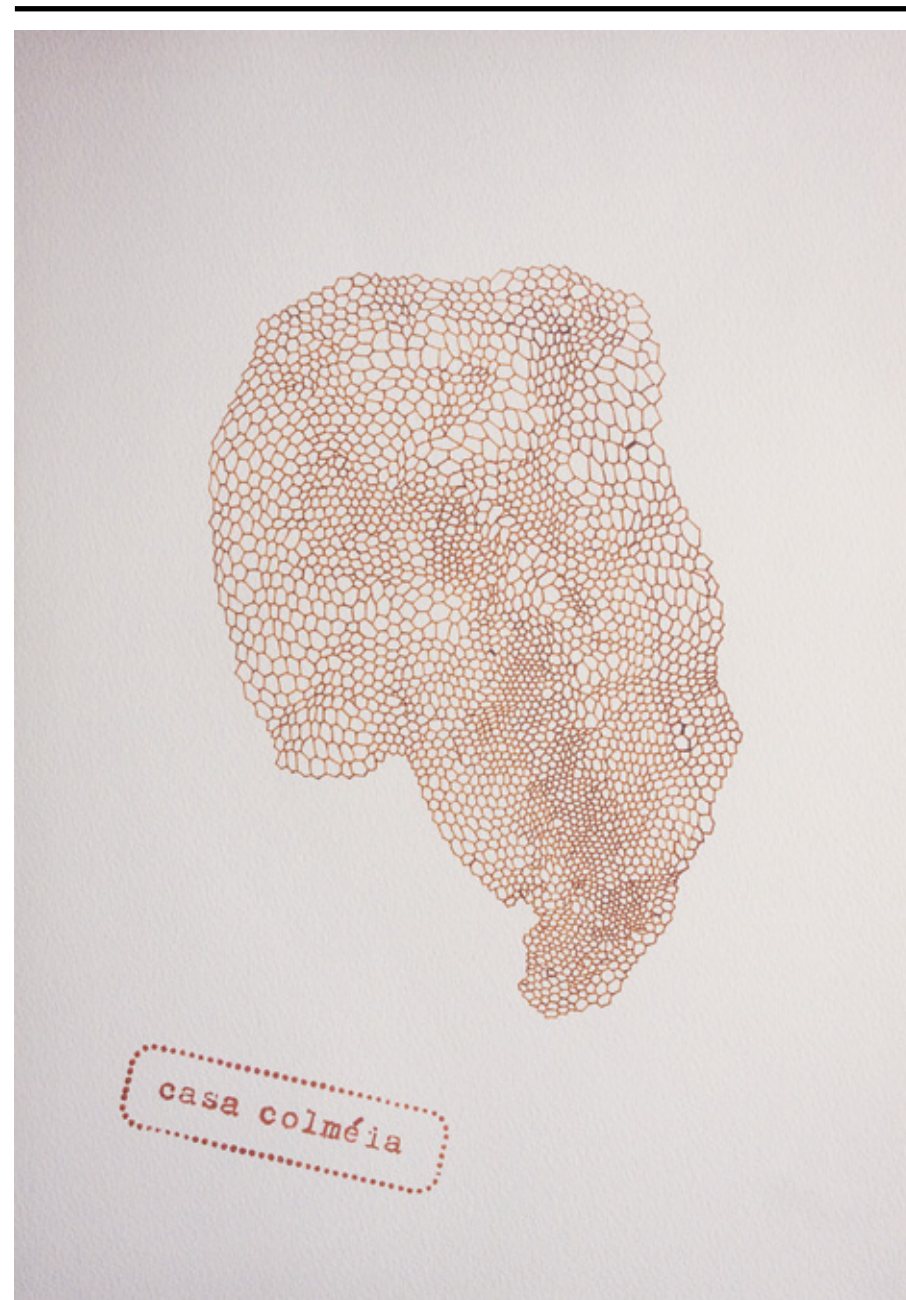
Casa de abelha [Beehouse], 2002
photo-action
40 x 60 cm | 15.7 x 23.6 in



Casa de abelha [Beehouse], 2002
 photo-action
 10 photographs of
 25 x 36 cm | 9.8 x 14.2 in each

→
 left
 Casa de abelha [Beehouse], 2003
 ink and stamp on paper
 40 x 30 cm | 15.7 x 11.8 in

→
 right
 Casa de abelha [Beehouse], 2003
 ink and stamp on paper
 40 x 30 cm | 15.7 x 11.8 in



maria farinha ghost crab 2004

Maria Farinha Ghost Crab is a fable-film inspired by a type of sand crab known as ghost crab, due to its agile and fleeting-like behavior, which is commonly found on the East Coast of the United States and on Brazilian beaches. In this work Brígida Baltar invited the actress Lorena da Silva to enact Maria Farinha (a name used to designate ghost crabs in Brazil), having to personify the animal, running hurriedly and incessantly digging holes in the sand. She also wore shell-shaped headphones through which she listened to sounds meant to capture the character's dream, reverie and delirious experience. The film was recorded on the island of Ilha Grande, Rio de Janeiro in 2004, using 16 mm film stock and produced with the kind support of CAPACETE.

[Watch the video](#)





Maria Farinha Ghost Crab, 2004
fiber glass
variable dimensions



Maria Farinha Ghost Crab, 2004
ink on paper
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.7 in



Maria Farinha Ghost Crab, 2004
ink on paper
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.7 in



Maria Farinha Ghost Crab, 2004
ink on paper
75 x 55 cm | 29.5 x 21.7 in





flying 2011–2012

This body of work engages with the ideas of falling, flying, vertigo and landing, as well as matters of light and shadow through a process of reappropriation of objects. In modifying their nature and purpose the artist created numerous sculptures and oneiric installations. Notably, *A queda* (2011) consists of a monumental chandelier, which the artist suspends just above the floor as if time—or gravity—had been suspended at a fragment of time immediately before the chandelier would crash on the ground. Another example lies in the work *Untitled* (2011), which is composed of a bronze harp accompanied by a collection of bronze wings, installed side by side. Here, the artist establishes physical and symbolic tension between suspension and fall, the angelical and the mundane, the lightness of feathers and the shiny heaviness of metal.

←

exhibition view
Brígida Baltar: Filmes, 2019
Espaço Cultural BNDES,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Teatro [Theater], 2011
wood and video
165 x 40 x 50 cm | 65 x 15.7 x 19.7 in



Curator Marcelo Campos reflects on the artist's use of everyday objects in unexpected situations, stating that 'The appropriation of objects in unfinished and damaged sculptures brings back the ghostly shadows of history. At the same time, homage is paid to anti manufacture as a possibility of creation. It is finished, it is done. They are works and artifacts. Heritage is no longer unwanted. On the contrary, its meaning is expanded. One no longer searches for literal history, which connects image and myth, but rather activates the bric-a-brac of a sort of collage.'

Other iterations of the series *Flying* can be described as micro-installations consisting of small wood boxes, which are sculpted into the shape of tiny theaters. The stage is occupied by small screens that transmit videos created by Baltar, whereby shadows are presented as main characters. While the installations convey the artist's early work with theatrical scenography, the creation of microcosmic theaters engages with the idea of collective experiences establishing an intimate rapport through the manipulation of scale.



Voar [To Fly], 2011
(photographic still)
16 mm film
07'00" (loop)

[Watch an excerpt](#)



Sem título [Untitled], 2011
bronze
160 x 60 x 40 cm | 190 x 110 x 60 cm





Escultura alada I
[Winged Sculpture I], 2011
 alabaster candlestick, glass,
 feathers, brocade carpet and wood
 13 x 27,5 x 23,5 cm | 5.1 x 10.8 x 9.3 in



Escultura alada III
[Winged Sculpture III], 2011
 stone, metal, ceramic
 and peacock feather
 13,5 x 27 x 12,5 cm | 5.3 x 10.6 x 4.9 in

Brígida Baltar's embroideries emerged as the artist worked on developing a different relationship with temporality, using waiting periods and pauses of activity as opportunities to engage in artisanal experimentations with time.

With this in mind, Brígida Baltar developed three series. The first is titled *A quimera das plantas* (2015–2016) [*The Chimera of Plants*] and consists of colorful embroideries representing hybrid plants executed on rectangular linen textiles. The resulting images are inspired by that of a chimera, which in Greek mythology designate figures that emerge as a whole made up of fragments of various different beings. Having received a bone marrow transplant from her brother, Baltar became intrigued by hybridism in nature and turned to explore the various forms in which they surge in the environment.

A quimera das plantas
[O shimeji e a cebola rôxa]
[The plant chimera
[The shimeji and the red onion]],
2016
embroidery on fabric
60 x 41 cm | 23.6 x 16.1 in





←
left
A quimera das plantas
[Costela de Adão e folha da Begônia]
[The plant chimera [Monstera
deliciosa and Begonia leaf]], 2015
embroidery on fabric
34 x 25,5 cm | 13.4 x 10 in

←
right
A quimera das plantas
[Espada de São Jorge e Costela
de Adão] [The plant chimera
[Saint George's sword and
Monstera deliciosa]], 2015
embroidery on fabric
35,5 x 29,5 cm | 14 x 11.6 in

Irmãos [Siblings], 2015
philodendron and philodendron
hederaceum on bronze
31 x 10 x 5 cm | 12.2 x 3.9 x 2 in



The second body of work is titled *Autorretrato com pelos (2016)* [*Self-portraits With Hair*]. The series is made up of ten handkerchiefs embroidered with the image of the artist's self-portrait, onto which she adds patches of thread that resemble facial hair. The works were inspired by Baltar's sense of discomfort with her own body as she began to notice new hair growth throughout her body as a reaction to medical treatments. It is also interesting to note, that in using tissues as the canvas, the artist invades a traditionally intimate and male object with an image of herself, alluding once again to biological hybridity.

Autorretrato com pelos
[*Self-portrait With Hair*], 2016
embroidery on fabric
38 x 37 cm | 15 x 14.6 in





Autorretrato com pelos
[Self-portrait With Hair], 2016
embroidery on fabric
38 x 37 cm | 15 x 14.6 in

The third body of works is characterized by the artist's engagement with fabric as a metaphor for the skin. Baltar embroiders large areas of the cloth, always leaving some parts untouched as a means of creating a divide in thickness and materiality that gives the piece a sense of organic corporeality, further amplified by the human scale of the works. The surface also consists of small, almost ornamental representations of bruises, or sores, randomly dispersed throughout the fabric, reinforcing the notion of the body, the organic, and suggesting the piece could in fact be part of one's own figure.

In 2017, Baltar began yet another set of works titled *Minha pele sua pele* (2017–2019) [*My Skin, Your Skin*], whereby she covers textiles with embroidered areas in two different colors, suggesting an encounter and coexistence of chromatic bodies in the same space.

Os hematomas da planta
[*The Plant's Hematomas*], 2016
embroidery on fabric
73,5 x 77,5 cm | 28.9 x 30.5 in





Os hematomas
[The Hematomas], 2016
embroidery on fabric
75 x 46 cm | 29.5 x 18.1 in



As aftas [The Mouth Sores], 2016
embroidery on fabric
37 x 37 cm | 14.6 x 14.6 in



As petéquias
[*The Petechiaes*], 2016
embroidery on fabric
76 x 54 cm | 29.9 x 21.3 in



A mão que arde
[The Hand That Burns], 2016
oil on bronze
9 x 9 x 29 cm | 3.5 x 3.5 x 11.4 in



O hematoma
[The Hematoma], 2016
oil on porcelain
35 x 23,5 x 1 cm | 13.8 x 9.3 x 0.4 in



O hematoma
[The Hematoma], 2016
oil on porcelain
33 x 20,7 x 1 cm | 13 x 8.15 x 0.4 in

the flesh of the sea 2017–2018

The flesh of the sea forms a group of ceramic sculptures in organic forms, which sometimes resemble shells that arguably come from the deepest parts of the ocean. In reliving her childhood memories, Baltar remembers strolling across Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro looking for perfect shells whilst she remembers finding mostly fragments. It took little for her to realize what she sees as the power of the incompleteness of organic elements. Furthermore, her interest in the chimerical and fabulous nature extends throughout this body of work. Here, Baltar intertwined notions of the home and intimacy once again, while sensually evoking parts of the female human body in its formal appearance.

Curator Marcelo Campos wrote on the series, saying that: ‘The Flesh of the Sea sees Brígida Baltar showing a heightened interest in ceramics, a material featured in her work since the beginning of her career in the 1990s. Among these experimentations, in addition to the interest in searching for abyssal colors, the pieces present a wealth of adverse pinks and deep blues. They thus resemble bodily forms and elements, quasi-organs, like vaginas, mouths, noses, eyes. The artist positions herself to scrutinize the burns in the material and its surprises, the change in sheen and tonality, the fissures, the transparency.’



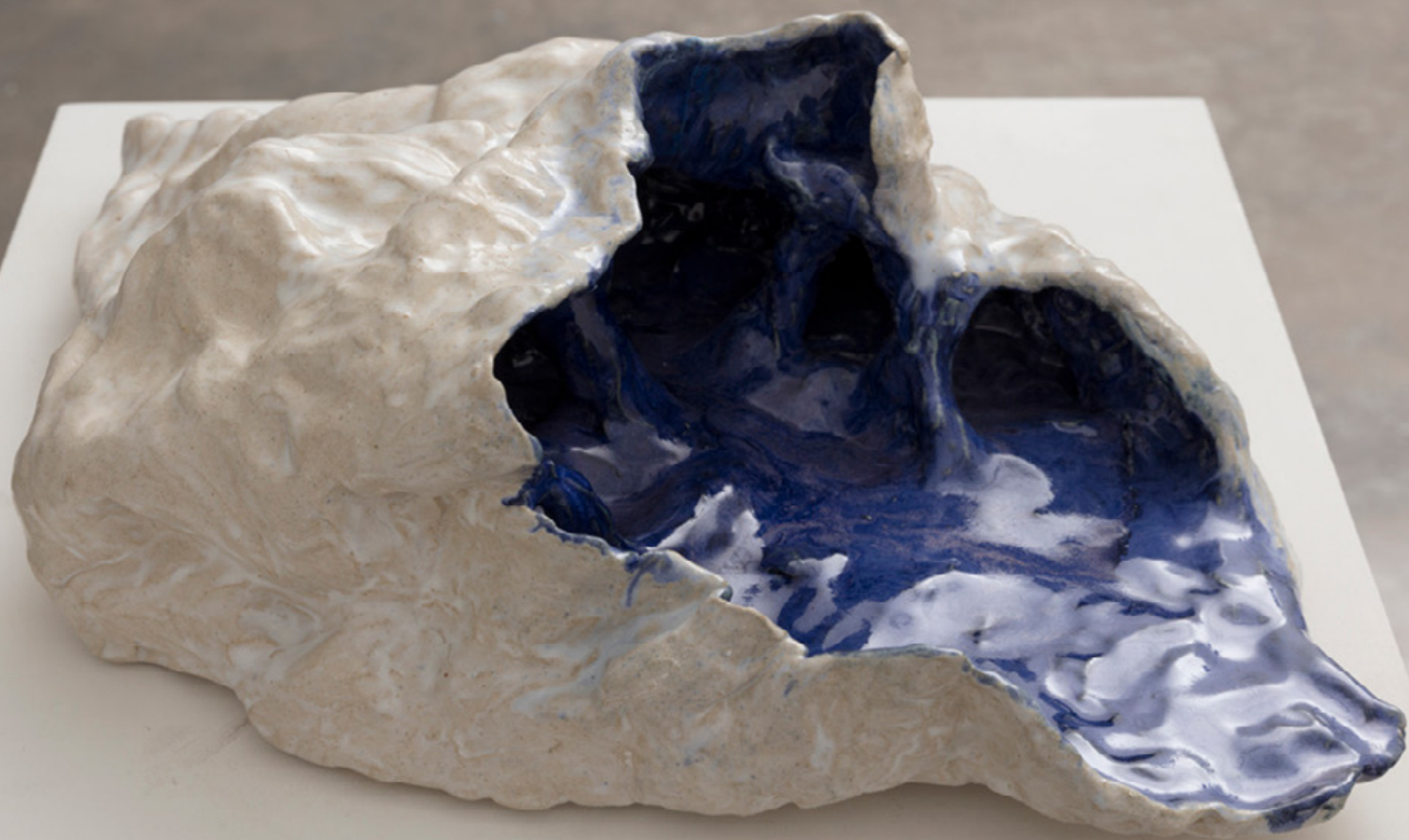
A carne do mar III
[The Flesh of the Sea III], 2018
glazed ceramic
44 x 22 x 24 cm | 17.3 x 8.7 x 9.4 in





←
exhibition view
A carne do mar, 2018
Galeria Nara Roesler,
São Paulo, Brazil

A carne do mar
[*The Flesh of the Sea*], 2017
enamelled ceramics
83 x 108 x 8,5 cm
32.7 x 42.5 x 3.3 in





←

Concha gruta II [Cave shell II], 2017
glazed ceramic
15 x 59 x 57 cm | 5.9 x 23.2 x 22.4 in

As lambidas do mar
[The Sea's Licks], 2017
ceramic and enamel
19 x 33 x 74 cm | 7.5 x 13 x 29.1 in





O berro da concha
[The Shell's Bellow], 2017
ceramic and enamel
22 x 25 x 30 cm | 8.7 x 9.8 x 11.8 in



A concha triste
[The Sad Shell], 2017
glazed pottery
25 x 20 x 23 cm | 9.8 x 7.9 x 9.1 in

Mergulho [Dip], 2018
bronze with silver bath
51 x 38 x 36 cm | 20.1 x 15 x 14.2 in



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