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Ford Foundation Gallery presents *Cantando Bajito: Chorus*



Image courtesy of Archivo de la Memoria Trans Argentina (Trans Memory Archive Argentina).

Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice | 320 E 43rd Street, New York

On View October 8 - December 7, 2024

Opening Event October 8, 2024 | 5-7pm

Convening Event October 10, 2024 | 9am-5pm

Gallery Hours: Monday - Saturday | 11am-6pm

New York, NY – The [Ford Foundation Gallery](https://fordfoundation.org/gallery) is pleased to present ***Cantando Bajito: Chorus***, the final movement of a three-part exhibition series celebrating strategies for resistance in the wake of rising gender-based violence. The power of many voices joining in harmony becomes a fitting metaphor for this culminating show that

considers the politically powerful act of coming together. The exhibition is an invitation to reflect on the importance of collective making, organizing, and care arising from interdependence found in shared struggles. *Chorus* opens on October 8th with a celebration from 5PM to 7PM and a convening event on October 10th from 9AM to 5PM. The convening brings the series' artists, curators, practitioners, and the general public into dialogue on the series' themes and will feature special talks, performances, and other interventions by the shows' artists and archives.

Chorus is curated by Roxana Fabius, Beya Othmani, Mindy Seu, and Susana Vargas Cervantes. It assembles artworks and archives by **Hoda Afshar**, **Archivo de la Memoria Trans Argentina (Trans Memory Archive Argentina)**, **Archivo Memoria Trans México/Hospital de ropa (Trans Memory Archive Mexico/Clothing Hospital)**, **Chloë Bass**, **Tania Candiani**, **Fatma Charfi**, **Lizania Cruz**, **Cyberfeminism Index**, **FAQ?**, **Cecilia Granara**, **Los Angeles Contemporary Archive**, **Mai Ling**, and **Textiles Semillas (Textiles as Seeds)**. Together, the works illuminate how the coming together of bodies forges power out of precarity.

The voice in performance carries symbolic resonance through its relational qualities that connect people. *Chorus* evokes a twofold meaning: a choral body—an assembly of disparate voices that build together—and the refrain of a song, which carries both a repeating central idea and a 'hook' that draws others in to add their voice. *Chorus* invites all to enter into a collective performance. This performance aims to reflect what sociologist Leticia Sabsay has called the 'aesthetics of vulnerability.' This concept shows the liberating potential of bodies that face vulnerability *en masse*, rallying against the all-too-present aesthetics of cruelty that seeks to divide people along gendered, sexualized, racialized, and national lines. *Chorus* is a call to join in a multivocal refrain of resistance transcending dividing lines.

Artworks in *Chorus* reflect how vulnerability can act as an effective mobilizing force, and the exhibition recognizes the agency of those facing and countering systemic violence together. For theorist Judith Butler, it is in vulnerability, in marching together in the streets, that resistance is found. In *Mutation I* (1992) by artist **Fatma Charfi**, whose creation of humanoid figures from paper arose as an expression of her grief at the devastations of the Gulf War, figures in black ink intermingle in a flexible net-like pattern. Echoing images of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the formations of figures in the piece, which appear to fall, float, and bend, and to rise, recover, and connect, evoke the strength of bodies in alliance and the vulnerability that binds them. Through these patterns, the interconnected bodies in motion suggest the forms of performance that

Butler finds at the heart of collective political mobilization. Several other artworks in *Chorus* also echo strategies that draw on performance, using media, symbols, chants, gestures, and more. **Hoda Afshar**'s photographic series *In Turn* (2023) centers the symbolic performance of hair-braiding in women's movements in Iran. Like the Kurdish protest slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom" that transcended its original context, the photos show women living outside of Iran wearing braids to support the movements, weaving interconnections. Similarly, **Tania Candiani**'s paintings from the series *Manifestantes (Protesters)* (2022-2024), based on recovered press photos of protestors in feminist movements around the world, are embroidered to show differences, but united by shared scale, color, form, and purpose. They underscore the importance of voice and gesture in protest and the translocal nature of collective mobilization.

In addition to looking at contemporary examples of feminist public protest, *Chorus* considers how other social structures, from family groups to artistic collectives, provide support under precarity, oppression, or threat. In the installation *El tejido mensaje-aliento-pensamiento-resistencia (The weaving message-breath-thought-resistance)* (2024) by **Textiles Semillas**—a union of weavers, artists, and activists—weavings displayed on an iron framing structure evoke how the groups uphold each other in the face of epistemicide enacted on Indigenous people in Argentina through their practices. Also exploring structures of support, **Chloë Bass**'s video essays, photographs, and prints in her *Cutting Room Floor* (2024) installations investigate the family format, particularly focusing on American mixed-race families, to question the linear narrative of racial progress, and identify gaps in the American archive.

The archives represented in *Chorus* show how collections can also offer important structures of support, by reframing narratives, reclaiming agency, and documenting injustice. They build protections and bonds and also hold grief. A new photo installation, *Constelaciones: Entre estrellas y cenizas (Constellations: Between stars and ashes)* (2024) by **Archivo de la Memoria Trans Argentina**, creates a space for the protection, building, and vindication of trans memory. It reveals how archives make a struggle visible and also foster alliances. Visual narratives document a network based on support, protection, celebration of life, and preservation of memory. Selections from **Los Angeles Contemporary Archive**'s *Private Practices: AAPI Artist and Sex Worker Collection* (2021-) ask how artists, archives, and community members can effectively collect together. A healing-focused celebration of Asian American perspectives through erotic ritual, its contents—screenshots, paystubs, apparel, set pieces, police reports, text messages, and other ephemera relating to sexual

labor—keep growing, expanding solidarities. As affective networks, **Archivo de la Memoria Trans Argentina**, and all the archives honoring trans memory throughout Latin America that have sprung up since its formation, collectively deal with grief and find support networks in everyday life for marginalized communities. *Chorus* grieves the failure of our systems while celebrating collective movements for systemic change.

Chorus also recognizes that surviving is very different from flourishing. This is reflected in selected pieces from **Archivo Memoria Trans México** and the affiliated project **Hospital de ropa** (2022). In this project, textiles are recombined and refashioned to commemorate the lives of trans women and gender non-conforming people who have died of AIDS in Mexico since the 1980s. Fabric, jewelry, and clothing from those being honored emerge through a site of transformation as new creations, showing those celebrated in a state of flourishing. The collective **Mai Ling**'s new work *Becoming Stickiness* (2023/2024), a video installation and interactive “stickiness station,” furthers their reclamation of joy and pleasure through interactions with the invasive kudzu plant. In the video work, a search for kudzu, stickiness, and pleasure leads to intermingled bodies becoming one with plants, challenging dichotomies between human and object, decorative and invasive. **Cecilia Granara**'s painting *Occhi, Luce, Sangue, Stelle* (*Eyes, Light, Blood, Stars*) (2023) similarly challenges dichotomies, embracing interconnections. A red stream resembles the blood flowing through all of us, connecting us and keeping us alive. Hands reach toward the flow, as though from all sides and times. The hands' sensuous shape and movement evoke a vulnerability that is their strength. Through this strength and connection, moments of joy arise.

As a full ensemble, the curators from across the series have created a collective desk for the exhibition, featuring readings, zines, ephemera made by artists, and notes on the featured objects. This installation will include **Lizania Cruz**'s *To Feel, To Resist, and To Flourish* (2024), in which she collaborates with feminist organizers to create flower arrangements together through the duration of an interview in which they discuss their experiences and what is needed to flourish in the future. The desk will also feature an intervention by **Cyberfeminism Index**, a collection of radical techno-critical activism, academic articles, hackerspaces, software education, net art, and more, and an “Exchange Journal” offered by queer artists' platform **FAQ?**.

The convening on October 10th, to which all are invited, will reflect the conceptual threads of the exhibition series. The event will feature a public talk by **Archivo de la Memoria Trans Argentina**, the collective creation of an edible forest and tasting of stickiness with **Mai Ling**, and more. Bringing together people, voices, and ideas,

Chorus's events and special features will embody the show's themes, celebrating the power of gathering and collective creation. Follow the gallery's social media for registration details.

About the Curators

Roxana Fabius

Roxana Fabius is a Uruguayan curator and art administrator based in New York City. Between 2016 and 2022 she was Executive Director at A.I.R. Gallery, the first artist-run feminist cooperative space in the U.S. During her tenure at A.I.R. she organized programs and exhibitions with artists and thinkers such as Gordon Hall, Elizabeth Povinelli, Jack Halberstam, Che Gosset, Regina José Galindo, Lex Brown, Kazuko, Zarina, Mindy Seu, Naama Tzabar, and Howardena Pindell among many others. These exhibitions, programs and special commissions were made in collaboration with international institutions such as the Whitney Museum, Google Arts and Culture, The Feminist Institute, and Frieze Art Fair in New York and London. Fabius has served as an adjunct professor for the Curatorial Practices seminar at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, and Tel Aviv University. She has also taught at Parsons at The New School, City University of New York, Syracuse University, and Rutgers University. She is currently curating the 2024 exhibition series *Cantando Bajito* at the Ford Foundation Gallery.

Beya Othmani

Beya Othmani is an art curator and researcher from Algeria and Tunisia, dividing her time between Tunis and New York. Currently, she is the C-MAP Africa Fellow at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. Her recent curatorial projects include the three-part exhibition series *Cantando Bajito* at the Ford Foundation Gallery, the Ljubljana 35th Graphic Arts Biennial, and *Publishing Practices #2* at Archive Berlin. Previously, she took part in the curatorial teams of various projects with sonsbeek20→24 (2020), the *Forum Expanded* of the Berlinale (2019), and the Dak'Art 13 Biennial (2018), among others, and was a curatorial assistant at the Berlin-based art space SAVVY Contemporary. Some of her latest curatorial projects explored radical feminist publishing practices, post-colonial histories of print-making, and the construction of racial identities in art in colonial and post-colonial Africa.

Mindy Seu

Mindy Seu is a designer and technologist based in New York City and Los Angeles. Her expanded practice involves archival projects, techno-critical writing, performative lectures, and design commissions. Her latest writing surveys feminist economies, historical precursors of the metaverse, and the materiality of the internet. Mindy's ongoing *Cyberfeminism Index*, which gathers three decades of online activism and net art, was commissioned by Rhizome, presented at the New Museum, and awarded the Graham Foundation Grant. She has lectured internationally at cultural institutions (Barbican Centre, New Museum), academic institutions (Columbia University, Central Saint Martins), and mainstream platforms (Pornhub, SSENSE, Google), and been a resident at MacDowell, Sitterwerk Foundation, Pioneer Works, and Internet Archive. Her design commissions and consultation include projects for the Serpentine Gallery, Canadian Centre for Architecture, and MIT Media Lab. Her work has been featured in *Frieze*, *Vanity Fair*, *Dazed*, *Gagosian Quarterly*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *i-D*, and more. She is currently an Associate Professor at University of California, Los Angeles in the Department of Design Media Arts.

Susana Vargas Cervantes

Susana Vargas Cervantes teaches, writes, and curates. Vargas Cervantes is a transdisciplinary scholar, internationally recognized for her artistic and academic work at the intersections of alternative criminology, visual studies, and queer studies—in both Anglo North America and Latin America. Her research mines the connections between gender, sexuality, class, and skin tonalities to reconceptualize pigmentocracy as a system of perception. She is the author of the book *The Little Old Lady Killer: The Sensationalized Crimes of Mexico's First Female Serial Killer* (NYU Press, 2019) and *Mujercitos* (Editorial RM, 2015). After a Fulbright Visiting Fellowship at Columbia University, she joined Carleton University as an Assistant Professor in Communication and Media Studies.

About *Cantando Bajito*'s Series-Wide Curatorial Group

The three-part exhibition series *Cantando Bajito* is developed by curators Isis Awad, Roxana Fabius, Kobe Ko, Beya Othmani, Mindy Seu, and Susana Vargas Cervantes, with the advice of a larger curatorial group including María Carri, Maria Catarina Duncan, Zasha Colah, and Marie Hélène Pereira.

About the Ford Foundation Gallery

Opened in March 2019 at the Ford Foundation Center for Social Justice in New York City, [the Ford Foundation Gallery](#) spotlights artwork that wrestles with difficult questions, calls out injustice, and points the way toward a fair and just future. The gallery functions as a responsive and adaptive space and one that serves the public in its openness to experimentation, contemplation, and conversation. Located near the United Nations, it draws visitors from around the world, addresses questions that cross borders, and speaks to the universal struggle for human dignity.

The gallery is accessible to the public through the Ford Foundation building entrance on 43rd Street, east of Second Avenue.

About the Ford Foundation

[The Ford Foundation](#) is an independent organization working to address inequality and build a future grounded in justice. For more than 85 years, it has supported visionaries on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. Today, with an endowment of \$16 billion, the foundation has headquarters in New York and 10 regional offices across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Learn more at www.fordfoundation.org.

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