

CURRIER MUSEUM *of* ART

**New exhibition at the Currier premieres work focusing on environmental and human rights issues
by the Indigenous non-binary artist UÝRA**

Exhibition title: *The Living Forest: UÝRA (A Floresta Viva: UÝRA)*

Exhibition dates: May 11 – September 24, 2023

Live performance by the artist at the Currier Museum of Art on May 11, 2023 at 7:30 pm

Companion book published by Dario Cimorelli Editore (bilingual English/Brazilian)



UÝRA, *Lama*, 2017, photo by Keila Sankofa

The Currier Museum of Art announces the first solo exhibition of UÝRA (*they/them/their*) in a US institution, opening on May 11, 2023. The exhibition is curated by Lorenzo Fusi, the Currier's recently appointed Chief Curator, and will include a comprehensive selection of photographs and videos encompassing UÝRA's entire artistic trajectory, with work from many of their past performances and recent appearances. The photos will create an immersive and visually compelling environment complemented by two video excerpts from the documentary *UÝRA: The Rising Forest* (2022), directed by Juliana Curi and distributed in the US by Streamline. The full documentary will also be screened at the Currier's auditorium during the exhibition (screening dates to be announced).

For the opening reception on Thursday, May 11, the artist will activate the galleries by means of a live performance. UÝRA will then return to Manchester in July 2023 to perform and run a workshop during the Currier's annual Summer Block Party event on July 15 from 4 pm to 9 pm.

UÝRA (*b. 1991, Santarém, Brazil*) is an Indigenous visual artist, performer, biologist, activist, and art educator. Their social name and artistic alias, UÝRA, originally derives from the ancient Tupi language and means "flying insect or animal." The artist is also known as "the walking tree" or "the tree that walks."

“A walking tree breaks the Western, Eurocentric, colonial thinking mould that envisions trees as stationary, motionless organisms. By turning into UÝRA, I want to highlight how Indigenous bodies have always [...] moved independently from colonialism,” the artist recently stated in an interview with *Cultural Survival Quarterly* to explain the motives behind their chosen identity.¹

UÝRA presently resides in Manaus, an industrial territory in the centre of the Amazon, where they actively work with the local communities and youth groups on land and water preservation, Indigenous and LGBTQ2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two Spirit) rights, racial and gender equality, while also exposing and trying to heal from systemic colonial diseases, such as deforestation, industrial pollution, and dispossession. Their work focuses on the diasporic experience of the Indigenous communities in Brazil and globally as a result of their historical oppression and forced displacement. The artist’s chameleonic transformations are an act of resistance against the structures of oppression and exploitative systems established by settlers’ culture. Embodiment and participation are central elements in their practice, along with environmental research, art education, and confronting racism and transphobia.

UÝRA is a gender-fluid interspecies artistic persona that eludes fixed classifications and challenges binary oppositional systems (human/not-human, male/female, etc). The artist uses organic elements (such as foliage, bark, fibres, plumage, and natural dyes) to create elaborate costumes that blur conventional separations between humans, animals, and plants. The hybrid creatures thus created freely move and operate between the forest and the city, ultimately commenting on the impact of anthropocentrism and industrialization.

By creating photo-performances (actions only performed for the camera often shot in remote parts of the forest) and performances with a live audience, the artist is interested in showcasing how all living systems are deeply interconnected and ultimately interdependent. Their work celebrates diversity, dissidence, and adaptation as a survival strategy.

The exhibition and associated program of public and educational events at the Currier Museum of Art represent the first opportunity for US audiences to familiarize themselves with UÝRA’s interdisciplinary transformative practice.

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¹ Laura Harvey, “Blazing a Trail of Hope: An Interview with Emerson Uyra,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly* (2021), <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/blazing-trail-hope-interview-emerson-uyra>