

Frans Krajcberg

(1921-2017)

Frans Krajcberg (1921-2017) is one of the greatest Brazilian artists of the 20th century. A sculptor, painter, photographer, fervent activist for the environmental cause, he passed away on November 15, 2017, at the age of 96.

Born in Poland in 1921 in a Jewish family, he lost everything during the war and emigrated to Brazil where, fascinated by the natural richness of the fauna and flora, he settled down to create relentlessly until his death.

His ties with Paris remain extraordinarily strong. He found refuge among the artists of Montparnasse, such as Marc Chagall and Fernand Léger and kept a studio where he came back two months a year until his death, building over and over a bridge between Rio and Paris.

All his life, Frans Krajcberg has put his art at the service of nature in order “to bring about a movement which mobilizes the expression of a planetary consciousness.” Calling for a “new ethic of artistic creation” he recalled that the artist, more than ever, “must be at the heart of any civilization project: fully and radically.”

His works are an alarm call for hope. Through them, he constantly denounces the plundering of natural resources by man, while illustrating the amazing capacity of Nature’s resilience.



His sculptures and assemblages are made from wood “rescued” from the fires of the Amazon rainforest, bouquets of intertwined creepers, polychrome trunks, or quartz ore... His paintings are imprints taken directly from the surrounding nature (sand, rocks ...), enhanced with natural pigments of Minas Gerais. Frans Krajcberg plays with the shadows and lights cast on his sculptures, which he loved to rework with the seasons. His work seems to pursue a never-ending quest: to revive what is dead.

In 1975, his exhibition at Centre Georges Pompidou of Paris confirming his desire to use his art to denounce the threat of the urban extension of the third technological revolution. “I became aware that Art for the sake of Art was over and I want my sculptures to be the witnesses of this disaster.” In 1976, Pierre Restany signed the Rio Negro Manifesto, after a trip with Frans Krajcberg in Amazonia. It is a genuine plea in favor of committed art, calling on artists to renew their consciousness. In the 1985-the 90s, Frans Krajcberg witnessed the great fires ravaging the Brazilian forest. He denounced them through committed photographic reports, which caused him to be threatened with death.

The 1990s brought him the expected consecration, definitively associating the artist with the activist: Krajcberg multiplied successful exhibitions (Rio, Moscow, Paris ...).

In 2005, for the year of Brazil in France, a large exhibition in Bagatelle paid tribute to the artist and the activist. It was the opportunity for Frans Krajcberg to launch his “Cry for the planet.”

In 2015, Frans Krajcberg and Espace Frans Krajcberg played a major role within the COP 21, by receiving Amerindian leaders. The Espace Frans Krajcberg became a laboratory of ideas and exchanges, “an antenna of the Amazon in Paris.”

In 2016, Frans Krajcberg was the honorary artist of the São Paulo Biennale.

In 2017, he was the first artist invited to the Musée de l’Homme in Paris as a whistleblower to address the essential question: “Where are we going?”

Espace Frans Krajcberg - Contemporary art Center for Art and Nature

www.espacekrajcberg.fr

Espace Krajcberg is a free exhibition space open to all, managed by the “Association des amis de Frans Krajcberg”.

It is entirely dedicated to the relationships between Contemporary Art and the environment.

The permanent exhibition rooms bring together a selection of archives and works by

artist Frans Krajcberg, emblematic of his artistic and activist career. They mostly come from the collection of the City of Paris. The Art center handles its conservation and presentation to the public.

The temporary exhibition rooms present an artistic, literary, scientific, cinematographic, and educational program around the environmental themes dear to the artist. Espace Frans Krajcberg is a flourishing place for exchanges, creation, reflection, awareness, and hope. A window on cultural multiplicity and a place of expression that connects researchers, artists, and the public.

It is located at the end of Chemin du Montparnasse, 21 Avenue du Maine, a bucolic alley, vestige of the great history of Montparnasse.

The path housed Frans Krajcberg's Parisian studio, where “Montparno” at heart, he came several times a year.



Information

The Espace Frans Krajcberg, Contemporary Art Center for Art & Nature

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Open Tuesday – Saturday from 2 pm to 6 pm

Free entry

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BIOGRAPHY OF FRANS KRAJCBERG

HIS YOUTH IN POLAND

Frans Krajcberg was born on April 12, 1921, in a small town in the south of Warsaw in Kozienicé, Poland. His family was Jewish and modest.

As child, the forest was already a refuge for Frans: he escaped the harassment of his school friends who accused him of being Jewish. "In the forest of my village, I found the only place where I could question myself. I suffered so much as a child from racism against the religion I was born into: those fanatics admitted nothing else. "I wondered where I was born, why here, whether in a place I would be hated less?"

His father was a shoe seller and his mother, Bina, a well-known Communist activist in the Polish party. In the 1930s, the Communist Party and books that were considered biased were banned in Poland. It led to reinforce the combative spirit of Bina who strongly considered that "the emancipation of people is achieved through education".

Frequently imprisoned, Bina Krajcberg had an unwavering fight. She was hanged by the Nazis in 1939, the day war was declared. Frans Krajcberg, aged 18, recognized her body in Ramdam prison near Warsaw. He recovered his mother's necklace, which remained a talisman all his life. The character and the convictions of Bina Krajcberg surely influenced her son: flee the intolerable and fight to survive!

After his mother's death in 1939, Frans Krajcberg returned home to Kozienice. He no longer found traces of his family. Imprisoned in a church where the Nazis gathered the Jews of the village, he managed to escape by running into the forest. Passing through the bullets, he crossed the river to get his freedom back.

RUSSIA, WAR, CAMPS

With resistance fighters and Polish survivors, Frans Krajcberg joined the Polish Red Army in the Soviet Union. In Vilnius, he met Mordechaj Anielewicz, who led the Warsaw Ghetto insurrection. He became sick and was hospitalized in Minsk, he started painting during his convalescence. In Leningrad, he went to Fine Arts while carrying out studies in hydraulic engineering. He learned to speak Russian.

Frans Krajcberg meets Natacha, his first love.

In 1941, the Reich attacked the URSS and surrounded Leningrad. Krajcberg fled and for weeks he ran amid the bombing, caught between the German front and the Russian front. Natacha died on the road to Minsk, while they were taking refuge in the forest to escape the bombings.

Incorporated into the Polish First Army, he was sent to Tashkent, Central Asia, where he became a technical controller of Uzbekistan dams. He used a false name to hide his Jewish origins. In 1943, he joined the Polish Second Army as an officer assigned to the construction of bridges. He became part of Marshal Zhukov bridge units.

He built the bridge that will allow Poland to be freed. Frans Krajcberg is the first soldier to enter free Warsaw, alone in the midst of tank columns.

In the Red Army, Frans Krajcberg faced concentration camps that deeply traumatized him. On July 44, he entered Mjdanek camp, near the Russian-Polish border. He was told his parents were there. He became aware of the extent of human madness. The image of these "mounds of bodies, crowded, piled one over the others" will haunt him until the end of his life.

When he returned home, the family apartment was occupied. A woman slammed the door in his face, calling him a "dirty Jew". He decided never to go back to Poland again. He threw the two medals awarded by Stalin over the Czechoslovak border and went to Stuttgart. He tried again to search for his family, in vain. They all died in the holocaust. *"I left the concentration camp in an indescribable state of shock, mute with horror (...) Each time I see piles of Amazonian trees burnt by men, I can't help but think of the ashes of the crematoriums: the ashes of life, the ashes of the fire of men gone mad"*.

The Bauhaus School

In Stuttgart, Frans Krajcberg learned to speak German. He studied at Beaux-Arts with Willy Baumeister (1889-1955), professor at the Bauhaus who chose to stay in Germany and resist. He discovered the avant-garde creation demonized by Hitler.

"Baumeister's teaching was open, stimulating and generous. It pursued the spirit of Bauhaus and broke from all techniques. To help the students, Baumeister had organized an award prize. I won twice. He invited me to his place and advised me to go to Paris. He gave me a letter of recommendation for Fernand Léger".

In a few months, Krajcberg acquired knowledge on Modern Art and the main artistic trends. "There, I learned everything about Bauhaus, about the great movements of Modern Art. "We discussed Cubism, Cézanne ... After what I had experienced, I felt closer to Expressionism than to Concretism." He was convinced that he had to continue this path. Art acted as a form of redemption.

POST-WAR MONTPARNO

In Paris, Fernand Léger hosted him for three months. However, Frans Krajcberg quickly realized that Europe would not help him revive. He made radical changes in his life. Marc Chagall gave him support for his new start. One of his female friends worked for immigration and suggested he went to Brazil. Brazilian law accepted immigration of foreign women, married or about to be married.

She knew a young Hungarian, whose wealthy family said they were ready to pay for her ticket in exchange for a marriage of convenience. Frans Krajcberg accepted, without even knowing where Brazil was. They traveled, one in 3rd class, the other in 1st. Krajcberg never saw his “bride” again. He landed in Rio de Janeiro in 1947, where a new life began in an unknown land. Frans Krajcberg was 26 years old, everything had to be reinvented.

THE DISCOVERY OF BRAZIL

In Rio, Frans Krajcberg was penniless and ended up sleeping on Botafogo beach. In 1948, he went to São Paulo, where Francisco Matarazzo had just opened the Museum of Modern Art. He hired Krajcberg as a handler. Quickly, Krajcberg integrated the artistic circles of the city. He socialized with “self-taught painters” of the Família Artística Paulista: Volpi, Cordeiro, Mario Zanini... who brought him into the studio of Osir Arte. He made the “azulejos” ordered from Portinari for the great architectural achievements of Modernism.

In 1951, Krajcberg directed the hangings of the First São Paulo Biennial, where Max Bill received the Grand Prize. The following year, Bill became the leader and one of the founders of Brazilian Concretism. Frans Krajcberg painted in Itanhaem, a coastal village in the house of Mario Zanini, who regularly joined him with Alfredo Volpi. The production of this period was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, but Frans Krajcberg did not sell. Life in Sao Paulo was tough for him. He felt he had “lost all moral identity”.

In 1952, Lasar Segall reached out to Frans Krajcberg. He bought a drawing and told him to go to the stationery run by the Klabin family in Monte Alegre, in the south of São Paulo. It was the artist's first contact with Brazilian nature. It was a true shock. Frans Krajcberg was dazzled by these wild and lush forests! He left the stationery and went to paint in the forest alone. He was amazed by nature.

“Since I left Stuttgart, I was a lost man (...) I hated men. I was running away from them (...) But, in isolation, what is the point of living? Nature gave me strength and pleasure to feel, to think, to work. To survive, I was in the forest, and I discovered an unknown world. I was discovering life. Pure life: to be, to change, to continue, to receive light, heat, and humidity. Real life: when I was in nature, I thought, spoke, and wondered for real. When I look at it, I feel how things move: it is born, it is dead, it's the continuation of life. I built my house in the forest. A wild cat adopted me. I collected orchids. I surely had the largest collection of orchids in Brazil.”

For two years, Frans Krajcberg made a living from his ceramic creations: pottery, azulejos, sculptures. He painted self-portraits, still life and plants.

Frans Krajcberg lived in an ecologically managed forest but saw the nature of Paraná gradually destroyed by fire and human exploitation. In 1955, his house in the forest burned down in an arson attack. His drawings, paintings, ceramic creations as well as his rare collection of orchids burned. Frans Krajcberg lost everything, again.

He returned to Rio, where he shared a workshop with Franz Weissmann. He exhibited with Milton Dacosta and Maria Leontina at the Little Gallery, in Rio. He began to paint a series of abstract landscapes, "Samambaias" (ferns), reminiscent of Paraná. He worked linear networks of plant density on blue tonal backgrounds, which he began to enhance with soil, while leaving gaps in light.

In 1957, Frans Krajcberg won the prize for best Brazilian painter at the São Paulo Biennale, which also recognized Frans Weissmann as best sculptor. Jackson Pollock received the grand prize. Frans Krajcberg acquired Brazilian nationality the following year. He became suddenly famous, sold his paintings and returned to Paris.

In France, Frans Krajcberg found himself immersed in the intellectual and artistic debate of the end of the 1950s with the Algerian war, the crisis of the School of Paris, and the polemics around Abstraction. Intoxicated with turpentine, he stopped painting. He oriented his research towards a more immediate contact with the material. He made collages and woodcuts on Japanese paper, making his first wooden "direct prints", using molded paper technique.

"I was very lucky when I arrived in Paris, because I was able to survive there. I sold all the gouaches I made in my hotel room to Rosa Fried, for her New York gallery. There were especially those to whom I exchanged my paintings for food, at the restaurants La Coupole and the Hungarian Patrick. At La Coupole, I met Sartre and Giacometti whom I admired a lot. I still admire Giacometti. He was the one who had done a lot with human figures: he concentrated all human expressions in those little heads. In Paris, we mostly talked about Tachisme: Soulages, Hartung, and the gesture. I witnessed the fall of Tachisme. Paris was stimulating, but I felt lost. I had stopped painting. Already in Rio, turpentine was poisoning me. I fled to work"

After a year, Frans Krajcberg increasingly felt the need to work with natural materials, as close as possible to the beauty of elements surrounding him. In 1958, he flew to Ibiza where he returned regularly until 1964. He lived without much, in a cave near the sea and began to photograph nature, exercising his gaze on a daily basis and sharpening his sensitivity. He made his first "prints of rocks and earth" and paintings with natural elements. He met the critic Pierre Restany who wrote "*Nature is his workshop... It is his research and his medium*". Direct prints, assemblages or scenography treatments... He was a marginal precursor of Arte Povera.

"I fled to work. I went to Ibiza. And for the first time, I had the need to feel the material, not the painting. I made prints of earth and stones. Then I took the earth directly by gluing it. It looks like

a kind of Tachisme. It isn't. It is not a discarded painting. There is no pictorial gesture. These are fingerprints, records. Pieces of nature. After that, I could no longer work in Paris. Where can I find my land? »

He went to the Amazon for the first time.

In 1960, Frans Krajcberg was made an honorary citizen of Rio de Janeiro. The following year, he participated in the Reliefs exhibition organized by San Lazzaro in Paris. Lazzaro managed the Gallery and the Revue in the 20th century. Jean Dubuffet, whom he admires, appreciated his materials. Georges Braque became his friend and mentor. They collaborated on two lithographs, and Braque incorporated one in his last "papier-collé" painting.

Krajcberg was also interested in Op'art and kineticism. He got interested in New Realism avant-garde, and his friend Pierre Restany wrote the Constitutive Declaration in October.

Frans Krajcberg's approach is at first glance similar to the one of the New Realists.

He uses pre-existing objects, as they do. But the choice and meaning of this reappropriation are radically different. On the one hand, the New Realists offer second nature to "artefacts" of urban modernity, and on the other hand, Frans Krajcberg recovers elements from nature to offer an "alternative aesthetic and out of the Art crisis".

"I liked the insolence of New Realists and their freedom. They wanted to get out of the formal machine of Abstraction. They wanted to be free from painting gestures and dared the act of showing. Show what? The nature of cities. (...) The artist must not only go into nature, but participate in his time (...) Today, human representation serves advertising and electronic image (...) their second nature of cities is not mine. This is why I never tried to join the group of New Realists that I knew well. I belong to the minority who knows the importance of nature in the future of men, so my work expresses it".

That same year, Krajcberg met Michèle, a French woman with whom he lived for four years. He became friends with the photographer and reporter Roger Pic who lived in "allée" du Montparnasse.

He went on a second trip to the Amazon.

In 1964, his prints and his paintings of earth and stones led Frans Krajcberg to winning a prize at the Venice Biennale, which awarded the Grand Prize to Robert Rauschenberg.

He was invited to Minas Gerais, he returned to Brazil and set up his workshop at the foot of the Itabirito peak, among the iron ore fields with pure pigments lands. There were wonderful colors. Frans Krajcberg made his first macro photographs, and he used natural pigments to enhance his works made with collected dead wood. He worked by applying a mix of soil and glue, on dried paper, and drew again.

"The mountains were so beautiful I started to dance. They go from black to white. The convulsive waves of vegetation pushed towards the rocks amazed me. I was overwhelmed and wondered how

to make such beautiful art. One feels poor in front of this wealth. It made me worry; I was afraid of it. My work is a long love struggle with nature. I could show a fragment of this beauty. I did it. But I cannot repeat this gesture over and over again. How can I make this piece of wood mine? How do I express my awareness of it? Where is my participation in this life both including and exceeding me? Until now, I have not dominated nature. I learned to work with it. (...). I discovered color, lands of pure pigments, colors that are materials. There are hundreds of them, ocher, gray, brown, green, a huge range of reds. Since 1964, all the colors I worked with have come from Minas. (...) I collected dead wood from the mineral fields and made my first sculptures by coloring them with soil. I wanted to give them another life. This was my naive and romantic period”.

In the early 1960s, Frans Krajcberg set up his Parisian workshop at Chemin du Montparnasse, in Paris, which is today, Espace Frans Krajcberg. He developed techniques of woodcut and prints which were directly engraved on wood, as well as a series of paintings-assemblages made from flowers that he sculpted and overlaid with red natural pigment.

In 1965, José Zanini Caldas told him about the village of Nova Viçosa, in the State of Bahia. He organized a multidisciplinary project bringing together artists and intellectuals, such as architect Oscar Niemeyer and singer Chico Buarque de Hollanda. They wish to create an artistic movement drawing its inspiration from the richness offered by local materials. In Brazil, it was obviously a major concern!

The attachment to the material and to memory is related to “Tropicalism,” an artistic movement that has spread. Frans Krajcberg is seduced. He went to Nova Viçosa, leaving the forest and the seaside. He built a workshop following plans designed by Zanini and settled alone. The group’s great utopian dream did not resist geographic isolation.

To find out more about his workshop-house perched on top of a tree, [click here](#)

In Paris, Frans Krajcberg began to work on dropped shadows. It consisted in capturing the game of light on natural elements. The shapes fascinated him. The shadow was drawn and cut out from a wooden support. In the first pieces, the constructive or concrete hard geometric cutting contrasted with the fluidity of the natural lines of the shapes it highlighted. Over the years it drew near, as a side lighting blueprint.

“I had this idea in Minas, but in Paris I made my first dropped shadows. I wanted to shatter the square, to get out of the frame. I had more than one reason to do so. Nature is not square, it is moving (...) Life is not square and has no fixed forms. (...) The abstraction of squares accompanied the beginning of the century’s revolutions, as Expressionism accompanied its misery. I have always had an expressionist sensibility and I have never recognized myself in Concretism. I didn’t want art for the sake of art. I wanted to find new forms. Nature gave me thousands.”

I owe more to Arp’s wooden cuts than to Matisse’s paper cuts. (...) My studies consisted in testing the lighting to choose a shadow. There were plenty. No one has the same shadow and one’s shadow is always moving. I wanted to unify the object with its shadow. I tried to find the object in

its shadow. I was looking in nature at the possible rebirth to life of art, with different forms captured from it. Drop shadow added form to it. It was my way to participate.”

In 1967, Frans Krajcberg married Alba, a young Brazilian girl from Bahia and daughter of wealthy doctors from Salvador. She was an Art History student, writing a thesis on Vassily Kandinsky. The couple separated three years later.

In 1969, Frans Krajcberg was invited to the “Art et Matter” exhibition in Montreal.

Between 1972 and 1974, Frans Krajcberg moved to Nova Viçosa. He made his first “polished wood” which were assemblages of dead wood with architectural lines: hollow trees or mangroves, devoured by light. When I saw the mangroves, I was impressed. I came from Tachisme and Abstraction from Paris. How could it capture the life of these forms, their changings, and vibrations? In the white vibration I found the Amazon Forest.

Frans Krajcberg also made “sand prints”, cast directly on the beach at low tide. Facing the sea, he observed for hours the coming and going of the waves and the alternating force of the winds. As it retreated, the water inscribed an unlimited repertoire of furrows and ripples on the sand. On Japanese paper, without glue, he restored nature’s imprints directly into plaster, before printing them on the hidden side of the paper. They reveal the texture of the ground, “the skin of the world”, in its smallest details. From the living nature, sands, and plants, existed a matrix inscription restoring grain by grain the material and the original scene that was forever stored. The imprint was then mounted on a canvas or wood.

The lack of frame and margin gave the impression of “raw” work, far from easel painting. Exposed vertically, the object of nature becomes an artistic artefact immortalizing an existence doomed to disappear. It was a way for Frans Krajcberg to mourn in front of the world.

Through this process, he was the first to have used the interpenetration of painting and sculpture in such a successful way. His work allowed painting and sculpture to join each other which Paul Klee called “the soul of creation.”

In 1975, Frans Krajcberg was invited to Paris to exhibit his works at the Center National d’Art Moderne Georges Pompidou, as a foreshadowing. The building was under construction. It was the first exhibition organized under its label. He met Claude Mollard, General Secretary of the Pompidou Center and Pierre Restany who wrote the catalog for the exhibition, who were both widely acclaimed by critics. It gave rise to passionate debates within the public. The debates reinforced Frans Krajcberg’s will create to show forgotten nature, but also to denounce nature threatened by the planetary extension of the third technological revolution.

After Brasilia had been established in 1960, he became aware of these dangers. The construction of the Brasilia-Belém Road created a real desert.

“It was moving inside me. A process was going on. The debates of the CNAC clarified it. They took place twice a week, after the projection of my slides. There, I realized that Art for the sake of Art was over, and that I wanted my sculptures to be witnesses of the disaster.

My sculpture has become engaged. I wish to express my revolt. There is only one solution for the modern artist. Either his art participates in the third industrial revolution, that of electronics, and commits in progress, or his art fights against the consequences, the pollution which is as fearsome as atomic bombs.

You have to choose, and I have chosen to fight, to express myself not only with the beauty of nature's forms, but also with nature that is being destroyed. My sculptures are like the memorial of the disaster I see, in the middle of which I live."

Frans Krajcberg became more and more sensitive to the destruction of the Amazonian Forest by man. His work is arduous and his suffering on the edge. The deep wounds remaining after the extermination of his family during the war worsened at the sight of hectares of forest disappearing in front of him.

He put in front of his house an enormous sculpture of eleven meters high, named "Memory of Destruction."

Two dead tree trunks were emptied, dried up and burnt, are embedded one in the other and raised towards the sky. Their dramatic silhouette speaks of the mourning plants, but also of the human body, reminiscence, and the refusal to forget the past. Like African ancestors, buried in the heart of homes to protect the living of their tribe, this sculpture acts as a spiritual guardian of the artist's private space.

In a friendly and harmonious cohabitation with the forest, Frans Krajcberg invested his territory like an Indian village. He created it. On the seaside, he exhibited his sculptures to take photographs while facing the ocean.

In 1976, he embarked for Mato Grosso in the Amazon, with Sepp Baendereck, whom he had met the previous year. They both shared a passion for nature and remained close to each other until Baendereck's death in 1989. Together, they made three Amazonian expeditions. (1976-77-78) and three trips to Mato Grosso (1985-86-87).

With Pierre Restany, Krajcberg traveled through Minas Gerais and Piauí.

PIERRE RESTANY AND FRANS KRAJCBERG

"Original nature must be exalted as a hygiene of perception and mental oxygen: an integral naturalism, gigantic catalyst and accelerator of our faculties to feel, to think and to act."

"Naturalism is the expression of planetary consciousness (...) a naturalist option opposed to the realistic option, is the fruit of a choice engaging individual consciousness as a whole. This option is not limited to expressing the fear of man in front of the danger put to nature by the excesses of industrial civilization."

“Integral naturalism is an answer. Precisely, by the virtue of fundamentalism, which is the planarization of consciousness. Presented today as an open option, it is a guiding thread in the chaos of current art.” Pierre Restany, Rio Negro Manifesto, 1978 (extracts).

In 1978, Pierre Restany joined Sepp Baendereck and Frans Krajcberg for an expedition to the Amazon. As they ascended the Rio Negro, Pierre Restany wrote the Manifesto of Integral Naturalism or Rio Negro Manifesto. He explores his own vision of Art confronting “alternative” aesthetics of Frans Krajcberg, based much more on reflection than on pure instinct. The conferences in Rio, São Paulo and Brasília have shown controversy.

“Amazonian nature calls into question my sensitivity as a modern man. It also calls into question the scale of traditionally recognized aesthetic values. The current artistic chaos is the conclusion of urban evolution. Here we are faced with a world of shapes and vibrations, the mystery of continuous change. We must leverage this Integral nature to give new meaning to individual values of sensitivity and creativity.

The Rio Negro Manifesto was launched the day Brazil opened up to democracy: the military had just granted amnesty to opponents. It was the first debate after the dictatorship, we had never talked about the destruction of forests. The attacks were violent. Some did not admit that three “gringos” spoke of Brazil. The manifesto was presented in Curitiba, New York, Paris, Rome, and Milan. » FRANS KRAJCBERG.

To read the entire Pierre Restany Manifesto, in 1980, Frans Krajcberg began his polychrome plant prints in Nova Viçosa. In 1982-1983, after a trip to the region of Belem, he made monumental “wickerwork”, inspired by local craftsmanship, naturally letting light through.

But a decisive shock took place in 1985. During a trip to Mato Grosso, a wild and lush region in central Brazil, he helplessly witnessed the arson ignited by the large landowners to clear land devoted to extensive livestock farming. He was Revolted and decided to make a long photographic report on the burning forests: “Queimadas,” unambiguously showing the role of Man in this massive destruction.

Frans Krajcberg is, and will remain from now on, an activist showing and denouncing the destruction of nature, relentlessly.

The Artist brings back dry palm trunks from this trip, of which he creates several sets of sculptures, the “conjuntos”. Whether rain sticks or totems, they denounce deforestation, as did his photographs.

“I always wondered why when I was a child. Why does man destroy natural resources when he knows that the planet is exhausted and that without them, his own life will be impossible? Why is Brazil becoming desertified when it is one of the richest countries on the planet? For immediate land gains, we destroy our forests, we destroy in the long term. Society is a commercial machine, and the thought of art has sunk into it. Where is the artist in these problems?”

The following year, he published a book of photographs “Natura” and returned to Mato Grosso to continue his fight.

I AM LOOKING FOR FORMS TO MY CRY.

In 1987, Frans Krajcberg traveled for the third time in the wild state of Mato Grosso. Director Walter Salles joined him to shoot a film about his life: “Krajcberg, Poète des Vestiges” (45 min, Prize for best documentary at Dei Popoli festival in Florence). “Krajcberg was the greatest influence of my life,” the director declared when the artist died.

Krajcberg’s work definitely was committed to the environmental fight. To express his revolt, he sought his inspiration in the forms offered to him by nature. He wants to alert, denounce, shout in the face of the world the misdeeds of destruction by reviving natural elements.

“I show the unnatural violence done to life. I express the revolted planetary consciousness. Destruction has forms, although it speaks of the non-existent. I’m not trying to sculpt. I am looking for forms for my cry. This burnt bark is me. I feel myself in the woods and the stones. Yes, I am an Animist. But not a visionary. I am part of this moment. My only thought is to express whatever I feel. It’s a huge struggle. Painting pure music is not easy. How can I make a sculpture scream like a voice? There are in my work cultural reminiscences, reminiscences of war, in the unconscious, surely. With all this racism, this anti-Semitism, I couldn’t practice any other form of art. But above all, I express what I saw yesterday in Mato Grosso, in the Amazon or in the State of Bahia. »

I AM A BURNT MAN. *“I am a burnt man. Fire is death, the abyss. Fire has always been with me. My message is tragic. I show crime. I bring the documents, I collect them and add more, I want to give my revolt the most dramatic and violent face. I want my work to be a burn reflex”.*

At the end of the 1980s, after his travels in Mato Grosso and in the Amazon, Frans Krajcberg began to work from “burnt wood”, recovered from the places of deforestation. His “Revolts” are assemblages made from burnt natural elements - trunks, lianas, roots... collected in forests which were devastated by fires, then transformed with a blowtorch. The fire hardens the wood and gives it a certain resistance. The work is then enhanced with black or red, colors drawn from vegetable charcoal, stones or natural pigments, which protect, heal and camouflage as would war paint.

Erected on natural plinths, crossed by light, his “burnt woods”, steles or totems, looked like tragic alarm sirens. Frans Krajcberg affirms that death is not an end. He challenges it with his sculptures. The purified, transformed, magnified elements are reborn. The “burnt bark” echoes the “burnt wood”. Between painting and epidermal shreds, their tragic economy is opposed to the theatricality of the “conjuntos.”

THE WITNESS. Frans Krajcberg is outraged by the criminal destruction of the Amazon rainforest, blazing day, and night, filling the horizon with black smoke. “The massacre I saw in the Amazon rainforest, I had never seen it elsewhere, even during the war”. He is the first renowned artist to use photographs and sculptures to actively denounce the fires. He also defends the inhabitants of the Amazon, to whom he feels close to through their traditions, their way of life and their art.

On December 22, 1988, Chico Mendes, the first to have defended an ecological conscience in Brazil and beyond the borders, was assassinated. His interventions have saved nearly 1,200,000 hectares of forests. Frans Krajcberg pays homage to him by sculpting a wounded rubber tree, incised with deep red lines that evoke blood. A commemorative plaque in pyrographed wooden bears the name of the martyr militant.

In Rio Branco, in the state of Acre, Frans Krajcberg tirelessly photographs the devastated forest and collects scattered elements for his sculptures. He tries to convince the farmers to give up cutting down the trees, which led to several death threats. He meets the Amerindian “Cacique” (spiritual leader) Raoni. He works with him to defend the cause of the Amerindians of the Amazon, with whom he maintains friendly and militant links until his death.

MY WORK IS A MANIFESTO. From the 1980s, the notoriety of Frans Krajcberg allowed him to act on the international scene and to assert himself as a militant artist. He is invited to exhibit his work all over the world. He shows his “Revolts” in Cuba, New York, and Stockholm. In 1988 he participated in the symposium on the environment in Seoul and, artistically, in the movement “Doctors without borders”, in Romania.

The 1990s brought him consecration for his “ecological” art. In 1990, he was invited to Moscow at the International Congress of Ecology. It is the first time that he has returned to Russia since his studies at Fine Arts, in Leningrad. In 1992, the Museums of Modern Art of Salvador and Rio put him in the spotlight. In Rio, his exhibition “Imagens do Fogo”, during the United Nations World Conference on the Environment, attracts more than 300,000 visitors. In Paris, the “Latin America” exhibition at the Center Georges Pompidou shows several works of his. In 1996, he was at the “Villette-Amazonie” exhibition at Grande Halle de la Villette. Under the responsibility of Jacques Leenhardt and Bettina Laville, the exhibition is a manifesto which places the environment as a priority issue for the 21st century. In 1998, he exhibited at the Fondation Cartier, in the exhibition “Being Nature”.

Because he was so far ahead in his awareness of planetary issues, the role of Frans Krajcberg in the years 1980/1990, made him one of the fathers of the Anthropocene movement, giving man a decisive role in planetary balance. The artist is *“completely and radically” At the heart of any civilization project.* Art allows society to be transformed. All his life, Frans Krajcberg dreamed of radical artistic gestures: *“The absolute gesture would be to unload, as is, in an exhibition, a truck of charred wood, picked up on the spot. My work is a manifesto. I do not write: I am not a politician. I have to find the picture. If I could put ashes everywhere, I would be as close as possible to what I feel”.*

THE CRY FOR THE PLANET

In 2003, Frans Krajcberg was honored in the “Art and Revolt” exhibition organized in the new Montparnasse Museum, located in the alley where his studio is. Thérèse VIAN MANTOVANI is the curator of the exhibition. He donated a set of sculptures to the City of Paris, to be exhibited by Espace Frans Krajcberg.

In Curitiba, Paraná, a museum bearing his name is opened in the botanical garden. In Nova Viçosa, he built a small museum near his house. He released the second edition of his book “Nature et Revolt.”

2005 is the year of Brazil in France. The City of Paris organized a major retrospective exhibition in the Parc de Bagatelle. Entitled “Dialogues with Nature”, it pays tribute and gives voice to both the artist and the activist. Frans Krajcberg works in close collaboration with Sylvie Depondt, Commissioner General, Brazilian producers and the Parks and Gardens teams. Nearly a hundred works are transported by freighter from Nova Viçosa. The “burnt woods” are exhibited for the first time in open air. The large totems stand out on the lawns and stand in front of the trees of the Bois de Boulogne. Franco-Brazilian debates on the role of urban and peri-urban forests are organized. Paris, Rio, and São Paulo are actively involved. Gilberto Gil, then Minister of Culture in Brazil, invited “each of us to reconsider Nature through Art.” The exhibition and the debates were a huge success: 450,000 visitors were present. For Frans Krajcberg, this is the opportunity to launch his Cry for the Planet: an activist and artistic appeal intended to awaken sleeping consciences.

On this occasion is broadcasted on France 5 the documentary film “portrait of a revolt”, directed by Maurice Dubroca, and produced by Eric Darmon, Mémoire Magnétique productions (2004, 52 min), FIPATEL 2004, UNESCO Prize for documentary 2004.

The same year, a bronze sculpture was installed on the Place de la Vache Noire, in Arcueil, and a work was installed at the Brazilian Embassy, in the “Entre Deux Lumières” exhibition.

Photos of the exhibition “Dialogues with Nature,” Bagatelle, 2005

Recognition

In 2008, Frans Krajcberg received the “Bahiano Citizen” title of the State of Bahia. His “Queimadas” photo book, clearly denouncing the harmful effects of deforestation, is published with the support of the Government.

He is present in the “O Grito - Ano Mundial da árvore” (The Scream - World Year of the Tree) exhibition at the Palacete Das Artes Rodin, in Bahia. In São Paulo, he exhibits at Ibirapuera Park

and at the OCA, for the 60th anniversary of the city's Museum of Modern Art and takes part in all the biennials. He received the Best Exhibition prize of the Year by the Association of Art Critics and obtained the "Citizen Paulistano" title.

In 2011 he exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Niteroi, in the suburbs of Rio

In 2012 his work was presented to João Pessoa, in Natureza Extrema for the inauguration of the Museum of Estação Cabo Branco. He received the Enku grand prix at Gifu in Japan, and the Vermeil Medal of the City of Paris was awarded to him for his work.

In 2016 in São Paulo, he was the artist of honor at the 32nd Biennale.

Works "Africanas" by Frans Krajcberg at the 32nd Sao Paulo Biennial in 2016, entitled "Incerteza Viva" (Living Uncertainty).

In 2016-2017 in Paris, the Musée de l'Homme invited Frans Krajcberg as first whistleblower in the newly renovated rooms. The works were installed in the section "Where are we going" to provoke questions and debates. His life and his work are organized. Espace Frans Krajcberg hosts performances and works by researchers from the Musée de l'Homme.

THE MANIFESTO OF INTEGRAL NATURALISM

The "Cry for the Planet" launched by Bagatelle in 2005, continues to bring together activists and celebrities from the world of Art and Culture around Frans Krajcberg's fight for the defense of the environment. But the fate of the Amazon remains at the heart of his concerns. In 2011, he launched a "Cry of hope for the Amazon" and co-signed an open card at the UN for the creation of the International Year of the Amazon, with other personalities (Thiago de Mello, João Meirelles, André Trigueiro, Christiane Torloni, Vitor Fasano, Regina Jeha and Mario Mantovani).

In 2013, 35 years after Pierre Restany's "Rio Negro Manifesto", Frans Krajcberg and Claude Mollard launched "the New Integral Naturalism Manifesto". The text reaffirms the essential role of the Artist in the defense of Nature. Faced with threatening globalization, they radicalized the terms of the first Manifesto. They claim the right to diversity and the duty to respect the planet: fully and radically. Artists are citizens of the world. As such, they must create a movement capable of raising public awareness by drawing their inspiration from Nature.

In 2015, at the COP 21, the Artist launched a great movement in France and Brazil with the Akiri association, to resound his "Cry for the planet". France, Brazil, and Peru, and representatives of the Amerindian peoples and artists, ask for the protection of the Amazonian Forest, guardian of the ecological, climatic, and cultural balance of our land. They wish to take part in the climate negotiations in Paris, in December 2015.

Exhibitions, conferences, seminars, and screenings are organized to voice the concerns of the Amazon rainforest people, in partnership with the Quai Branly Museum, the Yves Rocher foundation and the SNCF, Yann Toma, Anouk Garcia, Oskar Metsavaht, Vincent Carelli ... The presence of Amerindian leaders and artists in Paris who speak out in defense of the Amazon rainforest represents a unique opportunity to meet them and support their projects.

Benki Piyako, Frans Krajcberg, Puwe Luiz Puyanawa and Shipibos. Photo d' Anouk Garcia: AKIRI.

TRANSMITTING

Frans Krajcberg died on November 15, 2017, in Rio. He is buried in Nova Viçosa, at the foot of the tree that he considered his best friend and that he photographed daily for years.

One year later, Espace Frans Krajcberg, which had been closed ever since he died, reopened with a new identity and a reinforced mission: to continue the fight of Frans Krajcberg: its aim is to spread and promote his work, to fight for the awakening of consciousness and reconnection of Man with Nature. From now on, the program brings together its message and its work to all those who wish to commit themselves to the service of life, art and the planet.

Frans Krajcberg has spent his life denouncing the destruction of nature. He always cultivated his force of wonder; his eyes and soul were constantly alert. Every day, he worked on his artistic gaze and nourished his committed vision, and tirelessly photographed the details of Nature which fascinated him. He admired the strength and resilience of Nature. With him, we wish to awaken consciousness and act, to develop hope and his messages.

“The forest is pure life. When I look at nature, I can feel how it all is: to be born, to die, the continuity of life ... Nature calls into question my sensitivity as an artist and as a man”. Frans Krajcberg.