

Finders Keepers

a solo exhibit by Artur Silva
curated by Mercè Valderrey

November 16th - December 7th, 2023

at Lullo Pampoulides gallery
58 Jermyn St (second floor),
St. James's, London SW1Y 6LX, UK

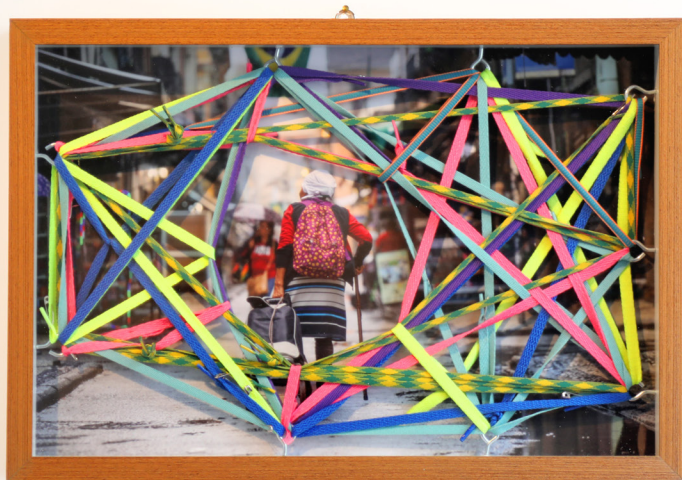
Finders Keepers

The movement of objects has been a prominent feature in Artur Silva's research-based art, particularly as it relates to colonial dynamics and the circulation of people, plants, and cultural artifacts. Whether tracing the presence of lemons in Europe back to the commerce of the Roman empire in China, or the invasive presence of the rubber tree in Southeast Asia to the first documented biopiracy of the British Empire, Silva's work encounters opportunities to reflect upon the flux of imperial transactions and their mutations over the time.

Finders Keepers poses similar questions about the trajectory of objects in museum collections. The starting point of this exhibit is the 1822 portrait of Giovanni Belzoni attributed to Horace Vernet. Belzoni, a circus man turned archeologist, was tasked by the British General Council in Egypt, Henry Salt, to transport some of the objects the French failed to move, particularly the statue of Ramses II, now one of the cornerstones of the British Museum Egyptian collection. Belzoni's smash and grab was authorized by Mohammed Ali, the Pasha (governor) of Egypt, at the time when Egypt was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The right to memory of the Egyptian people was determined from one empire to the next.

Artur Silva, who lives between Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the United States finds in his own neighborhood the linguistic conceptual underpinnings of this exhibit: In Rio, he lives on the edge of the Sahara, the largest open mall in the world with over 1200 stores assembled together by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants over 100 years ago. As a tribute to the dozens of anonymous workers who actually carried Ramses II through the Sahara desert to the Nile River, he turns his camera to the countless nameless carriers and their trolleys transporting capital in merchandise form. Silva aggregates the candid portraits of the carriers with retail products they transport creating an interplay between photography and material culture as documentation of a place. Transporters and transportees, signifiers and signified, all in one frame.

Belzoni's wreckless methodologies are believed to be the inspiration for the fictional character Indiana Jones. He stepped on mummies, graffitied his name inside of the Pyramid of King Khafre at Giza, and engaged in fist fights with the workers. Although never directly associated with the British Museum, through Henry Salt, Belzoni sold the Ramses II statue for £2,000 (approximately £238,371.80 in 2023). It took the British Museum 5 years to agree to that price. The statue remains on display ever since.



Untitled (Sahara) 1, 2023 Archival inkjet on archival paper with shoelaces and hooks, 55 x 33 x 8 cm



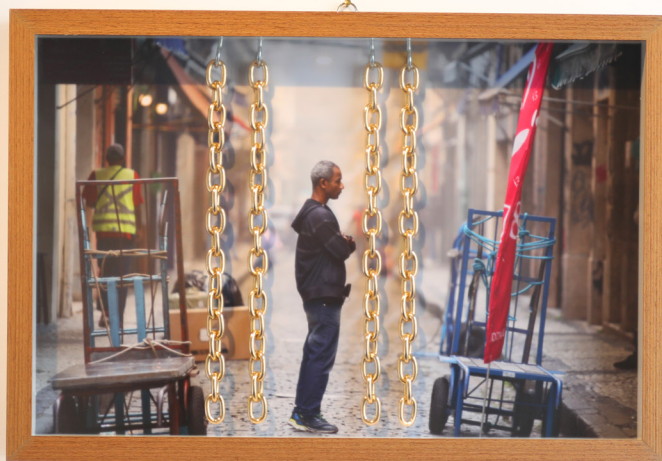
Untitled (Sahara) 2, 2023 Archival inkjet on archival paper with shoelaces, 55 x 33 x 8 cm



Untitled (Sahara) 3, 2023 Archival inkjet on archival paper with embroidery, 55 x 33 x 8 cm



Untitled (Sahara) 4, 2023 Archival inkjet on archival paper with Little Blue Macaw feathers, 55 x 33 x 8 cm



Untitled (Sahara) 5, 2023 Archival inkjet on archival paper with golden chains, 55 x 33 x 8 cm



Untitled (Sahara) 6, 2023 Archival inkjet on archival paper with plastic net and push pins, 55 x 33 x 8 cm



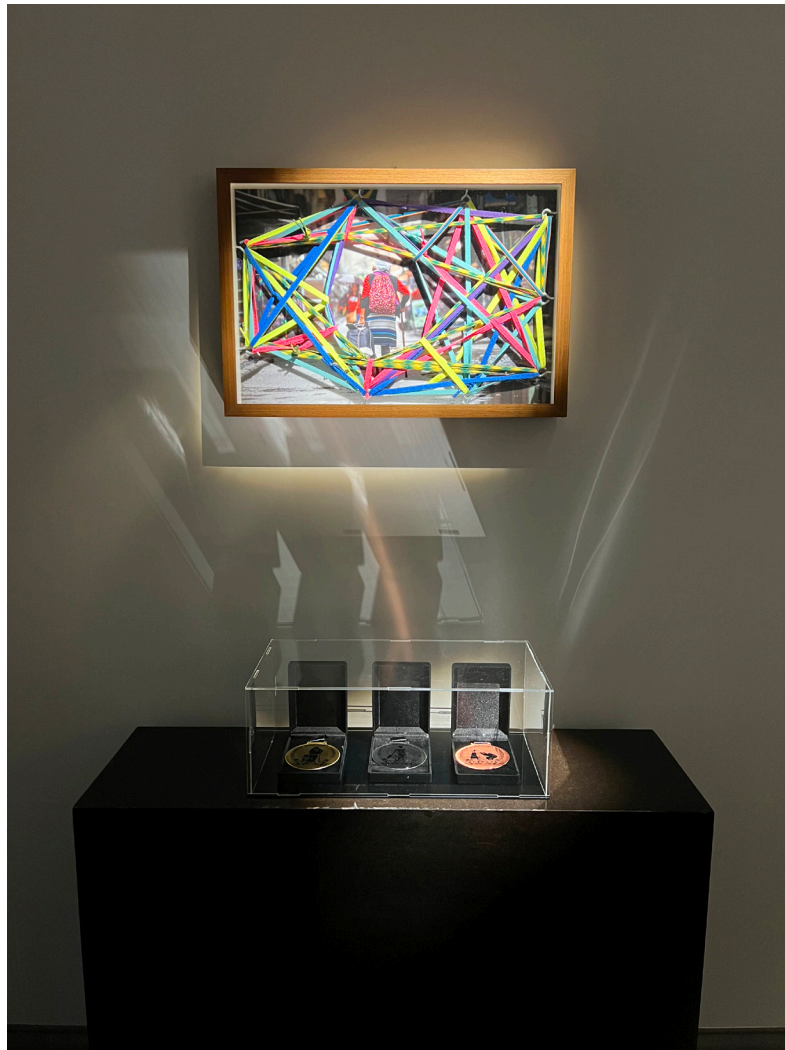
Untitled (Sahara) 7, 2023 Archival inkjet on archival paper with yarn, acrylic ring and magnifying glass,
55 x 33 x 8 cm



Untitled (Sahara) 8, 2023, Archival inkjet on archival paper with acrylic beads, nylon and hooks,
55 x 33 x 8 cm



White Man's Burden, 2023, three medals made with engraved metal and acrylic with ribbon and cases housed in acrylic display.



detail of installation shot



Imperial Way, 2023 Brazilian street signage, 40cm x 20cm



detail of installation shot 1



detail of installation shot



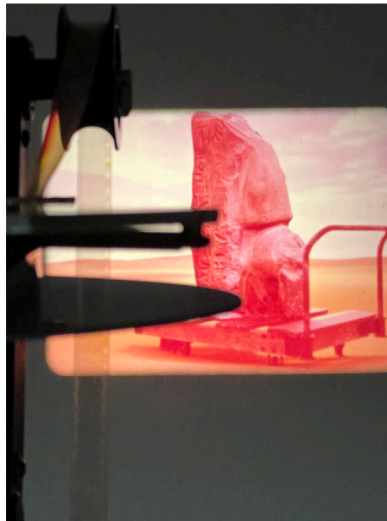
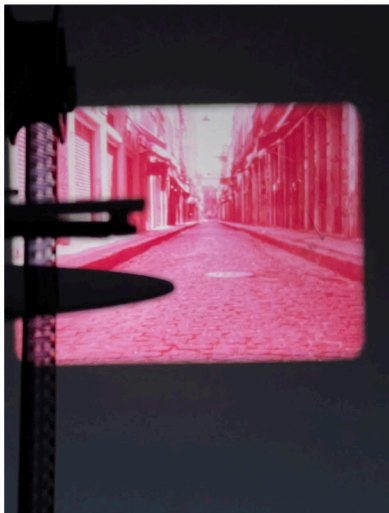
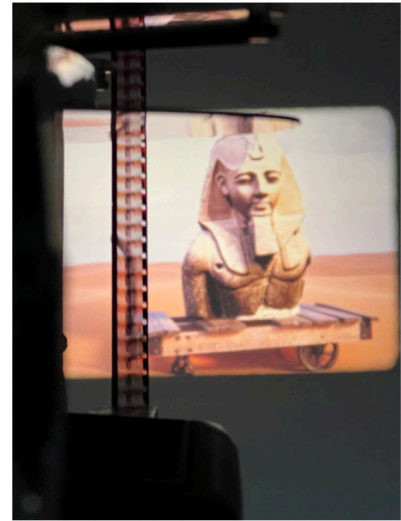
detail of installation shot



detail of installation shot

Two Saharas

collaboration with Aaron Higgins and Thomas Lewis



Two Saharas

collaboration with Aaron Higgins and Thomas Lewis
16mm reversal film, TRT.: 3:02s

Giovanni Belzoni used around 80 people to transport the statue of Ramses II, which weighs over 7 tons, through the Sahara Desert into a boat on the River Nile. They used rolling logs to carry the large sculpture.

Two hundred years later, at a time when robotics and artificial intelligence have made significant leaps forward, the primary method of merchandise transportation in the Sahara open mall in Brazil, continues to be the wheels of dollies propelled by human strength.

Created in part on a 3D digital environment and edited with images shot in Paris and the Sahara in Rio de Janeiro, *Two Saharas* reflects on this dichotomy by utilizing 16mm film as a kind of technological rift between two worlds.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HYkQYSn7zN3OEeloKhRI0Rm4CeGqs0-A/view?usp=sharing>



Finders Keepers Documentary, 2023, 4K digital file, TRT.: 12:16s

Featuring:

Lewis McNaught - former curator of the Egyptian collections at the British Museum and current editor of Returning Heritage

Barnaby Phillips - former BBC correspondent and author of Loot

James Ratcliffe and Olivia Whitting - from Art Loss Registry

Joao Pacheco - Curator of Ethnological Collections at the National Museum of Brazil

Produced by **Mercè Valderrey** and directed by **Artur Silva**

This documentary explores the complexities of ethically assembling an encyclopedic museum collection and some cases of successful restitution of cultural artifacts.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Kp6FTHH-9PMsJriBDk4dq9_N6S0tEnFK/view?usp=sharing



Portrait of Giovanni Battista Belzoni, 1822
Attributed to Horace Vernet (Paris 1789 - 1863)
Oil on canvas, cm 55 x 44.8
Inscribed and dated "Giovanni Battista Belzoni 1822" on verso

Artur Silva

Artur Silva is a multidisciplinary visual artist and educator. He was born in Belo Horizonte, Brazil and lives between Rio de Janeiro and Indianapolis. He received a Masters in Fine Arts from the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).

His work has been displayed at institutions such as the Van Abbe Museum in The Netherlands, the Ludwig Foundation in Havana, the Smart Museum in Chicago, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Centro Cultural de España in Mexico City, Indiana State Museum, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, among others.

Artur has received a number of awards including a Pollock-Krasner Grant (NYC), NALAC grant (San Antonio, TX), Efroymsen Contemporary Art Fellowship (Indianapolis), two times recipient of the Christel DeHaan Artist of Distinction Award (Indianapolis Arts Council), Foundation for Contemporary Arts (NYC), Nominated for a Joan Mitchell Award, among others.

Some publications featuring Artur's work include The New York Times, Art News, Art in America, Forbes, PBS' Many Rivers To Cross series, among others.

Artur has been a Visiting Professor at Indiana University in South Bend, Herron School of Art and Design and DePauw University.