

Notes on the Collection: Sudden Death

Published [May 27, 2018](#)[June 18, 2018](#) by [perezartmuseummiami](#) in [exhibitions](#).

“Notes on the Collection,” (<https://pammportraits.org/2018/03/01/notes-on-the-collection/>) is a blog series by Pérez Art Museum Miami’s (PAMM) first Ford Foundation Curatorial Fellow Ade Omotosho (<http://pamm.org/blog/2017/11/p%25C3%25A9rez-art-museum-miami-welcomes-ade-omotosho-inaugural-ford-foundation-curatorial>), where he focuses on artworks from the museum’s permanent collection. Every month, Omotosho will share his notes on his personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences with various artworks that he hopes might provide a generative way to think about PAMM’s diverse collection.

Below, check out Omotosho’s Notes on the Collection: Sudden Death.

While many of the works in the exhibition *The World’s Game: Fútbol and Contemporary Art* (<http://pamm.org/futbol>) are celebratory, highlighting soccer’s lively recreational aspects and its potential to unify people, others are more politically inclined and address pressing issues. Brazilian artist Jaime Lauriano’s video *morte súbita* (*sudden death*) is one such work in the exhibition. In it, Lauriano examines the lasting legacies of violence of Brazil’s military dictatorship (1964–85). Its concerns resonate, especially in light of the recent assassination of Brazilian politician Marielle Franco in Rio de Janeiro. The circumstances of her death recall the tactics employed under the dictatorship, and considered alongside the video, reveal how Brazil’s current political moment is inseparable from that violent era.



Jaime Lauriano. *morte súbita* (sudden death), 2014. Looped video projection, 24 min, 51 sec. Courtesy the artist and Galeria Leme

morte súbita layers elements of soccer with methods of torture to foreground the violence that pervaded the dictatorship. In the video, a group of men line up against a concrete wall. The hems of their jerseys—belonging to Brazil’s 1970 World Cup team—stretch over their heads, clinging to their faces like body bags. Bare-chested and vulnerable, the men fold their hands behind their heads in a position redolent of a grisly torture technique. An announcer recites the names of twenty-two people (the number of players on Brazil’s squad during the World Cup) killed or who disappeared during the year of the World Cup as the ringing cheer of an unseen crowd drones on in the background, as if to drown out the announcer’s voice, suppressing it like those men shrouded in jerseys. A barrage of gunfire punctuates the din as each distinct sound competes for intensity. As the eerie elements of the video come into focus, it seems that what would typically be an introduction line for presenting players before a match becomes an execution line for a firing squad. A fatal turn feels imminent. As I watched the video and listened to the names resound in the gallery, I recalled another name, one claimed by history fairly recently—Marielle Franco. Waiting for a brief pause in the announcer’s rhythm, I imagined her name recited among the others.

Marielle Franco was a black queer activist and city councilor for Brazil’s Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) from the favela of Maré, Rio de Janeiro who was assassinated on the night of March 14, 2018. She was leaving an event called “Black Women Changing Power Structures” in the Lapa neighborhood of Rio, when multiple shots were fired into the vehicle where she sat, killing her and her driver Anderson Gomes. Throughout

her career, Franco was an outspoken critic of the rampant police brutality plaguing favelas and the extrajudicial police killings of their primarily black residents. She also vehemently opposed President Michel Temer's decision to order the military occupation of Rio in February of this year, the first federal military intervention in the state since the end of the dictatorship in 1985.



Jaime Lauriano. *morte súbita* (sudden death), 2014. Looped video projection, 24 min, 51 sec. Courtesy the artist and Galeria Leme

The dictatorship was notorious for the violent human rights violations committed by government officials. Over the course of 21 years, citizens were witness to the brutal regime and its various methods of political repression. There were disappearances and murders, dissidents were tortured, and the Brazilian people were held in thrall to authoritarian policies while those in government attempted to obscure these injustices with other events, including Brazil's World Cup victory and the so-called Brazilian Miracle—a period of unprecedented economic growth in the country that mostly benefited the wealthy classes.

The legacies of the regime remain palpable; nowhere are they more apparent than in the oppression of impoverished black communities in favelas throughout the country. Franco's death, a targeted political assassination in the months leading up to the general elections in the fall, is borne of the violence that festered during the dictatorship, a violence that saw the alleged defenders of justice turn against their own people. Her death extends a long line of loss originating in government corruption and military police violence. The outrage at her assassination in Brazil's marginalized communities—made up of people who felt represented by her—stems in part from a recognition of her death as a symbol of the country's regressive policies and of the continued assaults on their lives. What Franco protested was the misguided logic that military occupation would provide stability in Rio—a strategy that the city's poorest communities have understood to be wholly ineffective for years. Hers was a fight against a government reenacting a policy that would breed the same problems that it did years prior.

Franco envisioned a future for Brazil that reckoned with the weight of its history, a future hospitable to a moment in which her people could throw off that weight, if only long enough to create strategies to defend their rights as citizens. She sought to improve the lives of the country's oppressed communities despite the ahistorical vision of politicians who fail to heed the example of history.



Jaime Lauriano. *morte súbita* (sudden death), 2014. Looped video projection, 24 min, 51 sec. Courtesy the artist and Galeria Leme

In *morte súbita*, Jaime Lauriano was interested in similar questions of history: how the past bears down on the present, how violence and trauma, like shards of broken glass embedded in skin, are entrenched in the structures of power that organize governments. Franco is separated by those named in the video—the disappeared, the tortured, the murdered—by little more than 30 years. They are people she never knew, but they become kin in death, connected by their shared violation by a government with no regard for their lives. I like to think that Franco's death has resonated with Lauriano as he continues to probe Brazil's history and reassured him of the necessity of his work and what it reveals: the strides still left to be made before the country reconciles its past with its present.

Jaime Lauriano's morte súbita is now on view in The World's Game: Fútbol and Contemporary Art in the M. B. Fernandez Family Galleries on the museum's second floor.

morte súbita is not part of PAMM's permanent collection.