



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brazilian Conceptual Artist Valeska Soares to be Featured in Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's 176th MATRIX Exhibition

Hartford, Conn. (Feb. 2, 2017) – Opening this week, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's 176th installation of its groundbreaking MATRIX program will feature Brazilian conceptual artist Valeska Soares (b. 1957). Soares' exhibition, "Unfold," will present two, new site-specific installations that create dialogues with the museum's architecture and collection. The exhibition will open Feb. 2 at 5 p.m., and run through May 7. Patricia Hickson, Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art, curated the exhibition.

In her work, Soares creates immaculately-realized, poetic environments incorporating found, manipulated and manmade objects to address subjects such as spirituality, desire, ephemerality and time. For her newly-conceived MATRIX projects, Soares' degree in architecture, acute interest in design and sense of space will inform two installations: "Tabled," and, "Unhinged."

In "Tabled," Soares mixes history, abstraction and everyday objects responding to the modernity of the museum's 1934 Avery Memorial Building—a groundbreaking icon of International style architecture—and to Pietro Francavilla's "Venus with Nymph and Satyr" (1600), the Mannerist marble sculpture that emerges from the fountain pool at the heart of the space. Soares employs the museum's collection of wood tables of all styles, sizes and heights, tightly placed edge to edge, creating a cordon of objects around the pool. Each table is topped with a felt pad, precisely cut to size, in a different solid color—black, white, red or gray. Viewed from the upper two balconies, the surfaces of the tables will read like monochromatic shaped canvases.

Responding to the pure geometry and palette of the Avery Memorial, "Unhinged," will create a new architectural feature within the gallery in the form of a labyrinthine sculpture. Zig-zagging through the space, the "walls" of the sculpture will be constructed of 15 wood headboards dating from the 1900s to the 1970s, hinged together to disrupt the viewer's typical navigation of the space. The unique headboard forms suggest not just bedframes, but confining fences, prison gates and even cemetery headstones. Ominous, but also beautiful and poetic, the distinctive patterns of the old, worn, decorative headboards also conjure ideas about history and associations with the bed—a place of love, death, sleep, dreams, memories and the lives of owners long passed.

The artist offers, "I'm fascinated by ephemeral things; I'm giving people triggers that activate memories and contexts, and they create their own narratives. Each piece has multiple readings depending on who is seeing it. What I want my pieces to be are triggers."

Born in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, Soares lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil, and Brooklyn, New York. Her last major U.S. museum exhibition was held at the Bronx Museum of the Arts in

2003. Her work has been the subject of a number of solo exhibitions: at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1995); the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, California (1999); and the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, Mexico (2003). Soares has participated in the international contemporary art biennials of Venice (2005), Istanbul (2006), Taipei (2006), São Paulo (2008), and Sharjah (2009).

Public Programs

Soares will give a talk on Feb. 2 at 7 p.m. during the museum's Art After Dark event. Curator Hickson will give a gallery talk April 13 at noon. Both programs are free with museum and/or event admission.

Exhibition Credit

Major support for MATRIX 176 has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Robert Lehman Foundation, Inc. The MATRIX program is generously supported in part by Jeffrey G. Marsted and Marcia Reid Marsted as well as the current members of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's Contemporary Coalition. Special support for MATRIX 176 has been provided by Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo, Brazil, and Consul General of Brazil Fernando de Mello Barreto and Deputy Consul General Maria Helena Pinheiro Penna. Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum is provided in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the United States. The museum's nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival and modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 15; discounts for students and seniors. Free for members, youth under age 18 and Hartford residents with ID. Free “happy hour” admission for all visitors 4 – 5 p.m. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.

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Note to editors: High-resolution image files to accompany publicity of this exhibition are available for download at <http://press.thewadsworth.org>. Please email media@wadsworthatheneum.org for log-in credentials.