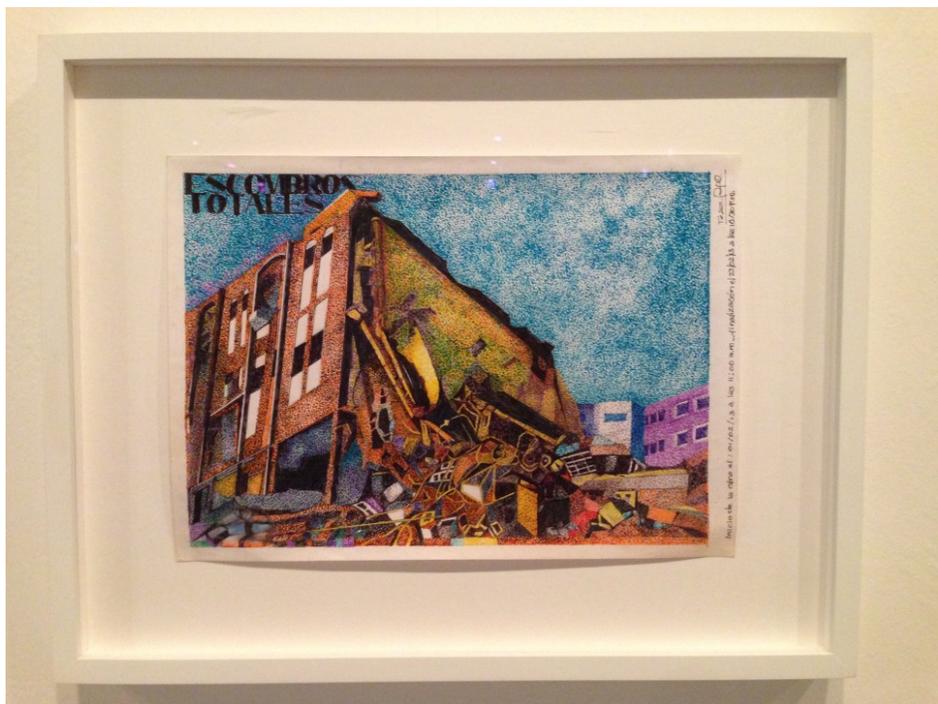


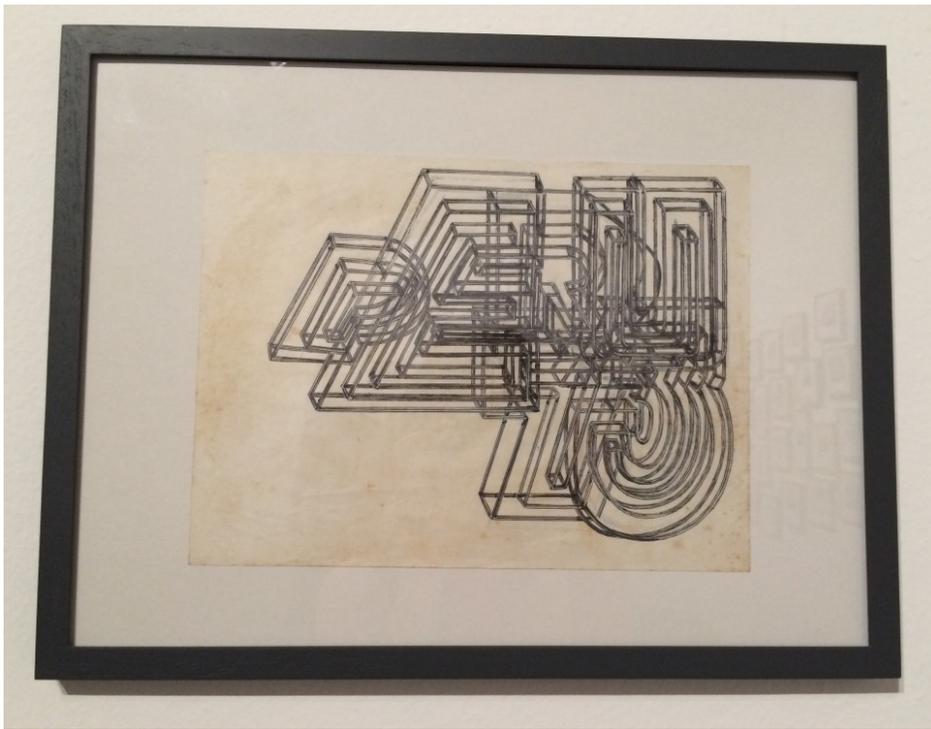
TERESA BURGA AT THE VENICE BIENNIAL 2015

3 August 2015

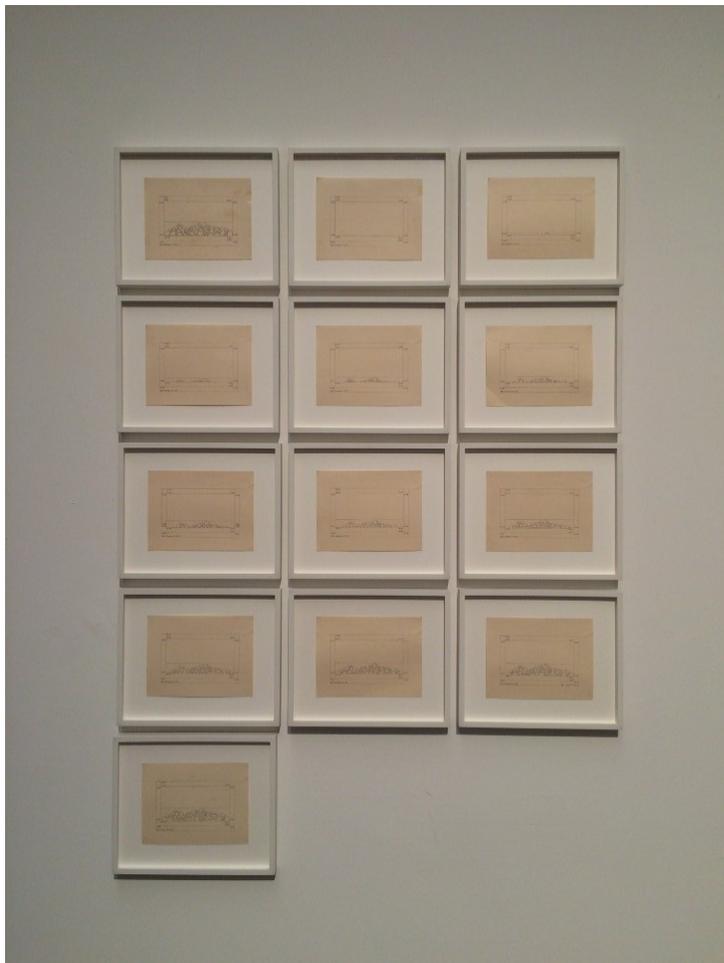


Escombros Totales, 2012, ink and pen on paper

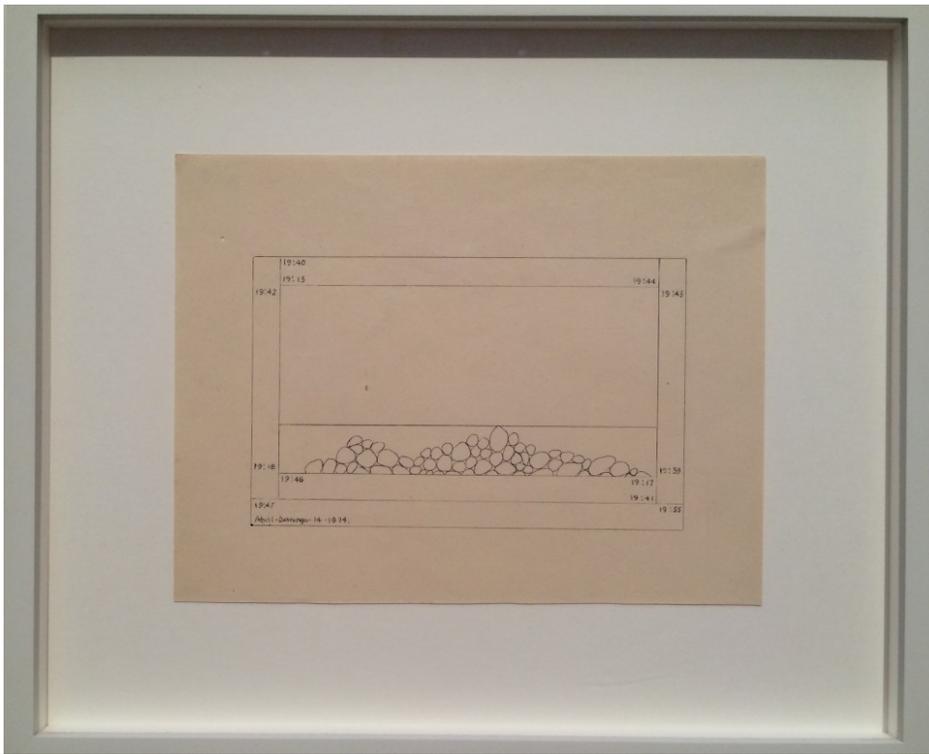
This year several series of drawings by Teresa Burga (Iquitos, Peru, 1935) are included in the presentation of the biennial's central pavilion. A pleasant surprise. Despite of its quality Burga's work is still relatively unknown. Being a woman in Peru's patriarchal society trying to build up a career as a conceptual artist in a, to make things even worse, 'peripheral' country undoubtedly has something to do with that. Neither did the nationalistic military government of Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1980) contribute to her professional development. For decades Burga was not recognized, neither within Peru nor internationally. Nowadays she is regarded as one of the most innovative and experimental Peruvian artists. Museums worldwide have started to pay attention to her work, often within the context of museological projects that aim to retrieve wrongfully neglected artists. This reversal did not start earlier than five years ago though. In fact, if it wasn't for art historians Miguel A. López and Emilio Tarazona, who came to Burga's house to gather information about the artist group *Arte Nuevo* she once formed part of, her work might have been deemed to remain undiscovered.



Untitled (Peru), 1973, pen on paper



Untitled, 14.-15.04.1974, 1974, ink on paper



Untitled, 14.-15.04.1974, 1974, ink on paper (detail)

Presented at the biennial are three types of drawings. *Untitled (Peru)* (1973), consists of three beautiful graphical, almost industrial 3D ink drawings in which the letters P, E, R, U overlap each other in various, sometimes indecipherable, ways. *Untitled, 14.-15.04.1974* (1974) shows a series of thirteen schematic drawings of growing amounts of circles, measured against several lines. They remind of laboratory tests or some sort of scientific recap. Each drawing contains references to time, or process. From the date till the exact hour and minute she executed specific parts of the drawing. Measurements and science form a great part of her oeuvre. In what is perhaps her most important work, *Perfil de la Mujer Peruana* (1980-1981) she analysed Peruvian women aged between 25 and 29 – right when the second-wave feminism in Peru emerged- based on aspects such as their anthropometric facts, educational level, political preference, cultural class and their legal-, economic- and psychological status. In collaboration with Peruvian psychologist Marie-France Cathelat the data was visualized in information graphics and installation pieces, giving insight into the women, their situation at the end of the Velasco's dictatorial regime and how they saw themselves. This comprehensive project would be the last one presented publicly for a long time. Although she continued drawing, instructions for installations and (musical) performances amongst others, nothing was exposed for about three decades.



Untitled (Jasmin Hagenmeyer – julio 1972) miércoles 30.10.2013, 2013, felt tip pen, ballpoint pen, fineliner and pencil on paper

A couple of her latest drawings, made between 2012 and 2014, are shown at the biennial as well. Like her older drawings this series too seem the result of a wish to capture, to represent in a strict and objective way. The dates and hours of her working schedule are meticulously noted on the sheet again to begin with. Furthermore one quickly notices that the drawings are copies and literally record something. Children's drawings for example of which the historical aura of, in this case, the seventies was carefully preserved. Other works derive from newspaper photography, predominantly with a political message and executed in a pointillist, pixel-like style. Although this last description may point into the direction of Burga's fellow compatriot artist Fernando Bryce (Lima, Peru, 1965), and they indeed share their methodology of copying historical reports, Burga's preoccupation with the past here seems to express itself more randomly and less driven by the ambition to focus on forgotten histories as is the case in Bryce's work. Stylistically their work is miles apart as well.



Untitled 26.02.1974, 1974 and Sin título (Untitled), 1974, ink on paper

Burga was one of the members of *Arte Nuevo*, a progressive group of artists active in Peru between 1966 and 1968. They tried to redefine and renovate Peru's artistic idioms and explored pop art, op art,

performance art and happenings. The military coup made an end to their activities as a group. Nevertheless Burga individually continued to explore the possibilities of conceptual or non-object art within the margins of the regime (the fact that her father and Velasco were friends may have helped her). Most of her proposals though were too experimental or were not 'Peruvian' enough according to the reigning populist standards and couldn't be executed. Her numerous instructions however make it possible to accomplish her work years later. Based on these instruction drawings [Malba Museum](#) in Buenos Aires for instance is currently presenting *Estructura de Aire* (1978), a work that was recently acquired by the museum. This installation consists of two invisible air columns that can only be detected with the skin. Yet, once the work has been felt it is deconstructed. [Tate Modern's](#) 'The World Goes Pop' opening mid August and on view till January 24 2016, sheds light on Burga's contribution to pop art by including her geometrical, modular sculptures *Cubes* (1968). The drawings on show at the biennial are thus just a tip of the iceberg of Burga's large and diverse oeuvre. An oeuvre that finally found its way to international recognition.