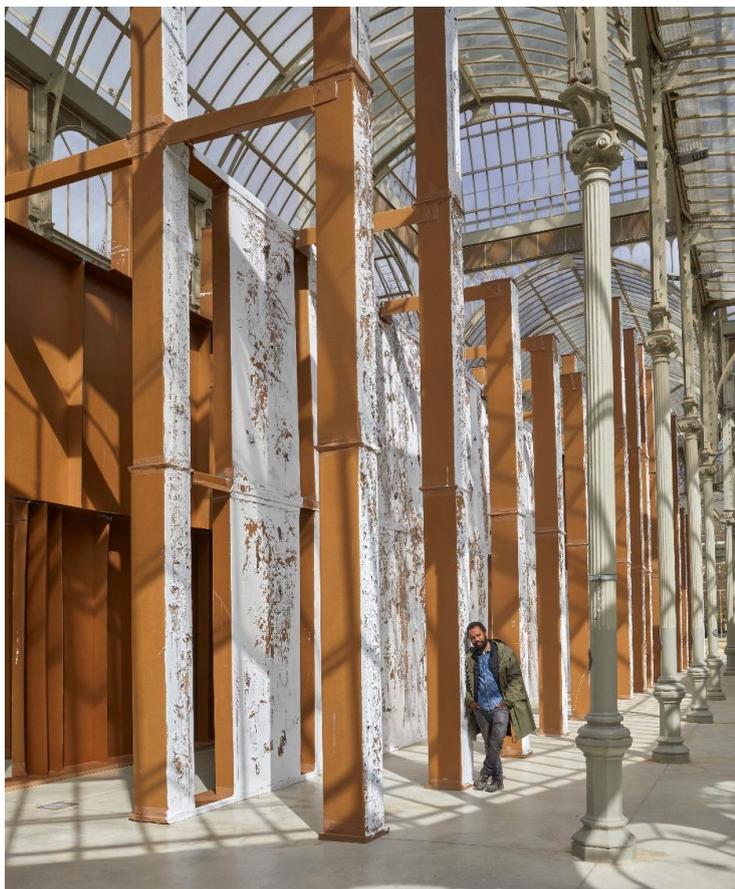


Carlos Bunga

Against the Extravagance of Desire



The artist **CARLOS BUNGA** at his exhibition at Palacio de Cristal.
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. April 2022.
Photographic Archive of Museo Reina Sofía

DATES:	8 April 2022 – 4 September 2022
LOCATION:	Palacio de Cristal. Retiro Park
ORGANIZATION:	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
COORDINATION:	Soledad Liaño

Palacio de Cristal hosts the new project by Portuguese artist Carlos Bunga (Porto, 1976): ***Against the Extravagance of Desire***. The exhibition, organized by Museo Reina Sofía, is his largest intervention in Madrid to date.

Bunga focused the beginning of his career on painting, before expanding his interests towards other artistic disciplines that allowed him to question **the conception of architecture as a language of power**, calling into question deep-seated inertia such as order or solidity, and willingly dispensing with the bombast of traditional materials, opting instead for the precariousness of certain structures made solely from **packing cardboard and adhesive tape**. ***Against the Extravagance of Desire*** continues this line of research: the changing environment surrounding the Palace that hosts the exhibition, as well as the context in which it was originally built, make up some of the keys to this new project.



Exhibition view **CARLOS BUNGA. AGAINST THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF DESIRE**
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The ephemeral nature of the artist's installations is inevitably bound up with two circumstantial concepts: time and place. Bunga opens a new dimension for the experience of a viewer who not only contemplates the work but enters and transforms it. The cardboard structure that composes the installation blends with the iron and glass building that houses it, giving rise to a hybrid and changing environment: "A performative, spontaneous and unstable space, built,

used and destroyed much more easily than conventional architecture," as states the exhibition coordinator, Soledad Liaño. The artist directs our attention precisely to all these **nomadic architectures, made of precarious materials**.

In the installation, Bunga brings stories outside the spotlight to public attention, as he did in his recent project *Home* (2022) for the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, but he also blurs the boundary between interior and exterior, making the building a participant in the external environment, a constantly changing natural cycle that defines and conditions it. Moreover, **nature vindicates its space in the cardboard construction and raises its voice through the leaves trapped in the paint**.

"*Against the Extravagance of Desire*", the artist states, "is an attitude of resistance informed by all the material that surrounds us and takes us farther and farther away from the spiritual essence which ought to reign in our lives. This project is an invitation to think with me of other ways of existing, being and inhabiting amidst the duality we live in."

In *Against the Extravagance of Desire* converge the majesty of the elements that compose the building located in the Retiro Park and the precariousness of the cardboard used by the artist. The Palacio de Cristal ('Crystal Palace') was built by Ricardo Velázquez Bosco in 1887 as part of the complex of buildings erected for the General Exhibition of the Philippine Islands, held the same year. It was built as a greenhouse for housing botanical specimens from the Philippine archipelago, but most of these failed to survive the long sea voyage, making it necessary to rustle up new contents to justify the construction of the building with its innovative iron and glass architecture, the result of technical progress and the availability of the new materials made possible by the all-out industrialization of the 19th century. Projects like this were an architectural triumph begun by Joseph Paxton with his greenhouse for Chatsworth (1837-1840) and his subsequent Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London.



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Among other advantages, the system of construction with prefabricated elements allowed the building to be put together and dismantled very quickly, which suited the intrinsically ephemeral nature of events like the World Expositions, greatly in vogue at that time. In the same way, Carlos Bunga has built his ephemeral interior architecture taking into account the particular climatic and conservation conditions of the Palace, which can affect the installation itself and which will be dismantled when the exhibition is over, as was the case with the pavilions of the aforementioned events.

An autobiographical trail

Bunga consciously vindicates an autobiographical trail as part of the narrative. This is understandable if we look back: Bunga's mother was forced to flee her country, Angola, when she was pregnant with him and his sister was just two. His family was part of the exodus of refugees caused by the Angolan War of Independence (1961-1975), who were taken to Portugal along humanitarian corridors set up by the Red Cross.

After a time at a refugee center in Oporto, they were rehoused in prefabricated dwellings that were provided in 1983 by Portugal's Housing Development Fund for low-income Portuguese families and a small percentage of Angolan refugees. Owing to their perishable materials, the constructions started to deteriorate almost at once, and their unacceptable living conditions led soon afterwards to their demolition. Bunga has stated that he learned to adapt to these transitory spaces. This way of relating to the world, he says, makes him feel like a nomad in his way of being and thinking.



Carlos Bunga's work has been exhibited in major international museums and art centers such as the the Museu de Serralves in Oporto (2012), the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo MUAC-UNAM in Mexico City (2013), the Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona (MACBA, 2015), the Museum Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich (2015), the Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia in Lisbon (MAAT, 2019), the Whitechapel Gallery in London (2020), and the Sezession in Vienna (2021). He has also participated in the 29th São Paulo Biennial and at Manifesta 5 (2004) in Donostia-San Sebastián.

For further information:

PRESS OFFICE

MUSEO REINA SOFÍA

[internacionalprensa@museor](mailto:internacionalprensa@museorinasofia.es)

inasofia.es

(+34) 91 774 10 2281

www.museoreinasofia.es/prensa

