

WAHC is located on the original territories of the Huron, Wendat and Neutrals, and later, the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe.



51 Stuart Street, Hamilton, ON L8L 1B5
www.wahc-museum.ca

Public Hours:
Wednesday - Friday 10 am - 4 pm
Saturday 12 - 4 pm



THE PEOPLE UNITED

The possibility of changing the course of history and achieving a more dignified and humane world through people uniting is a dream many artists share. The artists in the exhibition *The People United* imagine the possibility of moving this dream forward—acknowledging our violent and oppressive past, while looking towards a different future. The efforts of past and present generations of activists, scholars, workers, artists, and students demonstrate that it is through their imaginations and actions that a shift can occur. A vibrant hope emanates within the possibility of creating spaces of decoloniality, where imperial, neocolonial, neoliberal, and patriarchal systems can become part of the past. The artists in *The People United* propose counter-narratives using different aesthetic practices, media, methodologies, and concepts to project these spaces of transformation. The **Beehive Collective**, **Carlos Colín**, **Cristian Ordóñez**, **Colectivo LASTESIS**, and **Syrus Marcus Ware** understand and capture the essence and process of struggle, the humanity behind the masses that create change, and the hope that lies within thinking and practicing decoloniality. The artists and collectives in this exhibition are in constant dialogue between those who live in diaspora and those who live in the Global South, providing not only a lens from which to view things differently, but mirror the potential within us all to become part of that conversation.

The core members of the Beehive Collective, composed of ten to fifteen people in total, emerged from the anti-globalization movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s. They first distributed their graphics on the streets

The People United offers a site of struggle and hope. It examines moments of resurgence, contestation, and emancipation, but most importantly acknowledges the power that lies within people and a vision into what our future could be.

Tamara Toledo



Join us for a series of ancillary programs presented in support of The People United. (Scan QR code for info)

Friday, February 10, 2023, 7 - 9 pm

Opening Reception and Curator's Walkthrough with Tamara Toledo

Saturday April 8, 2023, 10 am

Mesoamerica Resiste! Workshop with the Beehive Collective.

Saturday, April 8, 2023, 1 pm

Second Saturday Family Workshop with the Beehive Collective.

Thursday, April 13th, 6:30 pm (Virtual Program)

Feminist and Political Collage: Interdisciplinary Strategies for Performance Workshop with Colectivo LASTESIS.

denouncing the country's patriarchal culture and accusing Chile's police, the judicial system, and the President for failing to prosecute the men who commit violence. The women squat three times with their folded arms up, representing the position they must take naked when arrested during body cavity searches. The power of their choreographic performance resonates worldwide, as others have adopted its message, referencing issues such as femicide, police brutality against Black Americans, and the Me Too movement. Its infectious stomping rhythm, its accusatory lyrics, and its powerful pumping of fists into the air in unison spread the shared understanding that neoliberalism, patriarchal structures of power, and violence against women are global issues that must be addressed.

The artist Dr. Syrus Marcus Ware offers us a space of hope. As an activist, educator, and scholar, his intention is to navigate different epistemologies and alternative modes of thinking, believing, and doing while moving towards an anti-capitalist future. His three-channel video piece entitled *Ancestors, Can You Read Us? (Dispatches from the Future)* imagines the collapse of capitalism and a not-too-far-away future where social restructuring is based on care, acknowledgement and respect of land, and of ancestors. For the exhibition, Ware takes us to the year 2072, and it is our great grandchildren who send us the message "to act, rebel, and take this earth back from the capitalists." They thank us for our contributions, they demonstrate their love, respect, and pride to those who fought for their own survival. As a symbol of that respect and gratitude, the artist renders a series of large-scale portraits entitled *Activist Portrait Series*, acknowledging their contributions to knowledge and history.

within anti-globalization protests. Inspired by direct contact with local voices impacted by globalization from across the Americas, the collective shares stories and experiences as graphic illustrations through a process of hemispheric collaboration between its members and the people who share their stories. The global issues that are discussed in the posters of the Beehive Collective include the impacts of neoliberalism, globalization, trade, extractivism, biotechnology, and climate change, among others. They use their anti-copyright images as educational tools to disseminate information and are committed to accessibility through working anonymously so that no one takes possession or claims copyright. Instead, the collective proposes to "cross-pollinate the grassroots" with their volunteer activist work.

Mesoamerica Resiste! is both a large-scale banner and the final poster in a trilogy about globalization in the Americas. The first of the series was the *Free Trade Area of the Americas* poster, created to disseminate the outcomes of the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. This poster was followed by *Plan Colombia*, which illustrated the US-subsidized war on drugs. The final poster on display for *The People United* exhibition took nine years to complete, and resulted in a double-sided poster that documents stories of resistance, resilience, and solidarity from Mexico to Colombia. The over four hundred species native to the region embody those who fight on the frontlines. This poster not only demonstrates the devastation and legacies of over 500 years of colonialism, but celebrates the resilience of activists and workers who take collective action and fight against systems of injustice and oppression.

The artist Carlos Colín takes a different approach to disseminate messages of defiance. He has chosen a historically-charged slogan, *Poder al Pueblo/Power to the People*, to remind us of the strength in those words, and the potential of their impact. The artist clearly states that the people have the potential to change the course of history, and participate actively to transform systems of power. By using the simple object of a rubber stamp— an old colonial method of dissemination and imposition— he grants people the opportunity to repeat the slogan as a mark of resistance. Colín invites audience members to fill the wall with a unified voice, placing the responsibility of completing the artwork into our own hands. The screenprinted poster references traditional grassroots methods of dissemination, and Colín invites us to take a poster and share it in public spaces.

The photographer Cristian Ordóñez traveled to Chile days after the *Estadillo Social* (social uprising) began in October of 2019 and lasted until the beginning of the pandemic. As he captures the first few weeks of the uprising, we witness history unfold through his lens. The *Estadillo Social* started with high school students demanding change to economic precarity and inequality due to a neoliberal system that impoverished most of Chile's citizens. Chile witnessed the highest levels of social uprising in decades as millions of people took over the streets to demand structural reform and replace the current Constitution which had been adopted under the dictatorship years.

Ordóñez's photographs are mounted on plywood, a material used to cover buildings of stores and institutions

during the uprising. The black and white series of twelve prints entitled *Trama 08. 2019-2022* have been exposed and layered several times, giving the final print an obscure, pixelated image that is difficult to decipher. This intentional depiction of the massive revolt is an attempt to capture not only the imminent danger, oppression, and resilience of those on the frontlines, but to intentionally dismantle stereotypes of what types of images are disseminated as documentation of resistance.

Ordóñez's work is in conversation with the work of Colectivo LASTESIS, an interdisciplinary feminist collective founded by Daffne Valdés Vargas, Paula Cometa Stange, Lea Cáceres Díaz, and Sibila Sotomayor Van Rysseghem. Their public performance *A Rapist in Your Path* was born during the so-called "Chilean awakening" in reference to the social uprising. Their call to action is based on a text by Argentinean feminist anthropologist Rita Segato and her theories around gender-based violence. This performance inspired women to join forces and accuse those guilty of institutional violence. While the first iteration took place outside Chile's Ministry for Women's Rights and Gender Equality on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the performance went viral with performances by thousands of others in Mexico, Colombia, France, Kenya, India, Spain, the UK, USA, and many other countries. In the performance, women wear black blindfolds referencing those who have lost their eyesight during the social uprising from targeted rubber bullets aimed directly at protesters by the police. Colectivo LASTESIS repeats the chorus "the rapist is you,"