

PEDRO LASCH
ABSTRACT NATIONALISM / NATIONAL ABSTRACTION: ANTHEMS FOR FOUR VOICES

The Phillips Collection
International Forum Weekend in Washington

October 27, 2014

12:30–12:45pm

First Musical Procession: musical performance of four anthems
(From the auditorium to the Music Room)

12:45–1:15

Flag Modulations: video projection
Music Room (with lunch)

1:15–1:45pm

Composition No. 20 and *Composition No. 46*: live performance

4:10–4:25pm

Second Musical Procession: musical performance of four anthems
(From the auditorium to the main entrance)



“I’m interested in promoting multilingualism and a multinational identity and fighting against monolingual and monocultural constructs. I think many of our countries and many of our policymakers, internationally speaking, are still too caught up with the past version of culture where you only speak one language, you only belong to one nation, etc. This work is an attempt to represent the complexity of who we are nowadays.”—Pedro Lasch

Abstract Nationalism / National Abstraction: Anthems for Four Voices is an audio-visual performance conceived by Mexican-born US-based artist Pedro Lasch and performed by professional musicians and museum volunteers. It is a series of short recitals that incorporate live music and visual props—flags, poles, and sashes—representing elements of national identity. Recitals take place throughout the Phillips galleries, culminating with a full-length performance and video projection in the Music Room.

Each recital combines four national anthems arranged for four voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) with each voice assigned one anthem. The grouping of the four countries is determined by their listing in English alphabetical order in the *2001 World Almanac and Book of Facts*. The language in which each anthem is sung shifts to that of the country listed subsequently in the Almanac. The anthem of the United States, for example, is sung in Spanish, the official language of Uruguay. Some sections of the composition call for each

voice to be featured as an independent flow, giving the audience the opportunity to appreciate a potentially familiar melody in a new linguistic and poetic articulation. These sections are called “musical processions.” Other sections, called “compositions,” generate a canon, creating a complete overlay of complex phonetic and semantic contradictions. These compositions are contemporary works of music in their own right, consistent with the aesthetic and stylistic vision of each composer.

The Phillips Collection is pleased to premiere two of these compositions: *Composition No. 20: Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland* by Craig DeAlmeida and *Composition No. 46: United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan* by Aristides Llana. DeAlmeida's composition presents a dramatic musical narrative of the co-existence of nations, while Llana's piece displays a strong structural sensibility reminiscent of its multilingual and polyphonic Renaissance models. Full compositions will be performed in the Music Room, accompanied by a video projection produced by Lasch. Compositions feature soloists Kristen Blackman (soprano), Erica Dunkle (alto), Cameron Aiken (tenor), Nathan Jones (bass). For the full recital, soloists will be accompanied by Hsiao-Mei Ku (violin), Leonid Zilper (cello), Donald L. Oehler (clarinet), John B. N. Hanks (percussion) and conductor Rodney Wynkoop of the Duke Chapel Choir and Duke Chorale.

Anthems for Four Voices is part of a larger social practice series by Pedro Lasch entitled *Abstract Nationalism/ National Abstraction*. This series channels the intense emotional and cultural associations we have toward anthems and national symbols. *Abstract Nationalism & National Abstraction* invites discussion around the notions of independence, colonialism, (multi)nationalism, migration, language, and mapping, all deeply related to the history of nations and cultures.

Pedro Lasch was born and raised in Mexico City. He has taught art, art theory, and visual studies at Duke University since 2002, and has been part of 16 Beaver Group in New York since 1999. He has a BFA from Cooper Union in New York, and an MFA from Goldsmiths in London. His solo exhibitions include *Open Routines* (Queens Museum of Art, 2006) and *Black Mirror* (Nasher Museum of Art, 2008). He has also participated in group exhibitions at MoMA PS1 in New York, MASS MoCA in Williamstown, Baltimore Museum of Art, Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and Royal College of Art and Hayward Gallery in London, Centro Nacional de las Artes in Mexico, and dOCUMENTA 13 (AND AND AND), among many others. His writings have appeared in publications such as *October Magazine*, *Art Forum*, *ARTnews*.

This project was initiated by Donald Russell, from the Provisions Library Research Residency at George Mason University. It was realized by The Phillips Collection under guidance of Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art Vesela Sretenović. Additional support provided by the Offices of the Provost, Vice Provost for the Arts, and Dean of the Humanities at Duke University. Unless otherwise noted, all translations were produced by DTS Language Services.

Special thanks to Zumrad Ahmedjanova, Catherine Albertini-Torres, Srinivas Aravamudan, Richard Brodhead, Azeddine Chergui, miriam cooke, Alyssa Dack, Tatiana DeGermán Ribón, Alexandra Dimsdale, Tim Doud, Laurent Dubois, Landy Elliott, Eric Ferreri, Esther Gabara, Uliana Gabara, Jon-Sesrie Goff, Jane Hawkins, Erica Hoskins, Elizabeth Jackson, Sally Kornbluth, Aaron Kutnick, Peter Lange, Jonathan Leibovic, Scott Lindroth, Imani Mosley, Ted Mott, Diana Murray-Watts, Fattaneh Naemi-Rad, Laurie Patton, Indri Puspita Sari, Laura Ramirez-Rasgado, Carmela Restrepo, Lauren Reuter, Donald Russell, Kirsten Santos Rutschman, Michael Schoenfeld, Duncan Shaw, Stephanie Sherman, Juliani Sidharta, Dan Smith, and Melissa Vetterkind.