

ARTILLERY



Valeska Soares, Duet I (from After), 2007, courtesy Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

VALESKA SOARES: ANY MOMENT NOW

Santa Barbara Museum of Art

by Debra Herrick

[November 7, 2017](#)

Brazilian artist Valeska Soares' mid-career survey at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, her first solo museum exhibit in the western United States, seamlessly expresses the ephemeral qualities of love and longing, in harmony with and opposition to the weighted—and often confining—art of altered everyday objects.

Although the exhibition does not follow a chronological order, time is at its essence. The title piece, *Any Moment Now...* (2014), prominently displayed in the museum's grand entry hall, is one of the most recent works in the retrospective; it includes mounted dust covers from 365 books in which each title references an aspect of time. Arranged in a grid on the gallery walls, they map time's passage, referencing the span of a year.

While a discrete unit of time (365 days) is clearly defined, the visual reticulation of the titles, unbounded by a defined visual frame, creates interconnecting lines that extend invisibly outward. The work builds complexity through the allusion to Jorge Luis Borges' *The Library of Babel*. This expansive work summons the viewer to consider *this* moment, represented or experienced, within an infinite expanse of time.



Valeska Soares, installation view, 2017, courtesy Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

Soares' intimate connection to literary and philosophical texts resonates throughout the exhibition, and no more so than in her use of the Roland Barthes' essay "A Lover's Discourse: Fragments" as both a recurring conceptual motif and as an index of the physical material found in the galleries.

In *Fragments: Dedication* (2007), Soares unmoors each letter of Barthes' essay on love and recreates the letters in porcelain. The letters are piled on the floor, the ink print is three-dimensional, the euphoric is grounded, and eloquence is transformed into nonsense.

Soares' work, *Edit Series* (2012), continues the artist's meditation on love. Here, Soares has redacted her original print copy of Barthes' essay and framed individual pages. Thus absorbed by Soares, Barthes' essay on the gallery walls, they map time's passage, referencing the span of a year.

And, sometimes love is sweet and sometimes it stinks. Soares plays with desire and repugnance in her sensory-based works, *Fainting Couch* (2002), a stainless steel chaise filled with the notoriously pungent stargazer lilies, and *Push Pull* (2013), a live taffy-pulling performance where spectators can indulge on the sweet delight.

“Any Moment Now” portrays the commonplace of love, where like language and memory, it is malleable and flawed. Ruminant in the exhibit like you’re reading a love letter you’ve found in a well-worn shoebox. You’ll find lyrical evocations of memories that linger on lost love, and ghostly traces and scents, and then again, those longings that harden in marble and stone, like fossils.