

ICA London – New Solo Exhibition by Laura Lima

Laura Lima: *The Drawing Drawing*

27 January – 29 March 2026

Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London



Laura Lima, *Ascenseur*, 2013/2016, Art Basel 2016. Image courtesy the artist.

In January 2026, the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), on The Mall, London, will present a new exhibition by Brazilian multidisciplinary artist Laura Lima (b. 1971, Minas Gerais). Since the mid-90s, Lima has become recognised for her subversive artworks which explore the relationship between bodies and their environment, questioning social expectations and accepted hierarchies by staging live situations where people, objects and spaces interact in unconventional ways. From leading a cow onto Ipanema Beach in 1994 to her celebrated *Balé Literal*, which saw a ballet of objects dance through spaces from the streets of Rio to the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona on a system of pulleys, Lima's distinctive practice challenges audiences and institutions to consider art as something which exceeds the boundaries of any one form — image, object, event, or performance — existing instead in the space between.

As Lima's first solo exhibition in London, *The Drawing Drawing* marks a significant introduction of her work to UK audiences, in which she will present a series of performative installations across the ICA's Upper and Lower Galleries. The exhibition will centre around a new commission which reconceives the traditional life drawing class, blurring the lines between audience and artwork.

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Lima's playful, sometimes anarchic disruption of established structures expands the definition of art and highlights the unseen work which sustains cultural institutions.

At the core of *The Drawing Drawing* will be an interactive sculptural installation that upends the traditional framework of the life drawing class. A cornerstone of Western artistic training since the Renaissance, life drawing centres the human figure, upholds drawing as a foundational discipline and promises mastery through faithful representation of perspective and anatomy. In Lima's installation, 'drawing' is redefined as an expansive, conceptual proposition. Visitors will be invited to put pencil to paper in a life drawing class in which the core elements of the setting are recognisable, but any conventions of subject and object, of perspective and representation, mastery and value, are destabilised. In their place emerges a poetic exchange that reorients attention towards the dynamics between bodies.

On display throughout the building, discrete performative sculptural works from various stages of Lima's surprising career will lay the conceptual groundwork for *The Drawing Drawing* installation. Also on view in the Lower Galleries will be *Ascenseur*, a work first conceived in 2013, involving a live performer partially visible to the public but separated by architecture. Like *The Drawing Drawing* it redefines the expectations of a visitor in a gallery space, offering a surrealistic jolt from the ordinary. The Upper Galleries will feature a scene related to *Balé Literal* that reimagines 'drawing' through a playful object dancing through the space – at once familiar and strange. The exhibition as a whole will be characterised by movement, poetic discovery and unpredictability. *The Drawing Drawing* and related performative installations, sculptural gestures and ephemeral actions will demand a shift in perception from the viewer; Lima explores the human experience in specific situations as choreographies of bodies, space, and the exchange between thought and matter.

Further information about the exhibition and event programme will be announced in the coming weeks.

Laura Lima: The Drawing Drawing is supported by the British Council and Instituto Guimarães Rosa, Brazil as part of the UK/Brazil Season of Culture 2025-26, a year-long cultural programme between the two countries.

Priority booking for ICA Members will be on sale from 16th December. General booking will be available from 6th January. For information about tickets and membership, please visit ica.art or contact: sales@ica.art / +44 (0)20 7930 3647

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Laura Lima commented:

“Everything moves. The matter of all things vibrates, rusts, sniffs, breathes, ages and transforms. *The Drawing Drawing* is the subtle acceleration of these events on the symbolic plane: their movement is not only random or rotational, as the eyes see, but elliptical, in affinity with that of the universe. Something familiar invites us to the gesture of drawing, in a drawing room. Perspective, attention and focus are sharpened and disintegrated.

The relationship between living beings and living matter, and the ways it can be presented in an exhibition is what I have been practicing since my work began. It's been two years from my first conversation with curator Andrea Nitsche-Krupp about this project, until the moment of presenting *The Drawing Drawing*, a work conceived for the ICA for the first time. It speaks with the certain humour and poetry necessary to pass the delicate times in which we are living. The work asks, how do we delineate the human? What is doing the delineating? I'm happy to put my ideas forward to this institution in the year ahead.”

Bengi Ünsal, Director, commented:

“It is this kind of artist and this kind of exhibition that challenges what it means to be an arts institution today. The ICA exists precisely to take on that challenge and serve as a conversation partner for an artist's ideas. Lima's new commission in the main gallery and her provocative work throughout the building reject the hierarchy of art forms and centre the audience: these are two of the ICA's core tenets and it is our deepest pleasure to support Lima's work.”

Andrea Nitsche-Krupp, Curator of Exhibitions, commented:

“It has been a privilege to work with Laura, who at every turn takes absolutely nothing for granted and provokes us — as curators, as an institution, and, hopefully, as a public — to do the same. Laura has been steadily developing a conceptual and philosophical practice for decades and it is our joy to bring her vision, which has been so critically influential in Brazil and across the Americas, to London audiences in a major way, especially through a thrilling new work that so tightly encapsulates her disarming perspective. It is both joyful and antagonistic, which, in this moment in particular, gives me a great deal of comfort.”

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Visitor Information

Tickets: from £7.50

Pay What You Can: Tue to Sun: 12 – 1pm

Members go free

Exhibition opening times:

Monday: Closed

Tue to Sun: 12 – 8pm

Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London, SW1Y 5AH

Access

If you have an access requirement that we can assist you with, please contact us in advance of your visit for more information at access@ica.art and we will make our best endeavours to help you. Full venue accessibility information can be found here, and you can download an accessibility map of the venue at www.ica.art/media/01795.pdf

About Laura Lima

For over three decades Laura Lima has created work that initiates the circumstances for an encounter. Neither performance nor strictly sculpture, Lima's work prioritises ambiguity, displacement, and productive estrangement. Since 1994 when she led a cow from her pasture onto Ipanema Beach, she has been developing a rigorous conceptual practice that materialises across diverse matter and form. Often incorporating live elements and instruction-based methods, her works tend to unfold independently of the artist's control. At its core, Lima's practice seeks to give visual form to philosophical concerns, asking us to reconsider what we assume to be stable or self-evident.

Audience and performer bodies are integral to Lima's sculptural situations, functioning variously as medium, concept, material, or political presence. A key principle in her practice is the equal consideration of all forms — living and non-

living — as sculptural matter, rejecting hierarchies of agency or value. In work that places us in a position to examine human relationships and unmask social norms, Lima always poses open questions and embraces uncertainty as an integral part of her practice.

Born in 1971, Laura Lima grew up in Brazil's countryside region of Governador Valadares. While still very young, Lima moved to Rio de Janeiro, where she is currently based. The artist received a BA in Philosophy from the State University of Rio de Janeiro in the 1990s and also studied art at the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro. In 1999, she founded the Organism RhR (Representative hyphen Representative) and served as its first bureaucratic administrator. As such, Lima created a glossary and an archive of the activities of the group, including ideas such as a philosophy of nothing, the non-functional, emptiness, and failure.

Lima's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions in institutions around the world such as MACBA Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, Spain (2023); Fondazione Prada, Milan (2018); Pinacoteca (Octágono), São Paulo (2018); ICA Miami (2016); SMK, National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (2015); Museum of Modern Art of Buenos Aires, Argentina (2015); Centro Cultural Banco do Nordeste, Fortaleza, Brazil (2015); Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2014); Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm (2013); Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich (2013); MUAC, Mexico City (2013); Foundation Eva Klabin, Rio de Janeiro (2012); among others. Lima presented a major outdoor installation in the 2025 Boston Public Art Triennial. Her works are held in numerous important collections, including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Instituto Inhotim, Brazil; Modern Art Museum of São Paulo; Bonniers Konsthall, Sweden; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Switzerland; Zabłudowicz Collection; and the Bonnefantenmuseum, The Netherlands, among others.

About the Institute of Contemporary Arts

The **Institute of Contemporary Arts** (ICA) is London's leading space for contemporary culture. We commission, produce and present new work in film, music, performance and the visual arts by today's most progressive artists. In our landmark home on The Mall in central London, we invite artists and audiences to interrogate what it means to live in our world today, with a genre-fluid programme that challenges the past, questions the present and confronts the future.

The ICA platforms the daring and the curious, supporting artists and ideas that challenge perceptions, inspire social change, and connect with diverse audiences locally and globally. As a space for bold, boundary-pushing creativity, we cultivate connections across disciplines, communities, and cultures. Our cross-disciplinary programming invites audiences to explore beyond the boundaries of individual art forms, fostering experimentation and the discovery of new perspectives. Open to all voices and ideas, we embrace interplay and interaction across club nights, film festivals, gigs, exhibitions, talks, and digital art. With inclusivity and collaboration at the heart of our work, we remain fearless in shaping contemporary creativity, connecting diverse voices, and making unexpected connections that define the future of arts and culture.

Our history of presenting and promoting visionary new art is unrivalled in London: from Kenneth Anger to Kathy Acker, Kano to Klein, Jackson Pollock to Jean-Michel Basquiat, Gay Sweatshop to Forensic Architecture, David Bowie to Stormzy, Pop Art to queer techno. Today, as ever, our inclusive programme reflects and represents who we are as a disparate and diverse collection of cultures and identities.

Exactly 78 years after a group of artists and poets founded the ICA as an alternative to the mainstream, we are committed more than ever to pave the way for the next generation and to platform creative voices. The ICA continues to celebrate risk and champion innovation, and experimentation across the arts – a playground and a home for today's most vital artists. Central to the ICA's vision and mission is a commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion at all levels of the organisation. We want to create and maintain an ICA that is a positive environment where similarities and differences of people are valued – a space where everyone belongs and feels welcome. We hold ourselves accountable through our regularly reviewed Anti-Racism Strategic Plan; Equality and Diversity Policy and Action Plan; and Safety Policy.

Since its inception, the ICA has been the home of future-thinking ideas and urgent cultural discourse. We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment that encourages dialogue and debate, recognising that differing viewpoints are essential to the advancement of contemporary arts and culture.

The ICA is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.