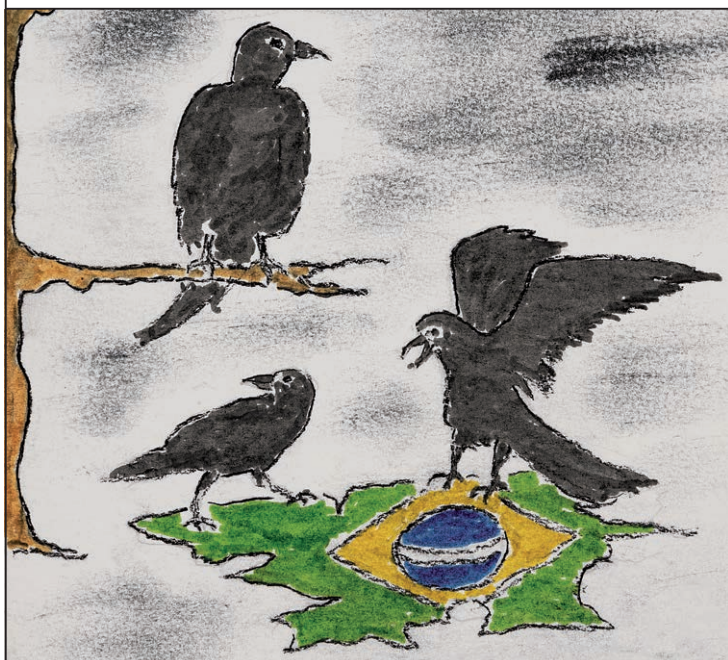


This exhibition brings together almost a hundred drawings, compositions and collages created by Jean Wyllys (Alagoinhas, Brazil, 1974) during his exile. It is a kind of log with which the artist narrates his subjectivity, his memories, his mythologies and his ways of taking the floor and politicizing existence.

# Jean Wyllys

## DE-EXILE



22.10.2022 – 15.01.2023

[LA VIRREINA]  
CENTRE  
DE LA IMATGE

Ajuntament de  
**Barcelona**



Jean Wyllys (Alagoinhas, Bahia, Brazil, 1974) served as a federal deputy with the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL) between 2010 and 2018. Since then he has been in exile as a result of death threats and homophobic and racist persecution based on fake news during the candidacy and subsequent presidency of the far-right politician Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.

A prominent LGBTI rights activist, during his time in parliament Wyllys played a crucial role in the repeal of some articles of the Brazilian Civil Code that regulated same-sex marriage and in the recognition of the labour rights of sex workers. He also proposed to legalize and regulate the production of marijuana, as well as to provide government funding for sexual reassignment surgery and hormonal treatment for transgender people.

The forced exile of Wyllys, together with that of other intellectuals and artists such as Marcia Tiburi, Wagner Schwartz and Débora Diniz, is part of the harassment of all ideological dissent encouraged by Bolsonarism. This harassment saw its most terrible expression with the murder in 2018 of Marielle Franco, a councillor of Rio de Janeiro and one of the most prominent voices in the demands for the rights of black women in Brazil. Today, Wyllys, Franco, Tiburi, Schwartz and Diniz represent a new political culture not only in Brazil but also on the entire South American continent.

After a period in Berlin, Jean Wyllys settled in Barcelona, where he is preparing a doctoral thesis on the creation and propagation of fake news as a government technology, with a particular emphasis on the last decade in Brazil.

*De-exile* presents almost a hundred drawings, collages and compositions that chart the artist's daily life, including his memories, his opinions, his mythologies and his dialogues with what is happening and with his critical subjectivity. Including portraits of characters from popular culture, dissident allegories, nappies, paper bags, newspapers, coffee, wax and watercolours, Wyllys's plastic work shows a drive to speak out, an urgent, untimely and unavoidable irruption.

The epilogue of this exhibition is one of the chapters of *Resistances. Art and Words to Combat Political Defamation*, a film series created by Francesc Badia i Dalmases and Jean Wyllys, directed by filmmaker Cristina Juliana Abril and produced by openDemocracy.



*Self-portrait, 2021*



*The Burial of the Truth or the Rise of Hate, 2020*



*Red: Everything Is History: "I Bled Too Much, I Wept Like a Dog..."*, 2020



*RIP (or Dead Flowers), 2022*

## DE-EXILE

Jean Wyllys

If I stop to think about the broader meaning of the word “exile” (being banished from a place), I come to the conclusion that I’ve always been an exile and that my life has been nothing more than what Mario Benedetti called “de-exile”, that moment of re-encounter with oneself.

I say that I’ve been an exile since I’ve been aware of myself because the characteristics of my homosexuality (mainly with regard to gender identification) appeared in my earliest childhood, exiling me from the order of male domination with all the violence that this exile implies. I started to live in exile from heteronormativity. In order to live and express my sexual orientation with a minimum of security, I exiled myself from my home town and therefore from my beloved family.

The extreme poverty in which I lived during my childhood and part of my adolescence also exiled me from full citizenship. The poor are almost all exiles from this land of human and fundamental rights. Later, when I was a teenager, I decided to be a conscious deserter from the patriarchy and to stand by its exiles: women.

Finally and ironically, owing to the political violence (constant death threats, incessant harassment and a major smear campaign) perpetrated by the extreme right in Brazil since its rise in 2016, culminating in the election of the fascist Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, I was forced to go into self-exile from my country.

I’ve been in exile for four years. Within this exile, I’ve lived through the terrible exile that the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed on all of us. To avoid falling into the abyss, I returned to my first form of expression, the one that poverty did not allow me to develop at the time: drawing. Before I started talking, I used to draw with matches on the floor at my mother’s feet.



*The Persistence of Memory, 2022*

In the cold and loneliness of the United States during the first wave of the pandemic, I began my “de-exile” by drawing and painting. Unconsciously, this took me back to my home, to my backyard, to my mother’s feet and, of course, to my country and my friends. This is how the visual artist in me (re) started: with the effort to rediscover myself in exile.

Hence, following the dates of the works, one can see the transformation of the lines and their motifs. From initial shyness and insecurity, I went on to free, shameless political intervention, particularly in the works I did on newspaper clippings. These works were not originally intended to be exhibited in a gallery or anything like that. When I did them and when I do them, I always think of a virtual exhibition, that is, a digital space. However, the world or market of plastic arts has seen in them a potential for exhibition in galleries and museums.

Their execution, for my part, is within what I call my “aesthetics of precariousness”, an expression that alludes to my technical precariousness (I am self-taught in all drawing and painting techniques); to the precariousness of my life in exile (which leads me to make small works using waste materials like garbage because of the economic hardship of having a studio and buying painting materials); to the subjective precariousness that comes from the traumas of multiple exiles; and, finally, to the “aesthetics of hunger” of my compatriot, the filmmaker Glauber Rocha. For him, cinema is born when you have a camera in your hand and a good idea in your head. For me, this applies not only to the cinema. My visual art also depends solely on a good idea and cheap colours and media.

The series of paintings and drawings I made on newspaper clippings reflect, in the form of visual art, the research I’ve been doing for more than two years on the relationship between programmed and directed disinformation, the contagion of fake news and the rise of authoritarian governments, parties and/or personalities. This is a new form of expression of this theme in the public sphere that, through

plastic interventions and their dialogue or clash with the material/medium, seeks to expand imaginaries and sensibilities, mixing and combining known analogue techniques for exhibition on digital platforms.

For this reason, I didn’t feel too comfortable with the name “plastic artist”. I prefer to say that I’m a public intellectual who also expresses himself through the visual arts. And in my case, beyond the aesthetic value of these arts (yes, there is an aesthetic value), there is the political value, because I think all works of art worthy of the name politicize human existence in some way. My works are also a colourful chronicle of the events that afflict us, representations that fight against the emptiness of thought.

In this exhibition, bravely and generously hosted by La Virreina (a cultural facility with enormous prestige and impact in debates on images), you will see all my efforts to (re)find my place in the world and see the beauty that still exists in it: my effort to “de-exile” myself and to colour even human ugliness and darkness.

**Curator: Valentín Roma**

DL B 19716-2022

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Palau de la Virreina  
La Rambla, 99. 08002 Barcelona**

**Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday  
and public holidays, 11 am to 8 pm  
Free entry**



**#JeanWyllys**

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