

## Ena Swansea is painting a massive mural, known as a Goyesque, on the floor of a bullfighting arena in Arles

Beginning on 10 September, New York artist Ena Swansea, along with a dozen assistants, will begin making a “Goyesque” – a painting on the sand that covers the whole inner space of the Roman arena in Arles, France, named after the Spanish master who famously depicted the thrills of the bullfight.



Swansea’s new work is an extended contemplation on two fields: the ritual and culture of bullfighting and opera, brought together. The inspiration and site for these projects is the notable Roman arena of Arles, France.

Built around 1 B.C, the arena holds 25,000 people and has recently undergone a magnificent restoration. The project will unfold in three parts: a grand but ephemeral painting, which is a giant image that dissipates under matadors and bulls, an installation distilling Carmen into a contemporary work, and a documentary film by Christopher Burke, that conveys the story from beginning to end.

Swansea is the first American artist selected for the “Corrida Goyesque,” joining notable past participants such as Christian Lacroix and Lucien Clergue. The Goyesque is named in honor of Spanish painter Francisco Goya. It is a temporary painting, created directly on the sand, covering the entire arena floor. For one day in September, the arena becomes a canvas for a monumental and site specific image, which must be painted overnight, unveiled the next morning, and erased by the complex choreography of “the corrida” by the evening. An orchestra and 200-person choir will inaugurate the event, performing the opening aria from Carmen before the Paseo begins.

Swansea’s design for the Goyesque is constructed out of 100 shadows of one bull, creating a bulging lattice across a sky-colored space. These shadows represent the bulls that have run across history, and the vital, charging bulls that will both destroy and join them in the shadows. The text - a commentary - says “yes, it is....no, it isn’t” in Spanish, the language of bullfighting. To compliment the painting, four color spectrum banners will frame the audience, starting at the Carmen-red wall enclosing the arena floor and ending with pale blue, where

the arena walls meet the sky. Swansea's interpretation searches for a place in contemporary art where these old rituals are alive and in the world today.

Part two of the project will occur in June 2011. Installed in the arena's 60 upper arches, this phase addresses the architecture and history of the building itself. It is based on George Bizet's opera Carmen.

These newly restored arches once held Roman statuary. Carmen 2011 will look for a new way for these ancient spaces to support art. A series of 60 images will reinterpret dramatic moments from the opera, which concludes with Carmen's death at a bullfighting arena. These character personifications echo the missing statues and revive classic narratives. Swansea's version for Arles stars actress Isabelle Huppert as Carmen.

The piece will be revealed through the 60 arches in cinematic time, as 60 frames of a film that does not exist. It asks for comparison to Roman temple friezes, where the action unfolds in chopped up moments, perhaps repeating an action, perhaps moving forward in the jumping progression of Proust's magic lantern. This installation is a meditation on opera, through the lens of contemporary art.

The silent images create Carmen without music. For the project's opening, this silence will be filled with music. Renowned Flamenco guitarist and composer Gregorio Ibor-Sanchez will write a transposed Carmen, allowing the story to reassert itself through a very different Gypsy, Andalou composition. Ibor-Sanchez will perform with singer Clara Tudela, whose exceptional voice embodies the duende of Carmen herself.

To convey the array and magnitude of these events, a documentary film is being produced. The renowned filmmakers include Director Christopher Burke and Director of Photography, Martial Barrault. Burke is an esteemed fine art photographer who has worked with clients ranging from Louise Bourgeois to the New York Times Magazine. Barrault is a cinematographer with an expansive history in art and music filmmaking, including work on "Art:21" and "Derrida's Elsewhere."

The film will provide a vivid synthesis of these events, bridging distinct but connected parts. The Corrida Goyesque will be captured using multiple video cameras and fourteen still cameras, in a fresh approach to complex time-lapse imagery. Using breakthrough, state of the art motion picture equipment, the filmmakers will show all facets of the project. They will see Swansea and her crew, as they spend all night creating the painting on the arena floor, and the animals and matadors as the light of the next day brings destruction. This story will include Carmen 2011, and its sequential reinterpretation in the arena's arches. It will be overlaid with Ibor-Sanchez's music, connecting the project's life from beginning to end. The film's sweeping vision captures this ephemeral project, and will remain, as a paean.