

THE
DOCK

Thaís Muniz
The Kite Ballet

The Kite Ballet is on display at The Dock
between 20 June – 22 August 2026.



Thaís Muniz, *The Kite Ballet*, 2024.
Photo by Antonello Veneri.

Introduction

The Kite Ballet by Thaís Muniz is a multidisciplinary series comprising the eponymous film, alongside textiles, photography, and sculpture. The work reflects on the relationship between territoriality and community, while advocating for play in adulthood as a revolutionary act.

Abaeté, an enchanted bioregion of Afro-Indigenous resistance in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, faces growing threats from economic agents in the real estate and greenwashing markets. Its protected areas are under siege by religious and legislative initiatives seeking to reduce them.

Traditional communities have been systematically displaced from the forests and coastal edges, while so-called “protected” areas face increasing allowance for invasions. For years, communal mobilisations have fought to safeguard this land.

The Kite Ballet intertwines poetic and mythical elements with these political, historical, and symbolic themes. The film portrays a group of local kite runners in their weekly communal ritual, highlighting the threat of private development and ecological displacement from a sacred territory, where joy and spiritual practices have thrived for centuries.

The film advocates for play and negotiation with nature as revolutionary acts, amplifying the voices of local activists.

Hail to the kite runners and sandboarders who gather weekly to enjoy the dunes.

Hail to the Fórum Permanente de Itapuã, the Xirês Patrimoniais, and the Em Defesa do Abaité project.

Hail Nativo and the Nativo de Itapuã NGO.

Hail to Mãe Gilda and all the terreiros rooted in this region.

Long live Pôr do Sol da Literatura, Nosso Quilombo, and every resistance manifestation that thrives there.

Abaeté resist.

The following text is a transcript of the narration from the film *The Kite Ballet*, 2024 by Thaís Muniz. A glossary of special terms can be found at the back of the booklet.

The Kite Ballet

Let me ask you something:

**When was the last time
you saw adults playing?**

Really playing, having fun.

Not online, not on screens,
Not at the pub over drinks or “lines”,
Not betting, nor for money,
Not at a posh retreat trying to
 “forgive your inner child”
Not with a child,
Not as part of some process
 suggested by another adult.

When did play become something exclusively
for infants?

How much does it cost to play
as an adult on sacred land?

What is the value of playing as an adult on land?

What is the value of playing
as an adult on sacred land?

What is the value of playing as an adult?

What is the value of play?

What is the value of the sacred?

The value of having space?

Moving and fixed dunes of wealth,

Stories scattered from other times,

Grains, airy, windblown.

Land grabbing from the restless *restinga*,

Which grows

unplanned,

without a final goal

or prior intention.

See these
body-
landscapes
dancing,

Body-landscapes that choreograph
We could just embrace degrowth

My head takes me high up,

Up there, I negotiate with the wind
bout which direction to take

I surrender control of this
body-territory

I drift in bliss,

The breeze sings like a choir

From 4 to 25 miles per hour

The eyes are almost closed

The eyelids negotiate with the sun

The shades and lashes wipe away the fine dust

The invisible bridle conducts every muscle

Threading glue and glass,

Threading braided nylon.

Strong and light sail pushed into the sky

Hills and mountains sculpted by wind and rain,

Sandbanks swept up by the breeze

Piled up by the work of Time

Time. Tempo. Tempo. Tempo. Tic. Toc. Tic. Time

They've focused on development,

concreting, building walls and roads,

Treated the dunes as deserts,

Made irreversible changes to the

dynamics of time and social interactions,

Weakened symbolic and rooted links,

Disfigured, simplified, impoverished

native landscapes

But the land is sacred

This land is sacred!

De
gr
ow
th,
Degrowth!

We keep alive

Nativos, Gildas and Bernadetes,

We will not move

the temples and sanctuaries.

Concrete colonisation,
Another church en haut,
Opulent residential units,

It flies, it flies, it floats, it takes it away

Never needed a Monte Santo
Because they have always been sacred

Where does
the idea that
we can
**tame the
landscape**
originate?

This,

a realm of Afro-Indigenous memories
and ancestral legacies

Abaeté,

Abaeté,

Abaité,

Abaité

Dark waters
bordered by
milky sands

Let out line,
Put in line,
Let out line,
Put in line

Paper birds dancing in the sky
One takes another down
You see them flying together,
But one is no longer autonomous;
It has to dance to the other's step.

Simple technologies of connection,
Cheap entertainment in nature,
A valuable excuse to be barefoot,
Arms rolling a PVC tube,

A drawer full of tangled lines

And coloured flying tails.

Events

Saturday 20 June, 2–4pm: Opening Reception with local bites and music by DJ Ortega. Admission is free, no booking required.

Saturday 4 July, 12–1pm: Thaís Muniz in conversation with Maeve Connolly. Admission is free, booking is required.

Saturday 11 July, 2–5pm: Kite-making workshop with Thaís Muniz and Lucas Paranhos. Admission is €10, booking is required.

For tours and access queries, please contact Curator **Erika Mei Chua Holum** at erika.holum@leitrimcoco.ie.

For press queries, please contact Communications Officer **Aaron Dobson** at

Glossary

Restinga is a distinctive coastal forest ecosystem found along the Atlantic coast of Brazil.

Growing on sandy, acidic, and nutrient-poor soils, these forests are characterised by medium-sized trees and shrubs specially adapted to thrive in dry, nutrient-scarce environments.

Tempo is a deity worshipped in Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions, including Candomblé and Ifá.

Known as Iroko in West African Yoruba tradition and Kitembo among the Bakongo people of Central Africa, Tempo is the guardian of time, silence, and nature. His sacred energy inhabits eternity and transition, reflecting the mystery that surrounds this Orixá.

In Brazilian Portuguese, the word tempo means both 'time' and 'weather,' reflecting Tempo's dual nature as a deity connected to both the passing of time and atmospheric forces.

En haut is a French term used in classical ballet meaning 'high,' used to describe a position held at a high level, most commonly referring to the arms raised overhead. It is most frequently used in the expression fifth en haut, indicating the arms in a high fifth position above the head.

Monte Santo (Portuguese: 'Holy Mountain') is a name proposed in 2021 to rename the *Dunas da Lagoa do Abaeté*, a sacred site of Afro-Indigenous traditions in Salvador, Bahia.

The renaming proposal, driven by evangelical Christian interests, was widely opposed by multiple communities and civil society organisations. The name Abaeté derives from the Tupi language (*abá* = person/people + *eté* = true/real), meaning 'true people' or 'people of worth'. The proposal was withdrawn following public protest.

Nativo de Itapuã is a grassroots non-governmental organisation founded on 12 December 1988 by environmental activist Antônio Conceição Reis (known as Nativo) in Itapuã, Salvador, Bahia, with the mission of preserving and protecting the Lagoa do Abaeté. Nativo was brutally assassinated in 2007 after nearly two decades of activism. His murder was never officially resolved and shocked the city of Salvador, gaining national and international media attention. The case continues to have a traumatic impact on the local community, having silenced much of the environmental resistance in the area.

Mãe Gilda de Ogum (1935–2000), was a Candomblé priestess (ialorixá), community leader, and founder of Ilê Axé Abassá de Ogum, a terreiro de Candomblé located around the Lagoa do Abaeté area in Itapuã, Salvador, Bahia.

Through her political activism and social work, she became a symbol of the fight against religious intolerance after suffering a series of attacks that preceded her death on 21 January 2000.

In recognition of her struggle, the Brazilian Federal Government officially declared the date of her passing as the National Day to Combat Religious Intolerance.

Maria Bernadete Pacífico (1951 – 2023), known as Mãe Bernadete, was a Brazilian ialorixá (Candomblé priestess), community activist, and leader of the Pitanga dos Palmares quilombo in Simões Filho, Bahia.

A prominent defender of Afro-Brazilian ancestral territories, she served as the coordinator of the National Coordination of Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (CONAQ) and the former Secretary for Racial Equality of Simões Filho.

Following the unsolved murder of her son Binho do Quilombo in 2017, she faced continuous death threats and was placed under Brazil's Human Rights Defenders Protection Program.

On 17 August 2023, she was assassinated in her home by two armed men, an event that sparked international outrage and highlighted the severe ongoing violence against quilombola land defenders in Brazil.

Credits

The Kite Ballet

A film by Thaís Muniz

Featuring the Kite Runners

Bruno Hilário, Eduardo Nogueira, Igor Picolé,
Jean Santana, Jonas Muzenza, Larissa Ferreira,
Natalie Rosa, Vitória Jesus

Executive Production Thaís Muniz

Production Thaís Muniz and Clara Domingas

Director of Photography Arivaldo Publio

Camera & Production Support Ser Tão Filmes

Film Editing Rafael Ramos

Photography Antonello Veneri

Sound Design Mick Donohoe

Voice Osaro Azams (EN) / Jamile Cazumbá (PT)

Music Mick Donohoe, Chico Feitosa (Berimbaus),
Dan Walsh (Flutes)

Art Direction Thaís Muniz

Costume Design Thaís Muniz and Sista Katia

Biography

Thaís Muniz's ongoing research, *New Atlantic Triangulations* (2022–), explores displacement, mental health, and joy through embodied cosmovisions and mythologies shaped by her mixed identity as a Brazilian woman of Yoruba and Bakongo heritage, with Irish citizenship.

Muniz's work has been presented at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin, and the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles.

Her first solo show, *Rites of Care, Curse and Comfort*, took place at Sirius Arts Centre in 2024 in Ireland. Muniz earned an MA in Art + Research Collaboration from Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, in Dublin, Ireland.

In 2025, Thaís received two Visual Arts Awards from the Royal Dublin Society: the RDS Mason Hayes & Curran LLP Centre Culturel Irlandais Residency and the R. C. Lewis-Crosby Award for her film *The Kite Ballet*.

Acknowledgements

The Kite Ballet was made possible through the generosity and support of many people. Deep thanks go to artist and activist Clara Domingas, who warmly opened the doors of Itapuã and generously shared her long-term research and knowledge of the area, and to artist and community leader Pio Filho, who welcomed the artist into his home and shared his ideas. Special thanks also to Sista Katia, Andrea Berteli, the Em Defesa do Abaeté project, Maurício Galvão, and Salvador Meu Amor.

Heartfelt thanks to Susan Thomson, Daniel Fitzpatrick, Jessika Reis, Johnny Batista, Aoife Spillage-Hinks, Kieran Sheridan, João Andrade, Cork Printmakers and team, D6 Culture-In-Transit and team, Axis Ballymun and team, the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dún Laoghaire, The Dean Art Studios and Kate Davenport.

The metal sculptures were created by Gilvan Barreto, who has carried forward the tradition of making Orixás Tools in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil for more than twenty-five years, and with whom the artist has collaborated since 2024, alongside Anderson Alagbedé, another specialised spiritual blacksmith. The works were then ground and finished in Ireland by Muniz and João Andrade. Sincere thanks also to Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Bruna Lima, and Niamh and Con Connor of the Celtic Druid Temple.

And finally, the team at The Dock — Jane Carmody,
Mary Conlon, Aaron Dobson, Jonathan Harte,
Erika Mei Chua Holum, Krzysztof Kuczerawy,
Terry Leahy, and Liz O'Dowd.



Leitrim
County Council
Comhairle Chontae Liatroma

