



Invernomuto and Jim C. Nedd, *PICÓ: Un parlante de África en América*, 2017, HD film, color, sound, 61 Minutes. LONDON

### “PICÓ: Un parlante de Africa en America”

AUTO ITALIA

44 Bonner Road

October 10–December 13, 2020

Barranquilla and Cartagena, the vibrant port cities of Colombia’s north Caribbean coast, were once slave-trading posts during Spanish rule. Since the 1950s, a music and dance culture emerged, manifesting in fluorescent, mobile sound systems called *picós*, apocryphally named after the pickup trucks that transport them to parties along the coastline. This history is the subject of an hourlong documentary, on view here, by the Italian artist duo Invernomuto in collaboration with the Afro-Colombian visual artist Jim C. Nedd., currently on show at Auto Italia South East in London.

Filmed in 2017, *PICÓ: Un parlante de Africa en America*, follows the woodworkers, technicians, and craftsmen who assemble *picós* from scratch, hooking up recycled turntables to gigantic speakers, sometimes numbering a dozen. Each *picó* is idiosyncratic, named and decorated with kitsch aerosol imagery emblazoned on the speaker grills, featuring neon wolves, revolutionaries, and Norse gods.

Full of exquisite, comic shots of the DJs (known as *picoteros*) posing beside their gear, the documentary also maps the deeper, synergized histories of enslavement, music, and resistance of sound system culture. The high-decibel, thunderous beats blasted from the *picós* matured across the 1970s, when records from West Africa were first imported to Barranquilla. *Picó* culture became the bass-heavy Afro-Colombian fusion it is today through a mashup of juju, highlife, and Afrobeats spun together with Colombian salsa and rumba. Most significantly, the documentary traces the origins of transatlantic sonic styles inland to a village named Palenque, founded in the 1590s by West Africans who escaped slavery and occupied by their descendants. If across the last century Afro-Colombian history has been overshadowed by the Colombian civil conflict, the filmmakers suggest that *picó* music is a remedy to this amnesia.

— Izabella Scott