

The background is a solid dark blue color. Scattered across the page are various white and light blue geometric shapes, including circles of different sizes, triangles, squares, and semi-circles. Some shapes are solid, while others are partially cut off by the edges of the frame. The shapes are distributed across the entire page, with a higher concentration in the upper and lower quadrants.

Chief Curator
Alexia Tala

Adjunct Curator
Gabriel Rodríguez Pellecer

Guatemala
May 6 to June 27, 2021

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We are one of those intra-pandemic biennials that have had to rethink the 'biennial model' during uncertainty. Amidst the catastrophe, this allowed us complete freedom to envision innovative ways that only following this period will we know whether they were successful or not because if we ask ourselves which of those innovations might work, we have no answer. We are all trying to think and imagine, but the reality is that we are on ZERO ground. Today, this makes every biennial a place for trial and error, and while that sounds very risky, at the same time, they become places where you can create from scratch and make the necessary changes.

The pandemic as a crossroads to rethink biennials

- Let's define a new role and new responsibilities for biennials.
- Let's learn from this temporary blockage of international events and develop sustainable ways of collaborating.
- Let's not waste the creativity we are investing in now to create new strategies and formats. Let's continue to implement them.
- Let's use social networks not only as a way to promote events but as a place to sustain virtual content.
- Let's advocate for ways to experiment, even if they are not perfect, let them be humane.
- Let's think twice before arranging to airlift huge works of art around the world, or an artwork that needs a courier... let's take care of our planet.
- Let's be a platform for artists to continue producing work and let's use the biennial as a tool to move forward with their internationalization.

Alexia Tala

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This 22nd Paiz Art Biennial represents a greater triumph than any of the previous editions. The COVID-19 pandemic that has convulsed the world since last year left in its wake a crushing burden of uncertainty and a need for improvisation that challenged human resilience and shook the artistic ecosystem. The impact of feeling alone, afraid, shut-in and sad, together with a new appreciation of one's own being and of what it means to live in a community, moved artists to rethink their way of ideation and creation. The pandemic made the creative community flourish, allowing it to escape, figuratively speaking, from lockdown.

At the Paiz Foundation for Education and Culture, we were faced with challenges unprecedented in our history. We postponed the biennial, previously uninterrupted for almost half a century, for a full year. We had to work despite quarantines, biosecurity protocols, artist travel restrictions, and limitations in the resources, technology, and internet that were available at that time. And yet we succeeded. Together, we built it.

What stands out in this biennial is its introspective tone and a new questioning about where we are, where we come from and where we are going. A need for integration, to take stock of what exists can be perceived in the works. There is a thirst for self-knowledge, an enquiry into who we are. The works speak of us as being a centre, but at the same time, one broken into pieces: together, yet separate. They search for analogies and points of encounter or connection in the community and in the world. Sometimes there is dialogue, other times tension, but in either case, a new reality is created out of what has been lived.

This Paiz Art Biennial, between pandemics, volcanic eruptions and unprecedented historical events, turns Guatemala into an art epicentre. For this tremendous accomplishment, we must thank our curator, Alexia Tala, who always demanded the highest standard of excellence, and Gabriel Rodríguez, co-curator, who was a vital bridge between the instructions that winged across the ether from Chile and the material world of installations and creation in Guatemala. I also give thanks to our team at the Paiz Foundation for Education and Culture for their tireless effort and dedication, and especially to Itziar Sagone for her sure-footed direction.

Art is catharsis.

Art does not stop.

Art allows us to find ourselves, especially when we are:

lost. in between. together

Maria Regina Paiz

President

Paiz Foundation for Education and Culture

With the title *lost. in between. together*, the 22nd Paiz Art Biennial confronted a vortex in which the realities conceived and created by Guatemala (Latin America, the Global South) faced their respective “antonyms” of collective cultural construction, that is, this globalised world, which at times seems to lead the destiny of humanity. Provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite the crisis of having to “see each other head-on”, we were able to greatly enrich the content of this selection. In a trice, the entire planet, regardless of parallels or meridians, found itself before a collective construction, or perhaps several, in which the basic issue was put on the table: the duality of death and life, and with it, all those issues that are crucial for us to go on considering ourselves inhabitants of the planet, rather than its executioners.

Even though *lost. in between. together* was already a way of being on the planet, this upside-down world made us even more lost, with the only certainty being that the one graspable thing is the moment. It is precisely that, the moment, that we celebrate in this marvellous “stage production”. Almost on autopilot, without any certainties possible, we open ourselves to the possibility of desire and the delightful pleasure of sharing. In this document can be found fragments of what could have been, and what ended up being: an effort that meant a true exercise in rethinking and reviewing how we interact, do things, disseminate them, and above all, communicate and create collectively.

This, then, is the work of a group of beings who, based on the central idea and proposal of Alexia Tala, curator, and Gabriel Rodríguez, co-curator, have given form to the ungraspable. To Alexia and Gabriel, thank you for this creation that called on us all from different places. To the participating artists, our deepest admiration for your work and the development of your proposals. To the team at the Paiz Foundation for Education and Culture, applause for an outstanding job. And to the Board, a deep appreciation for the close support you gave us, especially María Regina Paiz, who with her natural creativity and joy, provided us with solutions and wisdom.

On behalf of all those who have made this 22nd Paiz Art Biennial possible, I hope you enjoy these pages. May this reflection become a seed that germinates in multiple possibilities so that each of our visitors and readers can be recognised as a co-creator of the multiple realities that surround us and end up defining our stay on this planet.

Itziar Sagone
Executive director
Paiz Art Biennial

intro
duc
tion

by Alexia Tala and Gabriel Rodríguez Pellecer

The 22nd Paiz Art Biennial of Guatemala, **lost. in between. together**, emerged from a single question: *starting from where we are in the present, what is our past and what does it tell us about the future?* The problems confronting the contemporary world have left us in an uncertain place and without a compass. New forms of exploitation and violence— the product of the power of a few over the many—are appearing. At the global level, business priorities are explicit, as they have been since the beginning of the modern era on our continent. This, like the whole Global South, is counted among the geographies that have been subjected to these business interests, leaving a wake of actions and victims. Like other globalisation processes, the *hyperconnectivity* facilitated by modes of transportation

such as air travel is a double-edged weapon that has helped the coronavirus spread in a matter of months, exacerbating inequalities. At the local level, Guatemala's people, and its indigenous people, in particular, have been victims of multiple human rights violations throughout the country's history. Yet, despite this history, a culture rich in know-how and practices survives, diverse in its world views and forms of knowledge. Taking as its starting point multiculturalism and Guatemala's own reality, this biennial celebrates and reflects on the cultural and geographical diversity of the Global South, both for its innate richness as well as its critical lessons.

The biennial is organised around three themes: *Universes of Matter, Perverse Geography / Cursed Geographies*, and *pasts. eternal. futures*. In *Universes of matter*, the artists have searched for things within themselves that are hidden behind matter. Objects and landscapes are captured in their essence, either from a spiritual or scientific perspective. The aim is to open ourselves to exploring our environment in a way that is more sensitive to the knowledge that exists within things, to be open to all forms of knowledge... to include, incorporate and learn from these different forms of knowledge, from those of the human brain to those contained in our hands, or on the paths we have walked. To learn from the tree and the stone, from water.

Research like this can be seen in the work of artists like Ayrson Heráclito (Brazil), who has focused on Bahian rituals through performances and recordings. For this occasion, he chose to work in a Guatemalan context with the heritage of the Garífuna people, an Afro-descendant community with a unique history of liberation on the Atlantic coast. Collaborating with Heráclito is the poet Wingston González (Guatemala), who in his writing has explored Caribbean textual orality, speech inflexions and rhythms. This oral sensibility is in tune with artists such as Antonio Pichillá (Guatemala), whose ritual is also associated with everyday practices, in this case, mainly textile making. By exploring textiles, Pichillá is able to evoke the entire Mayan worldview; textile elements and knots configure its symbolic organisation. The installations of another textile artist, Ana Teresa Barboza (Peru), who on this occasion worked with Rafael Freyre (Peru), dialogue with images of a landscape. Barboza has sought to engage with local (Guatemalan) hands to share the creation of a fabric; she associates Guatemala's volcanic geography with the strength of mostly female hands.

Francisca Aninat (Chile) made *In the Future There Are No Space* (*En el futuro no hay espacios*, 2021), a work in which she merges the symbolism of colonial codices with stories of women from a community in Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. In line with this focus on

communities, and inspired by his research into buoys and other objects found on Lake Atitlán, Manuel Chavajay (Guatemala) questions the relationship between inherited traditions as living entities, unlike archaeology.

Angélica Serech (Guatemala) returns to the Mayan Kaqchikel textile tradition of Comalapa by incorporating new materials and atypical fibres in the construction of objects with no useful function. In another exploration of fibres, Hellen Ascoli (Guatemala) starts from her body and from the processes and objects used to create a fabric, to address the different ways the action of weaving can be perceived.

Uriel Orlow (Switzerland) approaches the reality of endangered languages from a contemporary perspective, in a process that includes fieldwork and historical research with Mayan botanical healers. Continuing with the search for the spiritual, Edgar Calel (Guatemala), a Mayan Kaqchikel artist, teaches us through symbols and material objects to see, listen to, and understand the ancestral culture deposited inside things. The wooden logs wedged behind the tires to immobilise a pick-up truck full of people are a kind of symbolic support that Calel sculpts to give it other connotations. Meanwhile, Detanico Lain (Brazil) continue to pursue their vision of the universe through correspondences, which they depict as shapes built on meticulous calculations. Their work *Green Bodies* (*Cuerpos verdes*, 2020) rewrites verses from the sacred Mayan book, *Popol Vuh*, with an alphabet made from body parts.

Óscar Santillán (Ecuador), who explores the invisible through transubstantiation, focuses on the deity Quetzalcoatl and provokes a dialogue between the Quetzal satellite, the first Guatemalan satellite launched into space, and materials from it converted into archaeological artefacts. In parallel, he collaborates with Elimo Eliseo (Guatemala), director, producer and screenwriter, in an audio-visual adaptation of the 1938 science fiction novel *La mujer y el robot* (*The Woman and The Robot*) by the Guatemalan writer Miguel Marsicovétere. Santillán incorporates Elimo's hallucinatory futuristic animations with his own particular point of view. The work connects with *Naj Tunich* (2018), by Pablo Vargas Lugo (Mexico), an

installation with video— the result of his exploration of the caves of the same name together with a group of experts in Mayan culture—in which we see references to rock art. Mayan art is also present in forms that celebrate the popular, as is the case of Diego Isaías Hernández (Guatemala), whose paintings capture the moment at which animals and people react with alarm at the occurrence of a natural disaster or other approaching danger.

In the second curatorial theme, *Perverse Geography / Cursed Geographies*, social problems related to the inequalities caused by the concentration of economic and political power are explored. In the local context, the essence of the racial discrimination that contemporary Guatemala experiences intensely is presented, connected as it is with the realities of the Global South. The experiences of certain groups who have suffered most from the effects of the exoticisation typical of colonialism are addressed, as are the practical consequences that these attitudes have on people's lives.

The projects presented here investigate how certain inherited attitudes such as domination, discrimination and dispossession, as well as an aspiration to accumulate capital, are normalised and naturalised in current forms of *coloniality*. With Guatemala as a reference point, there are conversations with other latitudes where the same social dynamics, the same segregating prejudices are repeated, although in different ways, regrettably as the organising principles of societies.

Jonathas de Andrade (Brazil) deals with some realities of marginalisation due to the dynamics of progress, contextualising them in their historical development. Forensic Architecture & Forensic Oceanography (United Kingdom) contribute with their project *Mare Clausum: The Sea Watch vs. Libyan Coast Guard Case (2017-2018)*, which involves an operation to rescue some 150 passengers in international waters contested between a coastguard boat operated by an NGO, and a Libyan coastguard patrol vessel.

Referring back to a dark period of local history, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa (Guatemala) works with five actors wearing costumes designed by the artist while they perform the play *A Place of Consolation (Lugar de Consuelo, 2020)* in the theatre of the Popular University, the original venue where in 1975 some students were rehearsing when they suffered an attack that became a symbol of government censorship during the armed conflict.

A group of artists bring social issues into their biographies or personal experiences. Antonio José Guzmán (Panama) reflects on identities, using scientific and cultural knowledge to travel in different zones, worlds and times. Sebastián Calfuqueo (Chile) with *You Will Never Be A Weye (2015)*, focuses on the problem of segregation based

on his personal history; he links problems of indigenous identity today with gender issues specific to his case. Marilyn Boror (Guatemala) has devoted herself to exploring disappearance manifested in language, to the point of using her own name as artistic material when starting a legal procedure to change her indigenous surnames to Ladino ones. Yasmin Hage investigates clay water filters from scientific and sculptural perspectives, analysing how these cylinders tell us a little story that is preserved in their very materiality due to their physical properties, the purpose they serve and their history.

Collectivize Facebook (2020-current), like other projects by Jonas Staal (Netherlands), seeks to expose power structures such as multinational corporate monopolies, in a campaign to dismantle and democratise their forms of control. Mindful of the impact and use of technologies, Heba Y. Amin (Egypt) proposes a glance into the future with *Operation Sunken Sea* (2018), a diversion of the Mediterranean Sea that situates Africa and Europe as part of a single continent and thus ends the problems associated with the migration crisis. This issue also concerns Oswaldo Maciá (Colombia), who through an immersive installation wraps us in an acoustic experience to bring us closer to the paths of the world's migratory winds, an analogy for a violence-free empathic migration.

Returning to a critical analysis of the object's power to exoticise, we find two other artists. Fernando Poyón (Guatemala) explores objects from his geographical and geopolitical sensibility by taking the children's game of chasing and keeping a spinning top upright as an allusion to the earth rotating on its axis. Ángel Poyón (Guatemala), who builds objects based on his characteristic "critical conceptualism", works on this occasion with hoes, customary instruments for working the land, re-signifying them.

For the theme *pasts. eternal. futures*, we turn to stories and micro-stories related to recent contexts. The person as an individual—amidst the identity problems caused by 20th-century accelerations—and matters of a political nature will be the main subthemes, brought to us from a range of documents, images and narratives. Starting with personal perspectives, situations that trouble societies, in general, are examined. From out of

this, we arrive at different views on what are often the same injustices, drawing attention to their own particular characteristics. That is, global analyses are proposed from particular sensibilities.

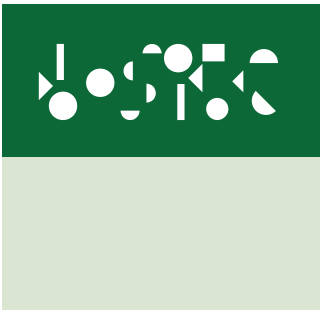
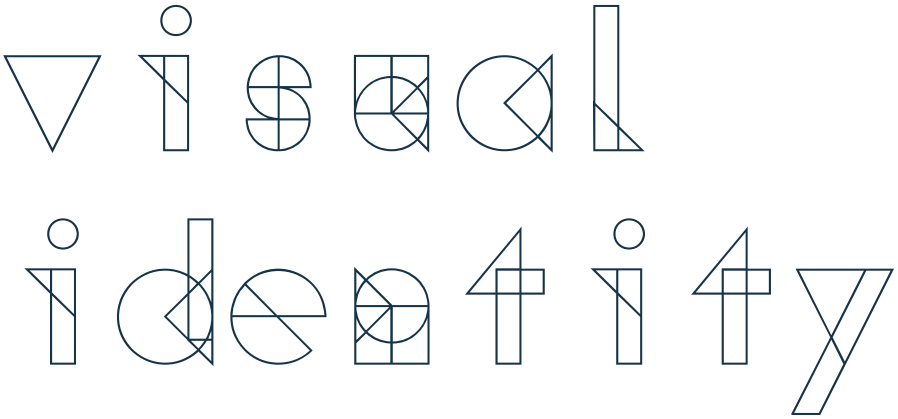
The audio-visual work of Nelson Makengo (DR Congo) reflects the theme that has most preoccupied him, *négritude* and history, exemplifying the documentary, allegorical and poetic approach that is his hallmark. This work relates to that of Naomi Rincón Gallardo (Mexico), whose characters are taken to the historical-ancestral-fictional plane, melding science fiction with mythology to talk about resistance and survival in native communities. Aimed at local realities, Alejandro Paz (Guatemala) looks at the tradition of colonial dances and the changes they have undergone during Guatemala's recent history. He dissects a theatre script to reveal the complex construction of the Moorish and Christian characters in a video in which the dancers appear without disguises or masks. Meanwhile, Oscar Eduardo Perén (Guatemala) takes historical criticism of the armed conflict and genocide into the realm of representation, depicting his own experiences in the militia and the guerrillas in his paintings and stories.

Andrea Monroy (Guatemala) works with textile techniques, deconstructing them and pointing especially to women's role in championing and dignifying this practice. In another way of working with fabrics, the maps of Maya Saravia (Guatemala) narrate migrants' journeys in exoduses driven by inequalities, as well as showing drug-trafficking routes and the *mestizaje* processes that result from these movements.

Several artists investigate official histories from their specific vantage points to reverse their linearity and chronology. Benvenuto Chavajay (Guatemala) revises the history of Guatemala in a rewriting process to point to Justo Rufino Barrios's liberal government and the Ladinisation Decree as a legal way to "whiten the race." The multi-channel video installation *Kaleta/Kaleta* (2014-2017) by Emo de Medeiros (Benin and France) explores a melange of traditions through dance, theatre, and the journey of a group of young people, accompanying the piece with percussion instruments made of recycled materials. Jessica Kairé (Guatemala) sculpts in fabric and eliminates the monolithic spirit of documents to make them more flexible, to question them and reconsider how history should be studied. The opposite of Kairé, Vanderlei Lopes (Brazil) freezes several newspapers, turning them into a bronze monument to stop time and the transience of news, questioning the historical time and the past that we are creating for the future.

The biennial's exhibition in tribute to a Latin American artist is dedicated to Paz Errázuriz (Chile), whose work focuses on

documentary photographic portraiture. Errázuriz presents an unpublished project on violence against Guatemalan women while she continues her wider search into alterity. The retrospective devoted to Aníbal López (Guatemala) is structured around a selection of works that also deal with violence and that, as always, confront the relationship between art, ethics and crime. The curatorial focus in this biennial, therefore, celebrates these ways of approaching the past in the present time in order to think about a possible future. If we do away with the fixed chronological order of Past, Present and Future, and we change them just to Pasts and Futures—in the plural—perhaps we will begin to glimpse possibilities. Always in the plural.



The shades that colour the project come from the earth, the forest and the night.

The visual identity designed for the 22nd Paiz Art Biennial by the Brazilian artists Detanico Lain is based on the word Guatemala (Quauhtemallan, meaning place of many trees), creating a system of writing that derives from dendrochronology, the science that measures time by counting the growth of the rings on the trunks of trees. Apart from the graphic elements, four typefaces were created that conceptually respond to the 22nd Paiz Art Biennial.

Dendrochronological



lost



in between



together



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**Cecilia Vilela
Rosina Cazali
Gladys Turner Bosso**

'Us' and 'Them': On Responses to the Environment and Our Proximity to the Other

by Cecilia Vilela

No one in a healthy state of mind doubts their own status as a person. But how similar to ourselves are we willing to allow the other to be? The criteria chosen to grant the status of personhood to beings other than ourselves can help reveal how a culture relates to the world around it.

In Western societies, the attribution of personhood tends to bring along a set of generally agreed-on attributions of moral consideration: once a certain existence is agreed to be a person, there is a general agreement on the basic treatment this particular being ought to receive. Moral consideration, in turn, plays a role in determining some of the terms under which humans treat the environment: whether a being or biome is 'worthy of moral consideration' affects the treatment it will get.

When reflecting on the connections between personhood, subjects of moral consideration and the moral consideration attributed to the world around us, two overarching perspectives can offer an iconic contrast: whilst the Western approach to personhood mirrors its anthropocentrism, the Indigenous may well offer perspectives of less human-centred ways of perceiving the world and relating to it.

In the context of environmental discussions, the problems of attribution of personhood are often addressed in discussions concerning animal ethics. Approximating non-human animals to the status of personhood, it turns out, highlights the necessity to extend to other beings the level of moral concern usually granted to humans only—helping to advance the animal rights agenda across public and legal spheres. Following this same logic, it is possible to envisage that, if the notion of personhood in Western cultures was to be revisited and expanded, some important shift in discourses and public opinion might occur which would contribute substantially to political and legal advancements of the environmentalist agenda more broadly.

For Kant, what defines a person is the autonomy enabled by their ability to reason, and it is personhood that “makes a being valuable and thus morally considerable”.¹ Following his theory, personhood is not, then, strictly tied to humanity—possibly extendable to animals whose cognitive capacities are proved sufficiently sophisticated. However, it would just not cover the entire humanity either—preventing, for instance, babies and cognitively disabled adults from being considered persons, and more gravely, subsequently being denied moral consideration.

On more contemporary definitions, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, as well as Peter Singer—whose arguments are structured for their particular aim of defending animal rights—argue that personhood should be granted on the basis of sentience or consciousness, since these lead to *subjective existence*.

As specified by Singer, the criteria in question for considering a being a subject of moral concern points to their sentience, combined with enough cognitive abilities to allow them to sense their own existence to the extent that it leads to the elaborations of interests—of their own as well as for their own future.² However, these criteria currently in question seem to exclude the possibility of extending such regard to non-animal organisms, as the criterion of ‘elaboration of interests’ (as we understand them) highlights.

On the very discussion of moral concern alone, it is also possible to identify the use of other terms that can be limiting. Singer draws on philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s statement that “The question is not,

Can they reason? Can they talk? But, instead, Can they suffer?"³, to support a position that does not argue for the protection of humans for the sake of being humans (speciesism), whilst remaining careful not to leave behind small children and cognitively disabled adults (which would constitute ableism). However, Singer's view is also a utilitarian one and, in aiming for the most useful or beneficial, it will necessarily be founded on humans' interests, insofar as it can only be able to measure usefulness and benefits under the very human terms for recognising them. Singer says that "It would be nonsense to say that it was not in the interests of a stone to be kicked along the road by a schoolboy. A stone does not have interests because it cannot suffer... A mouse, on the other hand, does have an interest in not being tormented, because mice will suffer if they are treated in this way."⁴ In Singer's own words, "If a being is not capable of suffering, or of experiencing enjoyment or happiness, there is nothing to be taken into account."⁵

While Singer's argument is valid for the defence that animal suffering should be avoided, this comment evinces how the entire argument is structured on a human-centred foundation, in which the defence of interests that lead to avoiding suffering fails to consider the possible existence of a wider system which also has interests of its own. This wider system's interest, in turn, may differ from the human experience of interest as we, humans, know it.

In some Indigenous cultures the notion of sentience is such that it embraces non-animal beings and natural elements more generally—including those which Western cultures simply treat as 'resources'. Back to the issue of personhood, indigenous perspectives offer a very different way of responding to this notion, just as they have an entirely different way of responding to the environment around them. Indeed, for Indigenous peoples, 'responding to' or 'interacting with' is a bad way of putting it: better to say 'belonging to' the environment around them.

In the Indigenous cultures, the ethical frames that determine their relationship to the environment are shaped by their *cosmovision*, stemming from the premise that the environment is intrinsically and non-

hierarchically interconnected with humans' own existence. Through such ways of seeing, rivers, forests, lands and natural organisms are regarded with the same sovereignty attributed to humans (as well as to non-human animals, to spiritual entities, and all other organisms).

Artistic practices carried out by individuals within this context, from their own standpoints, are one possible space where traces of such an approach to the world are easily identifiable, especially because of how—due to the self-contingent nature of artistic practices—their expressions through them are rarely (if at all) infiltrated by attempts to conform to Western discourses. A few examples follow.

Visual artist Antonio Pichillá (b.1982, Guatemala) has a series of works with stones inspired by the Mayan understanding of stones as sacred beings that are revered and protected by successive generations of families. The artwork *Personaje Llamado Martín* (2017; fig.1) responds to Pichillá's research experience at the village of San Martín, in Santiago de Atitlán, Guatemala, where a set of stones from pre-Hispanic times are regarded as deities and passed on through generations of the local community, who care for and worship them. In Pichillá's installation, stones are wrapped in a textile that is charged with meaning for his culture: it is usually only produced by women, with the weaving looms associated with an idea of 'external wombs' and, subsequently, the ability to create the textiles closely connected to women's reproductive abilities and with the continuity of life. The textiles used by Pichillá carry the colours of maize—white, yellow, black and red—which Mayans associate with the origins of life. Wrapped in such meaningful fabric, the installation holds these stones in the highest possible regard, linking them to the womb, and to the creation of life.⁶

The photograph *Untitled* (Stone with stethoscope; 2009; fig.2), by another visual artist, Benvenuto Chavajay (b.1978, Guatemala), features a stone with a stethoscope positioned on it as if both listening through and being listened to by the medical device.

Jardin (2013-2014; fig.3), another work by Chavajay, presents stones arranged next to each other and attached to one another by flip flop straps and is said by the artist to allude to the stones from his childhood, by Lake Atitlán, where he has shared, played, and talked with the stones so much so as to regard them as his "kindergarten."⁷

Still on the relationship of the Mayans with stones, the famous lines by *Maya K'iche'* poet Humberto Ak'abal (1952-2019, Guatemala), resonate with the same perspective as Pichillá and Chavajay:

*"It's not that the stones are mute
they just keep silent."*⁸



Antonio Pichillá, *Personaje llamado Martín (A character named Martin)*, 2017. Handmade textile, paraffin candles and stone. 30 cm x 90 cm x 30 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Galería Extra, Guatemala city.



Benvenuto Chavajay, *Untitled (Stone with stethoscope)*, 2009. Photography. 69 cm x 100 cm. Image courtesy of the artist and Galería Extra, Guatemala city.



Installation view of Benvenuto Chavajay *Jardín (Garden)*, 2013-2014. Image courtesy of the artist and Galería Extra, Guatemala city.

While Ak'abal is a *Maya K'iche'* and Pichillá and Chavajay are both *Maya Tz'utujil*, in their creative expressions they all respond to beliefs common to all Mayans. In the Mayan culture there is no separation between artistic (and cultural) practices and other life activities in the same way that art (and cultural practices, more generally) are regarded in modern cultures.⁹ The artistic practice of a Mayan is intrinsically related to their way of living and relating to the environment that surrounds them, from their spiritual practices to subsistence activities.

Moving on to a different Indigenous culture, the Aimorés,¹⁰ a perspective of personhood amongst the Borum Krenak people¹¹ is offered by Ailton Krenak (b.1953, Brazil), Indigenous writer as well as socio-environmental activist and campaigner for Indigenous rights. In his book *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World* (2019), Krenak speaks of the attribution of personhood to mountains and rivers and how—in his as well as in other indigenous cultures across the world—such an approach is taken so profoundly as to allow for the establishment of kinship with them:

“The Krenak village is on the left bank of this river and on the right there is a mountain range. I learned that those mountains have a name—Takukrak—and personhood. ... In Ecuador, in Colombia, in some of these regions of the Andes, you can find places where the mountains pair-bond and form families. You have a mother, father, son, you have a family of mountains

that exchange affection, that make exchanges. And the people who live in these valleys throw parties for these mountains, offer them food, offer them gifts, and receive gifts from the mountains.”¹²

The Krenak people in particular have a river as their grandfather: the Doce River, which they call Watu, of which Ailton Krenak speaks as “a person, not a resource, as economists say. He is not something that anyone can own or appropriate; he is a part of our construction as a collective that dwells in a specific place...”¹³ In 2015, the Krenak’s Watu was affected by an environmental crime, when a dam, owned by the multinationals Vale and BHP Billiton, burst, spewing about 45 million cubic metres of iron mining waste into the region. In this context, Ailton Krenak described that “Watu, the river that has nourished and sustained our life... finds himself today sunk under toxic mud... which has left us orphaned and accompanying the river in a coma.”¹⁴ He goes on to criticise that so-called “humanity” fails to acknowledge the river, as well as mountains elsewhere—which are all being commodified—, as “... the grandfather, grandmother, mother, brother of some other constellation of beings who want to continue sharing life in this communal home we call Earth.”¹⁵

As anthropologist Stefano Varese explains, indigenous peoples’ “place, space, memory, language and above all the relational dialogue with all the organisms of the world are constituted in the ‘inhabited culture’ which is always expressed in the ‘language of place’.”¹⁶ This term defines the close proximity of the Indigenous systems of value and knowledge to their relationships between individuals, society and nature.¹⁷ This unique way of understanding their space, explains Varese, ensures that calculative knowledge does not gain ground and, remaining rooted in the landscape, that they do not distance themselves intellectually or emotionally from it.¹⁸

Two other notions are key for the interconnectivity that guides cosmovisions: plurality and reciprocity.¹⁹ The plurality allowed by cosmovisions opposes Western views that compartmentalise specialties and detach culture from nature; and the notion of reciprocity opposes the Western exploitative approach to nature as resource. The diversity privileged across indigenous cultures is established primarily by the refusal to place humankind at the centre and to take human perspectives as universal. When humans are not seen as in any way superior or separated from nature, there is clarity on how reciprocal their interactions ought to be: there is an understanding that what is taken from nature will necessarily be returned in some way.

In the capitalist system, calculative intelligence, this is, a rationale that seeks results, is privileged over a contemplative rationale, which

seeks meaning, and—radically opposed to the logic of reciprocity—a logic of commodification is imposed on nature.²⁰ Since the emotional and spiritual identification of Indigenous peoples with their territorial landscape is the most fundamental element in the constitution of their identities, this commodification is especially harmful for them: allowing for such predatory behaviour harms organisms with whom Indigenous peoples have a degree of kinship. As Varese accurately points out, a reified universe dismisses ethical consideration, spiritual attention, and emotional empathies, being reduced to its use and abuse for individual gain.²¹ On the same notion, Krenak adds: “When we depersonalise the river, the mountain, when we strip them of their senses by considering this to be an attribute exclusive to humans, we open space for them to become mere resources and waste products of industrial and extractivist activity.”²²

Arguing against personhood as it is understood in Western cultures, Donaldson and Kymlicka emphasise how accepting that moral considerations (and, thus, basic rights) be grounded on the basis of the possession of the Western notion of personhood would mean “to render human rights insecure for everyone...[and to] defeat the purpose of human rights, which is precisely to provide security for vulnerable selves,” reminding us further that “we are all entitled to basic human rights because we are all vulnerable selves.”²³

It is reassuring to notice that the importance given to pursuing practices that prioritise the security of the vulnerable seems to open space for the establishment of a common ground between Western and Indigenous thinking. From this point of convergence, the next step seems to be to expand horizons so as to rethink and recognise how, for good or bad, we organisms on Earth are all interconnected in an equally vulnerable way.

There is no doubt, however, that, in order to expand beyond the animal realm into the environmental realm in its entirety, other forms of subjective experiences would need to be embraced as, first, possible, and second, valuable. Given that such ways of seeing already exist—being vastly found across the Indigenous cultures—it seems like the struggle is not about finding alternatives, but, instead, about starting to ‘take them seriously’²⁴—

valuing those who have already found those ways of seeing, and who carry them through generations of ancestral knowledge, but whose perspectives are, still, continuously overlooked. Perhaps it is a matter of acknowledging the silence, and recognising that, if the dialogue between Western and Indigenous perspectives is still in many ways silent, it must be due more to Westerners' inability to listen than Indigenous peoples being mute.

¹ "The Moral Status of Animals," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified August 23, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-animal/#Pers>.

² Peter Singer, "Practical Ethics," in *The Animal Ethics Reader*, ed. Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler (New York; London: Routledge, 2017), 218. Kindle.

³ Peter Singer, "Practical Ethics," in *The Animal Ethics Reader*, ed. Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler (New York; London: Routledge, 2017), 11. Kindle, quoting Jeremy Bentham.

⁴ Peter Singer, "Practical Ethics," 210.

⁵ Peter Singer, "Practical Ethics," 211.

⁶ Alexia Tala, "Antonio Pichillá: Abuelos," Artishock, August 5, 2017, <https://artishockrevista.com/2017/08/05/antonio-pichilla-abuelos/>.

⁷ In the artist's own words: "*Piedras y cintas de chancletas de la marca Suave Chapina. Mi niñez transcurrió a unos metros del lago de Atitlán, compartía con las piedras, jugaba con las piedras, hablaba con ellas. De un modo fueron mi jardín de infancia y el lago mi piscina. Como artista quiero compartir mi jardín en cualquier parte del mundo.* [My childhood was spent a few metres from Lake Atitlán, I shared with the stones, played with

the stones, talked with them. In a way they were my kindergarten and the lake my swimming pool.]” Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, “Catalogue of the exhibition Churches [Mololon tak nakun] - Benvenuto Chavajay (2014),” accessed April 10, 2020, 24, https://issuu.com/madc/docs/cat_benvenuto/24.

⁸ The original poem in reads, in K’iche’, “*Man xa ta che ri abaj emem, / xa kakik’ol ri kich’awem*” and, in Spanish: “*No es que las piedras sean mudas, / solo guardan silencio.*”

⁹ “María Camila Montalvo, *The Soil Speaks - La Tierra Habla - ja rwach’ulef ntz’ijoni: Introducing the Maya Tz’utujil worldview* (New York: The Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, 2020), 16, https://issuu.com/mariacamilamontalvosenor/docs/the_soil_speaks__issuu.

¹⁰ Also widely known as *Botocudos*.

¹¹ Recognised as either *Borum*, *Krenak*, or *Borum Krenak*.

¹² Original quotation: “*A aldeia Krenak fica na margem esquerda do rio, na direita tem uma serra. Aprendi que aquela serra tem nome, Takukrak, e personalidade. ...No Equador, na Colômbia, em algumas dessas regiões dos Andes, você encontra lugares onde as montanhas formam casais. Tem mãe, pai, filho, tem uma família de montanhas que troca afeto, faz trocas. E as pessoas que vivem nesses vales fazem festas para essas montanhas, dão comida, dão presentes, ganham presentes das montanhas.*” Ailton Krenak. *Ideias para Adiar o fim do mundo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019), 4. Kindle.

¹³ Original quotation: “*...uma pessoa, não um recurso, como dizem os economistas. Ele não é algo de que alguém possa se apropriar; é uma parte da nossa construção como coletivo que habita um lugar específico...*” Krenak, *Ideias para Adiar o fim do mundo*, 12.

¹⁴ Original quotation: “[o] *Watu, esse rio que sustentou a nossa vida ... está todo coberto por um material tóxico ... o que nos deixou órfãos e acompanhando o rio em coma.*” Krenak, *Ideias para Adiar o fim do mundo*, 13.

¹⁵ Original quotation: “*...avô, avó, a mãe, o irmão de alguma constelação de seres que querem continuar compartilhando a vida nesta casa comum que chamamos Terra.*” Krenak, *Ideias para Adiar o fim do mundo*, 14-5.

¹⁶ Stefano Varese, “Los fundamentos éticos de las cosmologías indígenas,” *Amérique Latine Histoire et Mémoire. Les Cahiers ALHIM*, no. 36 (2018): 3, <https://doi.org/10.4000/alhim.6899>.

¹⁷ “*La aproximación axiológica y epistemológica indígena a las relaciones entre individuo, sociedad y naturaleza (cosmos) usa lo que la académica indígena lakota Elisabeth Cook-Lynn llama el ‘lenguaje del lugar’* [The indigenous axiological and epistemological approach to the relationships between individual, society and nature (cosmos) uses what Lakota indigenous scholar Elisabeth Cook-Lynn calls the ‘language of place’].” Varese, “Los fundamentos éticos de las cosmologías indígenas,” 10.

¹⁸ Original quotation: “Es a este enraizamiento profundo y antiguo en el paisaje y en el lugar, siempre contruidos y reconstruidos en las relaciones humanas con toda la compleja red bio-física, que los Pueblos Indígenas se remiten en sus reclamos territoriales y en su modo único de entender su espacio, de conocerlo de manera íntima, de no distanciarse intelectual y emocionalmente de él en ejercicios de conocimiento calculador, sino apropiándose y dejándose apropiar por él.” Varese, “Los fundamentos éticos de las cosmologías indígenas,” 15.

¹⁹ “Nuestra propuesta analítica sostiene que para los pueblos indígenas los principios de diversidad (bio-cultural), reciprocidad (social y cósmica) y complementariedad, han constituido durante milenios la estructura axiológica, ética y epistemológica de sus proyectos de civilización. [Our analytical proposal argues that for indigenous peoples the principles of diversity (bio-cultural), reciprocity (social and cosmic) and complementarity have for millennia constituted the axiological, ethical and epistemological structure of their civilisation projects.]” Varese, “Los fundamentos éticos de las cosmologías indígenas,” 11.

²⁰ “Lévi-Strauss, de hecho, puede haber seguido la ruta metodológica de Martin Heidegger ([1966], citado en Tedlock & Tedlock, 1975: XV-XVI) quien había propuesto la existencia de pensamiento contemplativo, común entre las sociedades indígenas, opuesto al pensamiento calculativo, forma dominante en las sociedades capitalistas. El primer modo de pensamiento orientado hacia significados, el segundo hacia resultados (Bloor, 1984). [Lévi-Strauss, in fact, may have followed the methodological route of Martin Heidegger ([1966], quoted in Tedlock & Tedlock, 1975: XV-XVI) who had proposed the existence of contemplative thinking, common among indigenous societies, as opposed to calculative thinking, the dominant form in capitalist societies. The first mode of thinking is oriented towards meanings, the second towards results (Bloor, 1984).]” Varese, “Los fundamentos éticos de las cosmologías indígenas,” 5.

²¹ “A reified universe ...is an amoral universe, which requires no ethical considerations or spiritual attention, let alone emotional empathies, it is a universe that cannot be celebrated, that can only be used and abused for the benefit of an economy of unrestricted individual gain.” Original quotation: “Un universo cosificado ...es un universo amoral, que no requiere de consideraciones éticas ni de atenciones espirituales, ni menos de empatías emocionales, es un universo que no puede ser celebrado, que solamente puede ser usado y abusado en beneficio de una economía de la ganancia individual irrestricta”. Varese, “Los fundamentos éticos de las cosmologías indígenas,” 4.

²² Original quotation: “Quando despersonalizamos o rio, a montanha, quando tiramos deles os seus sentidos, considerando que isso é um atributo exclusivo dos humanos, nós liberamos esses lugares para que se tornem resíduos da atividade industrial e extrativista.” Krenak, *Ideias para Adiar o fim do mundo*, 15.

²³ Donaldson and Kymlicka, “Universal Basic Rights for Animals,” 165 and 168.

²⁴ The call for indigenous perspectives to be ‘taken seriously’ is borrowed from the ‘ontological turn in anthropology’, movements in which anthropologists such as Philippe Descola, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Bruno Latour and Tim Ingold, amongst others propose approaches which are substantially more considerate of alternative ontologies. As precisely summaries by philosopher Yuk Hui (in free translation): “This ontological turn is a direct response to the crisis of modernity, which is generally expressed in terms of an ecological crisis that is now closely linked to the Anthropocene. The movement of the ontological turn is an attempt to take different ontologies in different cultures seriously (we should keep in mind that knowing where different ontologies are is not the same as taking them seriously).” Yuk Hui, *Tecnodiversidade*, trans. Humberto do Amaral (São Paulo: Ubu Editora, 2020), 36. Kindle.

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Tarzan, the Green Goddess and the “Permitted Mayan”

How the Mayan, the Indigenous and our Own were
constructed, and other ghosts in the Ladino gaze

by Rosina Cazali

We are the stories that we tell ourselves.
Shekhar Kapur

*It is as if the cultural identity of the other is problematic,
but never our own.*
Guy Brett

I cannot say exactly when I began to develop my taste for Tarzan movies. But I do know from reliable sources that in the 1930s the news that a Tarzan film was being shot in Guatemala caused a buzz of excitement. Titled *Tarzan and the Green Goddess*, the film is one of the man-ape’s most extravagant adventures. There are no articles about the experience of the shoot, but there were a series of

rumours that tell of the avalanche of mixed feelings experienced by the audience on hearing the first phrases of the narrator. In polished English, he referred to Guatemala as a picturesque country surrounded by snow-capped peaks, lakes infested with crocodiles, and thick jungles in which lions, rhinos and hostile natives roamed.

Hollywood, with its boundless universe of cinematographic productions, was at an ideal moment to fabricate messages to justify the domestication, whitening, control or extermination of whatever alien object or subject might threaten the security of North American borders. The film *Tarzan and the Green Goddess* was part of this project. To North American eyes, this was one of the first cinematographic representations of the Mayans as half-savage beings, practitioners of exotic rites, worshippers of idols, the product of a lethal underdevelopment who were incapable of safeguarding their own forms of knowledge. And although Tarzan would swing from vines sporting barely a loincloth, his white supremacy earned him the reward of the treasure hidden inside the Green Goddess, after its creators had been annihilated and their assets sacked.

Nine decades have passed since the premiere of that film, and it is rarely mentioned now. This is unforgivable: apart from being an accurate portrait of the enthusiasm that the Hollywood producers generated for the figure of the Mayan as an alternative to stories



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of cowboys, Martians and other villains, I believe that it shows how those wild imaginings would sooner or later produce an effect on how we Guatemalans represent the Mayans. Do not “the Mayans of Hollywood” match those that emerge from the pyramid of the Great Jaguar in the IRTRA of Retalhuleu? Do the beauty queens with their fancy dress recreating Mayan cultural icons not follow the school of lurid Hollywood scenography? I think so. But when and how did the encounter between these notions happen? To answer this question, I propose to review some contributions of art, and specifically the contributions of the Ladino gaze, to the construction of *the Mayan, the indigenous, our own*, which art has embraced as strange aesthetic categories. I refer to that manner of “seeing” that, ever since the existence of the Ladino was first conceived, came to occupy a dominant place in the creation of images, symbols, and art. All of these developments were concentrated in the capital city, where most of our artistic knowledge has been built, where artists have traditionally been trained and where, throughout the twentieth century, the cultural and administrative structures that support the local art system were shaped.

At the start of this journey, it has to be said that a concept like “Ladino gaze” is somewhat problematic, mainly because the term *Ladino* has always been problematic. We begin from the premise that a Ladino, in Guatemala, is not synonymous with *mestizo*, but is a conjugation of all those who have considered themselves not *indigenous* and are associated with the capital and its urban behaviours; and that, at the beginning of the twentieth century the Ladino came to occupy the place of the actor and paradigm of Guatemalan national history. Having no clear identity of his own, he found himself with a universe of indigenous images, and he understood that the dynamics of cultural appropriation, devouring and digestion might fill this void. So efficient was the digestive dynamic that after a while it transformed into an emotional reaction. Epic catchphrases like *Guatemala, soul of the Earth* or *Guatemala heart of the Mayan world* move us to the point of tears. I remember the shouts of the public when the first episode of the Star Wars saga was shown in

Guatemala and the panoramic view of Tikal, the base of the rebel alliance, appeared on the Lux cinema's screen. Tikal was as much ours as the quetzal, the white nun, black beans, and "our Mayan Indians". However anecdotal and picturesque my story is, it is a good illustration of the idealistic and romantic "Mayaphilia" that has permeated and continues to permeate our Ladino gaze.

As one of the great Western devices for the creation and support of imaginaries and ideologies, art was the ideal vehicle to install the Creole—preceding the Ladino—at the centre of the birth of the new republic. Post-independence art and aesthetics provided it with symbolic capital, by having the precise dose of autochthony needed for it to draw a dividing line with the colonial past and imagine and administrate the future, such as those drawings of winged women, feather skirts and indigenous elements that Casildo España used to engrave on coins and bid farewell to the Old World. Also, at the height of the European Enlightenment, there were expeditions to Guatemala that offered a series of possibilities of visual and historical enrichment. One of these was carried out in 1839 by the English diarist John Lloyd Stephens (1805-1852), accompanied by the artist and architect Frederick Catherwood (1799-1845) around archaeological sites of the Mesoamerican region. Stephens and Catherwood pioneered a way of showing, seeing and perceiving the Mayan world in the book they



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published under the title *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (1841). This exceptional document encouraged others to undertake new expeditions and mitigate, to some degree, the gross local ignorance about Mesoamerican cultures.

As a result of the Liberal Revolution of 1871, one of the first images that helped the cause of integrating Amerindian symbols was that of the quetzal. Due to its links with pre-Columbian and Mesoamerican civilisations, the bird was chosen as one of the first national symbols. But the contributions of foreign and local photographers like Herbruger Wheeling, Alfred Percival Maudslay, Agostino Somelilani, Doroteo González, Alberto Valdeavellano, and others, also began to establish an ethnographic interest in indigenous faces, customs and surroundings. The English photographer Edward Muybridge, who arrived in Guatemala in 1875, left a testimony of the indigenous world consisting of human groups. But it is in his photographs of Lake Atitlán and panoramic views of coffee plantations in which features and compositions can be appreciated that in later decades formed the basis of landscape painting.

Mayan Modernisms

In the history of Guatemalan art it is vital to recognise Carlos Mérida (1891-1994) as the first artist who, in the mid-twentieth century, was thinking and working with the rich possibilities of *mestizaje* and devoting his energies to creating specifically American modernist forms. Following his sojourn in Europe and immersion in the artistic vanguards (1910-1914), we have limited ourselves to telling the story of his quest for modernist forms that would denote his Guatemalan and American roots as part of a whole current of continental renewal. What has never been clearly said is that at that time in Europe many texts on pre-Columbian cultures were already in circulation thanks to the interest sparked by the conference held in Nancy, France, in 1875, whose objective was to explain the origin of those cultures. The results of that event contributed to the later organisation

and recognition of its associates as Americanists found expression in modernist literature and seeped into the visual arts. In Guatemala, Americanist ideas merged with theosophical currents and influenced the creators and intellectuals of the Generation of the 1920s. After his return to Guatemala in 1914, Mérida embarked on his Americanist project using European forms, which mingled with local themes like landscapes, costumes, indigenous types from the highlands and details taken from pots, hieroglyphs and pre-Columbian decorations. His ideas on Americanism found expression in the text that the artist wrote for the catalogue of his first exhibition in the National School of Fine Arts in Mexico City in 1920: "My painting springs from my deep conviction that we must make an art that is completely American. I believe that considering the glorious past that America has in art as well as its own character in nature and race, it must, without doubt, have its own artistic expression".

Apart from developing a highly personal style in which he combined the "passions of his race" with the "cultivated world" of the European vanguards (Salmon, 1927), we cannot deny that Mérida's work was as modernist as art deco. While generationally close to spiritualist and theosophical currents, one can at least speculate that he was not distant either from the *Mayan revival* that could be seen in sumptuous architectural projects like the Mayan Theatre in Los Angeles, the decorative adornments on skyscrapers like 450 Sutter in San Francisco, or the design of the building occupied by the Pan-American Union in Washington D.C.

From the Indian as a problem to the permitted Mayan

In the decade of the 1930s, during the era of the dictator Jorge Ubico (1931-1944), artists developed a big interest in landscape painting with the feature of having indigenous people in them. Extending what the photographers had begun at the end of the 19th century, the painters of that era strengthened the archetypes that would make up the folkloric landscapes and postcards of the period. Either as a bucolic or a panoramic image, Lake Atitlán, guarded by its three volcanoes, was the ideal setting for building and recreating a particular representation of the Indian as a "valuable decorative element", as authors like Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla would insist.

Since those years, the figure of the indigenous person, represented in art and so many other cultural products slowly changed into a presence and an extraordinary resource for the

promotion of tourist routes to Guatemala. While at the end of the 1920s the notion of “the Maya” had already established itself as a value, at the start of the thirties “the indigenous”, with an undeniable hint of *mestizofilia*, had begun to occupy a leading role in the imaginary of Guatemalan art. Distancing themselves from the stridence of the European vanguards, artists like Humberto Garavito, Antonio Tejeda Fonseca, Alfredo Gálvez Suárez y Jaime Arimany, among others, contributed to the landscape repertoire ethnographic-type prints and portraits of indigenous women exquisitely adorned with their traditional garments. With the scrupulous application of painting techniques like oils or watercolour, the rural indigenous person, the indispensable workforce on estates and infrastructure projects were represented as an idealised, essentially romantic figure.

On this point, it is impossible not to mention the publication in 1923 of the academic thesis of writer Miguel Ángel Asturias, *The Social Problem of the Indian (El problema social de indio)*. Asturias describes the Indian as the product of the physical and psychological inferiority of an entire race, as an ugly type of person with a wide nose and mouth, thick lips, prominent cheekbones, slating and dull eyes, narrow forehead and large ears (Asturias 1923, 69). Despite the racist methodologies Asturias expounded in his well-known thesis, the intellectual circles of the day held animated discussions and exchanged texts on the formation of a *mestizo* identity in Guatemalan society. As a novelty in those days, novels, poetry, history and essays that expressed a certain *mestizo* pride began to be published. In the fog of positioning of that era, the idea of *Indian* continued to gain steam, only without the *Indian*. Like a ghost, the indigenous populated the works of the artists of the 1930s. The product of rigorous artistic practice and technique, these works would play a vital role in the construction of an image suitable for the gaze of the Ladino capital. Labels like *landscape Indian* or *pretty Indian girl* became common to describe the works of the artists mentioned. The continuous use of these expressions in exhibition catalogues, news and

magazine articles, or in speeches introducing *vernissages*, justified the regenerationist thesis that supported the integration of the Indian who was considered civilised, progressive and modern.

From the 1920s and 1930s on, art provided an image loaded with preconceptions of an indigenous figure geared to Ladino taste, but also provided the shape of an unquestionable aesthetic repertoire. This “permitted Mayan” as a reproducer and encoder of taste and aesthetics considered modern would mutate through the years and the political events following the dictatorships. One of the results of the civic-popular and political movements that concluded with the dictator’s overthrow and the period of the 1944 Revolution was the formation, in 1945, of the National Indigenous Institute of Guatemala. In its effects on art and its practices, the formation of this institution was important in bringing artists closer to the ethnic background of a large part of Guatemalan society. Indigenism came to permeate the work and ideas of important creators such as Guillermo Grajeda Mena, Roberto González Goyri, Roberto Ossaye and Dagoberto Vásquez, who for several years headed the Folklore Department of the General Directorate of Fine Arts. In their formal, stylized and modernist explorations, they synthesised the meeting point of the indigenous past with the present. Artists such as Juan Antonio Franco and the engravers of the period attached importance to the social condition of the indigenous and placed them at the centre of the revolutionary debate. In spite of the attention paid to works by indigenous artists such as Andrés Curruchich, Andrés Telón and others, representations of the indigenous continued to be elaborated from the capital’s perspective, permeated by preconceptions and fluctuating between artistic interest and academic paternalism. And that Mayan past continued to be an ornament and a valuable symbol for the state. Military projects exploited the image of Tecún Umán as a mythical warrior, and artists such as Rodolfo Galeotti Torres converted the image into a paroxysm of racial representation, just as Mexican muralists and sculptors such as Francisco Zúñiga (Costa Rica 1912-Mexico 1998) had done in their most rabid moments.

One of the most emblematic works of this period was the Mayan Palace. Designed by the architect Carlos Malau and decorated throughout with Mayan iconography, the work of Galeotti Torres, its purpose was to unify symbolically the municipalities of San Marcos, considered to be the territory of Ladino landowners, and San Pedro, which had an indigenous majority population. Based on a distorted image of the past, the Mayan Palace became the standard-bearer of a new era that embraced indigenism as a paradigm of nationality—in this specific case, as a neutral zone for the solution of the constant

inter-ethnic and representation conflicts between these two municipalities.

The Green Goddess, between mythology and knowledge

Throughout the second half of the 20th century, in a period touched by conflict, the image of the indigenous continued to feed representations that verged between the symbolic and the contradictions that were characteristic of this time. During the Guatemalan internal armed conflict (1960-1996), the art most committed and sensitive to the situation of the indigenous came to channel its concerns for the underprivileged in representations of the indigenous insurgent, or as victims of the cruellest marginalisation and repression, as shown in works from the early days of members of the Vertebra Group. As a peculiar counterpoint, in 1975, the Guatemalan Ministry of Defense formed the Kaibil School named in honour of Kaibil Balam, a warrior figure belonging to the indigenous royalty of Guatemala's western highlands in the 16th century.

In 1992, the work of the photographer Luis González Palma ushered in a new way of seeing the indigenous. At the epicentre of the celebrations of the fifth centenary of the so-called Discovery of America, González Palma had been making frontal portraits of indigenous people that were powerfully reminiscent of photographs from the late 19th century that, in an anthropological sense, showed an interest in recording phenotypes. The difference was that the artist covered them with sepia patinas to suggest a sense of memory and added visual and iconographic references that alluded to Christianisation and cultural domination. Through the face and the gaze, González Palma explored immaterial aspects such as trauma, loss, pain or silence, all of them feelings derived from the violence experienced in Guatemala for more than five centuries. The penetrating glances of his indigenous characters left a powerful impression. Their whitened eyes opened a strange space for debate about how we see and are seen, on the power of the gaze and from where it is directed. For González Palma, everything involved the preparation of careful aesthetic strategies

that gave him a possibility to understand the morphology of his own (Ladino) gaze. This constantly fuels the debate (or doubts) about the legitimacy of things like formal punctiliousness in pursuit of the “dignification” or recognition of the indigenous.

In the mid-1990s, indigenous artists began to have a greater presence. With the new millennium, a whole new generation emerged that contributed a flood of knowledge that questioned the single, dominant views. The extraordinary suggestion that the Western conception of art does not exist in the indigenous universe, but rather that art is considered a sacred space, was one of the most influential key changes of that first moment. From their own voices and gazes, artists such as Benvenuto Chavajay, Manuel Chavajay, Antonio Pichillá, Marilyn Boror, Ángel Poyón, Fernando Poyón, Sandra Monterroso and many others have traced the complex map of contemporary indigenous art. In 2014, I had the opportunity to work with the Poyón brothers on the Poyón Collection project, a large collection of postcards, books, photographs, architectural plans, sculptures, coins, costumes, comic characters, audios, film extracts and videos of different origin that make us aware of the extent to which Mayans have been represented, exoticised, commodified and stereotyped. By positioning themselves as collectors of objects valued as Mayan products, the Poyón brothers also question the figure of the “white” collector who has traditionally gathered “Mayan” objects of value and is the self-appointed guardian of their heritage and museums.

A posteriori, one of the most important lessons to be learned from this project is the importance of continuing to critically monitor the paradoxical and complex web of complicities that has been woven throughout history between the Ladino and the indigenous gaze. Innumerable layers of mythology and knowledge intersect and accumulate in this process, like the Green Goddess, who was not an immutable idol, but an object of ritual who hid within her the formula for a powerful explosive.

¹ Arturo Taracena, "Guatemala: del mestizaje a la ladinización, 1524-1964" ("Guatemala: From Miscegenation to Ladinization, 1524-1964"). <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/4058/arriola.pdf?sequence=2>

² Both terms are proposed from, among others, phrases such as "idealistic mestizophilia" and "romantic indianofilia", suggested by the philosopher and researcher Amílcar Dávila Estrada. See: Amílcar Dávila Estrada, "De tópicos tropicales: india bonita", *Transvisible*, catalogue of the 19th Paiz Art Biennial (Guatemala) p. 63.

³ With the issue of Decree Number 33 in 1871, General Miguel García Granados saw in the bird enough mythology to consolidate and give continuity to that imaginary under construction, distanced somewhat from the Spanish past and focused on the promotion of the new republic. The word "quetzal" comes from the Nahuatl word quetzalli. The bird is associated with the feathered serpent deity called Quetzalcoatl. As the air god of the Mexica and Maya, the quetzal was revered, and the beauty of its iridescent feathers was prized as an adornment to intricate headdresses made for use by figures of power.

⁴ "Introito" from the catalogue ("Private exhibitions organized by the National Academy of Fine Arts of Mexico"), 25 August to 10 September 1920, Mexico City. <https://icaa.mfah.org/s/es/item/733347#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-2001%2C-215%2C6551%2C3666>

⁵ Marcelo Zamora came up with the concept of the "permitted Mayan" in his article "Imaginando naciones desde San Miguel Totonicapán: la lucha por la definición del 'maya permitido' en el discurso multicultural" ("Imagining Nations from San Miguel Totonicapán: The struggle for the definition of the 'permitted Mayan' in multicultural discourse"), in *Mayanización y vida cotidiana (Mayanisation and Daily Life)*, vol. 2, Santiago Bastos and Aura Cumes, coords. (Guatemala: FLACSO), p. 604. The original concept was used by the Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and the social scientist Charles Hale. In a contemporary setting, "permitted Indian" refers to the role that international organisations and states play in promoting the participation of indigenous peoples in late-modern or multicultural capitalism. According to the logic of instrumentalisation, these organisms tend to exalt patrimonial and cultural values, but by establishing or suggesting norms of representation. While recognising the importance and usefulness of the term in today's context, I take the liberty of applying it speculatively, or as a suggestion that these practices made a first appearance in past times. According to the valuable studies and critical contributions of Cusicanqui, "permitted Indian" is a term with a specific application. In the absence of a more exact concept in the visual arts field, I have resorted to it on this occasion, while recognising and respecting the contributions of these two authors.

⁶ The Kaibil School has been famous for its rigorous physical and mental training programme aimed at developing soldiers' capacities to face combat situations and extreme environmental conditions. The so-called *kaibiles* served in special operations in the Guatemalan Army and in other countries.

Images

1 Stills from the third film in the series known as *Tarzán y la Diosa Verde*. Directed by Edward Kull and Wilbur McGaugh, it was partially filmed in Guatemala in 1935.

2 Aerial view of the Gran Jaguar, saccording to the *Xetulul* park version. IRTRA, Retalhuleu.

3 Tikal, beer and rum. Billboards near La Aurora International Airport, Guatemala City.

4 Engraving No. 20 by José Casildo Spain. In Antonio Juarros, Guatemala by Fernando Sétimo on December 12, 1808. Real Print. 1808

5 Drawing by Frederick Catherwood (1799-1854) English explorer, draftsman, architect and photographer. Together with John Lloyd Stephens, Catherwood visited Central America in 1839. Together they published the book *Incidents of trips to Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (1841) with texts by Stephens and illustrations based on Catherwood's drawings. For the realization of his drawings, Catherwood used a lucid camera.

6 Facade of the Maya Theater, opened in 1927 in downtown Los Angeles, California. It was designed by architect Stiles O. Clements of *Morgan, Walls & Clements*. Its façade includes patterns and stylized pre-Columbian figures designed by the sculptor Francisco Cornejo. The Mayan Theater is a prototypical example of the many *Mayan Revival*-style theaters of the 1920s. Its first owner, Leon Hefflin, rented the Mayan Theater to produce variety shows. From 1971 to 1989, the theater showed pornographic films. In 1990, the Mayan Theater was turned into a nightclub. Today it is considered a historical monument.



Scan the code to see the film *Tarzan and the Green Goddess* and other references on the topic.

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Panama, Canal Republic.

Keys to understanding a country with a canal in the middle

by Gladys Turner

When art in Central America is discussed, Panama is often left out; the subjects explored by the artists appear to be different. However, there are points in common although they are not always easy to see. From a historical and political perspective, Panama has been separated from the countries that formed part of the General Captaincy of Guatemala, all of which had a parallel and common independence process. Panama was part of the Viceroyalty of New Granada and after independence from Spain the Panamanian creoles decided to join what is now Colombia due to old administrative ties. Although this defined Panama's idiosyncrasy with respect to the rest of Central America, we are united by a colonial past and a common history of territories that have been occupied by neo-colonial projects and transnational emporia.

The processes by which our countries became part of the world capitalist system have been similar; they occupied subordinate, vulnerable and dependent positions from which escape has proved very difficult.¹ At an early stage, the United States seized control of Central America's natural resources, focusing on the exploitation and commercialisation of products such as coffee, cocoa, indigo, and bananas, hence the derogatory term "banana republics". This reductionist label groups together former colonies that evolved into politically unstable and economically dependent countries, and it became a stigma applicable to the whole region. But in some way, both this pejorative term and the image of the banana itself have become a kind of symbolic referent spurring artists to analyse the complex scenario of systemic violence in the region.² Important contemporary artists such as Moisés Barrios (Guatemala), Jorge Linares (Guatemala), Oscar Figueroa (Costa Rica), Pedro Arrieta (Costa Rica), Simón Vega (El Salvador), Leonardo González (Honduras), Cesar Chinchilla (Honduras), or Rachelle Mozman (Panama), have opened conversations about power relations, the processes of exploitation and dispossession and human rights violations, depicting them symbolically in their works by manipulating the image of the banana and stories associated with banana enclaves.

Criticism of the presence of the United Fruit Company (UFCO) and other agrarian enclaves has had a lesser imprint on Panamanian art compared to the work of artists from the region's other countries. Although creators such as Arístides Ureña Ramos or Rachelle Mozman have explored the subject,³ most Panamanian artists have tended to reflect on another aspect of the territory's exploitation by aggressive outside powers. In the case of Panama, the fight for control of its advantageous geographical position has generated forms of violence that have been systematic, constant and highly visible, as materialized in the existence of the old Canal Zone, the country's turbulent relations with the United States and the latter's constant military interventions.⁴

A little history

When Panama became independent from Spain (1821), it immediately joined Greater Colombia, a vast South American community of new countries; later, in 1903, it sought the support of the United States to achieve a rapid separation. Taking advantage of the fact that the canal project started by the French had failed,⁵ the Panamanians convinced Philippe Bunau-Varilla, a Frenchman linked to the French company, to negotiate with the United States to secure its support for the separatist cause.⁶ It was a serious mistake for which the country was to pay dearly, as Bunau-Varilla accepted everything the United States demanded in return: rights over the canal's construction, two large swaths of land on both sides, and the guarantee of administering the Canal in perpetuity.⁷ And while the United States government established a colonial enclave in a strategic place for its geopolitical control of the region, the new nation would see the light with an important part of its territory under occupation. This was the origin of the so-called Canal Zone, practically a sovereign state embedded in the country's centre, to which Panamanians were denied access for decades.

After several renegotiations of the original treaty and constant popular protests, the Torrijos-Carter treaty (1977) was finally signed, initiating a process that would return the Canal and its territory to Panama in 1999. Just 10 years before the Canal was handed over, Panama was invaded by the US in its final and most decisive intervention.⁸

In the last twelve years, artists and curators have sought to deconstruct the complex implications of the Canal and its Zone's existence: the *8th Art Biennial of Panama* (2008), 1964. *Art, Politics, Panama* (*Arte, política, Panamá*, 2014), *Canal Republic* (*República Canalera*, 2014), *Greased pole* (*Palo encebao*, 2017), *Completely artificial* (*Completamente artificial*, 2018), *Latin American Roaming Art* (2017-2018), *An invasion in 4 times* (*Una invasión en 4 tiempos*, 2019-2020), and *The 20th and its context* (*El 20 y su contexto*, 2019-2020). Analysing some of the works from these exhibitions, we will look at three core themes that fire the national imagination across the country: the Zone as an alienated territory, the symbolic weight of the national flag, and the betrayed dreams of sovereignty.

The alienated zone or the fifth frontier

How territories and borders are delimited influences the shaping of identities, memories, and collective myths. The Canal Zone,

also known as the “fifth frontier”, turned into the essential axis on which identities, memories, political narratives, and national imagery were built. For the 8th Art Biennial of Panama (2008), the Mexican curator Magalí Arriola proposed the thesis “Enter the Canal Zone”, inviting international and Panamanian artists to explore that phantasmagorical presence that was the old Zone, to sketch out a new cartography that would allow an unprecedented look at the subject of the territory’s geopolitical construction, at invisible borders and identity processes. Sam Durant (USA) made *Americas*, an installation with maps of Panama at different historical moments, whose content emphasised the interests of those who commissioned them.

This work invited us to think of cartography as a kind of record of the political volition of the powerful, but also as an idealized representation of desire. According to Arriola, “Durant not only questions the authority of the supposed scientific objectivity of maps as instruments of measurement; the artist also points at the differences between *mapping and being mapped...*”⁹ The logic that dominates when territories are shaped and represented will be that of the hegemonic will.¹⁰

For the *Completely Artificial* exhibition (2018),¹¹ Darién Montañés analysed the processes of appropriation, resignification and negotiation concerning the borders of the old Canal Zone. In his pieces *Tachón and Mojón*, Montañés



Darién Montañés, *Borrón (Erasure)*, 2018. Chalk drawing on the gallery floor. Courtesy of the artist.

explored the points that marked the boundaries of the old Zone. He discovered three types of limit located around Avenida de los Mártires (the old Ave. 4 de Julio). One was the legal limit, as defined by the agreements between each country; another was the limit that the zonal authorities recognized operationally and that they located right in the centre of the avenue. The third limit, which we could call an affective one, was recognized by Panamanian and Zonian civilians as the true border. This was located some meters away from the legal limit, showing that borders can be mental and emotional.

Every border, every boundary, has a series of rules and practices that apply to those who enter the zone in question. Thus, each territory has internal logics, its circles of power and its subordinate groups; and, of course, the groups that are marginalised by being kept outside the confines of that space. For decades, the boundaries between the Canal Zone and Panama City, particularly its most emblematic space, the Avenida 4 de Julio (later Ave. de los Mártires), were the scene of animated nationalist demonstrations. The event with the greatest impact was a clash on 9 January 1964 between Panamanian students and US soldiers, with a toll of several civilian deaths and injuries. The students were demanding compliance with agreements that allowed the Panamanian and the North American flag to be raised together. They marched peacefully to the Zone to raise the Panamanian flag and were attacked by civilians and police from the Zone.

In 2014, on the fiftieth anniversary of this event, the exhibition: *1964: Art, Politics, Panama* was mounted.¹² The curators invited artists from different generations to reconstruct lost memories and examine the assumptions and mythologies surrounding the date. Brooke Alfaro made *Dime*, an installation in which a large format photo of the Avenida de los Mártires was seen from the Zones side, focusing on the protesting Panamanian students and citizens. A short distance away, there was a table with a rifle, a war helmet, and a box in which a dime could be deposited, the price at the time for participating in a fairground target-shooting event. This work, controversial for its crudity, refers us to pure conflict to challenge the exercise of power. But the information it offers us about the “other”, while real is also fragmentary.

To broaden the horizon, it was necessary to leave the well-trodden paths of Panamanian historical discourse centred on the claim to sovereignty over that territory.¹³ So, *1964. Art, P olitics, Panama* turned to documentary photography to find other perspectives. With declassified images from the Washington, D.C.-based National

Archives of Record Administration (NARA), photographic material was exhibited that allowed a perspective on the “other”. Images of students from the Zone climbing to place the flag of their country on their school flagpole was met by photos of Panamanian students doing the same on the borders of the Zone. The photographs of the young Zonians had the same intensity and emotion as those of their Panamanian counterparts and had never been seen by Panamanians before.

The right to fly the flag

National flags are icons with a dense and complex emotional charge; they have the power to represent a country, its people, its interests, and ambitions. They are symbols that so wholly assume what they represent that the manipulation of that piece of cloth can be governed by honorary rituals, be equivalent to a victory, or indicate the capture of a territory. Americans have understood the power unfurled by the omnipresence of a flag; remember Joe Rosenthal’s famous photograph of American soldiers raising their country’s flag on Iwo Jima, or the image of astronauts on the first journey to the moon.

The relationship between the Panamanian obsession with the homeland flag and the presence of the US flag in the Canal Zone has been dialectical, the one was the antithesis of the other. The Panamanian flag became a flag in opposition.¹⁴ Being able to place the Panamanian flag in the Canal Zone became the stubborn ambition of generations.¹⁵ The iconic cover of *Life* magazine, with a photograph by Stan Wayman, shows angry young Panamanians climbing a lamp post on the borders of the Zone during the 1964 riots, to fasten the national flag after learning that the one held by the students in their peaceful demonstration had been shredded. Art critic Adrienne Samos captures the performative essence of those moments, “Is there a more transcendent creative act for republican Panama than that performed on January 9, 1964? At risk of their lives, students climbed over the border

fence of the old colonial enclave to transform a lamppost into a gigantic mast demanding sovereignty. The tremendous visual, symbolic, ethical and political power of this act burst into our collective imagination to stay".¹⁶

In the exhibition *Greased pole* (*Palo encebao*, 2017), Stan Wayman's famous photograph was contrasted with a photographic series produced by José Castellón around a popular game called *Greased pole*, which consists of climbing to the top of a pole to obtain a reward, usually money or liquor. Formally, the images captured by Castellón led him immediately to associate them with Wayman's image, reflecting on the equivocal and shifting nature of representations and on the new motivations of contemporary Panamanians.

The theme of the insulted flag appears powerfully in two works by José Braithwaite, both without title. One of them is a doleful installation with the flag hanging from a gallows knot against a black background, shown for the first time in the *Canal Republic* exhibition (2014),¹⁷ which analysed one hundred years of the Canal's influence on national identity. Due to its success in synthesising a period in which a permanent sense of oppression was so evident, the work was installed again in the exhibition *An invasion in 4 times* (2019-2020).¹⁸ This exhibition analysed what would be the last and definitive act of interference by the US government in Panama: the 1989 military invasion.



José Castellón, *The Right To Fly The Flag*, 2017. Video.

Braithwaite's second work was a powerful and dramatic installation in the exhibition *The 20th and its context* (2019-2020).¹⁹ The four fields of the Panamanian flag, normally in white, blue and red, were replaced by black and white, without the stars, and surrounded by ropes that cross it. This flag is the background of a spatially complex montage, in which three tables flank the entire composition, each one with elements referring to the ideological, psychological, and cultural processes that condition us to respond emotionally to national symbols.

In the same vein, in *An Invasion in 4 Times* José Castellón's video *The Right to Fly the Flag*, was shown,²⁰ in which the flag is hoisted to the top of a mast and then taken down. Out of focus, the flag's stars are cut off. This act of mutilation tells of national aspirations constantly attacked by US military and political interests seeking to strengthen their control in the region. When the US invaded Panama in 1989, its strategic objectives included capturing the dictator Noriega, dismantling the Panamanian army, and installing a government docile to Washington's policies; to this end, it carried out a disproportionate military operation that resulted in an undetermined number of deaths and injuries. As usually happens, the soldiers took war trophies, including Panamanian flags. In the context of the exhibition *An Invasion in 4 Times*, a Panamanian flag captured as a war trophy and recovered by the Rivera brothers (local collectors) was shown, a return that arouses a sense of symbolic reparation.

Flags are not the only important Panamanian emblems. Strange as it may seem, the names of beer brands have had a patriotic narrative of their own, speaking to concepts such as "nation" and "sovereignty." In the video *Drinking song* (2011) by Jonathan Harker and Donna Conlon we can access an ironic symbolic analysis for understanding and deciphering Panama's relations with the United States. The North American national anthem, whose melody emerged in an old London club, is played using bottles of Panamanian beers with such power names as Soberana (Sovereign), Panama, or Balboa. The

persistent affirmation of the national identity of Panamanians arose, in part, out of their opposition to US territorial policies. However, since the US invasion of Panama in 1989 we have seen the gradual dismantling of nationalist discourses in favour of a more and more nakedly capitalist and consumerist society.

Sovereignty betrayed

After the return of the Canal to Panama, issues are still pending that relate the old Zone in a problematic way to the illusions and expectations of the population, and they continue to be reflected in artistic production. The *Home Go Gringo* work, presented by Jonathan Harker to the 8th Art Biennial, was conceived as a mural located on the border between the old Zone and Panama City. It recreates a situation common before the canal's return: political graffiti with the typical phrase *gringo go home*. On this occasion, the words were re-organized to have a different meaning, just as relations between the United States and Panama have changed, and just as the expectations of Panamanians have changed with the country's presentation as a new financial and vacation destination.

Coming from Panama City, the urban order of the Zone had always been admired. It followed the model of a garden city with large spaces, spacious houses, and lush vegetation. When the process of the Zone's return was just beginning



Donna Conlon and Jonathan Harker, *Drinking Song*, 2011. Video.



Jonathan Harker, *Home Go Gringo*, 2008. Intervention on a wall.

and the Panamanian authorities had begun to work on a land use plan, the country's population imagined that the houses in the old Zone would be offered to the Panamanian population at reasonable prices. But the reality was different; the dynamic of land occupation that had once reflected the interest of an external political power was now replaced by one based on a real estate market that ruled out the greater social use of the recovered assets. This is criticised by the artist Ramsés Giovanni in his work *Canal Land for Sale* (Tierra del Canal for Sale, 2014), presented in *Canal Republic*. Twenty-one glass jars, each containing three grams of earth from the Canal area, are displayed as little ready-for-sale souvenirs, just like the many made to celebrate the Canal's 100th anniversary.

Currently a Janus-faced reality is apparent, two faces that are not exclusive and represent a maladjustment due to coloniality. On the one hand, a country that aspires to the image (and only the image) of a developed nation, and on the other, the reality of an economy of brutal values. *Confluences* (2017) by Katherine Fiedler (Peru) presented in the latest version of *Latin American Roaming Art* (LARA)²¹ is a video-installation that confronts simultaneous realities: on the one hand, images of the expanded Canal; on the other, that of the imposing tropical forest. And in the middle, the persistent image of an air conditioning plant as a metaphor for a wrong development model²² that is applied in ignorance of its inherent contradictions, in a country where only very recently have people begun to speak about the missing and dead during an invasion that occurred 30 years ago. Exhibitions like the ones we have discussed are part of a collective effort to explore and make sense of the phenomena that have arisen since the old Zone came into existence, and the erratic relations with the US, the effects of which still weigh on the country.

¹Based on the development of European countries' mechanisms of colonial exploitation and accumulation in the 16th century, an economic, political and social matrix was established that determined the vulnerable position that newly independent countries of the region have

occupied in the economic machinery of the world system. Immanuel Wallerstein explains that “in world-systems we are dealing with a spatial/temporal zone which cuts across many political and cultural units, one that represents an integrated zone of activity and institutions which obey certain systemic rules”, Wallerstein, Immanuel, *World-systems Analysis: an Introduction*. Duke University Press, 2004, p.17.

² Regarding the work of Martinican artist Jean Francois Boclé, in an extensive cycle on the footprints of the banana companies in the Caribbean, Jaidier Orsini stresses the symbolic possibilities of the banana, commenting that “such a fragile and exotic fruit (...) embodies a tragic history of submission, exploitation, genocide and toxicity of the social and natural environment”. Orsini, Jaidier. *Jean Francois Boclé. El territorio donde se planta la memoria*, Artishock digital magazine, December 22, 2017.

³ The problem of the banana enclaves in Panama (in the regions of Puerto Armuelles and Bocas del Toro) is reflected in literature and essays more than in the visual arts. We recall here the novel “Flor de banano” by the writer Joaquín Beleño, or numerous studies on plantation workers’ struggles and the specific situation of the transnational banana corporations, focusing above all on the Chiquita Brand, the United Fruit Company and the Chiriqui Land Company (known popularly as Chirilanco), among others.

⁴ When Panama assumed its destiny as an independent republic in 1903, it did so under US tutelage. Thus, in the 1904 Constitution, in Title IV (General Provisions), article 136 was included, which declares that “The Government of the United States of America may intervene, at any point in the Republic of Panama, to re-establish public peace and constitutional order if it has been disturbed, in the event that by virtue of a Public Treaty that Nation assumes or has assumed, the obligation to guarantee the independence and sovereignty of this Republic”. Many of the interventions by the United States were requested by the country’s leaders when their or their social group’s interests were threatened.

⁵ There are great differences between the Canal project led by the French, and the one that would later be built under American leadership. The French canal project was a private venture, known as the Universal Company of the Interoceanic Canal of Panama. In the North American case, the US government itself was a shareholder in the company (1%) and controlled the territory, giving the project not only a commercial but also a political and military character.

⁶ The Provisional Government that was formed during the first moments of the independence movement appointed Phillipe Bunau-Varilla as Extraordinary Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States, in a maneuver that shows the ineptitude, desperation and ingenuousness of the Panamanian ruling class in that moment.

⁷ The so-called Canal Zone comprised two strips of land on both sides of the interoceanic highway, each 8.1 km wide, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and thus dividing the country and the continent. The Hay-Bunau-Varilla treaty conferred rights and authority on the United States to act as if they were sovereign in that space. It was a territory of exception, subject to its own laws.

⁸ To gain sympathy and obscure its purposes of controlling the region, the US government called this military intervention Operation Just Cause. The sinister figure of Manuel Antonio Noriega was well suited to establishing a narrative of “liberation”. In Panama, from the first years that followed the 1989 intervention, despite the censorship imposed by the national government for the duration of the North American occupation, the insurgent counter-narrative, which speaks of an “invasion”, would prevail over the official account of “liberation”.

⁹ Arriola, Magali. El dulce olor a quemado de la historia (The sweet burning smell of history), 8th Panama Art Biennial. Entering the Canal Zone. Panama: Ed. Art and Culture Foundation, 2011, p.49.

¹⁰ On this point, Vladimir Montoya Arango mentions that “the cartographer is a social subject, immersed in the network of political interests that shape the social reality of his time, his knowledge is neither neutral nor impartial, he plays a role in the designs of power and his knowledge is instrumentalized by the latter”. In Montoya Arango, Vladimir, *El mapa de lo invisible. Silencios y gramática del poder en la cartografía (The map of the invisible. Silences and the grammar of power in cartography)*. Universitas Humanística, No. 63, January-June, 2007. Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, p.163.

¹¹ Between 2017 and 2018, Sofía Bastidas and Guillermo León, curators of the itinerant Port to Port project that explores the future of different port cities on the continent, invited Darién Montañés to participate in the *Completely Artificial* exhibition at the Spanish Cultural Centre in Panama.

¹² 1964. *Art, politics, Panama*, a group exhibition curated by Silvia Estarás Manzano (Spain) and Panamanians Mario Garcia Hudson and Gladys Turner Bosso. Museum of Contemporary Art of Panama, 2014

¹³ Already in 2008, at the 8th Panama Art Biennial, in the presentation of Frederick Wiseman’s documentary, “Canal Zone” (1977), he provided us with a striking glimpse of the life of the Zonian (inhabitant of the Canal Zone). It was a three-hour film that captures fragments of the hidden life of American residents in a territory that was not their homeland, but that they adopted as such.

¹⁴ During the most violent period in the struggle for the Canal (between 1950 and 1977), there were catchwords or slogans that reflected nationalist aspirations apart from the universal “Yankee go home”: “One territory, one flag” “We are not just another star on the US flag” or “Panama is sovereign in the Canal Zone”.

¹⁵ In 1958, Operation Sovereignty was carried out, in which Panamanian students planted about 75 Panamanian flags in the Canal Zone. In 1959 there was a failed Operation Flag Planting, an initiative of Panamanian politicians and intellectuals who made a general appeal to the population. It was suppressed by the Zone authorities, with injuries on both sides.

¹⁶ Text fragment by Adrienne Samos for the exhibition Palo encebao, by the artist José Castellón, curated by Johann Wolfschoon. Diablo Rosso Gallery, Panama, 2017.

¹⁷ Canal Republic, collective exhibition of 2014, curated by Mirie de la Guardia. Galería Allegro, Panama. 2014.

¹⁸ *An invasion in 4 times*, collective exhibition curated by Mónica Kupfer, Adrienne Samos and Gladys Turner Bosso. Museum of Contemporary Art of Panama. 2019 -2020.

¹⁹ *The 20th and its context*, group exhibition curated by Susana González-Revilla. International Cultural Center, Panama. 2019-2020. This exhibition also analysed the subject of the US invasion of Panama.

²⁰ This video was also part of the 2017 Palo Encebao exhibition, referred to above. Diablo Rosso, Panamá.

²¹ Latin American Roaming Art (LARA) is an itinerant artists residency that was held in Panama in 2017, curated by Gerardo Mosquera. It invited international artists, including two Panamanians, to analyse the processes that Panama has undergone on her path to autonomy. Many artists were interested in the effects of the Canal's presence on the country. Museum of Contemporary Art of Panama. 2017-2018.

²² Like so many countries, Panama continues stubbornly to try to build its identity on the paradigm of modernity, disregarding the possibility of what Walter Mignolo calls "another paradigm". Mignolo assures us that this is "built on an awareness of the coloniality of power, of the inseparability of modernity/coloniality, of the colonial difference and of the relationship between the production of knowledge and the processes of decolonization and the socialization of power". At Mignolo, Walter, *Historias locales / diseños globales. Colonialidad, conocimientos subalternos y pensamiento fronterizo (Local Stories/Global Designs. Coloniality, subordinate knowledge and border thinking)* Madrid: Ediciones Akal, S.A., Madrid, 2003, p.52.

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Universes of Matter

Glossary

Alchemy

Aside from being the mother of chemistry, alchemy is a dance with fire. Óscar Santillán is one of its dance partners. Edgar Calel knows its secrets and plays with his knowledge like a musician whose instrument is heat.

Alchemists move in nonlinear times. They invoke different pasts using different infusions. They consult herbs on how to cure different ailments. Uriel Orlow files away all this knowledge, studies it meticulously, and through the saucepans' heat, the life stories of each herbalist are revealed to him. Plants can be an excuse to start conversations.

Plants are teachers, they have been exchanging with the earth for a long time. If we pay attention to them, maybe they will share something with us. Diseases originate from below, but so do cures. When we get sick, symptoms appear in our bodies. The right infusion can anaesthetise the symptom and accompany us while waiting for it to pass.

Alchemy is a name for this practice but, looked at from a different perspective, it could be called medicine, or it could be called healing. These terms can be expansive and undergo (alchemical) change solely in being translated. Alchemy, knowledge of the earth, knowledge of ointments, smells, flavours, makes working with herbs a gateway to sensibility. We can begin to think of plants as sentient and sensitive beings.

Astronomy

To observe, measure and scrutinise the Milky Way at night, navigators from the Global South turn to the stars to get their bearings. There is the Southern Cross. For many years, Andean cultures have counted time, understood cycles and deciphered from observation of the sky how to measure this notion.

Francisca Aninat's inquiries begin from these questions that have us look upwards, but her constellations also include communities with which she lives and old books in which dreams of other times were recorded. In these books that Aninat constructs, communities from different times dream together. Just as we read a book, we can read the stars and we can read the emotions on people's faces.

What have we shared with cultures of times past? What will we share with others in the future? All our cultures are seen from the sky with the same eyes. The constellations can be sources to consult for knowledge that was left inscribed there. The Kawéskar, portrayed by Paz Errázuriz in her series *Sea Nomads*, saw themselves as stars. That is why they covered their bodies with white dots because when they transcended, they would become stars.

Dimension

From a Western perspective, space is associated with three dimensions: width, height and depth. The fourth dimension would be time. We could say that this «objective» way of perceiving the world actually distances us from it. As Westerners see it, the world revolves around human beings and their perceptions. People are just another element in that network of relationships weaved by life. If we think of dimensions as different planes or ways of relating to the world, we could expand and transcend the anthropocentric gaze. For example, if we were to pay attention to the generosity of the earth, which gives us fruit in exchange for the seed we plant, we could apply that generosity to other beings. The rotation of the planet on its axis can also serve us, as in Fernando Poyón's piece, in which the artist suggests that by imitating the circular movement of the earth in the opposite direction, we can return to the past and take care of a pending issue as if we were rewinding the sphere symbolically.

Fire

Todos los fuegos el fuego (All Fires the Fire) was the title Julio Cortázar gave to one of his famous stories. This association in which *all fires* are the same *fire* could be seen as a concept that transcends the idea of the individual. The same fire is seen in Lake Atitlán, Sololá, Guatemala, as in Macaúbas, Bahia, Brazil. Fire is cross-border, it recognises no nations. It does not distinguish between ways of thinking, either.

Fire, in a bonfire, has the ability to listen and accompany us in the stories that are told around it. It listens and advises us. We can put food on its shoulders; it cooks it and prepares it for our nourishment. It is alive, like the other beings that inhabit the air. Oxygen is its food, and it imparts its knowledge with whoever it converses through the sounds of wood. And when it is thirsty, it drinks from water and transforms it into air. It paints with its colours, with blues and light blues below, yellows and reds above. During the night, these colours that it paints on the blackness behind it point towards the sky so that we can contemplate those other fires that are the stars.

Materials that are transformed by fire do not disappear but turn into gas. To travel to other planes, they blur, *become immaterial, dematerialise*. Fire gives us heat, like when we come close to another body. We can learn from its heat, which is distributed equally and unconditionally to whoever wants to borrow it. Its warmth is how it shows us its sensibility, its kindness. It serves to cleanse.

All fires are the same fire. If we light a match, rather than the fire belonging to us, we belong to it.

Inheritance

We cast the umbilical cord behind us when we are born. It is the embodiment of our inheritance. Just as inside the uterus a thread tied us to our mother, there is an invisible cord that binds a community and its ancestors together. That imperceptible thread could be sharing a plate, a drink, a party, a dance, music and laughter.

Invisible

What is not accessible to sight.

Just as fire transforms and cleanses, it also reveals. It makes matter somewhat invisible. Exploring this notion of the invisible, we realise not only that sight is the sense that we most use, but that it often distracts us from using our ability to absorb and feel with our other senses.

The invisible has another quality, that is to name it, we rely on notions like time, emptiness and infinity. But certain invisible elements communicate with us by sending messages to our skin, as when we feel heat or cold, pain or pleasure.

Taking this invisibility as a symbolic quality of some objects, we could speak of certain values that are imperceptible to the eye. The objects in Manuel Chavajay's work possess the inherited weight of a memory that is waiting to be read. This memory comes from the earth that is used as material, and which, on passing through water and then through fire, acquires a fixed shape. A vessel also contains the memory of the hands that moulded it, of the oven that set it, and it accumulates history in the use that is made of it, day by day. Both inheritance and use give objects a life of their own. But this animism is not limited to the object but is transferred to its relationships. The stone, wind, tree, water, food; everything is endowed with a vitality that is not limited to what can be seen. This life force is *invisible*.

Some synonyms for knot are union, link, loop, node, nodule, bond or tie. Other more metaphorical synonyms are muddle, difficulty, intrigue, cloudiness, connection, reason or motive.

Memory goes on accumulating experiences like a filing cabinet, but with images. These images may fade over time, but they never disappear. Those apparently concealed experiences are like knots. Knots that need to be undone. And they could be undone with the help of fire, with the help of water, with the help of fermented drink and plants. Above all, with the help of the spoken word, repeated and listened to as a mantra.

Antonio Pichillá's textiles are made of knots that we must symbolically untie, and of threads that are waiting to be knotted. Life is full of these processes of spinning, fraying, linking, unlinking, uniting and disuniting. Neighbouring San Pedro La Laguna, where Pichillá and his family weave, is San Juan La Laguna, on the shores of Lake Atitlán, where Diego Isaías Hernández paints frights. A knot can also mean a fright or a shock. The frights that Isaías paints include natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. This country's geography is besieged by these phenomena. But he also paints psychological, symbolic, inner or unconscious frights. Trauma.

Knot

Rites

Rites are associated with the repetition of a myth to reinforce its importance. A rite is a way of keeping a story alive, of reliving it with every gesture and word. We can associate rites with different imaginaries. In Mayan culture, they generally involve fire and its offspring: smoke, smells and heat.

Accompanied by dances, songs and offerings, rites invoke invisible energies and forces so that harmony can prevail. They celebrate repetition and constancy at moments of cyclical change and at turning points, to help preserve the peace and tranquillity of the people. At the beginning and end petitions are made, and to give something in return, offerings are left.

Translation

Translation is a cognitive activity that involves understanding a source text, or output text, and moving it into another language, to a meta text or a target text. If this activity involves only speech, it is called interpretation. And a translator or interpreter is someone who moves between two worlds.

Languages are worlds. This discipline of translation is frequently exercised in a poetic field. The translator or interpreter moves in this cross-border territory and makes it intelligible to the other. They are a giver of life.

Pablo Vargas Lugo looks for ways to translate the messages of archaeology to give us news of the past. Hellen Ascoli works in that space with her hands, which unite the different languages that are the fibres being woven. It is a way of translating the pasts that were still recorded on the looms.

We enter one language, and we exit into another. We leave one world to enter another.

Weaving

Weaving is the action of joining, usually of enlacing fibres in the form of a thread. The activity of weaving involves the whole body, from the eyes that see, the hands that count and the arms that embrace. Waist looms are an extension of the body. The weight of the weaver keeps the yarns vertical and in parallel.

Just as you enter the woven fabric, you must leave it. For Navajo weavers, it is important to leave an exit hole in the textile so that the spirit is not trapped. Sometimes it is an almost imperceptible thread that goes from the centre outwards, like a symbolic exit. These teachings were passed down by the first weaver, the spider.

Angelica Serech weaves with fibres, with corn silk and even with her own hair. She not only uses her weight on the fabric, but she leaves body fibres, she learns, exchanges and leaves a part of herself there.

Francisca Aninat

Chile | 1979

Francisca Aninat uses everyday materials in compositions that are somewhere between painting, sculpture and installation. She is interested in exploring the changes in accumulated and organised matter such as woven thread, overlapping pages and glued layers. By accumulating or causing repetitions in these material processes, Aninat also accumulates the time and the stories packed into the laborious making of her works. Her practice, like her transformations, comes from a manual and often collective process.

The *Open Book* project originates from this concern with collective construction. It began with a group of loom weavers from San Antonio, Guatemala who undertook to create a life diary. The weavers developed illustrations about the notion of leisure time, creating stories about their fabrics that end up showing a sense of community, given how recurrent experiences in the group coincide. Completed as an intervention, the project includes a mural where

the layers of the open book are shed without linearity. There, Aninat proposes to dialogue not only with the history of the daily habits of Guatemalan culture but also with the process of recording and conserving the historical memory of this culture.

The second part of the installation, *Biographical Notes*, is a book in which the artist draws inspiration from the universe of historical pieces in the Museum of the Ancient Book, in Antigua Guatemala, and also from the Mayan codices, achieving a fusion of divinatory calendars and divine notions on cosmology, astronomy and the prediction of natural phenomena. Aninat turns her attention to a future that is still being written.

Cecilia Vilela



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Notas biográficas (Bibliographical Notes), 2020

Book of painting in mixed technique based on collaborative work with the community of women from San Antonio, Guatemala

Photo: courtesy of the artist

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Libro abierto (Open Book), 2020

Oil, embroidery and pigments on intervened canvasses

Photo: Byron Mármol





Hellen Ascoli

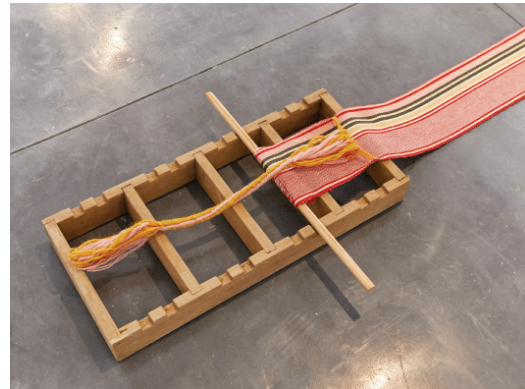
Guatemala | 1984

Manual work is a key element in the artistic practice of Hellen Ascoli since the sense of touch involves intimacy. One could say that she thinks with her hands. She sees herself as an artist, weaver and educator. Her interests focus on understanding culture from matter and affective relationships. From these analyses of the complex relationships between body, materials and space emerge maps of broader ties between power and economic systems.

As part of the project *Amanecí temprano para peinar el mundo* (*I Woke Up Early to Comb the World*, 2017) we see a series of photographs in which the artist's body is wrapped in a blue-grey fabric, woven from the width of her body multiplied by three. In one of the pieces, titled *Antena*, she intends that the body, wrapped in this fabric carapace, serves as a connection between heaven and earth in an embrace that she extends to the landscape of the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, Guatemala's highest mountains.

Her series *Cien Tierras (One Hundred Lands)*, 2021 focuses on the house as a space from which textiles emerge to tell us how an object can be approached from the body. Ascoli uses the structure of her house as a starting point for her looms. She takes the measurements of the walls with their windows and columns and weaves large canvases as if the house were a body for which she is fitting custom-made clothes. For the work *Con tierra / Sin tierra (With Land / Without Land)*, which is part of this series, she wove a piece that occupies the floor and then unravels in certain parts to weave braids, resting on her own foot as a loom structure. In each unravelled place, she deposits land from Guatemala and the United States, countries linked to her biography. This activity of weaving and unweaving works as an extension of her body linked to the lands she occupies.

Gabriel Rodríguez



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Con tierra / Sin tierra (With land / Without Land) from the series *Cien tierras (One Hundred Lands)*, 2021

Installation

Loom, cotton thread, earth and digital print on cotton paper

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol





Ana Teresa Barboza

Peru | 1981

Rafael Freyre

Peru | 1978

Ana Teresa Barboza's textiles simulate cross-sections of the earth's strata. Referencing the planet's millenary formations, the artist articulates landscape and textile to unite the ancestral time throughout all Native American cultures. The relationship with tradition also refers to a vision and intimate use of fabrics as skins that welcome us. In her textile installations, Barboza "strips bare" the weaving process, removing the thread from the two dimensions of the fabric so that it coexists with drawing, painting and different objects.

In recent projects, Barboza has worked with the architect Rafael Freyre, whose multidisciplinary practice utilises different expressions to seek to reconcile humans' relationship with nature. Their joint installations combine both artists' searches between textile and object to "undo the image"—the title of one of their collaborations. Another example is *Ecosistema del agua (Water Ecosystem)*, 2019, an installation that reproduces a water cycle, passing through micro-

sprinklers, textiles, stones and plants, ending with water that can be drunk by the public.

For the project, *El manto* (*The Mantle*), 2020, Barboza and Freyre have taken for their references some geographical and historical elements shared by Guatemala and Peru. The installation recreates a volcano, and from the crater, several waist looms emerge as lava. The work compares the force of the eruptions with the strength of the weaver's creative hands, and by extension, draws an analogy between the landscape and the communities and artisanal practices that inhabit it. The work was made in collaboration with a group of waist loom weavers from the locality of San Antonio, Aguascalientes.

GR



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El manto (*The Mantle*), 2020

Installation

Iron, textiles

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol

MICHIVO LESLIE HARRIS





Edgar Calel

Guatemala | 1987

The gestures and poetry to be found in Mayan-Kaqchikel traditions are given substance and are illustrated in Calel's work. Intangible elements like the scents of fruits and the sounds of birds can be starting points for his work. Conversations within his community or with his grandmother also spark the intangible gestures that he uses. His projects have expanded into exchanges with indigenous groups outside Guatemala, in countries like Brazil or Paraguay.

Ofrenda (Offering, Kobomanik, 2014—current) is a project that has travelled from Comalapa to different places. The stones used in the installation have lived with the Calel family for several generations. They can be perceived as altars of a sort, on which the artist places offerings of fruits and vegetables whose scent fills the room where they are exhibited. Each fruit and vegetable is cut open to show its inner colour, turning the work into a painting, into a

landscape in which one can appreciate the change in colour and smell as each specimen ripens.

For this biennial, Calel focussed on the wooden blocks used by pick-up trucks, one of the most common means of transport in Comalapa. These vehicles are usually overloaded with people, and on slopes, these blocks, or curbs are needed behind the tires to prevent trucks from rolling backwards. Calel sculpted his blocks out of wooden logs, drawing geometric designs around them that allude to the marks left by tires, associating them with the design of Mayan textiles. Thus, the author evokes the historical burdens imposed on traditions. Like logs, textiles also bear, carry and shoulder the weight.

GR



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Photo detail: Hugo Quinto

Transport of artwork: courtesy of the artist

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Rastros que dejamos sobre la cara de la tierra (Traces That We Leave On the Face of the Earth), 2021

Installation

Painting on canvas and wood sculptures

Dimensions variable

Photo: Hugo Quinto





Manuel Chavajay

Guatemala | 1982

Manuel Chavajay's work passes through two-dimensional, installation and audio-visual formats. As a Mayan-Tz'utujil artist, he has sought to build images, actions and objects that are poetic forms of denunciation and vindication of his culture. His personal history, like that of a large percentage of Guatemala's inhabitants, is marked by the violence of the armed conflict, of which he and his family were direct victims.

Like other indigenous artists of his generation, Chavajay sees contemporary art as a space for healing. His work refers to the wisdom of the practices and spirituality linked to the Mayan worldview; a deep connection with nature and the energy present in things, which reflect both a way of thinking and forms of life that have resisted despite the material and symbolic threats of the globalised world.

Chavajay presents the consequences of unfettered modernisation, using the objects themselves as if they were witnesses. For his installation *Retaal K'aslemaal* (Time Approaches Two Realities), he used objects found under Lake Atitlán, and from certain notions of archaeology he questions their precedence: possible offerings to the water mother or a canoe accident, says Chavajay, while imagining a woman using the pot, or a girl with the jar, or the fisherman who throws the stone to anchor himself. Sedimentation gave these pieces textures and colours, and here the artist makes a parallel between the changes caused by time on objects and the change caused by disease in our bodies in these times of canned foods and chemical dumps generated by the transnationals.

The work consists of 20 sculptures that combine the objects found with polyurethane and fibreglass masses to symbolise how ancient cultures are being devoured. Twenty is a significant number for the Tz'utujil: it is the Jun Winaq, the number of the totality, associated with the human being at full capacity, integrated with the cosmos.

Alexia Tala



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Retaal K'aslemaal, 2021

Installation

Mixed materials intervened with glass fibre and car paint

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol

Special thanks to:

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Josué Samol

Lorenzo Alfredo González González

Pedro Natanael Chavajay Cumatz





Detanico Laín

Brazil | 1974 and 1973

The artistic production of the Brazilian duo Detanico Laín (Angela Detánico and Rafael Laín) is notable for their combined training in design and semiotics. Their works, at once conceptual and poetic, have equally strong foundations in linguistics and drawing regarding the production of the image and in its meaning. With much research support, they explore references ranging from mathematics to literature. In many of their creations, they develop their own language systems: the text is translated into a new visual code and the message, initially organised in words, is turned into a visual and material composition.

In *Corpos Verdes (Green Bodies)*, 2020-2021, the artists create a visual communication system to represent extracts from the Popol Vuh, the founding narrative of the Quiché Mayan people, originally preserved by oral tradition and recorded in writing in the 16th century. The Popol Vuh addresses issues of a cultural, spiritual

and philosophical nature, and is today considered part of Guatemala's intangible cultural heritage.

In the system created by Detanico Laín, the letters of the alphabet are replaced by silhouettes of human bodies and the manuscript extracts are translated using a coding system that results only in graphic, non-verbal patterns. The artists propose to understand the body as a word, able to tell its own story, remember the past and record narratives. This singular alphabetical combination directs attention to the human body as a channel for transmitting ancestral knowledge. In addition, the use of the human figure as a symbol of this new alphabet places the body at the centre of the narrative quoted; in addition to aesthetics, it is an ethical question.

CV



waral chi q'equ'mal
chi aq'ab'al
xecha' k'ut
ta xena'ojinik
ta xeb'isonik
xeriqo kib'
xkikuc
ki tzij
ki na'oj

entre la oscuridad
en la aurora
dijeron entonces
cuando pensaron
cuando meditaron

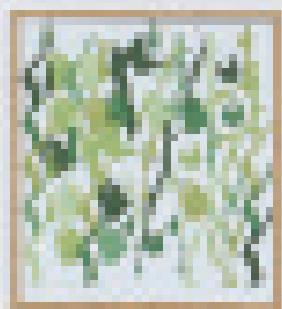
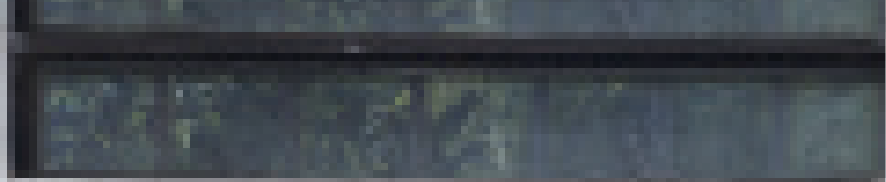
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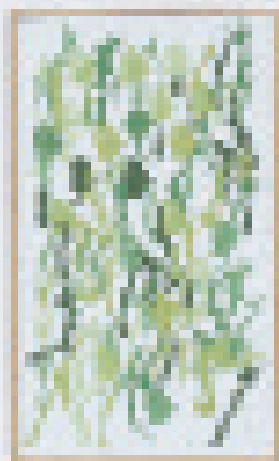
Corpos verdes (Green Bodies), 2020-2021

Digital print on cotton paper (extracts from the text of the *Popol Vuh*)

5 pieces (54 x 48 cm; 40 x 71 cm; 68,5 x 47 cm; 82 x 48 cm; 64 x 60 cm)

Photo: Byron Mármol





Ayrson Heráclito

Brazil | 1968

Wingston González

Guatemala | 1986

Contemporary art has chosen not only to recover the memory of the mystical but also to bring it into our time. This is a characteristic of Ayrson Heráclito's work. Focusing on Afro-Bahian culture, he brings an experience of recovery of its religiosity into the present day. From his perspective, art is not an exclusive terrain that is superior to or separate from the social fabric. Hence it can be a space to refer to the religious strength present in culture.

Heráclito's work involves a kind of advocacy using photographic or moving imagery. The artist confronts us with a series of situations that evoke the Bahian religious imaginary. Its ritualistic scenes, generally associated with cleansing and healing, embody past knowledge by blending resources that include the use of organic elements such as corn, dendé palm oil, and meat with the repetitive performance of certain actions.

It is noteworthy that the central relationship in Heráclito's work is between body and history. These become a starting point to explore the different kinds of violence that have a basis in slavery. His installation, *Ounagülei, mensajero de los ancestros* (*Ounagülei, Messenger of the Ancestors*) (2021), consists of a two-channel video and a display of photographs taken in northern Guatemala, in a region where two ships crewed by Africans headed for slavery were beached in the 17th century. The crews escaped their destiny of slavery and started an Afro-descendent community on the country's Caribbean coast (the Garifunas). Ounagülei is the messenger of the ancestors for the Garifuna community. This work contests the current context based on pre-established ideas of identity and territory on the continent.

AT



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Ounagülei, mensajero de los ancestros (*Ounagülei, Messenger of the Ancestors*), 2020-2021

Installation

Two-channel video

10 min

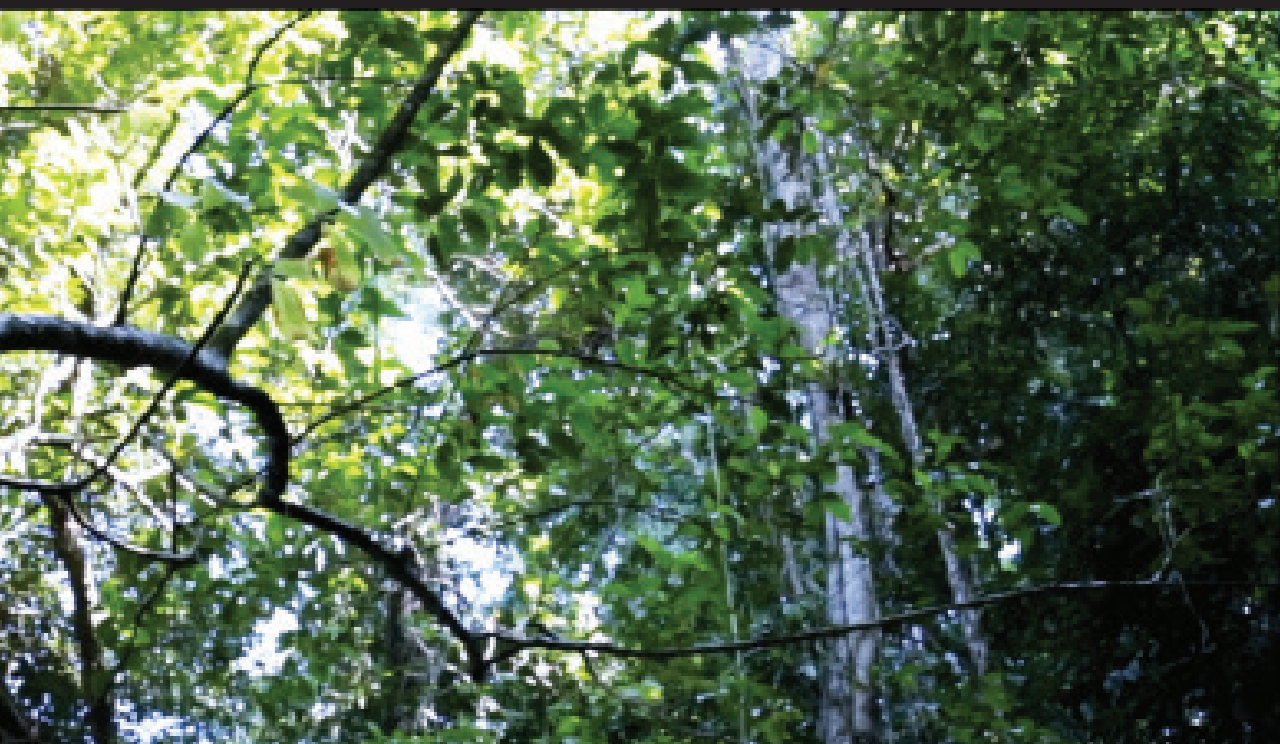
Three photographs printed on canvas

150 x 113 cm; 130 x 228 cm; 130 x 228 cm

Photo: courtesy of the artist









Diego Isaías Hernández Méndez

Guatemala | 1970

A popular Tz'utujil artist from San Marcos on Lake Atitlán, his extensive pictorial work reinforces the characteristic elements of traditional Guatemalan popular painting. At the same time, he has taken a highly individual path, bringing his own distinctive imagination to the canvas.

The scenes he portrays occur in places or settings where the daily activities and tasks of rural life—such as planting, harvesting and celebrations on the lakeshore—unfold in open country, in the market or at home. But something unifies them: a second frozen in time when the men, women, children and animals he depicts

are suddenly confronted by a natural disaster or the threat of imminent danger. The expressions and postures tell the story: eyes and open mouths, twisted bodies scattered around along with fruit, flowers, clothes, houses and dogs flying. Everything is jumbled up in a kind of tragicomic dance. Mystical elements typically appear (the sun, the clouds or undefined beings) announcing the presence of supernatural forces.

Taken together, the commotion seems to pit reality against the power of nature, whether it be the attack of a swarm of bees, rabid dogs, a volcano or a hurricane, as in *Destrucción del huracán Mitch en Guatemala* (*Destruction by Hurricane Mitch in Guatemala*, 2020), or *Gritos y llantos por una tormenta tropical en Guatemala* (*Shouts and Cries at a Tropical Storm in Guatemala*, 2020).

AT



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Destrucción del huracán Mitch en Guatemala (*Destruction by Hurricane Mitch in Guatemala*), 2020

Oil on canvas

137 x 91,5 cm

Photo: Byron Mármol

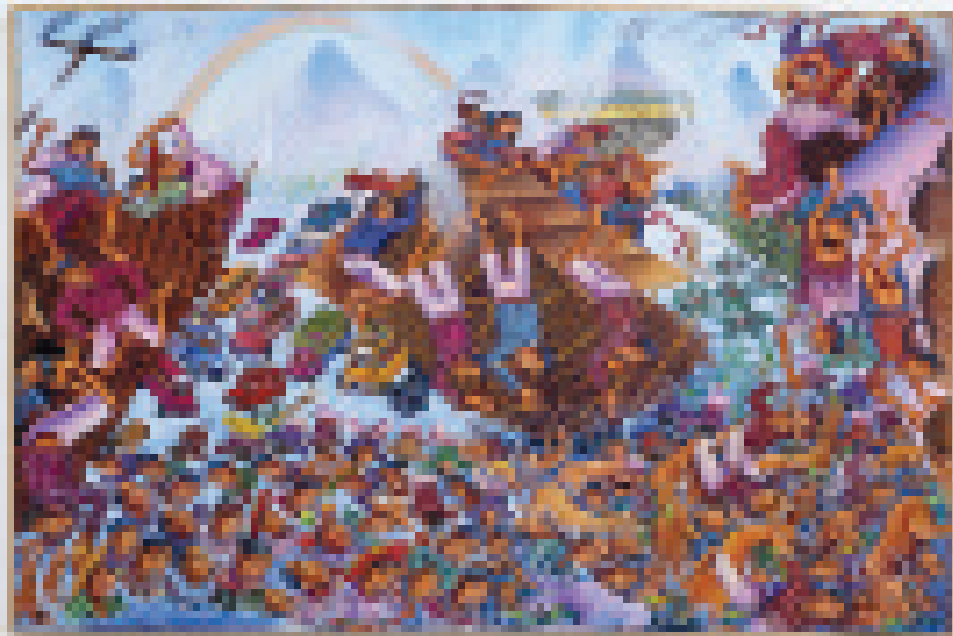
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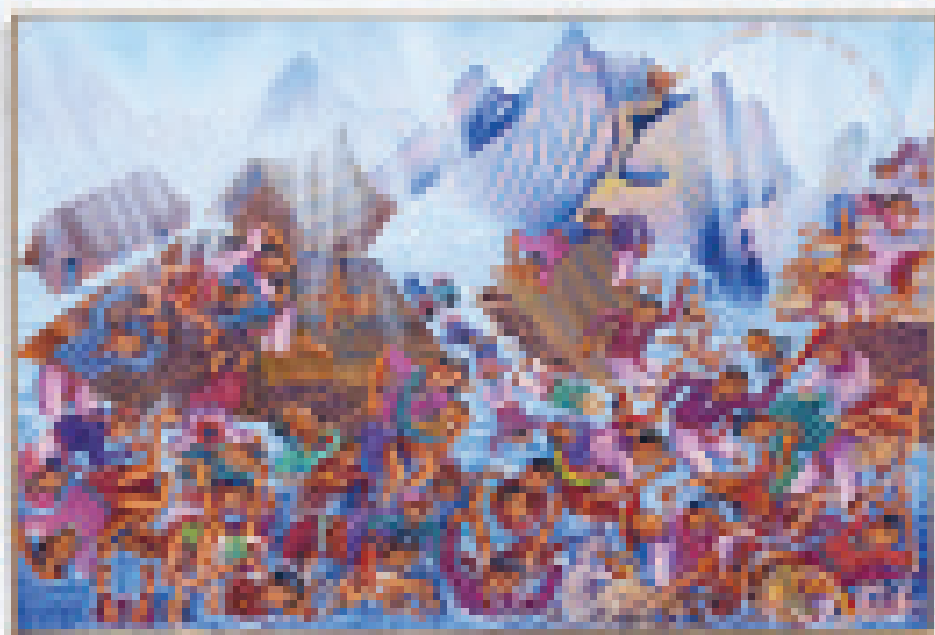
Gritos y llantos por una tormenta tropical en Guatemala (*Shouts and Cries at a Tropical Storm in Guatemala*), 2020

Oil on canvas

137 x 91,5 cm

Photo: Byron Mármol





Uriel Orlow

Switzerland | 1973

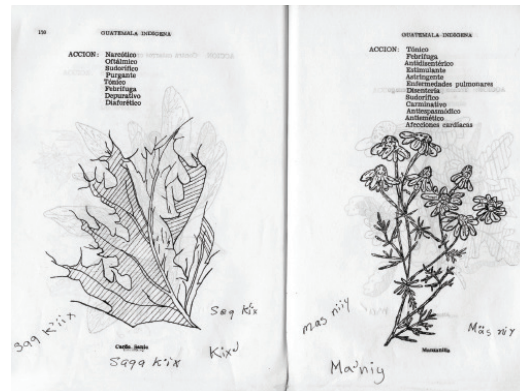
Uriel Orlow's investigations encompass long processes and are exhibited as multimedia installations. Many of his projects are based on micro-histories and search for ways to retell them in images. Collecting historical data, archival material and testimonies, his work moves between the indeterminate and the poetic.

Orlow is interested in unofficial histories, such as *The Short and the Long of It* (2010-2012). In 1967, at the outbreak of the Six-Day War between Israel and Egypt, Jordan and Syria, a group of ships was stranded in the Suez Canal and they were unable to leave the canal until 1975. During those eight years, at the height of the Cold War, the ships' crews left behind their different political loyalties to create a new social system, even celebrating their own Olympic games in 1968. The video *Yellow Limbo*, which is part of this project, takes as its reference archive film and photographic material, which is spliced with the artist's own filming, in which he makes the sea into

the protagonist of a diagonal memory through time.

For his present project, *Cómo se llamaban las plantas antes de que tuvieran nombre* (*What Plants Were Called Before They Had a Name*, Guatemala, 2020-2021), Orlow has taken as a resource the anecdotes of various indigenous spiritual guides of the Guatemalan Highlands, combined with his interest in ethnobotany as a way of recovering memory. The artist found a publication on medicinal plants published in the 1970s by the Indigenous Institute of Guatemala, written in Spanish. This triggered a series of reflections on the loss of indigenous languages and its negative impact on cultural diversity. The project seeks to make this publication accessible in indigenous languages by compiling in a series of interviews the names of the plants in the language spoken by each Mayan guide and herbalist together with their life stories.

GR



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Production process photographs: Courtesy of the artist

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Cómo se llamaban las plantas antes de que tuvieran nombre (*What Plants Were Called Before They Had a Name*) (Guatemala), 2020-2021

Installation

Single-channel video and 12 retro projectors

Dimensions variable

Photo: Hugo Quinto

Project sponsored by Pro Helvetia





Antonio Pichillá

Guatemala | 1982

Antonio Pichillá's work is intimately linked to the Maya-Tz'utujil culture to which he belongs, and which he evokes in different elements that speak of inherited ancestral knowledge, including textile art. In his designs and artistic practice, he aims to transmit the cultural density of the textile tradition he learned from his family. By varying the possibilities of patterns and knots, the artist refers to the worldview surrounding the daily life of San Pedro la Laguna's inhabitants.

Pichillá recreates the apparently abstract language of looms in paintings/fabrics/figures that are enlarged, scaled-down and transformed in different ways. He uses threads to "paint" designs that reproduce common patterns in the clothes or fabrics used by the community. Apart from textiles, with which he has experimented in both two-dimensional formats and installations, he also works with a series of sacred objects like glyphs and looms, which he assembles to

enhance their presence as objects and uses at other moments as an important part of his videos.

In the installation *Viento (Wind)*, 2020) Pichillá, working with his mother, creates a textile embroidered with the symbol for wind, which he installs by hanging from the ceiling. Here the limits of perception are expanded so that the textile can be interpreted as a complete experience that seeks to depict the Tz'utujil historical and cultural framework while making us see textile-making practices as repositories of an extended memory from which we need to rethink our present. Pichillá's work invites us to reflect on how important symbols of cultural heritage are, and what culture reveals in time, not only as it is built, but in the history that precedes it.

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Production process photographs

Antonio Pichillá Quiacaín and Clara Quiacaín

Courtesy of the artist

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Viento (Wind), 2020

Installation

Loom, wool, rope and tree trunk

450 x 300 cm

Photo: Byron Mármol





Óscar Santillán

Ecuador | 1980

Elimo Eliseo

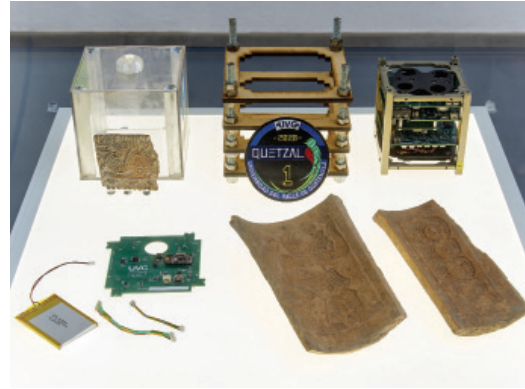
Guatemala | 1975

Cybernaut, artist, and science fiction fan, Oscar Santillán spans disciplines as far apart as scientific experimentation and ancestral legend, which he is able to combine intuitively. His off-key scientific interests lead him to discover quasi-alchemical ways of conceiving sculptures.

The project that Santillán conceived in Guatemala, *La sombra misma del cielo* (*The Very Shadow of the Sky*, 2019-2021), is based on the Aztec deity Quetzalcoatl (the Mayan's Kulkulkán, in Quiché mythology, known as Gucumatz). Santillán proposes a dialogue between archaeological pieces and fragments from the prototype of the Satellite Quetzal 1. The prototype's parts include a dimensions calibrator, a satellite simulator, a battery, solar panel plates, a prototype take-off system, a circuit board from the control system and altitude estimator, a basic prototype for carrying out tests, a transport box and cables and replicas from the interior and exterior of the satellite, apart from the insignia badge.

The assembly is complemented by six archaeological pieces. There are two bowls, one decorated in relief with a celestial bird, plants and details of snakes, and the other with plumed serpent designs. We also see a yoke decorated at both ends with the heads of a bicephalous serpent. Two fragments of a mould used to make vases can be observed, with the image of a monkey and a cord or a snake entwined vertically, and a rectangular seal with the design of a plumed serpent or reptile surrounded by circles and rectangles with feathers. Apart from the vase mould, which is from the late classical period, all the pieces are from the classical period. The seal, the yoke and the dark bowl are from the highlands, the adornment and light-coloured bowl from the lowlands, while the mould comes from the Pacific coast.

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Oscar Santillán

La sombra misma del cielo (The Very Shadow of the Sky), 2019-2021

Installation

Fragments of satellite and archaeological pieces

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol

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Oscar Santillán y Elimo Eliseo

La cuarta creación (The Fourth Creation), 2019-2021

Video

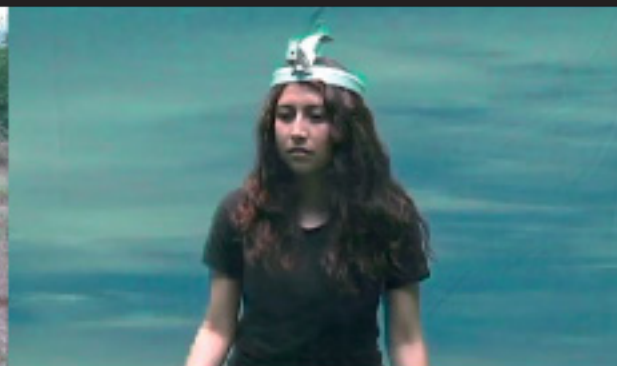
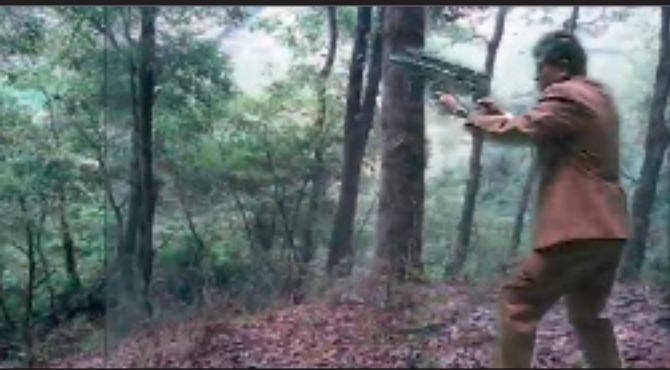
Video stills: courtesy of the artists

Project sponsored by Mondriaan Fonds

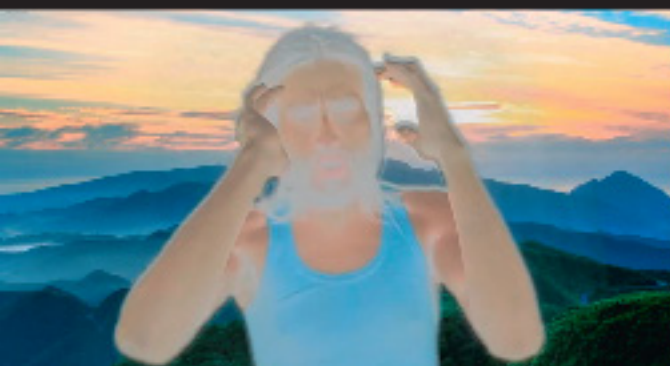








**KINICH
COMPLETED**



Angélica Serech

Guatemala | 1982

Using materials like maguey, corn husks, cotton, recycled threads, fabrics and other natural fibres, Angelica Serech creates textiles in an intuitive search in which she combines designs with different types of contrasting knots, colours and textures. Her textiles are accumulations that start from loom frames made from natural branches, suggesting fruit that is born on the tree. These compositions are abstract landscapes that respond to the ancestral textile tradition of the Guatemalan highlands but experiment with the usual themes, which sets them apart.

Serech combines the textile and landscape painting traditions of Comalapa in fabrics that recall her surroundings and everyday life. In dialogue, too, with culinary traditions, she converts corn husks and palm into fibre to highlight their pictorial and tactile qualities. By using different methods of tying, Serech achieves sculptural constructions

that suggest a relationship with the mountainous landscape and its three-dimensional quality.

For her project *Mi historia en nudos, al dorso de mi güipil* (*My Story in Knots, on the Back of My Güipil*, 2021), the artist seeks to accumulate in a single fabric the different experiments that she has been introducing into her work for years. It is a piece that condenses retrospectively every tying method she has used—in other words, her textile memory. In this work, past and present come together in an experimental textile that incorporates ancestral and present-day techniques without distinction. Serech proposes a change in traditional textiles by fashioning a monochromatic fabric that includes only earth tones, evoking in its folds the earth, its mountains and topography.

GR



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Mi historia en nudos, al dorso de mi güipil (*My History in Knots, on the Back of My Güipil*), 2021

Weaving on waist loom, woven and brocaded with cotton thread

400 x 200 cm

Photo: Byron Mármol





Pablo Vargas Lugo

Mexico | 1968

Pablo Vargas combines in his installations elements, languages and measurement systems from archaeology, astronomy and cartography. Taking features of pre-Hispanic culture, natural or astronomical phenomena, he generates compositions from milestones and calculations. His work transmits his sensitivity to them, viewed for their poetic qualities. Butterflies, codices, eclipses of the sun, pyramids, etc... Vargas Lugo quotes or re-reads them to create visual experiences that blend the conceptual with the poetic.

Near the Guatemalan border with Belize is *Naj Tunich*, a network of caves that contain the largest number of cave paintings from the late Classic Mayan period and, therefore, is of great value to humanity. This place gives its name to the installation Vargas Lugo presents at this biennial. In these caves, which have been closed for conservation for more than 30 years, Vargas Lugo discovers the images painted on the rock through artifice and colourful lights.

Ancient and modern science coexist in their visual language, abstract only in appearance since hidden in it are motifs that refer to the beauty of codes, magic, stillness and pause.

Discovering the Mayan imagery and the spaces of this mystical site is an enigmatic experience. At times we lose a sense of the scale of the place, and we only realise the size of the caverns when a human figure appears, or a light reveals its depths to us. The audio accompanies us with the constant sound of breathing, interrupted by a flute that accentuates certain passages, until we reach the exit of this ancient space buried in the jungle of the Petén, as alive as the symphony of the fauna that inhabits the area.

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Video stills: courtesy of the artist

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Naj Tunich, 2018

Video

34 min 37 s

Photography: Rafael Ortega

Editing: Alfonso Cornejo

Sound editing: Juan Cristóbal Cerrillo

Drawings in adhesive vinyl

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol





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pasts. eternal. futures.

Glossary

Abundance

Abundance brings with it the idea of consumption and accumulation. Since ancient times, many cultures have tried to accumulate certain resources such as precious metals and minerals, giving them material value. Later, these would turn into the equivalents of capital accumulation.

The urge to accumulate goods and resources in the colonies has even become a way of thinking. After several centuries, the search for economic abundance has permeated societies and minds to such an extent that in some cases it has solidified into the only way of thinking.

In the 1980s, these ideas eventually led to an apparent disappearance of national borders, but solely for the free market, not for the free circulation of people. As a consequence of inequalities, migration is ever more restricted while the globalisation of products is achieved without great problems, thanks to free trade treaties. Perhaps what is needed are treaties of free migration.

In this prevailing inequality between the North and the Global South, we find the economic transaction projects of Aníbal López, which strip bare this entire system of dispossession that results from the search for abundance at any cost. Money is presented as a power that corrupts. It can put a price on any person, to turn them into an object of exchange and to convert any action into a commodity if it can become a source of profit.

There are also other kinds of abundance, for example, of affection, of skills, of knowledge and of experience, that in reality are the opposite of the meaning given above.

Before

Memory always refers to a before. In the Andean language Quechua, the word “past” also means “eyes”. Eyes help us not to stumble, which is why they look to the front. Thus, what we see is already past. What has already passed is in front of us.

Perhaps, instead of the past, we might speak of pasts, since cultural configurations have been different for each society, and every now and then they clash. An example is the Spanish invasion of what was thought to be the East Indies, which, of all its misfortunes, generated a clash between different times, a dissonance of rhythms. Here, rhythms went at a very different beat to the acceleration (“civilisation”) to which they were subjected.

When two histories clash and one is subjected to the other, there is a distortion of those pasts, as there is an attempt to convert them into a single History. Those pasts that looked to the front did not possess in their know-how the notion of the future because their gaze did not discard the before.

The work of Benvenuto Chavajay turns those eyes that we have in front to examine those different stumbles, those different kinds of dispossession suffered by the native populations of these lands named Quauhtlemallan in Náhuatl by the Spaniards who arrived in the 16th century—before they were known as Iximulew (Land of Corn). Chavajay proposes that we review these ways of naming things by problematising, scrutinising and dismantling those pasts imposed by foreign names who decided that it would no longer be the Land of Corn, but Guatemala.

Mathematical theory tells us that the flutter of a butterfly in Japan can cause a hurricane in the Caribbean. In the opposition between civilisation and barbarism, there is an idea of the first as order and of the second as chaos. The word “barbarian”, used by the Romans for the Germanic tribes the Goths, was adapted to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of the so-called East Indies. These divisions between order and chaos are converted into sociological axes.

Chaos

According to the archipelagian thought of Édouard Glissant, we can make this “chaos” our own and resist the continental tradition. For the European genealogical tradition, we can substitute thinking that embraces all the histories of the Atlantic in place of a centre, and that takes the diaspora and all its variants into consideration.

Conflict

Race would be no problem if it were not used to denote hierarchies. From these ideas of hierarchy, domination and oppression spring the different conflicts that arise as soon as race is made into a form of social organisation. Whiteness begins to be taken as a model of self-improvement that one must aspire to. Conflicts result as soon as someone intervenes in what the other person must wish for. Domination also manifests itself in other organisational principles such as binary gender, monogamy through marriage, castes, monotheism over polytheism, and private property over communal land. These mandates are focussed on capital as the organising principle. These conflicts inherited from colonisation have mutated into the rhetoric of political speeches in which the imposed idea of the nation-state still drags ballast from the past. In Nelson Makengo's videos, these speeches, heavy with cynicism in their country of origin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are parodied, overlapped and questioned. Republic and democracy are two ideals that have been described on paper as the ideal forms of coexistence and government, but in the "young" nations of the Global South, they have proved problematic for the same reason, that they are tied to hierarchies of race, class and gender.

Synonym: honour. Dignity can be socialised as a way of considering. Were the conditions in which each person grows up considered, we would often be able to understand their actions, their ways of conducting themselves in life.

Dignity

Dignity is a way of defining more accurately the title of this biennial: *lost. in the middle. together.* In this ocean of uncertainties, we are left with being together, with taking one another into consideration.

Maya Saravia's projects begin with dignification. She is seduced by dance, which apart from being a body in movement, is also a process to understand the history of peoples.

Dream

A dream is a hallucination that occurs when the brain is asleep. For many years, these images have been perceived as premonitions of the future, as sources of advice, as omens.

Dreams are whispers from the unconscious, access to another side of life, hence their symbolic character. Marshall McLuhan argued in *Understanding the Media* that psychology, by beginning to investigate the unconscious, facilitated an encounter between Western thought and a tribal past. As if it were an activity of nostalgia, the unconscious was rediscovered, now from psychoanalysis, once again giving it a vocation as a signifier.

Another meaning of dreams is associated with the notions of future and hope. One thinks: I dream of this, I yearn for that, I want this, I desire that...Dreams accompany migrants in their search for a better life

Identities

A fiction that bodies subscribe to. There are racial identities that are imposed to segregate and justify hierarchies. Political identity is a form of social identity. People join a group fighting against some form of power in search of support, of identification.

Political identities have been adopted as forms of resistance since the second half of the 20th century until today. The process of *racialisation* applied to indigenous people and Afro-descendants is reversed when these identities are declared to lay bare the structures of power.

Marginality

Outside of power systems, there are always people excluded. Exclusion is always associated with not fitting into a social, economic, gender or race model. In Paz Errázuriz's photographic projects we can find everyday expressions of life at the margins, and of the communities built around a dissident identity. Dissidence is an expression of this alterity that is celebrated at the margins as a reaffirmation of life decisions.

Mixture

Within the processes of colonisation and segregation, identities were created. In Latin America, the differentiation was thought up between Europeans and the indigenous. In Africa, the same happened between Europeans and slaves. As part of this process, these Others began to emerge, born from mixed unions. After a few centuries, the Spaniards came to classify these mixtures into castes: *mestizos, mulatos, zambos, moriscos, castizos, lobos, jíbaros*, etc. Like the race-class-gender triad, this caste system aimed to organise societies to avoid uprisings or rebellions and to maintain control over the Other. By the 18th century, we can find this system illustrated in sixteen race combinations. Of these, probably the most conflictive for power were those that involved Spanish women. For the colonists, the white woman's body represented the perpetuation of the race so that any mixture would supposedly weaken this inheritance both economically and in the ownership of land. On this theme, Naomi Rincón Gallardo invents *mestizo* mythologies that revise past and present histories. Her videos aim at so-called neo-colonialisms which she besieges with invocations and harasses with spells.

Mythologies

Mythologies are defined as a collection of stories, myths and legends that on some occasions recount the origins of a people or a social group. So, mythologies are used to narrate origins. As Humberto Ak'abal writes in his book *Cosmogonía, la cruz maya*, *cosmogonic myths* tell a story about the origin of the world. *Theogonic myths* tell of the origin of the gods, of their birth. *Aetiological myths* give a reason for the existence of something. *Anthropogenic myths* tell of the appearance of people. In many traditions, we find *moral myths*, which explain to us good and bad. *Foundational myths* tell why, how and when a people was established and cities were founded. Finally, *eschatological myths* announce the future and the end of the world.

Times

For the word "tiempo" (Spanish for time, weather) the first results of Google search refer to the state of the weather. Why do we refer to the weather as time? If the weather is good, we celebrate. If the weather is bad, we complain.

Perhaps counting time and associating it with changes in the weather has been important because it has to do with survival, with the cycles of sowing and harvesting. Time is measured as a way of putting life together and hitching ourselves to the long orbit of the Earth around the Sun.

The Mayans have always been great time tellers, precise and meticulous because they have learned that understanding cycles means understanding the regeneration of life in general.

Voices

It is said that the voice, in ancestral times before language emerged, was very high in volume, that its echo travelled much further than that of our voices today.

As a form of knowledge transmission, the oral tradition has often been underestimated by Western thought, which gives precedence to the printed text and the rule of Reason.

Voices are stores of knowledge, guardians of millennial stories. Vowels and consonants belong to this living library in our memory, which with the air from our lungs, goes out into the world with the help of our tongue.

Benvenuto Chavajay

Guatemala | 1978

Through his work, Benvenuto Chavajay has sought to denounce the different forms of colonial violence in concrete and allegorical reactions to what his culture has endured for centuries. Although his Tz'utujil origins and personal history permeate his work, he extrapolates from his position to all of the continent's indigenous cultures.

Chavajay works with the Mayan cosmogony, asserting and referencing it in narratives and poetics that are often associated with the land, with rubber and with elements like corn. One of the main currents in his work is language and the violence done to it by the historical actions of Hispanization. These actions have been naturalised in contexts such as Guatemala, where they are part of the deep colonial wound inflicted by racist and segregationist Western "reason". Several of his works aspire, then, to restore and "give voice to" the

objects of that wound, looking for the traces of modern Western thought even in everyday things.

In 1876, in San Pedro de Sacatepéquez, Government Decree 165 was enacted, with the purpose of turning the indigenous population into *ladinos*. The decree offered indigenous people land in exchange for their dignity: they must stop speaking their language, no longer wear their typical costumes or transmit their Mayan knowledge and cosmogony to their descendants. In the work commissioned for this biennial, entitled *Ladino by Decree* (2020-2021) the artist is ironically portrayed by a “ladino” painter from San Juan de Sacatepéquez. His indigenous features and colouring have been exchanged for blond hair and blue eyes, in an expression of disgust at these ladino-creating techniques. A cross-stitch embroidery from the original decree accompanies the painting, metaphorically emphasising this historic ethnic whitening.

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Ladino por decreto (Ladino by Decree), 2020-2021

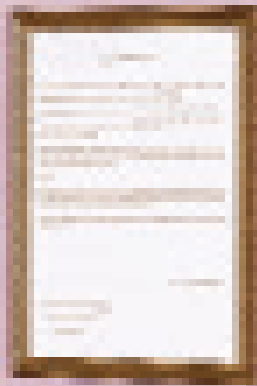
Embroidered by Rosa Mendoza (Sololá), 91.5 x 61 cm

Painting in cloth by Jorge Mazariegos (San Pedro Sacatepéquez), 61 x 51 cm

Photography by Josué Navichoc (San Pedro La Laguna, Sololá), 105 x 70 cm (ed. 3 y 2 PA)

Photo: Byron Mármol





Emo de Medeiros

Benín - France | 1979

Contextures is the term Emo de Medeiros uses to define his practice as an artist. It refers to looking at objects as moving interrelationships of their component elements. From their contextures, the ethnic, social, cultural, technological and historical contexts of contemporary art spaces are questioned, transgressed and united. Combining different media, Medeiros includes rituals, texts, paintings, pixels or fabrics in a *continuum* of materials, concepts and practices. *Mestizaje*, remix, do-it-yourself and random elements are important ideas in his work. The participation and interaction of groups, artisans and the public itself is important in completing the pieces.

Kaleta/Kaleta (2014-2017) is a project involving music, video and performance in a cross-cultural hybrid sparked by globalisation. The dancing participants do not communicate with each other except through gestures, and they only respond to the name Kaleta. They act as a collective. The percussion accompanying the piece uses recycled materials (cans, buckets and metal parts). The word *Kaleta* originates from a tradition that began in Ouidah, Benin, on the arrival in the 19th century of freed Afro-Brazilian slaves. The port of Ouidah was one of the main export centres for African slaves to Bahía in Brazil until slavery was abolished in the 19th century. *Kaleta/Kaleta* mixes the traditions of Beninese dance, called Zangbeto, with those of Brazilian Carnival and American Halloween. The group of dancers goes from house to house, hoping for tips in reward for their performance.

GR



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Making of photographs
Courtesy of the artist

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Kaleta/Kaleta, 2014-2017
Video installation in three channels
Photo: Byron Mármol





Jessica Kairé

Guatemala | 1980

Jessica Kairé's work alternates between sculpture, performance, food, and participatory works. Issues she explores range from gender questions and violence in Guatemala and the rest of Latin America to tropicalism, underdevelopment and her Jewish ancestry. Interaction with the public has been a feature in several of her projects.

The *Comfort series* (2008) has moved through contemplative and participatory sculptures. One of these works, *Comfort, Transitional Objects*, was commissioned for the *Horror Vacui* exhibit, a part of the exhibition *Disappeared*, a show that documented forced disappearances in Latin America. Kairé offered the visitor a soft object to put on as an embrace while following the route of the exhibition. She sought to give comfort in sculpture to those contemplating political violence.

In the *Tasting series* (2014-2015) she has sculpted with chocolate and bread, using moulds taken from architectural fragments "to savour them". Both the history of colonial architecture in Guatemala,

as well as Sephardic architecture can be tasted with the tongue, in an anthropophagic act of absorbing cultural legacies.

In 2020, Kairé began a collection of *Foldable monuments* that continue with her reflection on history and its weight, or in this case its lightness. The monuments are sculpted with cloth and remain creased on the floor until several participants decide to activate the suspended sculpture by tugging on the pulleys that the artist leaves visible, lifting and animating the monument. Do public monuments actually represent us? Or are they simply coffins of past events? Kairé revisits their validity, their presence and above all, their obsolescence in today's world.

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Monumento plegable (Monumento a Juan Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán) Foldable Monument (Monument to Juan Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán), 2021

Doblá/desdoblá un monumento (Monumento a la revolución de 1944) (Fold/Unfold a Monument (Monument to the Revolution of 1944), 2021

Newspaper

23 x 30,5 cm, ed. 3 + 2 PA

Photo: Byron Mármol

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Monumento plegable (Monumento a Juan Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán) Foldable Monument (Monument to Juan Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán), 2021

Highly recycled cotton canvas, cotton tapes, thread and shelf

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol

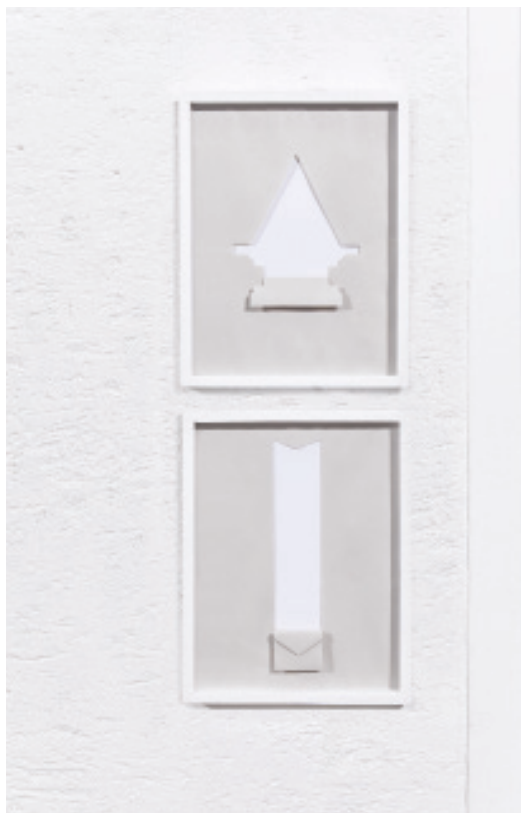
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Monumento plegable (Monumento a la revolución de 1944) (Fold/Unfold a Monument (Monument to the Revolution of 1944), 2020

Highly recycled cotton canvas, cotton tapes, thread and shelf

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol







Vanderlei Lopes

Brazil | 1973

Interested in phenomena involving the transformation of matter, Vanderlei Lópes addresses notions of permanence and mutability. His works reflect a mixture of different cultural elements that are always inspiring his artistic procedure. His continuous movement through media and techniques and the changes he submits his materials to put his artistic production constantly to the test and permeate his approach to the artistic object. Lopes veers between fiction and reality and construction and deconstruction, reflecting on how certain notions of social construction in the contemporary world are seen.

His most recent series, *Newspapers* (2019-2020) consists of bronze sculptures painted in gouache that reproduce press articles with their respective images. The installation of newspapers that he presents in the biennial questions the immediacy of information in the present, and what the newspaper represents as a material in disuse in an increasingly digitised society. It is a discourse of contrary

positions if we consider the durability and longevity of bronze compared to the obsolescence of the newspaper as a news provider. We are ever more immersed in a culture of immediacy, one that is quick to discard and replace.

These works are presented to us as signs of seemingly incipient chaos, one in which the different political models and social and environmental issues are in deep crisis, showing no sign of solution, nor even of allowing us to glimpse a vision of the future. We could say that this installation interprets the news event as a waste product, and in this sense, is an allegory about contemporary society.

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From the series *Newspapers*, 2019-2020
Six sculptures in bronze and gouache
Dimensions variable
Photo: Byron Mármol



**La
Democracia
es un
Mito.**

Tenemos un gran pasado
por delante



Nelson Makengo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo | 1990

In his artistic practice, Nelson Makengo questions the different political discourses that have become part of the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). He shows how these discourses have really appeared in practice from a perspective in which democracy and dictatorship emerge as two concepts whose meaning remains ambiguous in his country. The artist means not only to throw light on the current realities of Africa but to challenge outsiders' view of the continent, questioning how dominant discourses enter and mutate in a globalised society.

In his work, stories emerge whose function is to illustrate the problematics of the DRC even after independence, by connecting historical events, political discourses and the influence of the latter on Congolese society. In his videos, he places real and fictitious personalities in ruined and derelict settings to show the fictions that power has installed over time. In short, it is as if through his

works he seeks to create a visual archaeology of his history, his city, his country, his continent.

In the film *E'ville*, Makengo takes us on a tour of the installations of a partially abandoned mining company called AGK, located in Lubumbashi (known as E'ville before the DRC's independence). The images of the mining company, symbolic of the relationship between work and exploitation, confront us with political and social history. They present a terribly private and personal narrative: the images of the decaying ruins accompany audio of the last letter that Patrice Lumumba wrote to his wife before his assassination in that very spot. Lumumba was the leader of Congolese independence against the Belgian colonial power.

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Making of photographs
Courtesy of the artist

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E'ville, 2018
Video
12 min 20 s
Courtesy of the artist





Andrea Monroy

Guatemala | 1981

Monroy thinks of art as a space for communication, for a quest, for an opportunity to show the richness, complexity and dense historical and artistic content of Mayan textiles. In this sense, her work reflects her biography and is linked to her status as an inhabitant of a territory that keeps its ancestral heritage alive and which she wants, as she says, “to be seen not as south, less as north, but as centre”.

The technical and symbolic qualities of the textile tradition are the focus of her research, which she pursues in installations, embroidery and interventions that allow her to also address issues related to her own identity, that of indigenous communities, as well as violence against women. At the centre of her research is the güipil, one of the most complex garments of Mayan culture. Its figures, patterns, colours, shapes and modes of creation have been transmitted by generations of indigenous women until today. The artist celebrates it as a material synthesis of the Mayan worldview. In her works, she deconstructs the textile into forms and processes, embodying the

practice as if it were an act of writing, and taking it to a conceptual level. She has also used textile embroidery in her work as a banner for denouncing violence against women.

In *Juxtapositions* (2021), by fashioning different textiles Monroy seeks to compare how certain elements govern the cosmos in Mayan culture—such as the Sun on its path, the Moon, the stars and the cardinal points—with the symbolism of her own Christian religious practice—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Her work has a mystical element that brings universal questions about our existence into the present day. In the second room of her exhibition, in the work called *Interacciones* (2021), she performs experimental exercises using a winder, the basic tool used to wind thread into a ball. One must access Monroy's work as if one wanted to enter a vision of the universe, understanding weaving as a manual activity that parallels the creation of the cosmos.

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Photo: Juan Carlos Mencos
Courtesy of Galería Extra

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Yuxtaposiciones (Juxtapositions), 2021

Installation

Fabric panels

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol

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Interacciones (Interactions), 2021

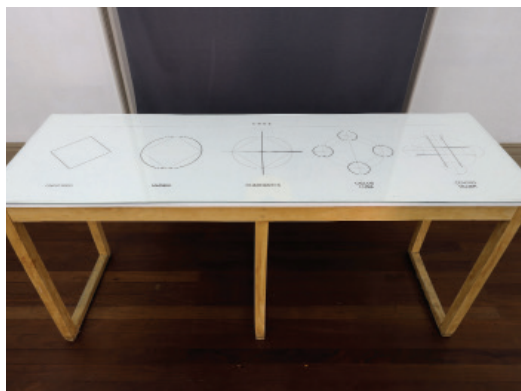
Installation

Four wooden winders

Dimensions variable

Photo: Juan Carlos Mencos

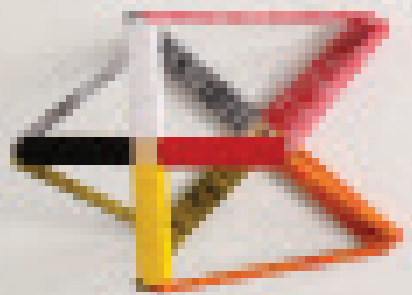
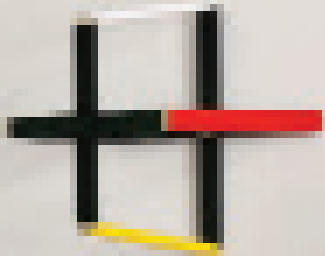
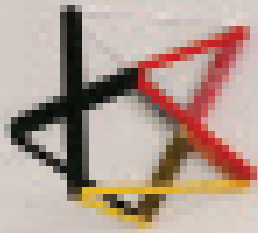
Courtesy of Galería Extra











Alejandro Paz

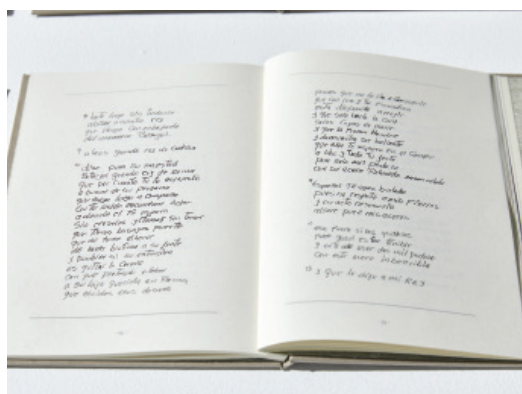
Guatemala | 1975

Alejandro Paz's work moves between art and architecture. Initially, it focused on analysing the political, social and cultural conditions of Guatemala through actions that highlighted tensions arising from inequality, racism and power relations. In another facet of his work, he has explored the relationship between drawing and architecture in works like *Migrations* (2008), which illustrates the journey of a migrant from Guatemala to the United States. A continuous black line is drawn on the showroom's walls, floor, and ceilings, at a scale of 1: 1000, creating a kind of nest or cage that captures this human drama in spatial terms.

El rey Fernando y Botargel (*King Fernando and Botargel*) is a project in progress consisting of video projections and a book with the script of a present-day adaptation of the colonial dance "El español". Popularly known as the "dance of Moors and Christians", it is still performed in Guatemalan tradition by local theatre-dance

groups known as *cofradías*. In an immersive experience, Paz's work breaks this theatre-dance down into parts. We see two dancers/actors without disguise dancing in the place where they rehearse, repeating their dialogue and clashing their sticks (swords) in a fight/dance. This exercise explores the identity constructions and power relations inherited from the colonial past and Christianity as a form of indoctrination. The book includes a transcription by hand of the prayer (sung) of Juan Toj, one of the dancers. The cover design nods to the Guatemalan army's pamphlets that were used as a tool for propaganda and intimidation against subversive dissidents (the guerrilla) during the internal armed conflict. Paz draws an analogy between different forms of indoctrination in different eras of Guatemalan history.

GR



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El rey Fernando y Botargel (King Fernando and Botargel), 2021

Printed publication, ed. 100

16 x 20.5 x 1.5 cm

Illustration by Alberto Rodríguez Collía

Photo: Byron Mármol

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El rey Fernando y Botargel (King Fernando and Botargel), 2021

Video installation

10 min 55 s; 11 min 18 s

Courtesy of the artist

With the participation of:

Fernando Pirir, Hector Yoc and Juan Toj

Special thanks to:

Juan Toj and Paiz Art Biennial

Camera and editing: Pablo Valladares

Sound: Eduardo Cáceres

Publication design:

Alberto Rodríguez Collía and Alejandro Paz

Illustration: Alberto Rodríguez Collía





Oscar Perén

Guatemala | 1975

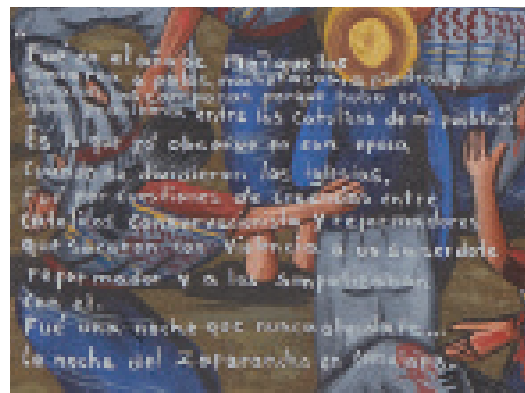
Within the landscape painting of the Guatemalan *Altiplano*, a pre-eminent figure is Oscar Perén, of Kaqchikel origin, who has participated in three previous editions of the Paiz Art Biennial. Since his childhood, he has documented his everyday life and the traditions of his people. His canvases are replete with elements ranging from oral tradition, especially his father's anecdotes and the legends of Comalapa, to the historical events of the country. Each painting is accompanied by a short description of its conception.

In 1962, Perén began his training at the school of Andrés Curruchich, a renowned artist of the Comalapa folk tradition. His paintings of the inside of buses—a recurring theme based on experiences of his daily journeys—made him famous for the novel perspective and composition in the arrangement of the characters.

His interest in stories told and his own experiences have also led him to picture violent events. Such is the case of *La noche del*

zafarrancho (*The Night All Hell Broke Loose*, 2019), about a pitched battle in 1967 between conservative and reformist Catholics, which Perén remembers and paints as a way to exorcise this trauma. In *La Cárcel* (*The Prison*, 2019), he contrasts a personal story from 1987 with the situation of the country at war. The artist is jailed for drinking on a Monday. He and other prisoners decide to get drunk and sing accompanied by a guitar. The meeting turns into a kind of farewell for some who were forcibly disappeared.

GR



Page 163
Chi'q'aa!, 2010
 Oil on canvas
 60 x 81 cm
 Private collection
 Photo: Byron Mármol

Page 163
La noche del zafarrancho (*The Night All Hell Broke Loose*), 2019
 Oil on canvas
 60 x 81 cm
 Private collection
 Photo: Byron Mármol

Page 164
La cárcel (*The Prison*), 2019
 Oil on canvas
 60 x 81 cm
 Private collection
 Photo: Byron Mármol

Page 164
Secuestros, incendios y asesinatos en Comalapa (*Kidnappings, Fires and Murders in Comalapa*), 2019
 Oil on canvas
 60 x 81 cm
 Private collection
 Photo: Byron Mármol



Naomi Rincón Gallardo*

Mexico | 1979

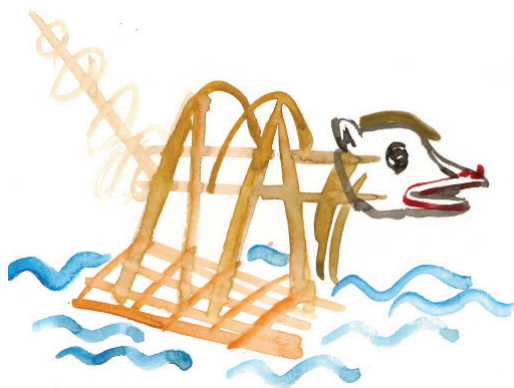
Naomi Rincón Gallardo produces videos and installations that are a mixture of tradition and fiction, moving between the universes of ancestral culture and futuristic utopia. The artist, who lives and works in Mexico City, is a member of the feminist collective Invasorix and also a teacher and researcher in areas such as decolonialism, intersectional feminism and queer theory.

Tlacuache Resilience (2019) is a fable whose characters interact in a hybrid temporality: the time of the world's creation and the present time, the latter characterised in the artist's vision by a culture of accumulation and elimination. To achieve such a temporal juxtaposition, Rincón Gallardo uses science fiction aesthetics in a narrative laced with pop elements (brilliance, neon, synthetic materials, sounds and colours). This is mixed with more traditional iconography, that of the rural landscape, sowing, mezcal, acoustic music and the storytelling tradition. In several scenes, the narrative is also clearly tied

to the notion of female strength found in Mesoamerican cultures.

In the plot, the characters invoke the powers of fire and festivity. They celebrate the cycle of life, death and resurrection of one of them, the opossum, symbolising acts of survival and resistance to the current oppressive culture of predatory extraction, which affects the ecosystem and native communities, generating territorial and cultural conflicts. The artist dedicates *Tlacuache Resilience (Opossum Resilience)* to Rosalinda Dionicio Sánchez, who survived an assassination attempt in 2012. Rosalinda is an activist in land disputes between traditional and mining communities in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico.

CV



Page 167
Costume sketches
Courtesy of the artist

Pages 168 -169
Resiliencia tlacuache (Opossum Resilience), 2019
Single channel video
16 min
Still photos: Claudia López Terroso
Courtesy of the artist

* Beneficiary of the National System of Art Creators Program
2019-2022 of the National Fund for Culture and the Arts



CULTURA
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FONCA
(Sistema de Apoyos a la Creación y Proyectos Culturales)





Maya Saravia

Guatemala | 1984

The issues that Maya Saravia addresses in her projects concern violence in its political aspect, ranging from wars and civil disobedience to new hybrid forms of protest. Speculation and instinct guide her associations in which she uses hallucination and abstraction as resources for analysing historical or political events and finding poetic interpretations that hover between reality and fiction. Her working material often comes from news, academic publications and official reports, which she contrasts with speculative material found on the internet on the same topics. She is currently experimenting with video and her favourite media have been installations and engraving. She is interested in how history is constructed, and she seeks to portray current topics and how these affect us individually from systems of power.

The war maps of the project *The Life Cycle of the Opium Poppy* (2017-) are a series of serigraphs that analyse violent attacks as an

abstraction. By seeing arrows appear solely on a flat surface, thus eliminating the representation of the topography—by concealing the territory—her maps expose the strategic decisions of military intelligence, taken behind desks. By separating their components, Saravia reveals power relations and foreign policies.

In *The Theory of the Ghost, vol. 1* (2020), Saravia returns to the maps and combines them with other forms of monitoring, in this case using music, dance and mixes from Africa and adapted elsewhere. This memory in the body is another way of tracing routes, from the past of slavery and the African diaspora to the present day and new dances such as reggaeton or dance hall.

GR



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The Theory of the Ghost, vol. 1, 2020
Installation
Dimensions variable
Photo: Byron Mármol





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Perverse Geography / Cursed Geographies

Glossary

Babel

Language often works against communication, but memory has no language. Memory, Pierre Nora says, “is always suspect for history”.* Faced with the impossibility of understanding, memory reveals the invisible.

Knowledge is transferred orally from generation to generation. This act of oral transference, as Ailton Krenak says, «includes with it a sense of life, enriching each subject’s life experience, while at the same time constituting a collective subject». **

Guatemala has 25 languages: 22 Mayan languages, Xinca, Garífuna and Spanish. How can a nation function officially in one single language? How can a nation give land in return for the silence of an indigenous language? How can the State manipulate men so that they renounce the transfer of their mother tongue to their descendants in exchange for land... in exchange for their own identity? Marilyn Boror’s work moves in these latitudes.

* Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, 1984.

** Ailton Krenak, *Peripheries*, May 2018.

Balance

Probably no word is more sought after in today’s world than “balance”. It is becoming difficult to conceive of any possibility of balance when we see the entire world in tension, in the greatest imbalance in many senses, above all between nations and between social/economic groups in each country. The global environment is in chaos; the threat of a cataclysm is latent and has been accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The works present here look to an ancestral past or a hypothetical future since the present is saturated with information and rather than clarifying, confuses. Hence the need, as Reinhard Koselleck would say, to rummage in the past. It is in this search for balance that thinkers like Miguel A. Hernández see the artist as a *Benjaminian historian*, whose operations aim to materialise past times based on “alternative [modes] of writing and communication about the past, believing in the material potency of images and questioning the linearity of the historical text”.*

* Miguel A. Hernández Navarro, *Hacer visible el pasado: El artista como historiador (benjaminiano)*, 2010.

Crime

Dispossession

Dispossession—depriving someone of, or usurping, something they once had, whether physical or symbolic—is usually achieved through violence. Beginning in the 1990s, Guatemala’s cultural world regained strength to reclaim its history using art, making visible what war swept away, what is no longer there and what was painfully torn away.

In the words of Naomi Klein: “The state of *shock* is not only what happens to us when something bad happens, but also what happens to us when we lose our narrative, when we lose our history, when we lose our bearings. What keeps us on track, and without *shock*, is our history”.*

* Naomi Klein, *The Doctrine of Shock* (documentary based on the book of the same name), 2009.

Colour

What is race? Even in art, classification and division by difference have been a symptom. In the 18th century, “casta paintings” were created, which today can be interpreted as containers of violence. These paintings reveal what today must clearly be urgently combatted. The different skin colours crudely illustrate identity, but identity thrives on difference. Édouard Glissant says: “The Same requires Being, the Diverse establishes Relationship. Just as the Same began with expansionist pillage in the West, the Diverse came to light through the political and armed violence of peoples”.* Sebastián Calfuqueo makes these diversities into the basis of his artistic practice.

* Édouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais*, 1981

Crime is not only a physical act but also a symbolic one. The violence of the “symbolic crime” is in the uncontrollable character of its consequences. A society, a world can be reconfigured as a result of a crime that is never recognised as such. Crime in the Global South has changed history for one in which information and hard data have disappeared. The identification and denunciation of human rights violations through counter-investigations are the focus of Forensic Architecture’s work, which at this precise juncture gives visibility to the crimes committed by local governments that dominate the official narrative.

Hope

The optimism of hope is what drives survival. When hope is exhausted, the strength to survive is lost.

The uncertainty and discontent that are part of life in the Global South is an indisputable reality. The instability provoked by the power of the North and by different dictatorships is part of the everyday. The memory of our region is atemporal and not only involves today's terror, but also the terror of its traces. Heba Y. Amin proposes a hopeful future, that of draining the Mediterranean Sea and reshaping the geography between Africa and Europe with consequences that open possibilities for a more egalitarian world.

Power

Power is the owner of the official history that is transmitted to society. As Jacques Le Goff makes clear, history is always born from a process of interpretation. The "true history" does not exist— what we have are a series of mediated accounts. The history that remains is one of the many possible histories of the same happening. It is the result of strategies to gain credibility that is built into the historical discourse that won over the others. Power manages to compress the space between the true events and the events selected to be converted into official discourse. The power of social networks is the best example of this. Jonas Staal and his proposal to "collectivise Facebook" aim to revert power to the people.

Territory

Territory is not defined by lines on a map or by a wall at a border. The concept of a geopolitical nation is a mere fiction in that the powers that be act over and above any border, even more so today in a world that is highly planned and manipulated by the few.

Ailton Krenak speaks of territory as a political and ancestral place of spiritual belonging. In the Mayan worldview, the territory is the sum of the parts, the world in general, which is the basis of their roots, the place where the umbilical cord is buried on birth and which interconnects the history of a people with that of the universe.

Winds

Whether as shifting breezes, gusts or gales, migration in the Latin American continent is a part of life, a state of being. The action of leaving what is one's own, of crossing borders and heading into the unknown comes from anxiety; the dream of migrating arises from the desire to be able to give better opportunities to those who stayed behind.

"What we need today is not to abolish borders but to give them another meaning, that of a passage, a communication, that is, of a Relationship", says Édouard Glissant.*

Reflecting on society and ecology, Oswaldo Maciá captures in sound the journey of migratory winds as they cross borders.

*Édouard Glissant, in conversation with Manthia Diawara, *Journal of Contemporary Art* 28, 2011.

Prejudice

Coming from the Latin *praejudicium*, meaning "previously judged", the word prejudice refers to a preconceived evaluation, usually negative, about a social group or person.

Sameness and difference play a crucial role here to the extent that one can deal with the other. Differences create prejudices that may be historical, cultural, gender or faith-based, among others. Xenophobia is a form of prejudice over race differences, in short: racism. When prejudices are implanted in society from positions of power, many individuals or groups are marginalised and treated unequally.

Marilyn Boror Bor

Guatemala | 1984

The work of Mayan Kaqchikel artist Marilyn Boror focuses on the word as a cultural code that defines and constructs identities. She works with graphic media, installations and actions of gesture or act, the latter apparent in her latest offerings. The word, on which power has historically acted, is also power in her work, and she seeks to display it both in its richness as well as in the violence inflicted upon it.

The processes by which society was “ladinised” (whitened) can be seen most patently in language, and especially in the change of indigenous surnames to Spanish versions, which is what Boror’s recent work is about. In what can be read as a testimony to the history of plunder of Guatemala’s indigenous people and whose consequences are still felt today, Boror seeks to rescue through language an imaginary, history and worldview that have been forcibly repressed.

In the project titled *Edicto cambio de nombre (Name Change Edict)*, the artist presents the results of an investigation carried out from November 2017 until October 2018. Boror collected name change decrees published in the official Guatemalan gazette *Diario de Centro América*. She discovered that during this period at least 200 people changed their indigenous surnames to non-native ones. Taking this as her starting point, Boror's art action consists of changing her surnames Boror Bor (of Kaqkchikel origin) to Castillo Novella, the latter chosen specifically for their prevalence in the Guatemalan oligarchy. The project reconstructs this research from archives and documents that shed light on the power factors that are still passively at work in society.

AT



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From the series *Edicto cambio de nombre (Name Change Edict)*, 2018

Photo: Byron Mármol

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From the series *Edicto cambio de nombre (Name Change Edict)*, 2018

Two pieces printed on cotton paper

Photo: Byron Mármol

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From the series *Edicto cambio de nombre (Name Change Edict)*, 2018

Marble stone

50 cm x 60 cm

Photo: Marvin Asijtuj



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EDIFICIO DE CAMPO DE TENIS



ARQUITECTURA Y DISEÑO DEL CAMPO DE TENIS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD SANTO DOMINGO, SAN DOMINGO, REPUBLICA DOMINICANA. TERCERA OLA DEL CONCURSO DE DISEÑO DE EDIFICIOS DE CAMPO DE TENIS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD SANTO DOMINGO. FASE FINAL DE DISEÑO.

1º Año 1. Semestre, Segundo Año

3.04.2018



El Estado de Guatemala aprueba el cambio de nombre de:

MARILYN ELANY BOROR BOR †

Mayo 1984 - Agosto 2018

Por

MARILYN ELANY CASTILLO NOVELLA

*En memoria de los cuerpos mayas huérfanos
violentados por el Estado racista de Guatemala.*

Sebastián Calfuqueo

Chile | 1991

Calfuqueo's work originates in autobiographical issues related to gender and ethnicity and has taken various forms, from video performance to ceramics. From his Mapuche origins, he extrapolates a social critique that questions the construction of identities in countries like Chile, from a consistent decolonial perspective. By dealing with discrimination and racial stereotyping his work connects with global issues that are ever-present today.

The central theme in his work is the relationship between self-perception and exoticisation when linked to indigenous issues, particularly as this affects the Mapuche. Calfuqueo questions how certain stereotypes circulate and construct and destroy identities. He explores this principally through images of bodies or faces, whether of others or his own, that are reproduced in photographs or audio-visual recordings. At other moments, his critique appears in small sculptures, objects, or installations, in which he expands his references to

material culture, and to craft techniques in the case of his pottery.

You Will Never Be a Weye, 2012/2015 is a video performance in which Calfuqueo tries to revive a cancelled identity. Here the artist recounts and contrasts narratives that remain part of his Mapuche family tradition, starting with the patriarchal notions installed with colonisation. Before the Spanish arrived in Chile, there existed in Mapuche culture the Machi Weyes, men who understood identity in an open manner and included practices commonly associated with “femininity”. This work returns to and questions concepts of colonialism and alterity in Latin America, and the consequences this has had for the continent.

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The female male discovered in Viedma: Article from *Caras y Caretas* on the 17th of may 1902
Courtesy of the artist

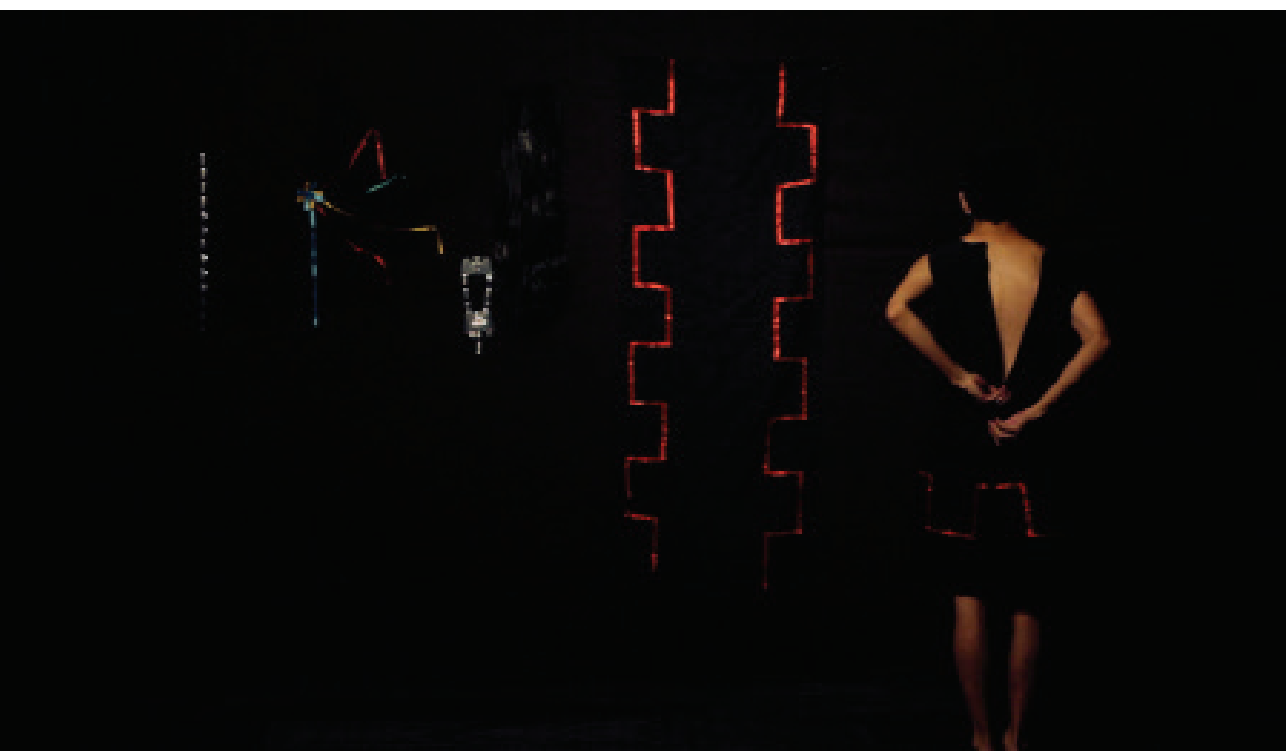
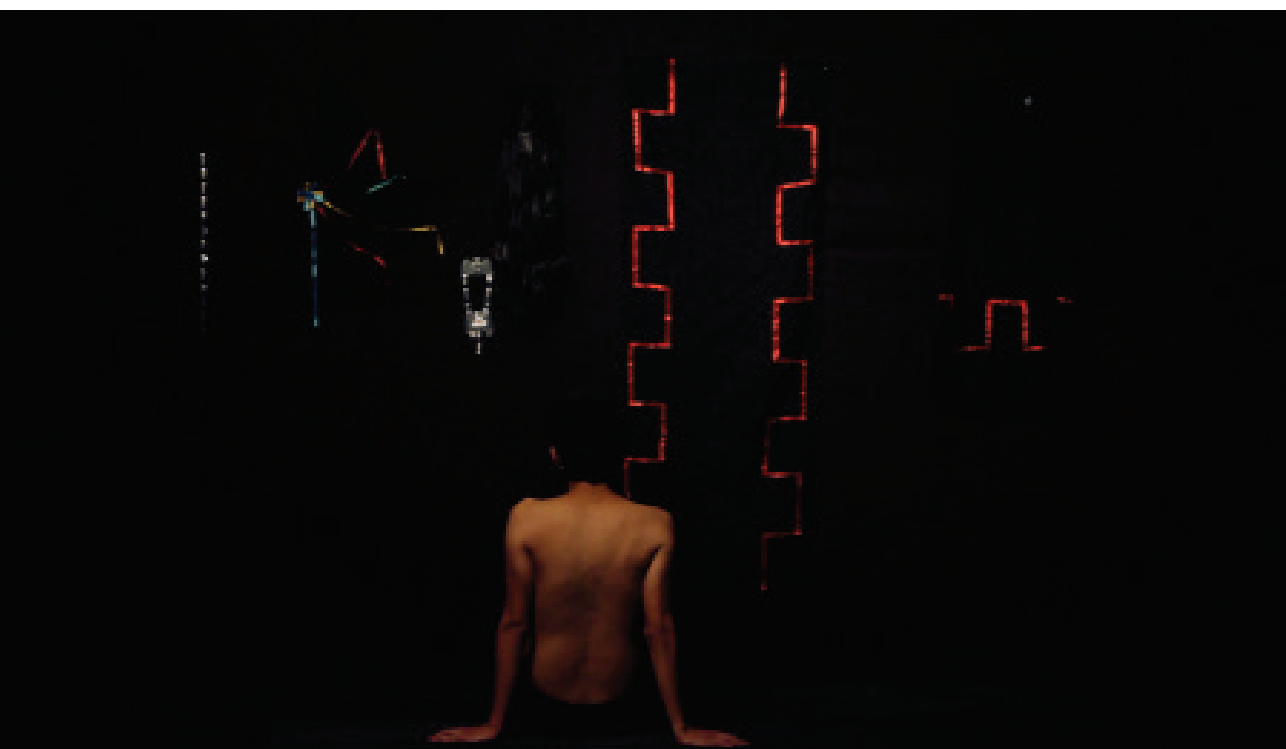
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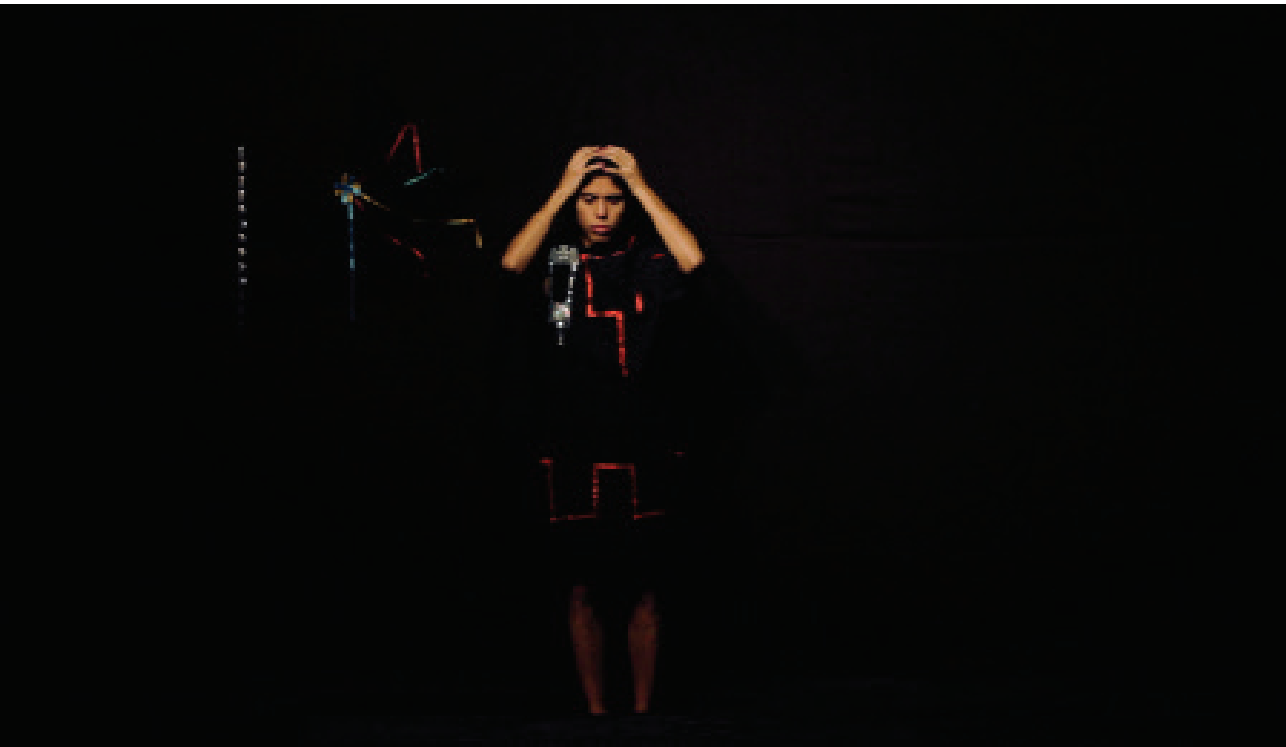
You Will Never Be a Weye, 2015

Video-performance

4 min 47 s

Courtesy of the artist





Jonathas de Andrade

Brazil | 1982

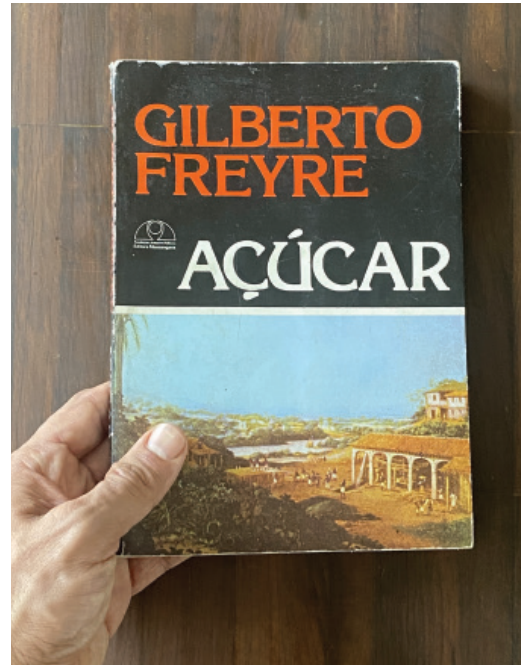
With installations, videos and archive photos, Jonathas de Andrade seeks to analyse the construction of ideas ranging from love to processes of civilisation, underlining how class, race and gender oppression works. His projects illustrate the exchanges between colonisers and colonised, between the global North and South, and emphasise the gap between abundance and deprivation.

With his home in Recife, in north-eastern Brazil, Andrade uses this location as a setting for many projects in which he analyses— and often subverts through his collaborators— specific cases of paradigms and stereotypes inherited from the colony. His ideas come from contact with communities in which he has lived for long periods, and many of his investigations emerge from conversations.

The twin-channel video *O caseiro (The Caretaker)*, 2016, works like a mirror that does not reflect the same thing. It is a dialogue between two moments in time within the same house. On one screen

we see a fragment of the 1959 film *O mestre de Apipucos*, in which director Joaquim Pedro de Andrade portrays a day in the life of Gilberto Freyre, a world-famous writer, sociologist, journalist and politician, who was born in Recife. We see Freyre going about his daily activities: resting on the beach, eating with his wife and chatting with the cook and his servant. On the other screen, the servant is the main actor, walking around the same house and doing his chores in 2016. The two screens share the same black and white format, rhythm and camera movements. Together with the synchronized cuts between the two, parallels are established that make the contrast of class and race aspects more obvious.

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Book *Açúcar*, author Gilberto Freyre

Courtesy of the artist

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O Caseiro (The Caretaker), 2016

Two channel video

8 min

Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Vermelho

Work in dialogue with the 1959 film "O Mestre de Apipucos" by Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. Film kindly lent by the production company Filmes do Serro

Director: Jonathas de Andrade

Assistant Director: Fellipe Fernandes

Director of Photography: Thiago Calazans

Actor: Carlos César Martins

Assistant: Dandara Pagu

Thanks to: Ana Maria Maia, Clarissa Diniz, Cristina Gouvêa, Fundação Gilberto Freyre, Jamille Barbosa y Jerônimo Lemos





Forensic Architecture & Forensic Oceanography

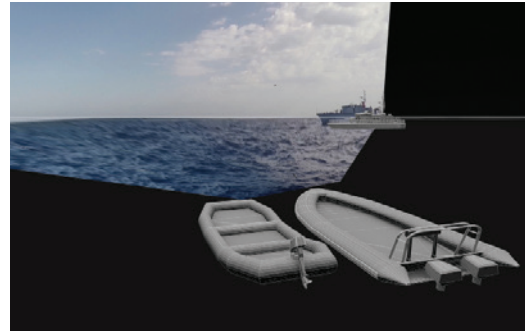
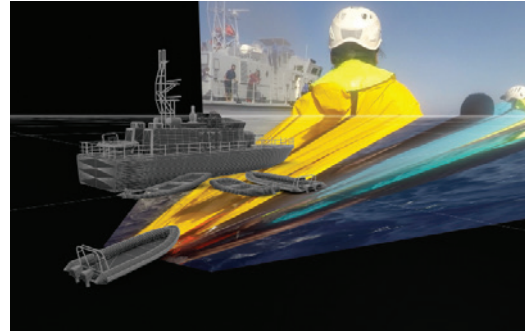
United Kingdom | 2010

Forensic Architecture & Forensic Oceanography is a multidisciplinary team that identifies and denounces human rights violations by conducting “counter-investigations”. The specific targets of its activism are states that control judicial systems and official narratives. The group combines expertise in architecture, visual art and design with fields such as law and the sciences to create content robust enough to change the direction of official investigations.

They have investigated armed conflicts, murders, migration issues and damage to the environment in association with organisations and groups defending human rights and social justice. In the *Operación Sofía* project, for example, the team conducted an in-depth investigation into the Guatemalan armed conflict in the Ixil Triangle, the most affected area. The research broached one of the distinctive issues of the Guatemalan civil war: the relationship between geography and military and state strategies.

The project exhibited at this biennial is entitled *Mare Clausum: The Sea Watch vs. Libyan Coast Guard Case* (2017-2018). It involves a reconstruction of the operation by an NGO coastguard vessel to rescue a ship with 150 passengers aboard in international waters, which was intercepted by a Libyan coastguard patrol boat. The investigation also examines possible links of the Libyan Coast Guard with Italy to protect the coasts, as well as the training given by European Union countries to crews to combat smuggling.

AT



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Stills of *Mare Clausum: The Sea Watch vs. Libyan Coast Guard Case*, 2017-2018

Courtesy of the artists

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Mare Clausum: The Sea Watch vs. Libyan Coast Guard Case, 2017-2018

Installation

Video and documentation with synchronisation techniques, 3D modelling and remote monitoring

28 m 56 s

Photo: Juan Carlos Mencos

Courtesy of Silvia de Tres





Antonio José Guzmán

Panama | 1971

Antonio José Guzmán's installations address issues of social justice and the history of colonisation through textiles and genetic research. His work asserts a positive aspect of migration as an agent of social change and community participation. Guzmán calls his installations «perceptual journeys in time,» as they travel between diasporas, oral traditions and cultural analyses. His multimedia work includes documentaries, musical compositions and soundscapes, in which he re-interprets post-coloniality notions and tries to assert the transculturality of each individual without losing the relationship with social ascendancy and collectivism.

Starting from his own DNA, Guzmán assembles a monumental work titled *Supreme Exodus* (2018), which investigates the recent history of migration in Latin America. It examines the relationships of displacement and exile through large-format paintings and textiles, as well as different elements of Yoruba culture and archive images.

Electrical Dub Station (2020-2021) is an iteration of the *Supreme Exodus* project made for this biennial. This work condenses an effort of many years to create a transatlantic collective memory. The installation refers to ideas proposed in the book *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* by Paul Gilroy (1993) and Guzmán's own mixed ancestry, combining performance, music, stage designs and textiles.

GR



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Electric Dub Station - Decolonizing Patterns, 2020-2021

Performance

Photo: Marvin Asijtuj

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Electric Dub Station - Decolonizing Patterns, 2020-2021

Installation

Fabrics, coloured sawdust carpet, video installation, performance

Dimensions variable

Photo: Andrés Asturias





Yasmin Hage

Guatemala | 1976

For the project **JMñ[** *elemento montaña* (**JMn[** *mountain element*, 2021), Yasmin Hage researched the ceramic filters invented by the Guatemalan Fernando Mazariegos to obtain drinking water ecologically and economically. To make them, a proportion of clay is mixed with sawdust. When baked, its external walls retain microducts that make them porous, and activated carbon appears in the internal layer, an element that doubles its capacity as a filter. Colloidal silver, the third filtering element, serves as a septic magnet that kills bacteria without the need to boil water. Hage perceives in this alchemy a virtuous emanation: a myth in which *everything* is part of the mountain: mud, water, silver, wood, fire and a thread between heaven and earth, the K'awiil lightning. She wonders: is its performance reflected in the filter? If 500 years ago the Europeans already practised the massive extraction of precious metals in Central and South America, were they eliminating intrinsic parts

of the *Mountain*, its filter-system, the *in-dividual* mountain *element*? Does not the first global currency, silver, also materialise the normalisation of an extractive mentality that is integral to the colonial project, one that still supports the social system of Europe and other empires? The mountain-of-water-as-system will have been a gigantic gem for its geometry and for its memory. Hage rearranges the staging of the circumstances surrounding the invention with materials from historical, chemical and sculptural exchanges, collaborating with a hitherto unknown co-author, Don Alfonso Ixpatá, a master potter of unbroken family lineage from Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, Guatemala.

GR



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JMñ [*elemento* montaña (**JMn**[mountain *element*), 2021
Installation

Water, Earth, Fire, Wind, Wood, Metal

Periodic table of chemical elements, water, element Mñ, K'awiil (the thunder that lights the mountain, the witz, the hill); embossings, metal types from printing, metal mining, pyrography from pressed wood powder, four Huayras (portable whistling ceramic furnaces for smelting and transforming silver and metals); paper and archive, eco filters (ceramic with activated carbon, bathed with colloidal silver), Rabinal mud (made from the ashes of the volcano explosion that created the crater of Lake Atitlán), universal open patent; the knowledge of the hands and feet of Alfonso Ixpatá (potter of uninterrupted family lineages), matter and memory, Bergson/Minkowski (Giacometti), the shot stones, the mountain, the infiltration

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol









Oswaldo Maciá

Colombia | 1960

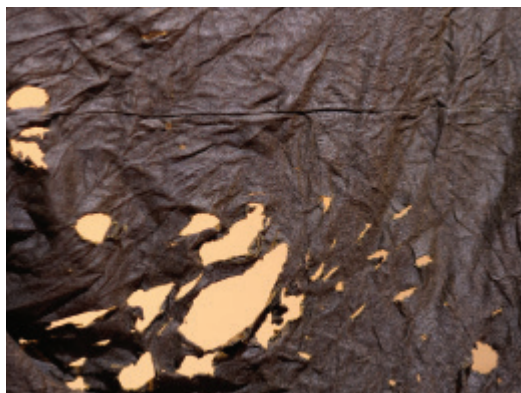
Oswaldo Maciá's olfactory-acoustic installation *Bosque de bálsamos* (*Forest of Balms*, 2021) explores complicated histories of migration and displacement. For the olfactory composition, two fans spread the aroma of Peruvian Balsam through the exhibition space. A product of the Peru Balsam Tree, *Myroxylon balsamum*, it is extracted by skilled workers on plantations in El Salvador. The balsameros carefully scorch and cut away sections of bark, fixing rags over the exposed sapwood. These repurposed materials, which might once have been a pair of jeans or a football shirt, absorb sap from the tree and are later pressed to extract the precious balsam. Twenty-four of these fabrics hang in the space.

The medicinal and aromatic qualities of this scent have been celebrated since the time of the Mayas. Beginning in the sixteenth century, Peruvian Balsam became an important colonial export for European medicine and perfumery, shipped over from Peru. Maciá

invites us to consider the smell of colonial history through this balsam, one of the first perfumes to cross the Atlantic.

The acoustic composition, a fifteen-minute looping stereo arrangement, plays on two megaphones, hanging across from, and in dialogue with, the fans. The composition features the sounds of winds, recorded in deserts around the world, and the calls of insect pollinators recorded in the Chocó rainforest, Colombia. The trade and migratory winds of the world travel great distances, blowing across borders, occasionally carrying humans, animals or insects with them. The insect pollinators of the rainforest remind us of both the abundant biodiversity engendered by cross-pollination and the fragility of symbiotic ecosystems. The winds trespass unwittingly, plucking things from their original context and throwing them into new ones. These migrations and displacements are destructive but generative, forming and reforming our world.

Oswaldo Maciá



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Photo: Juan Carlos Mencos

Courtesy of Silvia de Tres

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Bosque de bálsamos (Forest of Balms), 2021

Olfactory-acoustic sculpture

Fans, fabric impregnated with Peru Balsam,
megaphones, fifteen-minute sound loop

With thanks to Nelixia

Photo: Byron Mármol





Ángel Poyón

Guatemala | 1974

The objects in Angel Poyón's work have a *rajawal* (spirit), a life of their own signalled by the way he intervenes them. We have a ritual relationship with everyday objects and the artist's job is to find them. Once it is discovered, interactions with the object become intimate and resilient.

Poyón merges the tradition of his people with conceptual art. He unveils the essence of an idea but covers it with a cloak of energy and spirituality. He transforms the minimalist Western aesthetic by adapting it to an ancestral vision that penetrates further than the eyes, to find the poetic gesture and give the object a new life. His pieces contrast Western time with ancestral time, as in the piece *Estudios del fracaso medidos en tiempo y espacio* (*Studies of Failure Measured in Time and Space*, 2008), where he ridicules the linear view of time and makes us reflect on the cyclical time of his culture.

With the project *Ruq'a 'raqan qazadon* (*The Hand, the Feet of Our Hoe / Our Hoes*, 2021), Poyón attempts a new reading of the tools used to work the earth by sculpting hands made into fists in the upper part. Through these tools, the artist alludes to resistance, food sovereignty and defence of territory, giving voice to the land itself, which asks to be respected. The collection of hoes forms a circle, each symbolising a day of the Mayan calendar and highlighting the relationship between time measurement and sowing cycles; crucial for the reproduction of life.

GR



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Ruq'a 'raqan qazadon (*The Hand, the Feet of Our Hoe / Our Hoes*), 2021

Installation

Intervened hoes

Dimensions variable

Photo: Byron Mármol





Fernando Poyón

Guatemala | 1982

The work of Fernando Poyón, an artist of Mayan Kaqchikel origins, from Comalapa, Chimaltenango, includes sculptures and objects that illustrate the contrast between the indigenous worldview and Western culture. The artist transforms the concept of the map as a determinant of territories into something relative and fluid, giving us a humorous critique of this Western cosmopolitan idea. Similarly, he approaches the idea of homeland or nation as something his worldview makes it difficult for him to identify with.

In his series of maps is *Tierra firme, mundo abajo* (*Terra Firma, World Below*, 2018), which consists of a sphere of moist earth that serves as a flagpole. The fabric that flutters is printed with a mapamundi that places Europe at the centre of the world. Poyón tries to reverse the idea of territory perceived only as geography and private property. In the piece, the usually light-blue sphere of the

Eurocentric atlas is stripped bare to show the real and fertile composition of the planet's earth.

In this line of work is the project for this biennial, *Limpiar el espíritu* (*Clean the Spirit*, 2021). Here, a wheel covered in wet earth leaves a track over a large canvas. Poyón reverts to the children's game of pushing a wheel with a stick and chasing it to keep it upright and changes it into a symbolic healing exercise: when the wheel is turned in the opposite direction to the rotation of the earth, we can «cleanse» some unresolved occurrence, symbolically returning to the past.

GR



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Photo: Byron Mármol

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Limpiar el espíritu (*Clean the Spirit*), 2021

Installation

Fabric, wooden pole and iron wheel; drawing with earth on fabric

Dimensions variable

Photo: Andrés Asturias





Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa

Guatemala | 1978

In a kind of mythology that combines sculptures, drawings and performance, Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa created works that verge on the surreal from stories of his childhood, with references to literature, magic and folklore. His stage sets combine actors and dancers or sculptures that act as characters in a narrative that is both playful and tragic and often refers to Guatemala's violent history.

For the *Lugar de consuelo (Place of Comfort)* project (2020), Ramírez-Figueroa, together with the poet Wingston González, take theatre censorship during the 1970s in Guatemala as their reference. During the armed conflict era, the Popular University (UP) theatre company was attacked during a performance. With the UP building as the setting, Ramírez-Figueroa and González staged *Place of Comfort*, with only the memory of the place itself as an audience. This act of homage celebrates the theatre as a form of political resistance during the war era. For the characters—the dictator, the oligarch, the

soldier, the cardinal and the scarecrow— Ramírez-Figueroa made a series of costume-sculptures. Together with the video, the sketches of the design process are exhibited. In them, the features and appearance of the personalities and the characters' gestures can be seen, even the tone of their voices. The characters spread across the building, from the theatre to the classrooms and then up the spiral staircase to exit in the street, evoking in each of these spaces memories of the students, actors and of their artistic creation.

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Lugar de consuelo (Place of Comfort), 2020

Single channel video, 35 min 26 s

Twenty-seven sketches in watercolour, ink and graphite on paper, dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

Concept, direction, production and costume design:
Ramírez-Figueroa

Text and screenplay adaptation: Wingston González

Co-direction, camera and editing: Robert Beske

Assistant camera: Pablo Valladares

Cast: Wingston González, Jeffrey Ortega, Natalia

Mendoça, Dharma Morales, Leslie Romero

Casting assistant: Evelyn Price

Still photography: Mel Mencos

Sound: Ameno Córdova

Sound assistant and data management:

Pepe Orozco

Costumes and props made by: Joe Seely, Alex

Cassimiro, Valentina Soares, Nicolette Henry,

Alvaro Cuessi

In charge of costumes and props: José Bacaro,

Elizabeth Bacaro

Electricians: Carlos Armas, Joshua Hernández,

Geovanny Alarcón, German "piernas" Hernández

Producer: Alberto Rodríguez Collía

Co-production of video with The Power Plant,

Toronto, Canada

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Costume sketches

Photo: Byron Mármol











Jonas Staal

Netherlands | 1981

Jonas Staal calls himself a propaganda artist and works from rehearsal to installation. Using spaces in galleries, museums, and art-related institutions, Staal stages parliaments, embassies, schools and alternative forms of government to reflect on how present-day capitalism misinforms and disturbs. His performances have included appearances in international courts to sue transnational companies.

Staal is a founder of the political-artistic *New World Summit*, which develops alternative parliaments for “states without a state”, autonomist groups and blacklisted political organisations. Together with BAK, (basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht) he also co-founded *New World Academy* to study the role of art in political struggle outside a state context. One of the Academy sessions was with the collective of undocumented migrants *We Are Here*, in Amsterdam, and was called *lost. in between. together*. The 22nd Paiz Art Biennial borrowed its name from this title.

Collectivize Facebook (2020) began with a lawsuit against the Facebook conglomerate filed with the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. The project aims to get the company recognised as public domain and its ownership transferred to its 2.3 billion users. In other words, *Collectivize Facebook* seeks to turn the famous social network into a transnational cooperative. Taking up speeches by Juan José Arévalo (president of Guatemala, 1945-1951), Staal, in co-authorship with Jan Fermon, returns to the idea of “anonymous force” and updates it to refer to the powers that operate above the laws through multi-billion dollar companies like Facebook, Amazon, Alphabet (Google) and Bayer (Monsanto).
GR



COLLECTIVIZE

facebook

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COLECTIVIZA

facebook

ok

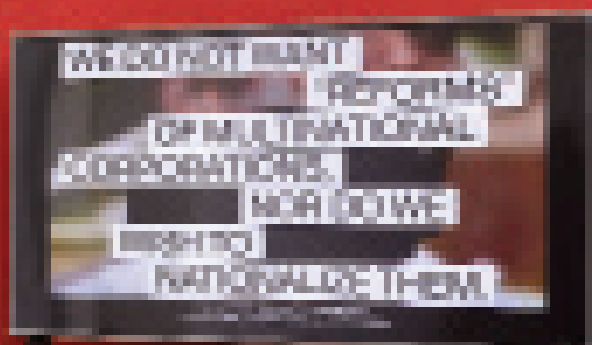
THE
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OF
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21ST
CENTURY

ok



Heba Y. Amin

Egypt | 1980

Heba Y. Amin's projects combine theoretical research with technology, politics and architecture. The artist aims to subvert established forms of power through narratives that rewrite history. He perceives landscape in his work as an expression of the dominant political powers. In his installations, physical space becomes a space for criticism. He also examines the notion of techno-utopia as a display of soft power: forms of colonisation and exploitation by powerful countries through technology.

Operation Sunken Sea (2018-) poses, at the same time as it parodies, a rearrangement of geography between Europe and Africa. What would happen if the waters of the Mediterranean were drained so that this natural border was made to disappear? If both continents were to form a supercontinent, how would political, economic and social relations be rearranged? Would inequality come to an end?

Through a performative political discourse, Amin presents choices for the end of terrorism, the migration crisis, and the rise of fascist governments. He also seeks to question the political uncertainty of Europe, the instability and collapse of nations in the Middle East and the failure of neoliberal policies in Africa. *Operation Sunken Sea* shows how the nations of the Global South suffer wars over oil and natural resources unleashed in their territories by First World countries. The project has several iterations in video, performance and installation formats.

GR



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Top photo: Courtesy of the artist

Lower photo: Andrés Asturias

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Operation Sunken Sea, 2018-present

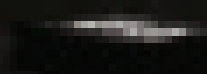
Installation

Video, lightboxes, photography

Dimensions variable

Photo: Juan Carlos Mencos

Courtesy of Silvia de Tres

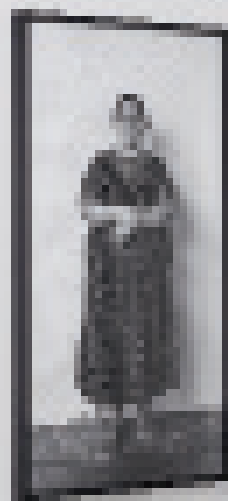




the
greatness
of the
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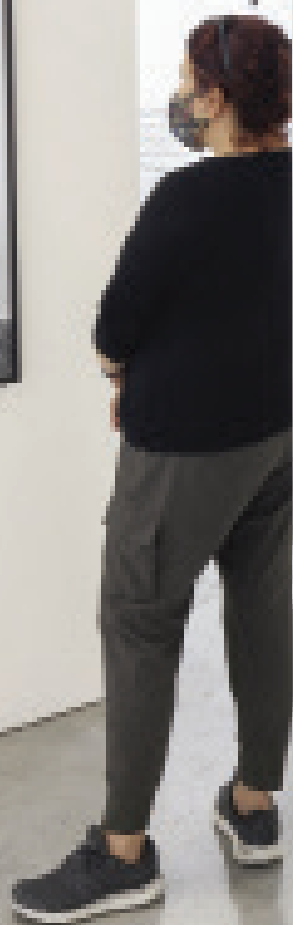
POZ

Erasmus iX









La conciencia de la piedra
habla desde su centro
dice nuestro nombre
la piedra busca la mano
y nuestra mano busca su piedra
en su centro guarda nuestra suerte
nuestro duro destino
nuestro blando destino
mi piedra y yo nos abrazamos
la lancé unas cuantas veces
regresé logreñada
lengüeteada por el sol
subiendo estaba su corazón
cuando me la tropezó y protectora
para que no se perdiera

Poema de Rosa Chacel
Piedra Afel, 2019.
La conciencia de la piedra de Victoria Levensky

Photography as an Embrace

by Alexia Tala and Gabriel Rodríguez Pellecer

To understand photography as a device means asking oneself: “What do we understand of that integral and yet uncertain relationship between time and what is photographed”? Time is always the ghost that haunts the image, in the sense that every photograph is the footprint of a loss, of a moment passed. Whenever there is photography, there is fear of time, fear of loss and the fleeting nature of the event. But what is time? Among all those who have pondered the subject, Saint Augustine, considered one of the first modern thinkers, observed eloquently: “What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; but if I wish to explain it to whoever asks me, then I do not know», he wrote in his *Confessions*. Saint Augustine meditated on time as flight, as the paradox of something that can only exist insofar as it has passed, that is, insofar as it “is no more”. There will never be a final word on this question, but we do have some certainties: time is not something unique or unidirectional, it is not a line in the void indicating progress.

What can photography tell us about time? To begin with, answering the question would mean describing photography as an obsessive attempt to question the definition of time. As such, and considered in terms of its functions as a mnemonic technique, as a footprint of loss, photography always exists in relation to what is photographed. As an instrument, it has been conceived in terms of what it contains, of what it takes away or adds to what it contains. And in that aspect, of subtraction and addition, is where theoretical efforts have been made to decipher its realistic nature or its sinister play with reality.

The historical development of photography has run in parallel with an effort to understand what it contains beyond its status as a record. Every photographer has to deal with the problem of representation. This has opened photography as a space for speculation about the image's relationship with reality, but also about a certain mysticism in the image. Between the eye and the object, between the violence of representation and the suspension of whatever is deprived of representation, we find photography's conflict. It is a conflict that is always adapting to new circumstances, above all in today's world, which has become photographic through social networks and, in this context of the Covid pandemic, is the world in which society lives.

The work of Paz Errázuriz (Santiago de Chile, 1944)—one must say at the outset—obliges us to think about these matters. Like all photography, hers includes a reflection about time but focused on a very specific link with what she has chosen to photograph. A feature of her work is that it opens spaces that were closed, invisible and forgotten, and the portrait and the face are its focal point and leading format. There, the relationship with time exists on several levels.

Why is it not the same to take a portrait of a person as to photograph a landscape? The most transcendent thinker on the subject, Walter Benjamin, was very clear on the subject: "It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last

time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face". In a similar vein, Roland Barthes, in his text "the Winter Garden Photograph", speaks of how he perceived the essence of his mother in a photograph of her taken when she was five-years-old, but viewed by him from another time. It is clear that photographing a face is not like photographing anything else. This is exactly what inspires the artistic practice of Paz Errázuriz. And it is true that the concept of aura—even though Benjamin saw it as moribund, as a consequence of mechanical reproduction survives in the reflection of art that explores the contemporary image.

We were saying that the operation Errázuriz has developed, preserved and sharpened throughout her career is strictly related to the kind of person she portrays. They are persons pushed to the edges of society who are generally presented to us in the same spaces in which they live. Far from the hierarchy of the documentary shoot, the photos show us something else that makes an appearance and demands our close attention both to those portrayed and to the nature of the photograph itself.

These are people captured in their condition of invisibility, and yet a space opens for them in the photograph. Errázuriz has a sensitive and careful eye, and her results are eloquent on that care: her work could not be further from anthropological authoritarianism. The flight has already occurred: every person cast out by society is part of a larger history, the history of exclusion, which is as long as that of humanity. However, something is shown to us when the faces appear as a permitted signal of individuality. In this sense, this is an ethnography that is not afraid of simplicity and that always operates from the perspective of the individual.

The space opens thanks to the image and through the portrait subjects. In this way, the traditional codes of the modern anthropological gaze, one that produces subalternity, give themselves away in the status of these images and the experience of observing them. These goals require a closer frame, no panorama. There is no need to enlarge the scale or to include details that contextualise the scene or limit or interrupt our contact with the portrait subject. This is evident from the formal constants of Errázuriz's images: individuals pictured from the waist up or full body, in quite restricted indoor spaces, seated or standing, in a door frame or facing an entrance... and almost always looking straight at us. Thus we have something approaching a scale of 1:1, in which the spectator has been invited to meet the eyes of the other, a stranger. The image has been selected as the place for this exclusive encounter, the gaze of the other being a kind of summons for the beginning of a contact.

What is surprising about the images of these personalities is how they avoid reification of their identity, as if their gaze protects them from the drama of photographic reduction or homogenisation. This prevents them from being nibbled at by the many spectres that have historically haunted the ethnographic gaze. Couples in love inside psychiatric hospitals, trans people in a brothel, old ladies in care homes, circus personalities, boxers... Errázuriz's subjects come close to us without failing to surprise.

The works emphasise the permanent social exclusion of individuals who are reduced to occupying precarious spaces, but at the same time are snatched from the silence to enter the world of photography, where they remain harmoniously in the image. Our relationship as spectators is therefore in a kind of suspension. The image is neither asking for consumerist-informative observations of the other, nor romantic contemplation. Neither one nor the other. It is a fluctuating, unresolved relationship that keeps us in limbo created by this alternative world that only exists in the photograph.

Paz Errázuriz questions, then, the history of violence of images founded on the modern anthropological gaze. Its consequences are well known to Latin America, the eternal victim of Europe's hunger for the exotic, with its accompanying effect of homogenising a diversity of histories and forms of life. The result is that with her focus on specific contexts, Errázuriz rescues them from silence and returns them to others. Herein lies the historical value of her work in those potential future-presents. Her images hold within them the power to be infinitely up to date, eliminating defined dates and places.

Alterity from sexuality

The time of the portrait, the time in the portrait, time as a portrait ... from wherever we observe the photograph, this confused triad remains forever trapped in Errázuriz's images. *Adam's Apple* (1982), the artist's best-remembered series, features that constant that we see throughout her career: the intuition of an emergency

transformed into a trans-historic relationship. Where no one had bothered to look, at the height of the Chilean dictatorship in the 1980s, Errázuriz observed closely, seeing the margin's potential as something that would remain to be reactivated again and again in future times. Those startling images of transgender people in their homes and in brothels stick in the collective imagination and re-emerge in contemporary struggles and discussions about the rights of sexual minorities. They appear forty years later, even in the public space of London Underground stations and on Madrid buses. In this sense, the images are testimony of an era but also of how there is historicity involved in how the issues of concern are being approached, assimilated and understood.

As Reinaldo Arenas narrates in his novels about his traumatic encounters with the repression of homosexuals in Cuba, in sexually conservative societies double moral standards have always prevailed, according to which, publicly, everyone is "heterosexual", but behind the scenes, sexual definitions and preferences are blurred. People from trans communities, by choosing to escape from the imposition of binary gender and sex, have a way of exposing their bodies so that they are automatically converted into a political territory that they must defend against different types of violence.

In Guatemala, as in many cases, the history of this group entered the



La manzana de Adán (Adam's Apple)
series, 1982 - 1987

Digital print with injection of
pigmented inks, 35 x 50 cm

public domain due to violent events. The 1997 murder of María Conchita, a trans woman, in the central square of the historic centre of Guatemala City became a watershed for the political organisation and visibility of the LGBTQI+ community movements. Trans, gay and lesbian groups organised into collectives such as OASIS, from which others would emerge and evolve. In part, the evolution of these groups in search of rights within society led to the first two deputies ever to publicly declare their sexual orientations—Sandra Morán, deputy for the 2016-2019 period, and Aldo Dávila, since 2020—thus, sexual minorities acquired representation at the legislative level.

Like *Adam's Apple*, the series *Trans Guatemala* (2020) starts from these stories of repression, stigmatisation and violence. The story that began in Chile during the 1980s continues now in Guatemala, this being Errázuriz's first experience outside Chile with a community that, although generally repressed by conservative fears of diversity, has different histories and nuances in each context. In 1980s Guatemala, the LGBTQI+ movement was impacted both by police repression and the HIV pandemic, the latter contributing to the movement's invisibility due to the stigma of its being a "gay disease". For groups defending sexual diversity, discrimination has always been a trigger for political organisations to protect the lives of their members.

The preparation for the *Trans Guatemala* series took place in a territory already explored by the artist as part of her usual practice. In Chile, her relationship with the LGBTQI+ community is one of friendship as well as complicity through her photography. For the Guatemala project, Errázuriz decided to match the images with a series of audios based on interviews conducted at the same time as the photo sessions. This component of the audio testimony adds a different edge and a broader dimension to the exhibition project, giving us another approach to the visual images. Of course, the visual component is key to identity in the trans community. But the recordings of voices are a second component that adds another layer of meaning. This change is

important, not only at the auditory level, but because at a symbolic level, it means the acoustic materialisation of a political decision.

Dissidence within societies has always been an agent of change. Many forms of dissidence come to notice, whether due to political actions, philosophical stances or just conduct in life. The great difference with explorations of sexual identity is that these acts, manifestos and ideological positions are installed in bodies. They are visible without the person having to speak. It is a posture that is carried in the skin, a way of breaking with sexual binarism that makes politics into a visual act, without even resorting to action. A look, a way of being, suffices.



Alterity from ethnicity

The confusing triad of possible combinations between portrait and time has a special place in the case of *The Sea Nomads* (*Los nomades del mar*, 1995), a series that we highlight for what it shares with the project carried out for the Paiz Guatemala Art Biennial. This series is, in short, the result of a need to capture in portraits ethnic disappearance, a problem with a landscape that no postcard could convey. The Kawéskar—depicted in Puerto Edén, on Wellington Island in the far south of Chile—are the last sea nomads, the remaining twenty of their ancient ethnic group of canoeists. It is a landscape that is fading. Again, the faces, their



Los nómades del mar (*The Sea Nomads*) series, 1996
Digital print with injection of pigmented inks, 35 x 50 cm

bodies and time. These are groups that have been left outside time and the speed of modernisation, the progress achieved that has left some in front and others behind. Relegated to obscurity, those who are not at the forefront of progress are left out, anachronistic and forgotten. This is what *The Sea Nomads* speaks about.

It is not, then, only social marginality that interests Errázuriz but also marginality in the broadest sense, in this case, marginality in time. This is dealt with more radically in the project (underway) developed in the Atacama desert, *Shepherdesses of the Altiplano (Pastoras del Altiplano)*, in which the artist addresses the disappearing legacy of women living in extreme isolation. As a result of mining activity, many of the life forms based on herding and continued for centuries have now been reduced to a handful of women. It is a hidden chapter in Northern Chile of another effect of the globalised world whose improvements come with the exclusion of everything that does not contribute to economic development.

Among these forms of submission, isolation, abuse and marginalisation, in the *Sepur Zarco* series (2020) Paz Errázuriz's eye captured the group of women involved in the legal case of the same name. The story caught her attention because of the courage of those women, who survived one of the most paradigmatic episodes of domestic and sexual slavery during the Guatemalan armed conflict.

On February 26, 2016, the women of Sepur Zarco obtained a conviction, which for the first time in the history of the country and one of the few in the world, judged crimes in the form of sexual violence, domestic and sexual slavery to be crimes against humanity, and sentenced the two defendants, former soldiers, to 120 and 240 years in prison.

This explanation of the case was given during the presentation of the United Nations Development Program's *Annual Report on the Rule of Law and Human Rights* (2016), held in New York (*Prensa Libre*, June 29, 2016, Guatemala).

The aforementioned report was presented in June 2016, months after the sentence was passed by a court

that February in Guatemala. The international importance of the case was paradigmatic in that it condemned the crimes of sexual and domestic violence committed during the internal war (1960-1996) as military policies of repression and subjugation. The news item continues:

The head of the investigating body detailed how justice was applied in the Sepur Zarco case. Truth, Justice, Reparation, No Repetition, are the four pillars of transitional justice. The UNDP has supported capacity development in the office of Public Prosecutor for Human Rights of the Attorney General's Office to prosecute cases of sexual violence against women.

A large proportion of the victims during Guatemala's internal war were disappeared and murdered, so the Sepur Zarco case had a different component in that the victims were survivors. They were women who, after 32 years, decided to denounce, to show their face, and above all, to provide their violated bodies as evidence of the abuses when appearing before a court. From that same body, from that same voice, their testimonies were heard in the Q'eqchi' language in a court in Guatemala City. For the history of this country, there is no end to the number of symbolic reparations that we could name that is represented by this case.

Another peculiarity of the Sepur Zarco case is that the rapes of these women did not occur as a result of loss of self-control or excess on the part of the perpetrators. On the contrary, it was a strategy of warfare, which is why it became known as a case of sexual and domestic slavery. The events occurred following the capture and disappearance of their husbands—who were trying to regularise the property titles to their lands—in the military outpost of Sepur Zarco, located in the municipality of El Estor, in the department of Izabal, in 1982-1983. Adding to the gravity of the case, the women of Sepur Zarco had no contact with members of insurgent forces (guerrillas) during the civil war, so the slavery they were subjected to was not part of the counterinsurgency strategy set out in the extermination plans of the Guatemalan army.

In a political history like Guatemala's, silence has been the governments' most effective weapon for keeping the population subdued. From their own bodies, by speaking and breaking the silence, the Sepur Zarco women managed to reverse a part of the country's violent history.

An essential part of Paz Errázuriz's photographic projects is the processes involved. When we spoke with her about the place to choose for the portraits of the Sepur Zarco grandmothers (as they

are now known), the artist requested that it not be a new house but preferably one that showed signs of the passage of time. This characteristic can be equated to the subjects that she seeks, characters with stories, with experiences that bring us closer to injustices and inequalities in their most intimate aspect.

The meeting with the grandmothers took place in the middle of a scarcely typical day. In the historic centre of Guatemala City, the then-president had decided to walk from the Presidential Palace to the Congress of the Republic. Several streets were respectfully cordoned off, causing more traffic chaos than usual. The meeting between the grandmothers and Paz Errázuriz took place in a dimly lit room with a long table. The meeting was mediated by an interpreter from Q'eqchi into Spanish. At first, the interaction was serious and Errázuriz, sitting at the end of the table, listened attentively. Slowly, the grandmothers relaxed into smiles as they told of the importance that their portraits had for them. Complicity shone on their faces, and on the artist's face too. While some words or concepts are lost in translation from one language to another, in a smile, no language exists. Before meeting the grandmothers, Errázuriz understood the value of listening, often an underestimated quality. She knew that she was facing a group of very brave women who, in their demands, had faced and survived both the demons of the past and those of the present. There were many hugs as the meeting concluded.

This is a feature of Errázuriz's personality that pervades her work: she does not seek attention to herself but wants all attention to be focussed on the subjects before her camera. It is a way of assuming responsibility for her work in giving visibility to these characters who suffer oppression within society. Her camera embraces and dignifies them in the very act of exposing them in their environment, in their intimacy, so that their personal stories emerge, thus turning the photographic act into a form of empowerment.

Looking at some of her photographs, it seems as if she herself is included, as if she were part of those portrayed, one more of them. In her photos there is no otherness, or if there was, she would be one of those

“others». Rather, there is a search for intimacy, because that is when the photography occurs: in the moment when the artist’s eyes, not the camera shutter, meet the eyes of these subjects on the other side of the mirror. It is at that moment that the photograph embraces and dignifies.

Pages 249 - 250 - 251
Trans Guatemala series, 2020
Digital print with injection of
pigmented inks
35 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist







Brave Little Bodies That Give Us Lessons in Greatness

by Yolanda Aguilar

I must begin by saying that it was quite a challenge to find the exact words to express my feelings when I was shown the photographs of the women of Sepur Zarco. When I saw them for the first time, I could not believe it; I did not expect to see what I was seeing. I thought I would find other kinds of expressions, different emotions captured by Paz Errázuriz's camera lens. Then I wondered who would see the photos. Alterity is always more acceptable if what we see, above all, is those people's exclusion and marginality from what we ourselves are.

I realised that it was not a question of the contents of the photographs but of what the photographer wanted to express and of what I myself projected as an observer. What I thought almost immediately was that with these photographs there was a risk of observing only what excludes or victimises, and so I wondered: what is the courage of these women and what is it that gives them the joy to go on living?

I expected to find smiling faces, vital expressions and bodies reflecting expectations of social struggle and displaying the symbols

of having “won” a judicial victory. But what I saw were bodies that told stories of fear, of dispossession. Bodies inhabited by exclusion, by hard times, by «I expect nothing». Armoured bodies that hold themselves in, that close all the body’s boundaries and limits, that express tension and stiffness in their posture. Women who are most likely still in mourning. That was when I realised that such bodies of women can only express the stories they inhabit. Stories that inhabit bodies and bodies inhabited by stories.

Words are unnecessary because bodies express themselves with total honesty. The photos name, the photos shout. The Mayan Q’eqchi’ women survivors of Sepur Zarco got tired of waiting for what the State has kept pending for them for so many centuries. The memories they incarnate have now stuck to their bones and skin. These faces that have seen hard things return the hardness that they have lived. And that is what somehow represents all of us. It is the original meaning of the kind of people we are. Those expressions, bodies, faces and ways of walking speak as much about them as about us.

Alterity does not exist if we sit in our comfort and privilege to see these photos at such a distance that they do not even move us. We are them too, we are all a bit of them.

How do we make it comprehensible then, that it is precisely for this that life has been accumulated, that it is from there that the strength indispensable for survival, resistance and the start of healing is taken?

«Let no one doubt that I am here with all my being, let no one doubt that I am here with all my dignity». That is the most powerful message from the *compañeras* of Sepur Zarco. Their living spirit, their collective strength, their desire to live. As the *compañeras* said while the judicial process was underway, **«Our heart is happy».**

Although they reflect the weariness of life, they do not hide their pride and the legitimacy of their existence given the indisputable fact that they have not been destroyed. We survived and we are alive! Little brave bodies of women who honour us with their legacy and give us lessons in nobility.

No, it is not the State that compensates, repairs or provides justice. It is the social and community organisation of women and people that continue to pave the way for the young generations. It is the hope generated by possibilities of new horizons, of not repeating and, therefore, of change. It is in the handover to the next generation where such changes happen, where magic can emerge. Because everything that the grandmothers lived should NEVER AGAIN be experienced by those who are still in their flower.

Rebirth only begins when you realize that it is possible to heal pain, frustration and anger. When confidence is restored and you can look straight ahead again, without guilt, without shame and without fear. When you can smile once again knowing that even though they tried, they could not destroy us. It is the moment when justice that «allows the truth of women to be installed at the social and community level» makes sense.¹ It shows that it is possible to transform collective imaginations so that they radiate light and healing instead of social condemnation to those who survived violence.

The photo of the granddaughter and grandmother shows us a path. How do we repair the damage that has been caused to us? What can we do to “transform injustice into justice? To be silenced in your own voice; humiliated in confidence and self-esteem, suffer terror in security and social death in legitimacy? Enslavement in freedom? The only way is through our own collective strength.



Restorative justice for the grandmothers of Sepur Zarco
Photo by: Esteban Biba
Instagram, 27 February 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BCTj6LwIlf/>



Photo by: Kimberly López
Source: La Hora, <https://lahora.gt>



Photo by: Sandra Sebastián
Source: Plaza Pública,
<https://www.plazapublica.com.gt>

During the Sepur Zarco trial, the grandmothers who testified covered their faces with cloaks, not out of shame, but because they feared for their lives. It was a terribly painful process.

For information about the trial:
<https://www.unwomen.org/es/news/stories/2018/10/feature-sepur-zarco-case>

We are reaching a moment in which realities are changing, when not only cruelty, abuse and violence are announced, but the material and subjective conditions are being created to repair the damage caused. When collective strength turns into listening, recognition, legitimacy, dance and joy as ways of healing wounds. This is what has been called «The Law of Women». A name given to the recovery of women's own and collective power, which gives rise to justice as an act of profound renewal from the roots and not just from the system.

It is about changing life: the Q'eqchi' grandmothers from Sepur Zarco who won this battle in the courts; the Mam and Chuj women from Huehuetenango who have been healing for decades; Ladino women who have fought for justice from urban spaces. All of them, along with the young women who take to the streets never to tolerate again, in any way, so much as a pinch more violence. We are part of that change; it is a paradigmatic cultural change that goes hand in hand with the great transformations of consciousness. We are the women of all peoples, the great protagonists of everyday life. The place of justice is in the small and large collectivities of women.

Healing is a permanent act of expanding consciousness. Healing inner hurts and oppressions is an act of transformation, it is a path toward the joining of all the struggles of the peoples, women and beings that inhabit this planet. May we all get up, may the tenderness, love and example of our ancestors allow us to be part of this cultural, spiritual and planetary transformation that requires our personal commitment and our collective effort. Let the place from which we observe be challenged, let our political act be to move from this place, to stop observing and to become change itself.

Deep gratitude for your legacy, Grandmothers.

¹ Amandine Fulchiron. Online presentation of the publication *Ley de mujeres, Agents of change*, march 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7INTsT_YIY

² Ibid.

*The stone's conscience
speaks from its centre
it says our name
the stone seeks its hand
and our hand seeks its stone
at its centre it guards our luck
our hard destiny
our soft destiny
my stone and I crossed paths
I threw it a few times
It came back in fragments
licked by the sun
the stone's heart was sweating
when I swallowed it in pieces
so it would not get lost*

Poem by Rosa Chávez

Piedra Ab'aj, 2019, The

Consciousness of the Stone

(Le uno'jinik le ab'aj)

Sepur Zarco series, 2020
Digital print with injection of
pigmented inks
50 x 92 cm
Courtesy of the artist













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places

under

siege

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López

A-1 53167
ARGENTINO



Page 264 a 269:
Exhibition views
A-1 53167 Places Under Siege
Photos: Andres Asturias / Marvin Asijtuj



LETTER
HARDWARE



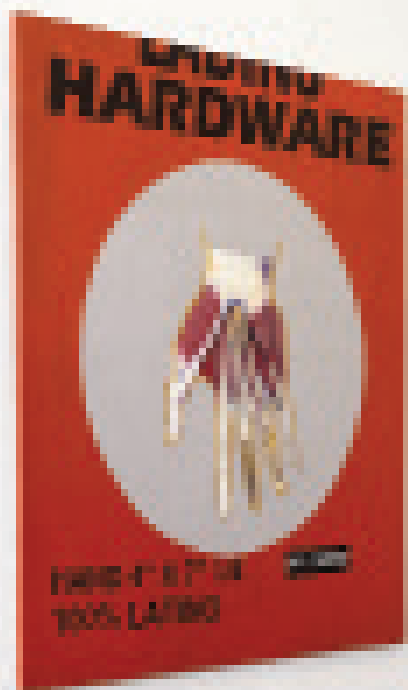
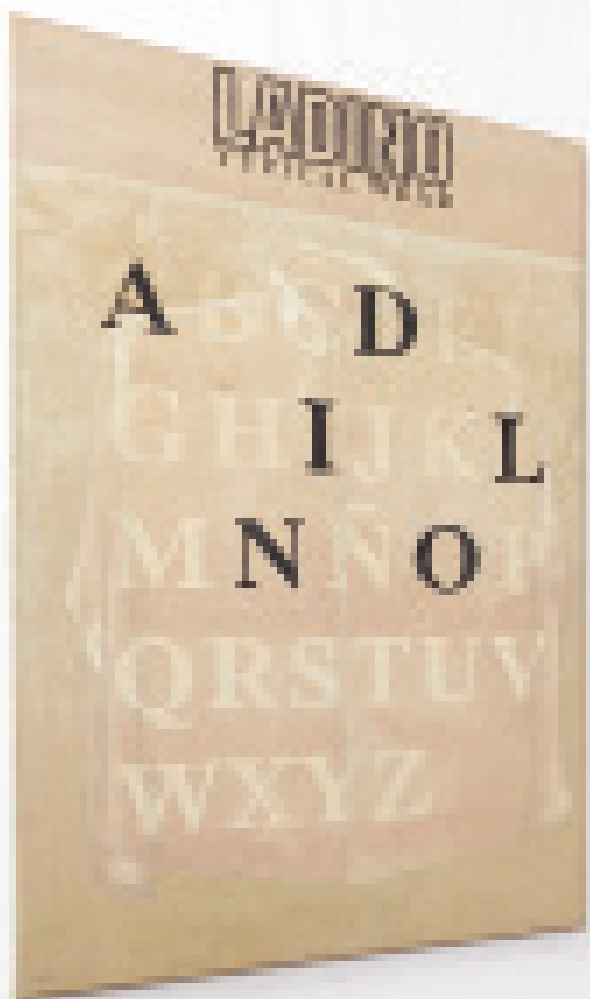
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GROUND ZEROS: On the work of Aníbal López.

by Alexia Tala

In 1930, as an attempt to understand how the collective power of the masses worked, the artist Flavio de Carvalho used his own body as an aesthetic platform to trigger an experiment. *Experience n.2* involved his participation in the Corpus Christi procession in Sao Paulo, Brazil without removing his hat. It was a minimally provocative act that caused the social mass to react with mounting violence until it threatened to lynch him, causing the artist to panic. Through this art action, Flavio de Carvalho tried to experience in his own flesh the reaction of the masses that he would later convert into a delirious text. If in the 1930s de Carvalho's art practice was considered disruptive, 82 years later we find ourselves once again encountering this sort of audacity, this need for quasi-anthropological experimentation involving specific social groups that place the artist in the role of a social critic. Only in this case, the artist Aníbal López (Guatemala City 1964-2014) does not make himself into the «element of disturbance», as Flavio himself describes it, but rather creates a situation and certain conditions to provoke the spectators, in the hope that they will slowly

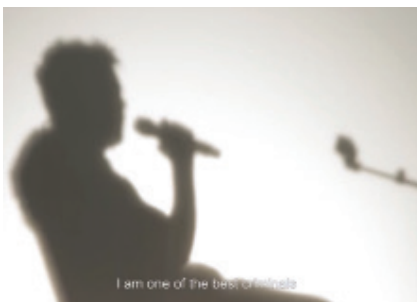
realize what they are experiencing, question themselves, and perhaps react to what they are witnessing.

In 2012, Aníbal López performed the work *Testimony* (*Testimonio*), 2012 for Documenta 13 Kassel. Behind a cloth screen that allowed only his silhouette to be seen, a man in front of a microphone answered questions from the public about his job as an assassin. Together, he and López had travelled from Guatemala to this prestigious art event to mount this action that would last more than 40 minutes, and in which the identity of the interviewee was protected for everyone's safety. The man claimed to be a professional in the art of killing. He explained how his method of murder depended on the type of victim; how he had taught others his trade; how the business worked, and how the police themselves covered up these actions in Guatemala, among many other topics.

Testimony illustrates López's style, which pushes viewers into an irksome discomfort zone, bringing reality into the seemingly innocuous and protected sphere of art. And in doing so, it transforms the viewer into an accomplice. Due to its strong sense of presentation and synthesis (issues that I will explore in some specific works later), Aníbal López's body of work makes words like critique and denunciation—already so banal when used to label art in Latin America—wholly inadequate to describe it. True, López is critical, and he denounces, but with his formal resolutions he also achieves much more than that. An in-the-flesh



Testimony, 2012. Video performance carried out in Documenta, Kassel
Private collection
Photo: Elisa Penagini



Testimony, 2012. Video still
Performance carried out in Documenta, Kassel

display of art and society's cynical condition is an element that he articulates in several of his works. The main scene of the Swedish film *The Square* (2017)¹ gave us a relevant image: the guests at the patrons' dinner party feel uncomfortable at the antics (ludicrous and grotesque acts) of a human monkey, but not enough to react against the aggressive harassment of a young girl. Both the film and López's works show the rules of a game that has been invented by the artist, and the viewer's desire to stay inside the rules. In the case of Flavio de Carvalho, it is the artist himself who is inside, and his desire is to take an experience to the limit. At one point in this juncture, something excessive happens, which is only possible in the space delimited by the artistic experience.²

As antecedents of *Testimonio*, the work presented in Documenta 13, we can recognize three art actions of Aníbal López which operate from the same cynicism: *The Loan* (2000), *Hugo* (2002) and *Beautiful People* (2003). In *The Loan*, Aníbal robs a man on the street with a gun, specifically on Reforma Avenue in Guatemala City, and with the proceeds of the robbery, he covers the costs of the exhibition (the printing of the work, invitations, montage, bottles of wine for the opening cocktail hour). The work in question turns out to be a brief explanatory text about the robbery, a kind of confession in which he also informs attendees about the source of the exhibition's funding. In the work *Hugo*, the artist brought a pig to Ida Pisani's Prometeo Gallery in Italy, for visitors to feed, caress and play with. At the exhibition's opening, after walking around the gallery as a pet with a pink ribbon around its neck, the pig is cooked and served to the audience. A split-screen video shows images of the pig alive in the gallery and being grilled to be eaten. In *Beautiful People*, López instructs the security guards of the Contexto gallery, owned by Belia de Vico, to allow into the exhibition only those people they consider beautiful. The number of people began to decrease progressively and little by little the guests realized that they were part of the inaugural performance. Aníbal López was unable to get in. It is no coincidence that these three actions took place at the exhibition's opening event. This is the moment at which the work "happens", in which the superficiality of the art world is most nakedly on show because no one goes to see what is exhibited there but to be seen themselves. The "art" institution is characterized by its frivolity, its capacity to trivialize what is real, and as is conveyed in much of Lopez's work, its effective impunity. López aims to show how the act of performance—or rather an action that is located within the boundaries of art—manages to evade legality. In this sense, he is interested in the space that is created out of his intervention, as de Carvalho would say, as an "agent

EL PRESTAMO

El día 29 de septiembre del 2000 realice una acción, la cual consistió en asaltar a una persona con apariencia de clase media. Se realizó de la siguiente manera: armado con una pistola salí a una calle de la zona 10, paré a un hombre como de unos 44 o 45 años, pelo castaño y escaso, un poco pasado de peso, le apunté a la cara diciéndole, esto no es un asalto, es un préstamo, y se lo devolveré en lenguaje visual para sus hijos. Dicha persona me entregó Q 874.35.

Esta obra está siendo patrocinada por el hombre que fue asaltado, con lo cual se ha financiado: las invitaciones, montaje y parte del brindis de esta muestra.

A-1 53167

Guatemala 21/10/508 D.O.

El Préstamo (The Loan), 2000.
Print on bond paper, 152 x 106 cm
Private collection
Photo: Marko Bradich



Hugo, 2002. Art action
Photographic documentation ; digital
print on cotton paper, 35 x 17 cm
Estate of Aníbal López
Photo: Byron Mármol

provocateur". *With Testimony*, these three previous works gain greater strength by showing us that, taken as a whole, López's actions largely seek to "present what is real". In the case of the assassin, this verged on the surreal for the European public, but for the Guatemalan public attending, it became a kind of «hyperrealism» that had followed them all the way to Germany. Witnessing the crudity of one's own context on the other side of the Atlantic only drove home what is difficult to digest every day in Guatemala but which in some way becomes natural. While part of the public pressed the assassin with questions, the Guatemalan attendees left the auditorium. And that is exactly what Aníbal intended. As his son Andreas explains, «What my father does is to break things up, he leaves them naked and raw so that people have to re-explore them, have to confront them once again, and in that confrontation, there is art».³

And thinking about that appearance of art that Andreas is speaking of, it is one that Flavio de Carvalho identified in his experience as an «experimental fictitious state»; in Aníbal López's case, I would call it an «experimental hyperreal state». The artist has an urgent need to present a reality that relates closely to having lived in Guatemala, a place whose violence—one of the most extreme in Latin America, as history shows—has been silenced and naturalised. Perhaps the clearest work in this sense is *30th of June* (2000), an intervention in which during the night before a military parade

the artist scatters coal through the streets where the soldiers will march. The next morning the army was unable to clean all the soot from the ground, so that as the soldiers marched down the street they left footprints, in an allegorical reference to the ashes of the bodies this very militia had burned. Employing these footprints, López makes the bodies reappear and imprints them on the territory, symbolically forcing the guilty to confess to a crime before the ingenuous public. But among the historical problems of the Guatemalan context, López concerned himself in some of his early works—mainly in the *Ladino* series (ca.1995-2003) —with ideas that operate at the origins of racial discrimination and identity. In these works, in drawings on paper, paintings on canvas or installations composed of drawn and painted boxes, the artist shows images of bodies or fractions of bodies, depicted without skin, seeking thereby to show how anatomical differences are invented as a justification for discrimination.

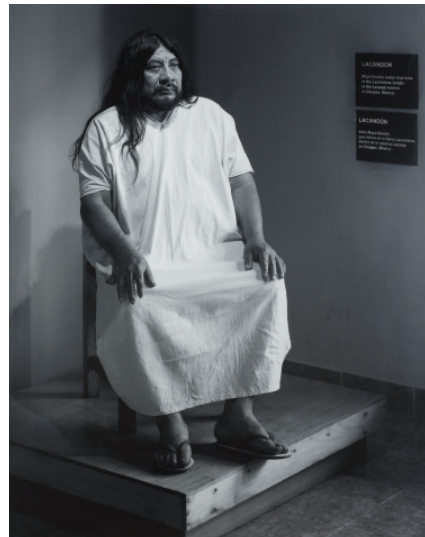
Thinking about these works, we can understand the deeper motivations underlying López's sense of his own de-identification. It is by no means strange, therefore, that during this period he began to sign his works as «A-1 53167», the number of his identity card. For a long time, I thought that he used the number to give himself a name that implied no association with an ethnic group or social class. According to Ligia Peláez,⁴ Aníbal began earlier to



30 de Junio (30th of June), 2000. Photographs 51 x 34 cm. each
Private collection
Photo: Marko Bradich



Exportación importación (Export, Import), 1999. Installation. Dimensions variable. Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol



Lacandón, 2006. Photograph 150 x 180 cm. Private collection
Photo: Marko Bradich

experiment with identity issues, initially using his middle name and second surname and signing as Asdrúbal Juárez, only later using his identity card. All this was part of a reflection on time and global social history. The discussion was about when America's reality began, taking it as the date 1492, the year of Christopher Columbus' arrival. That is why the artist used that date D.O. (after the West) in many of his works.

Linked to the problem of identity and ethnic discrimination, there is a work that connects with the previous ones based on a historical datum. In *Lacandón* (2006), López places Don Carmelo, an indigenous person from Chiapas, as if he belonged to the objects in the Frontera de Corozal site museum. Next to the man appears the inscription: "Lacandón. Maya-Quiché Indian, lives in the Lacandón jungle within the Lacanjá reserve in Chiapas, Mexico". This work arose from the fact that a group of Lacandons were exhibited to the city's elites in the Guatemala National Fair of 1938, organized by the writer Mario Monteforte Toledo during the government of Jorge Ubico. Festivities like these served to provide entertainment to elites of the time and served as a time reference for Aníbal López.

Following what he has proposed in the works mentioned so far, there is a question of which art is part, but not exclusively so, as it has to do with broader questions of the human condition. As I was saying, in López there is an interest in performing acts that address a theme even as they present the theme addressed. Fetishisation and morbidity are topics that are exposed as issues at the same time as they are recreated. The artist manages, then, to work from the creation and recreation of reality. Hence, we must say that the performative is at the service of performativity: doing and saying happen at the same time. The Testimonio audience actively participates as a catalyst for the flow of information from the assassin—and in turn for his confession. The hunger for spectacle appears at this moment as an inalienable part of the artistic experience (we return here to the illustrative image of *The Square*). Referring to a performance called *La Cena* (2000), a work in which the artist offers a complete dinner to a tramp inside the gallery, the artist comments:

The idea of art has always been used as a form of denunciation, trying with this to transform its society, to give it new parameters of thinking that will make it question its environment for an «evolution» that allows us to transform what we have created together. But deep down, it will always continue to be a product for an elite where the only beneficiary is the artist, who continues to inflate his curriculum with each work. The intention of this piece is at least to give something real to someone and not just my grown and stagnant ego.

Formally, as an action or performance, the purpose is to assume reality as an expression of itself, the support and the medium being the need of a society that is rotting into oblivion.⁵

The dimension of the human condition encompassed in these works—we can speculate—is to be found in morality’s nature, and what makes it possible. Morality is never given but is malleable, and it must be disrupted to be identified, to discover where it is and what its limits are, López tells us. And the necessary reality factor is the law. The dislocation in the case of *Testimonio* is a substantial part of the work because it is what allows the artist, the assassin and the participants to be exempted from it. In legal terms, the work is a confession of indeterminate wrongful acts in a country where they cannot be tried. That is, the crimes are announced without proper names and outside the jurisdiction where their prosecution is possible. Thus, neither damage to the image of the artist or the police institution are, in truth, criminal acts due to the impossibility of their prosecution, even though they specifically expose the negligence of both. López’s interest, then, is more solid than a mere accusation:

I believe that to get to the root of a problem, what is important is not a denunciation but a conscious analysis of the matter in question in an empirical-scientific manner, one that allows us to see and experience the contradictions of our own parameters at first hand.⁶

Throughout his career, Aníbal López’s works follow a very precise thematic and formal organization, articulating a body of work that examines different themes but never abandons its central axes: the reality of Guatemala and Latin America; the problems of human morality; and the space of art as a setting that is particularly apt for establishing relations between them.

In his works, what we prefer not to see or assess is brought to us through a single act. It is perhaps what underlies his work as a pseudo-formal strategy, a powerful synthetic capacity in that complex

diagnoses are condensed into a direct and apparently simple act. This synthetic character prevents them from being repeatable actions. They are specific actions developed out of contextual resolutions and strategic management of the blind spots between the field of art and legality. This zone of blind spots between art and legality is what Aníbal calls a "site". For Aníbal López, works create sites, in a different sense to physical space. Actions, he tells us, are abstract spaces that become visible and comprehensible only when an occupant appears. This is the key to his strategic intelligence.

We can see both works (López and de Carvalho) as field experiments on how society reacts to certain disturbances. We can compare how in the 1930s, a man not taking off his green hat in a Corpus Christi procession led the masses to an attempted lynching that ended with police intervention, and how in 2012, an assassin travelled abroad and openly declared with total impunity how he carried out his crimes. If there is one thing that caused López great frustration, it is that in none of his actions did anyone formally denounce the crime committed, neither the armed robbery on Reforma Avenue nor the assassin in Kassel. Although it made the headlines locally, nothing reached the hands of justice, which is frustrating on the one hand, but on the other, confirms what López wanted to stage.

I think I take no risk in saying that Aníbal López is the most influential artist in Central America, especially on the local Guatemalan scene, both for his contemporaries and for subsequent generations. Appreciation of his work and his legacy is still in debt in our region, but I believe it will not be long before we recognize the power of his ideas and the intellectual quality of his works. This will happen when the unique character of his operations is understood, as well as the courage of his ideas and the nature of the ground zeros created by his actions in confronting art with reality.

¹ *The Square*, a Swedish film directed by Ruben Östlund about a contemporary art museum curator in charge of the exhibition "The Square", a controversial advertising campaign installation that invites visitors to show altruism and respect, ideas that are belied by the

behaviour of the curator, due to a series of situations in which he becomes involved. The film tackles the cynicism and absurdity of the art system and contemporary culture.

² The strategy of presenting reality to «awaken» the spectator has specific antecedents and reflects influences on López's work associated with his dialogue with the artist Santiago Sierra. López and Sierra had a close relationship due to an affinity of ideas. Sierra had links with Guatemala and created several works there, such as *8 people paid to stay inside cardboard boxes* (1999) and *Public transported between two points in Guatemala City* (2000).

³ "Aníbal López Oral Archive", a project by Alexia Tala and Gabriel Rodríguez. Interview with the artist's son, Andreas López.

⁴ "Aníbal López Oral Archive", a project by Alexia Tala and Gabriel Rodríguez Pellecer. Interview with the artist's wife Ligia Peláez. Peláez is an anthropologist and the couple shared a rich intellectual dialogue.

⁵ Writings by Aníbal López on the performance *La cena*, October 13th, 2000. Belia de Vico Archive / Contexto Gallery, June 2002.

⁶ Ibid.

A-1 53167: Ways of Disturbing

by Gabriel Rodríguez Pellecer

Aníbal López's retrospective comprises several stages of his artistic production. He is a key figure in understanding the contemporary art scene in Central America during the 1990s and 2000s.

This exhibition ranges from his beginnings as a painter when his provocations found their target in the Catholic conservatism of this country. He painted saints and religious figures with naked and transgender bodies. Towards the end of the 1990s, he filled his canvasses with an anthropological quest to understand the Ladino. He portrayed the Ladino as a character without skin, without identity, and at the same time, as a worker, a middle-class person or as a tool broken in pieces, as in *Ladino Hardware* (1997).

On meeting and collaborating with Diego Britt and Sylvestre Gobar, he changed course and turned to

action art. He began to consider the economy as a trigger of dynamics that determine the human condition. We all have a price, and the work of A-1 53167 aims to show it. His works strip the economic system bare to highlight its excesses and inequalities and how these impinge on the ethical and moral decisions of its, often marginal, actors.

In his projects, he wanted to make the viewer and the art world feel uncomfortable by putting them in situations that cause inner conflicts or make them accomplices of illegal acts. Such is the case of work like *The Loan* (2000) in which a text narrates a robbery perpetrated by the artist. He has us read the text and then drink wine that was bought with the stolen money, thus turning us into accomplices. And he even makes the Kassel Documenta into an accomplice with the work *Testimony* (2012), in which a paid assassin confesses to the public, answering questions about his work.

The economy, as a way of understanding the political, psychological and power dynamics of society became a pivot of Aníbal López's artistic production.

The Ladino Series

Aníbal López's projects always began with a confrontation and were built on discomfort. This characteristic can be found in his first exhibitions in the early 1990s. This interest in antagonising his viewers led him



Yacente (Recumbent) 1 y 2, 1993.
Oil on canvas, 61 x 81 cm. Private collection. Photo: Byron Mármol



Ladino Hardware, 1999. Oil on canvas.
77 x 122 cm. Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol

down different paths and, without having any academic pretensions, Aníbal's projects addressed issues often discussed in anthropology and sociology. There are no concessions in his provocations, only inquiries, provocation and incitement. From being populated by religious imagery in the mid-1990s, his images turned into a quest to unveil, discover and scrutinise a problematic and unfinished identity, that of the Ladino.

Trained as López was at the National School of Plastic Arts in Guatemala as a painter, these inquiries began with painting. An immense curiosity led him to pose many questions about this in-between character who aspires to be white and despises the indigenous, a question of identity in Guatemala. Ladino identity stems from denial, so adopting a *mestizo* (mixed race) status is also problematic. Aníbal decides, through series such as *Ladino Hardware*, to place the Ladino according to his social class: this middle-class type whose only value is labour. These paintings portray him as just another tool in the toolbox.

In his famous work *Being and Time* (1927), the German philosopher Martin Heidegger uses the example of *the tool* and *the broken tool* to question scientific thought and preference for practical reason. We think of the hammer only if it breaks, just as we are aware of our internal organs only if we feel pain. We can use this idea to analyse López's paintings on the Ladino concept.

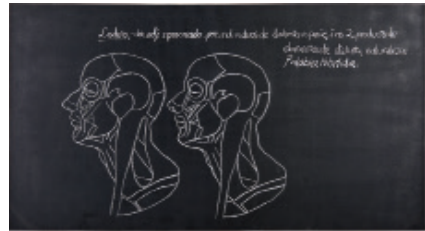
The working-class person, who is dedicated to working with his hands as a carpenter, blacksmith or mason, becomes a tool of the economy. Within a capitalist system, this individual is transformed into a manifestation of that abhorrent concept, human capital; he ceases to be a subject and becomes a tool, an object. For the worker, of course, work is a dignified activity with which, together with his family, he can survive. But Aníbal López's work seeks to question the sociological part of human relations in the class struggle and the different ways in which bodies are perceived. One body is rated to be intellectual capital, while another is exploited as body capital. Besides the theories of political economy, López is interested in this skinless body, which is muscle alone. Returning to

Heidegger, we could make an analogy with the pictorial proposal. For the economic system (and specifically for the owners of big capital) workers' bodies are made to be invisible, they are subjects of little importance. In a gesture revealing the status of the working class as a *tool*, López wanted these bodies to turn into the *broken tool*. Thus, he could bring to the surface the prejudices that exist in such a segregated society, one in which inequality has reached the point at which some bodies become expendable.

In the 'Ladino' series, Aníbal López gives us an x-ray of Guatemalan identities using various sculptural exercises. In a reference to Andy Warhol's Brillo soap-pad boxes, he intervenes with fragments of the Ladino's body, revealing his muscles, as well as with a series of boxes intervened with silkscreens parodying surnames as registered trademarks. Surnames like Cojtí, in reference to Demetrio Cojtí, one of the main indigenous intellectuals who gave shape, in the 1990s, to the process of Mayanisation as a political identity of Guatemala's original peoples. Bauer is a brand that refers to Alfonso Bauer Paiz, one of the most important post-1944 revolution left-wing intellectuals. Juárez is Aníbal's second surname. Peláez is the surname of his partner at the time, Ligia Peláez, with whom he began conversations on sociology, which influenced his artistic production in later years, especially his performances. From these works,



Ladino – músculos (Ladino – Muscles), 1999
Mixed media on canvas
171 x 150 cm
Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol



Ladino, 1995
Mixed media and encaustic on board
22 x 27 cm
Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol



Exportación importación (Export Import), 1999
Installation
Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol

one can see Aníbal's quest to antagonise any form of the economic, intellectual or political elite.

In Guatemala, as in most places that suffered colonisation, surnames have always been a form of symbolic capital that prefers some bodies over others. Just as surnames are trademarks that symbolise economic power, the surnames López or Juárez are simply links in the chain of production of a poorly distributed wealth.

The Ladino fragmented inside several boxes is the product of a mutilated identity, of a body, fragmented, packed and ready to be exported (or smuggled) to the United States, in search of the American dream (or nightmare). Although the worker is not considered a "legal" citizen, a job there brings a more decent life than in Central America. Aníbal experienced this first hand some years before starting this series, migrating north and working different jobs. The hand of the painter that we appreciate in these works was formed from the hands of the worker.

Points and Lines on Planes

In his 1926 book, *Point and Line to Plane*, Wassily Kandinsky (Russia, 1866-1944) argued that the point was the smallest unit of a drawing and was directionless. Meanwhile, the line was a succession of points on a plane. On the plane, according to Kandinsky, we can appreciate a sensation of lightness and liberation in the upper part of compositions, while in the lower part, we experience condensation and weight. Taking Kandinsky's ideas in dialogue with Piero Manzoni's drawing exercises as a starting point, we can locate Aníbal López's Line and Point projects. Manzoni was one of López's important references, both for his provocations like *Artist's Shit* (1961), as well as the unusual and novel way in which he approached drawing.

«Third world» artists are always expected to refer in their work to the crises suffered by their countries of origin: violence, poverty, inequality, injustice and the like. This expectation always responds to a form of

exoticisation and the problem of there being a single narrative in the news. A-1 53167's projects on the idea *Point and Line on the Plane* respond to both context and abstraction.

Let us take as an example the piece *Straight Line* (2013). In a volume made up of sheets of bond paper, with a point drawn in the centre of each page, we find an illustration of the idea of the line as a succession of points, in this case, climbing vertically. The size of the volume is about the height of a typical sculpture base. From a distance, it looks like an empty plinth. On approaching, one can see that the sculpture is inside the volume and consists of a line that is both virtual and real, formed by each of the points drawn in the centre of each sheet.

Now, look at the piece titled *9mm. shots*, where five wooden plinths are sculpted by bullets. The way this sculpture base is penetrated responds to the same concept of the volume made of sheets of paper, but in this case, it is bullets rather than points that penetrate it. Both pieces require close-up inspection. One way of looking at them sees a plastic solution, while the other sees a forensic one. These *9mm. shots* plinths are displayed aligned and are reminiscent of the way people are lined up in a firing squad. Both exercises are drawings as well as sculptures.

Part of this line of work is *Black Plastic Ribbon 110 Metres Long by 4 Metres Wide Hanging From the Incienso Bridge* (2003). This piece was



La distancia entre dos puntos (The Distance Between Two Points), 2008
Watercolour, 52 x 45 cm. Private collection. Photo: Byron Mármol



Línea recta (Straight line), 2013
Sculpture, reams of paper and ink
Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol



Nueve milímetros (Nine Millimetres), 2009. Sculpture
Wood intervened with gun shots
45 x 45 x 100 cm each
Aníbal López collection
Photo: Byron Mármol



Listón negro (Black Ribbon), 2001
Photography (polyptych), 25 x 25 cm each
Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol



El punto en movimiento (The moving point), 2002
Documentation in photography
Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol

made on June 21, 2003, as a reaction and contribution to protests against the presidential candidacy of former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, in which black ribbons appeared on the streets on poles, trees, cars and windows. A-1 53167 upscaled these billowing ribbons to reflect the seriousness of the threat posed by Ríos Montt's candidacy. The Incense Bridge in Guatemala City has been a recurrent spot for suicides. Taking this feature into account, López makes a huge tape that is thrown into the void to evoke the "political suicide" that the inscription of Ríos Montt's candidacy represented while accentuating the theme of mourning. This ribbon not only evoked an immediate political duel, but the mourning of the victims of 36 years of civil war (translator's note: the Spanish word duelo means both a duel and mourning). This long black tape, loose, waving, grimy, surely produced a sound that gave a voice to the silence of mourning.

The Distance Between Two Points (2002) and *Point in Motion* (2002) are the best-known actions in this category of López's work. Both pieces drift from the back of a bus and two cars travelling through Guatemala City. With these actions, López questioned the limits of drawing, which would be determined by the traffic, movement and speed of the cars. They are lines conditioned by the city.

The work of A-1 53167 encompasses incisively the conflictive social relations produced in a troubled city such as Guatemala

City. In his artistic practice, the political conjuncture of the 1990s appears as a backdrop, where we can find events that would impact the decades to come, such as the signing of the Peace Accords. This symbolic signature served A-1 53167 as a route for exploring the public space for his actions in search of an audience distinct from the art gallery audience.

Another element that runs through the actions of Aníbal López is complicity. His projects are registered within an “informal” economy, in which commercial exchanges have, on the one hand, a Guatemalan state built on mafia foundations, and, on the other hand, middle and lower classes that function on a survival basis. López was able to lay bare this socioeconomic context by showing the consequences of capitalism, disrupting the space between ethics and morality.

ECONOMICS: The Metaphysics of Violence

by Leonel Juracán

If we were able to strip money of its multiple present-day meanings, perhaps we would be left with nothing but foreign exchange parlours and stock exchanges, like ancient temples of a universally practised secular cult. Coins, like the fetishes and amulets of some pagan faith. Banks and fiscal reserves like dolmens or monoliths, vestiges of an obscure tribal power. However, and of this one can be sure, many of the social habits and forms of conduct that derive from money would also remain.

But what is money and how does it acquire its value, so much value that it can buy freedom, peace or life? We rarely reflect on such matters, thinking as

we do that money is worryingly and inexorably tied to survival. In his story *El Zahir*, Borges tells us that a coin is concrete proof of our faith in eternity, our fear of death made concrete, and money a representation of that nature that we perceive as unchanging and yet dynamic, as an eternal and infinite multiplicity and unity.

We could say that Aníbal López's work questions the creation of this symbol by pointing to the logical incoherence that can arise from using money to trade other goods that are symbolic at the same time; but beyond that, his work turns into a deconstruction of the symbol, something like a mathematical demonstration of the contradictions between physics and semiotics, a reflection of the search between the limits of grammatical precision and the distorted image of nature that we construct with language.

In works like *Ladino Hardware* (1997), *Hugo* (2002), *Se compra, se vende se alquila, se regala* (*Bought, Sold, Rented, Given Away*, 1999-2011), *El préstamo* (*The Loan*, 2000), *MS and M18* (2007) or *We'll Meet at the Summit* (2009), he has us think about the value of money compared with other abstract values: the body's usefulness as a work tool, the affection one has for a pet, the fear of violence caused by economic disadvantage, the false security given by purchasing power, the moral probity of not being materially responsible for a robbery.

SE VENDE

SE ALQUILA

SE PRESTA

SE REGALA

Se vende, Se alquila, Se presta, Se regala (series: For Sale, For Rent, For Loan, For Gift), 1999-2011
Aerosol, acrylic on canvas
Aníbal López collection
Photo: Byron Mármol



MS and M18 Dogs, 2007. Photography
58 x 38 cm. Private collection
Photo: Byron Mármol

Ludwig Wittgenstein tells us that we sometimes think of the meaning of signs as mental states of their user, and at other times as the role that symbols are playing in the system of language. The choice is up to every one of us.

Text published on the occasion of Aníbal López's individual exhibition, *Economía informal (Informal Economy)*, in May 2011 at the (Ex)Céntrico space of the Centro Cultural de España, in Guatemala City.

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Universes of Matter

Francisca Aninat

Chile | 1979

Lives and works in Santiago. Master of Arts, Central Saint Martins College, London. Individual exhibitions: Arróniz Gallery, Mexico City; Museo de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile; Rollo Contemporary Art, London. Group exhibitions: Bendana Pinel, Paris; Sala Alcalá 31, Madrid; Tegenbosch van vreden, Amsterdam, Wifredo Lam Center, Havana. Collections: Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago de Chile; FEMSA, Mexico; Cisneros Fontanals Foundation, Miami; David Roberts Art Foundation, London. Prizes/scholarships: National Fund for Culture and the Arts, Chile, 2015, 2016; national selection for Prix Canson de France, 2015; CIFO 2012.

Hellen Ascoli

Guatemala | 1984

Lives and works in Wisconsin, USA. Master of Fine Arts, Art Institute of Chicago. Individual exhibitions: Museo Tamayo / The Back Room (virtual); Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; Projects Ultravioleta, Guatemala City; Sol del Río, Guatemala City. Group exhibitions: greengrassi and Corvi-Mora, London; Museo de Correos, Guatemala City; Lawndale Art Center, Houston; Videobrasil, São Paulo; Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, CA. Prizes/Scholarships: illy SustainArt, ARCO 2020; Frieze Focus Stand (with Ultraviolet Projects), 2019.

Ana Teresa Barboza

Peru | 1981

Lives and works in Lima. Bachelor of Art, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Individual exhibitions: Wu Galería, Lima; Now Contemporary Art Gallery, Miami; Galería Revolver, Lima. Collective exhibitions: ARCO, Madrid; Ch.ACO, Santiago de Chile; AIR 19, Melbourne; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Lima; Rijswijk Museum; Academia de San Fernando, Madrid. Residences: Fubon, Taipei; Utopiana, Geneva; Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. Prizes/scholarships: National Art and Innovation Award, Lima, 2019; National Painting Competition Banco Central de Reserva del Perú, 2010; Visual Arts Contest "Passport for an Artist", Lima, 2006.

Edgar Calel

Guatemala | 1987

Lives and works between Brazil and Guatemala. Mayan-kaqchikel artist, graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas Rafael Rodríguez Padilla, Guatemala. Individual exhibitions: : Oficina Cultural Oswald de Andrade, São Paulo; Goethe Institute, São Paulo; Casa / Estudio B'atz', Córdoba (Argentina). Group exhibitions: Frieze London; Berlin Biennial; Museo de Arte Moderno Carlos Mérida. Collections: Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San José (Costa Rica). Residences: CEIA, Belo Horizonte; Lastro, São Paulo; Resilience (Silo), Rio de Janeiro. Prizes: Juannio Latin American Art Contest/Auction, 2015.

Manuel Chavajay

Guatemala | 1982

Lives and works in San Pedro La Laguna, Sololá. He studied at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas Rafael Rodríguez Padilla, Guatemala, and the Institute for Training and Development, Amherst, Massachusetts. First indigenous artist with a solo exhibition at the Museo de Arte Moderno Carlos Mérida, Guatemala City. Individual exhibitions: Galería Extra, Guatemala City. Group exhibitions: Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier, Vienna; SIART Biennial, La Paz; Biennial of Curitiba; Biennial of Visual Arts of the Central American Isthmus. Collections: Reina Sofía Museum, Madrid; Ortiz-Gurdián Foundation, León, Nicaragua.

Detanico Lain

Brazil | 1974 y 1973

Angela Detánico and Rafael Laín live and work in Paris. Solo exhibitions: The Club, Tokyo; Galería Vera Cortês, Lisboa; Museu Brasileiro da Escultura, São Paulo; Casa del Lago, UNAM, Mexico City; Galería Vermelho, São Paulo. Group exhibitions: Maison des Arts, Brussels; Modern Museum, Sweden; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; CCS Bard Hessel Museum, New York; L'Art Pur Gallery, Riyadh; São Paulo Biennial; Venice Biennale; Mercosur Biennial; Biennial of Havana; Mostra Internazionale di Architettura, Venice; Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial, Nigata. Prizes: Nam June Paik 2004, Germany.

Elimo Eliseo

Tacaná, San Marcos, Guatemala | 1975

Originally from the village of Cunlaj. Videographic technician, advertising and artistic painter, with audio and video production works made in his San Marcos-based studio and presented on regional television channels. This is the first time that he has participated in the Biennial.

Rafael Freyre

Lima, Peru | 1978

Graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at the Universidad Ricardo Palma. Master of Fine Arts, University of Plymouth, England and the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam, Netherlands. He worked as an architect and designer in Rotterdam and later in Rome with the Italian architect Massimo Fuksas. He also worked for a short period in New York and Bali with theatre director Robert Wilson. He is currently Creative Director at Estudio "Rafael Freyre", where he leads a team developing different projects combining architecture, design and art.

Wingston González

Livingston, Guatemala | 1986

Lives and works in Guatemala City. Author of more than a dozen texts published in America and Europe. Awarded the "Luis Cardoza y Aragón" Mesoamerican poetry prize, 2015. In 2020, was included in the Forbes Central America magazine The Most Creative in the Region list. Co-author (with Bernabé Arévalo) of the multimedia book New Manual of Procedures for a Sentimental Education 1 (YAXS / La Valiente, 2017). He is a regular collaborator of the artist Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa, with whom he has developed the projects Heart of the Scarecrow / place of consolation (32 São Paulo Biennial, 2016), Linnæus in Tenebris / the beach awaits you (CAPC, Contemporary Art Museum, Bordeaux, 2017) and What will I do with my place in heaven (Toronto Art Biennial, 2019).

Ayrson Heráclito

Brazil | 1968

Lives and works in Salvador de Bahía, Brazil. PhD in Communication and Semiotics, Pontificia Universidad Católica de São Paulo. Solo exhibitions: Blau Projects Gallery, São Paulo; Raw Material Company, Dakar; Museo de Arte Moderno de Bahía. Group exhibitions: Galerie Imane Farès, Paris; Weltmuseum, Vienna; Europalia Brazil, Brussels; Biennial of African Photography, Bamako; Mercosur Biennial; Luanda Triennial; Venice Biennale. Collections: Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt; Videobrasil Cultural Association; Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro; Museo de Arte Moderno, Bahía; Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon. Prizes: PIPA 2016; Novo Banco Photo 2015.

Diego Isaías Hernández Méndez

Guatemala | 1970

Lives and works in San Juan La Laguna, Sololá. He is a draughtsman, painter, and sculptor, and one of the best-known exponents of Tz'utuhil Mayan art. Exhibitions: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institute,

Washington D.C.; Glama-Rama Salon, San Francisco, CA; Oakland Museum, CA; Springfield Public Library, Massachusetts. Prizes: Glifo de Oro, Bial de Arte Paiz 1998, Guatemala.

Uriel Orlow

Switzerland | 1973

Lives and works in Lisbon and London. PhD in Fine Arts, University of Geneva. Solo exhibitions: Kunsthalle Mainz; La Loge, Brussels; Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Paris. Group exhibitions: Venice Biennale; Manifesta 9 + 12, Genk/Palermo; Lubumbashi Biennale; Yinchuan Biennial; Sharjah Biennial; Moscow Biennale; Mercosur Biennial; Tate Modern and Tate Britain, London; Centre for Contemporary Art, Geneva; Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Prizes: C. F. Meyer 2020; Sharjah Biennial Award 2017; City of Zurich Art Prize, 2015; Swiss Art Prize, Art Basel 2008, 2009, 2012.

Antonio Pichillá

Guatemala | 1982

Lives and works in San Pedro La Laguna, Sololá. Graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas Rafael Rodríguez Padilla, Guatemala. Member of the TEI-CA group (Science and Art Research Study Workshop). Exhibitions: For Site, Hong Kong; CCS Bard, Hessel Museum of Art, New York; Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San José (Costa Rica), Berlin Biennial. Collections: Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid. Prizes: Juannio Latin American Art Contest / Auction, 2017; Intercontinental Indigenous Biennial (Honourable Mention), Mexico City, 2012.

Óscar Santillán

Ecuador | 1980

Lives and works in Amsterdam. Master in Sculpture, Virginia Commonwealth University, USA. Solo exhibitions: Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City; Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; Copperfield, London; Fundación ODEON, Bogotá; Spazio Calderara, Milan. Group exhibitions: LACMA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; NRW FORUM, Düsseldorf; Yokohama Triennial; SongEun Art Space, Seoul; Zadkine Museum, Paris. Residences: Skowhegan School, Madison, Maine; Jan Van Eyck Academy, Maastricht; Delfina Foundation, London; Fondazione Ratti, Como.

Angélica Serech

Guatemala | 1982

Lives and works in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango. Trained in the family and community textile tradition. Exhibitions: Art City Gallery and Studios, Ventura, CA; Latin American Art Contest / Auction Juannio, Guatemala City; Museo Ixchel del Traje Indígena, Guatemala City; MUA: Women in the Arts, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Pablo Vargas Lugo

Mexico | 1968

Lives and works in Mexico City. Bachelor of Visual Arts, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Individual exhibitions: Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; LACMA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA. Group exhibitions: Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Venice Biennale; São Paulo Biennial; Cuenca Biennial; Mercosur Biennial. Collections: Jumex, Mexico City; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; MACBA, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona.

pasts. eternal. futures.

Benvenuto Chavajay

Guatemala | 1978

Lives and works in Guatemala City. Graduated from the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas Rafael Rodríguez Padilla, Guatemala City. Group exhibitions: Sies + Höke, Düsseldorf; Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit; Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Long Beach, CA. Collections: Museo del Barrio, New York; Museo de Antioquia, Medellín; Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San José (Costa Rica); Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami; Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco, CA; MOLAA, Long Beach, CA; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Artist Pension Trust, New York. Awards/scholarships: 2008 Juannio Latin American Art Contest / Auction Award; CIFO 2013.

Emo de Medeiros

Benin | 1979

Lives and works between Cotonou and Paris. He studied at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris; the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris; Massachusetts College of Art. Solo exhibitions: Golborne Gallery, London; BackSlash Gallery, Paris; Africa Art Fair, Cape Town; Centre Arts et Cultures, Cotonou; Galerie RSF, Paris. Group exhibitions: Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Centre Pompidou, Paris; MARKK, Hamburg; AL Maaden Museum of Contemporary African Art, Marrakech; Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg; Videobrasil, São Paulo; LagosPhoto, Nigeria; Dakar Biennial; Marrakech Biennial; Venice Biennale. Digital Earth Research Grant 2018.

Paz Errázuriz

Chile | 1944

Lives and works in Santiago. Co-founder of the Association of Independent Photographers of Chile (AFI). Solo exhibitions: Barbican Gallery, London; Museo de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; MASP, São Paulo; MAPFRE Foundation, Madrid; Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg; House of the Americas, Havana; Tate Gallery, London; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Venice Biennale (representation of Chile 2015). Collections: Daros Latinamerica, Switzerland; Tate Gallery, London; Museo Reina Sofía; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao. First photographer to receive the National Art Award in Chile (2017). Scholarships: Guggenheim, Andes Foundation, Fulbright and Fondart.

Jessica Kairé

Guatemala | 1980

Lives and works in New York. Bachelor of Arts, Hunter College, New York. Co-founder and co-director of NuMu, Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Guatemala City. Solo exhibitions: EIDIA, New York; Centro Cultural Metropolitano, Guatemala City. Group exhibitions: Storefront for Art & Architecture, New York; Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City; Museo Jumex Museum, Mexico City; Museo del Barrio, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Mercosur Biennial, SITElines Biennial, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Great Tropical Biennial, Loíza, Puerto Rico; Biennial of the Museo del Barrio.

Vanderlei Lopes

Brazil | 1973

Lives and works in São Paulo. Bachelor of Arts, Universidade Estadual Paulista. Individual exhibitions: Galería Athena, Rio de Janeiro; Galería Marília Razuk, São Paulo; Museo de Arte Moderno, Rio de Janeiro; Galería Nueveochenta, Bogotá. Collective exhibitions: ArtNexus Space (digital); De Saisset Museum, Santa Clara, CA; Mana Contemporary Art, Chicago; Brazilian Museum of Sculpture. Collections: Pinacoteca of the State of São Paulo; Museum of Modern Art, São Paulo; Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro; Lara Project, Singapore; Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro; Figueiredo Ferraz Institute, Ribeirão Preto. Pirelli Award 2016.

Aníbal López (A-1 53167)

Guatemala | 1964-2014

Solo exhibitions: John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York; prometeogallery of Ida Pisani, Milan; ARTBUS, New York; Cátedra Arte de la Conducta, Havana; Sol del Río, Guatemala City; Adriano Olivetti Foundation, Rome; Centro Cultural de España, San José (Costa Rica); Espacio 0-27, Guatemala City; Museo de Arte Moderno de Guatemala. Biennials: Documenta 13, Kassel; Venice Biennale; Mercosur Biennial; Biennial of Havana; Prague Biennale. Collections: Centro Museo Vasco de Arte Contemporáneo, Álava; Paiz Foundation, Guatemala City; MACBA Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona. Prizes: Golden Lion for the best young artist, Venice Biennale 2001; Glifo de Oro, Bienal de Arte Paiz, 1994 and 1996.

Nelson Makengo

Democratic Republic of the Congo | 1990

Lives and works in Kinshasa. Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts of Kinshasa and La Fémis, Paris. Exhibitions: Galerie Imane Fàres, Paris; Kunstverein, Milan; São Paulo International Short Film Festival; Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, France; Videobrasil; Lubumbashi Biennale; Berlin International Film Festival. Residences: Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates; IDFA Amsterdam; WIELS Center for Contemporary Art, Brussels; Atelier Picha, Lubumbashi. Prizes: Sharjah Art Foundation 2019; Videobrasil 2019; Grand Prix, Saint-Louis Documentary Film Festival, Senegal, 2019; IDFA Award for Best Documentary Short Film, Amsterdam 2019.

Andrea Monroy

Guatemala | 1981

Lives and works in Guatemala City. Bachelor of Architecture, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala. Exhibitions: The Anderson Institute for Contemporary Art, Richmond, VA; Museo de Arte y Diseño Contemporáneo, San José (Costa Rica); Museo Ixchel del Traje Indígena, Latin American Art Contest and Auction Juannio y Galería Extra, Guatemala City; Centro de Cooperación Española, Antigua Guatemala. Exhibitions as part of the site/sign collective City of the Imagination in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala; The New School (Sheila Johnson Design Center), New York; Museo Tambo Quirquincho, La Paz; Bienal Centroamericano, San José (Costa Rica). Residence: Meet Factory, Prague.

Alejandro Paz

Guatemala | 1975

Lives and works in Guatemala City. Bachelor of Architecture, Universidad Francisco Marroquín, Guatemala. Individual exhibitions: Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española, Antigua Guatemala; (Ex) Céntrico, Cultural Center of Spain, Antigua Guatemala. Group exhibitions: PAI Project of Art and Independence; Ex-Teresa Arte Actual, Mexico City; Biennial del Caribe, Santo Domingo; Biennial de la Habana; Mercosur Biennial; São Paulo Biennial; Biennial of Valencia (Spain). Prizes: Grand Prix at the Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts, 2017. Collections: Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Oscar Eduardo Perén

Guatemala | 1950

Lives and works in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango. He has an artistic career of more than 50 years. His work has been recognised in publications such as Arte naïf Guatemala: Contemporary Guatemalan Mayan Painting, sponsored by UNESCO. He has won numerous national and international prizes. He has exhibited in Switzerland, China, Germany, Sweden, Norway and the United States.

Naomi Rincón Gallardo

Mexico | 1979

Lives and works in Mexico. She has a doctorate in art (PhD in Practice), Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. Individual exhibitions: Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Akademie der Künste der Welt, Cologne; SF MoMA, New York; The Island, London. Group exhibitions: The Backroom (Museo Tamayo), Mexico City; Kunstraum, Innsbruck; Benton Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; MUMOK, Vienna; Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; Berlin Biennial; Biennial of Nicaragua. Scholarships: SFMoMA 2016-2017; Akademie der Künste der Welt, 2014; Jumex Scholarship, Mexico 2009-2010; National System of Art Creators 2019-2022, FONCA, Mexico.

Maya Saravia

Guatemala | 1984

Lives and works in Germany. She studied at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas of Guatemala and the Instituto Europeo di Design, Madrid. Solo exhibitions: Institut für Alles Mögliche, Berlin; Espacio Naranja, Madrid; Balcony, Lisbon. Group exhibitions: OTR, Madrid; Espai VolART - Fundació Vila Casas, Barcelona; Museo Fundación Pedrera, Alicante; Galerie im Körnerpark, Berlin; Hipocamps, Museo de la Universidad de Alicante; La Erre, Guatemala City; Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española, Antigua Guatemala; Unidad Habitacional Tlatelolco (somos aunque nos olviden), Mexico City. Prizes: AVAM (Visual Artists of Madrid), JustMad Fair, 2018.

Perverse Geography / Cursed Geographies

Marilyn Boror Bor

Guatemala | 1984

Lives and works in Guatemala City. Bachelor of Art, Universidad de San Carlos, Guatemala. Maya-kaqchikel artist. Exhibitions: Galerie im Körnerpark, Berlin; Sur Gallery, Toronto; Museo de Arte Moderno Carlos Mérida, Guatemala City; Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, CA; Instituto de las Artes de la Imagen y el Espacio, Caracas; Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo NuMU, Guatemala. Collections: Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid. Scholarships: Yaxs Artistic Research 2017-2018, Guatemala; Utopia Foundation, Spain 2016; ESPIRA/Espora for Emerging Central American Artists, Nicaragua, 2001-2014.

Sebastián Calfuqueo

Chile | 1991

Lives and works in Santiago. Master in Visual Arts, Universidad de Chile. Member of the feminist Mapuche collective Rangĩntulewfũ. Individual exhibitions: Galería Metropolitana, Santiago de Chile; 80m2 Gallery, Lima; Galería Mano de Monja, Valparaíso; Museo Regional de la Araucanía, Temuco; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile. Group exhibitions: Strizzi, Colonia; Vitrina Lab, Miami; Performance Space, New York; UNSW Galleries, Sidney; Konsthall de Lunds (Sweden); Mercosur Biennial; SIART Biennial, La Paz. Prizes: Municipal Prize for Young Art, Santiago de Chile, 2018; FAVA 2018, Chile; Santiago Municipal Visual Arts Contest (Performance), 2017.

Jonathas de Andrade

Brazil | 1982

Lives and works in Recife. Solo exhibitions: The Power Plant, Toronto; New Museum, New York; Museu de Arte de São Paulo; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montreal; Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon. Group exhibitions: Museum of Modern Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; Sharjah Biennial; São Paulo Biennial; Mediacity Biennial, Seoul Museum of Art; Mercosur Biennial. Residences: Darat al Funun, Amman; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio; Train Residency at Gasworks, London; Townhouse Gallery, Cairo; A Tale of a Tub, Rotterdam. Prizes: Prix de la Francophonie, Lyon Biennale 2013; Future Generation Art Prize 2012, Ukraine.

Forensic Architecture & Forensic Oceanography

England | 2010

Forensic Architecture (FA) is a human rights research agency based at Goldsmiths University, London. Forensic Oceanography (FO) is a project initiated within Forensic Architecture that investigates the militarised regime imposed by European states along their maritime borders. Exhibitions: Whitney Museum, New York; Tate Britain, London; Kunsthalle Mainz; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Barcelona; Documenta 14, Kassel; Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Venice Biennale; Biennale de l'Image Possible, Liège.

Antonio José Guzmán

Panama | 1971

Lives and works between Amsterdam, Panama City and Dakar. Bachelor of Fine Arts, Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam. Solo exhibitions: OSCAM, Amsterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, Panama City; Windward Arts Center, Los Angeles, CA. Group exhibitions: Nieuw Dakota, Amsterdam; Centrum Beeldende Kunst, Rotterdam; Silk Road International Exposition, Xi'an; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; Biennial of Havana. Collections: Centro Wifredo Lam, Havana; Galleri Image, Aarhus (Denmark); OMI International Arts Center, New York. Residences: Minerva Art Academy, Groningen, 2018; Spring House, Amsterdam 2018. Grants: Projectinvestering Kunstenaar, Mondrian Foundation, 2020.

Yasmin Hage

Guatemala | 1976

Lives and works in Guatemala City. She graduated from the ALBA School of Visual Arts, Balamand University, Beirut. Group exhibitions: Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, CA; Galería Espacio Mínimo, Madrid; Biennial of the Museo del Barrio, New York; Bienal Centroamericana, San José (Costa Rica); Bienal de Artes Visuales de Nicaragua, Managua; Bienal de Mercosur. Collections: Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; Fundación Ortiz-Gurdián, León (Nicaragua); Yax, Guatemala City; Le Plateau, Paris; Empresarios por el Arte, Costa Rica.

Oswaldo Maciá

Colombia | 1960

Lives and works between the United Kingdom and the United States. Master of Arts, Goldsmiths College, University of London. Exhibitions: Galería Espaivisor, Valencia; Tate Britain, London; Manifesta 9, Genk; Venice Biennale; Riga Biennial; MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain; Bienal de Porto Alegre; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Tate Britain Collections, London; Daros Latinamerica, Zurich; Collection Catherine Petitgas, Paris/London. Prizes: Golden Pear, Art & Olfaction Prizes 2018, London; public art commission of the city of Bogotá (first sound sculpture in the southern hemisphere), 2015; First Prize, Cuenca Biennial 2011.

Ángel Poyón

Guatemala | 1974

Lives and works in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango. Individual exhibitions: Fundación TEOR/ética, San José (Costa Rica); T20 Gallery, Murcia; Proyecto Poporopo, Guatemala City; Galería Extra, Guatemala City; Galería Despacio, San José (Costa Rica). Group exhibitions: WhiteBox.art, Munich; Galerie im Körnerpark, Berlin; Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, TX; Miami Prácticas Contemporáneas, Bogotá; Museum of Contemporary Art, Santa Barbara, CA; Casa de las Américas, Havana; ARCO, Madrid; Trienal del Caribe, Santo Domingo. Collections: Cisneros Fontanals Foundation, Miami; Paiz Foundation, Guatemala City; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid.

Fernando Poyón

Guatemala | 1982

Lives and works in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango. Individual exhibitions: Loft 5 (with Ángel Poyón), Guatemala City; Casa de la Cultura, Comalapa; Banco de Guatemala. Group exhibitions: Museo Mexic-Arte, Austin, TX; George Mason University, Washington, DC; Salón Internacional de Arte Indígena Manuel Quintín Lame, Popayán Cauca (Colombia); Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (NuMU), Guatemala City; Center Párraga, Murcia; Taipei Museum of Fine Arts; Centro Wifredo Lam, Havana; Art Museum of the Americas, OEA, Washington, D.C.; ARCO, Madrid; Videoart Festival, Barcelona; Biennial of the Americas, Denver, CO.

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa

Guatemala | 1978

Lives and works in Guatemala. Master of Fine Arts, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Solo exhibitions: APC Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux; Gasworks, London; Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart; Casa América, Madrid. Group exhibitions: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; New Museum, New York; Tate Modern, London; The Hangar, Beirut; Venice Biennale; Gwangju Biennial; São Paulo Biennial; Lyon Biennial. Prizes/Scholarships: illy SustainArt Award, ARCO 2020; Mies Van Der Rohe Award 2017, Krefeld; CIFO Scholarship 2015; DAAD Berlin Scholarship, 2015; Guggenheim Scholarship 2012.

Jonas Staal

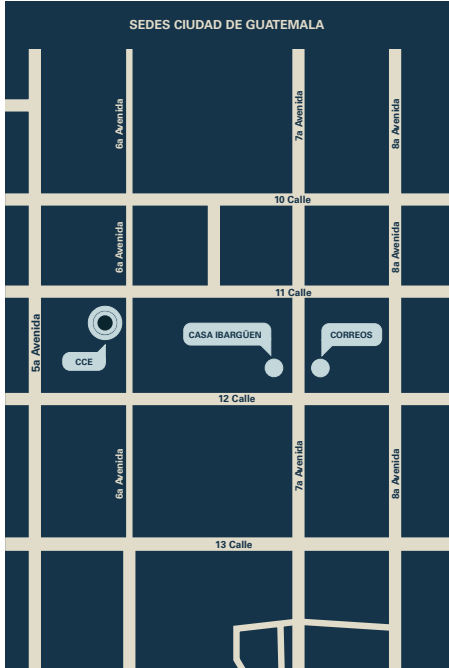
Netherlands | 1981

Lives and works in Rotterdam. Doctorate in Arts, University of Leiden. Exhibitions: Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, CCA Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow; Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Nam June Paik Art Centre, Seoul; São Paulo Biennial; Taipei Biennial, Berlin Biennial. Publications: Propaganda Art in the 21st Century (MIT Press); Nosso Lar, Brasília (Jap Sam Books); Steve Bannon: A Propaganda Retrospective (Het Nieuwe Instituut).

Heba Y. Amin

Egypt | 1980

Lives and works in Berlin. PhD in art history, Freie Universität, Berlin. Co-founder of the Black Athena Collective. Solo exhibitions: The Mosaics Room, London; Zilberman Gallery, Berlin; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Atwood Gallery, University of St. Cloud, Minnesota. Group exhibitions: Quai Branly Museum, Paris; La Tallera, Cuernavaca; Kunsthalle Bremen; MAXXI Museum, Rome; Museum of Contemporary Art, Krakow; Berlin Biennial; Istanbul Biennial; Dak'Art Biennial, Senegal; Moscow Biennial. Awards/scholarships: Anni and Heinrich Susmann Foundation Prize 2020; Artist in Residence Audain Foundation, Vancouver; Field of Vision Scholarship 2019, New York.



Guatemala City

Centro Cultural Municipal AAI (Palacio de Correos) AAI Municipal Cultural Centre (Post Office Palace)

A space promoting artistic and cultural education to contribute to the full development of citizens.

7th Ave. 11-67, Zone 1, Guatemala City

Jonathas de Andrade (Brazil)

Forensic Architecture & Forensic Oceanography (UK)

Antonio José Guzmán (Panama-Netherlands)

Oswaldo Maciá (Colombia)

Fernando Poyón (Guatemala)

Jonas Staal (Netherlands)

Heba Y. Amin (Egypt)

Centro Cultural de España (CCE) Spanish Cultural Centre (CCE)

A centre that has made itself an axis and platform to support creative and innovative processes to promote inclusive and participatory cultural dynamics.

6th Ave. 11-02 Zone 1, Guatemala City

Paz Errázuriz (Chile) | Individual exhibition Naufus Ramírez Figueroa (Guatemala)

Casa Ibargüen

A space for culture and art which mounts exhibitions, presentations and other educational activities.

7th Ave. 11-66 Zone 1, Guatemala City

Andrea Monroy (Guatemala)



Antigua Guatemala

Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española (CFCE) Spanish Cooperation Training Centre (CFCE)

A division of the Spanish agency AECID, charged with coordinating and carrying out cooperation activities in the specific area of education.

6th Ave. North between 3rd and 4th Streets, Antiguo Colegio de la Cía. de Jesús, Antigua Guatemala

Aníbal López (Guatemala) | Retrospective exhibition

Fundación Nacional para las Bellas Artes y la Cultura (FUNBA) National Foundation for Fine Arts and Culture (FUNBA)

An institution dedicated to strengthening national identity through rescuing, protecting, conserving, investigating, disseminating and promoting art in Guatemala.

5th Ave. South No. 40, Antigua Guatemala

Marilyn Boror (Guatemala) Sebastián Calfuqueo (Chile)

Benvenuto Chavajay (Guatemala)
Elimo Eliseo (Guatemala)
Wingston González (Guatemala)
Yasmin Hage (Guatemala)
Ayrson Heráclito (Brazil)
Diego Isaías Hernández (Guatemala)
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Detanico & Lain (Brazil)
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Oscar Eduardo Perén (Guatemala)
Ángel Poyón (Guatemala)
Naomi Rincón Gallardo (Mexico)
Óscar Santillán (Ecuador-Netherlands)
Maya Saravia (Guatemala)
Angélica Serech (Guatemala)
Pablo Vargas Lugo (Mexico)

La Nueva Fábrica - The New Factory

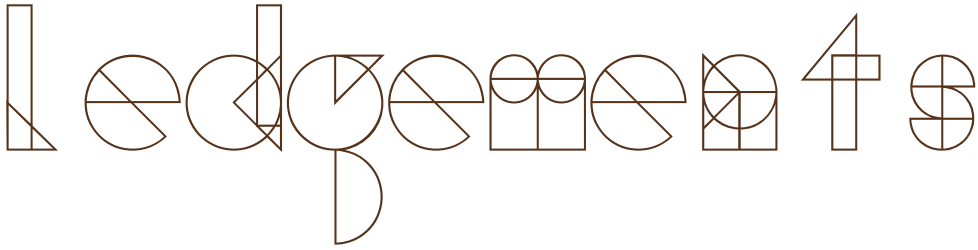
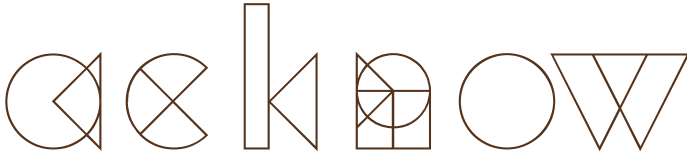
An art space that promotes creative exploration through a program of residencies, workshops, multidisciplinary studies, exhibitions and community events.

Callejón Contreras, Santa Ana, Sacatepéquez

Francisca Aninat (Chile)
Hellen Ascoli (Guatemala)
Ana Teresa Barboza (Peru)
Edgar Calel (Guatemala)
Manuel Chavajay (Guatemala)
Rafael Freyre (Peru)
Uriel Orlow (Switzerland)
Antonio Pichillá (Guatemala)

22nd PAIZ ART BIENNIAL

Six locations
40 artists
± 100 people involved
± 100 publications in national media
± 60 publications in international media
First Virtual Gallery
15 thousand in-person visits
± 17 thousand virtual visits



To carry out this edition of the Biennial turned out to be an enormous challenge. Apart from a postponement, we had to deal with a period of pandemic and comply with the corresponding biosecurity protocols to protect the health of our work teams and visitors. Without the support and cooperation of a large number of people, entities and institutions it would have been impossible to achieve. The Paiz Foundation wishes to express its gratitude to all of the people who, in one way or another, helped to make this Biennial happen. Especially to:

Thelma Ajín
 Fernando Alameda
 Archivo Gabriel Cúmez
 Fernando Ávila
 Julia Alarcón Ortega
 Rudy Alfaro
 Thelma Álvarez
 Vera Cintia Álvarez
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22nd PAIZ ART BIENNIAL - GUATEMALA

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22nd Paiz Art Biennial, Guatemala:

May 6 to June 27, 2021

Paiz Foundation for Education and Culture, Guatemala.

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Alexia Tala

Adjunct curator

Gabriel Rodríguez Pellecer

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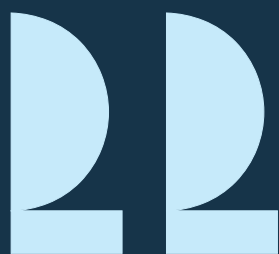
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