

MARCELA MORAGA M.

selection of works

In her textile projects, drawings, videos and performances, Marcela Moraga explores the tensions of a binary nature/culture order, using multi-media practices to question the different socialization of nature in different colonial and geographical contexts, her artistic research is particularly dedicated to landscapes and follows traces of human intervention both in the geological structure of the earth through extractivist practices and in the shaping of social space through architecture, always focusing on the individual who has distanced himself from his environment. With the help of speculative narrative structures, methods of fiction, spirituality and indigenous knowledge, Moraga develops new narratives that allow a connection between human and non-human.



CKUNNA TACKATUR TTASTURCKOTA

We are waiting for you
(translated from the Ckunsá language)

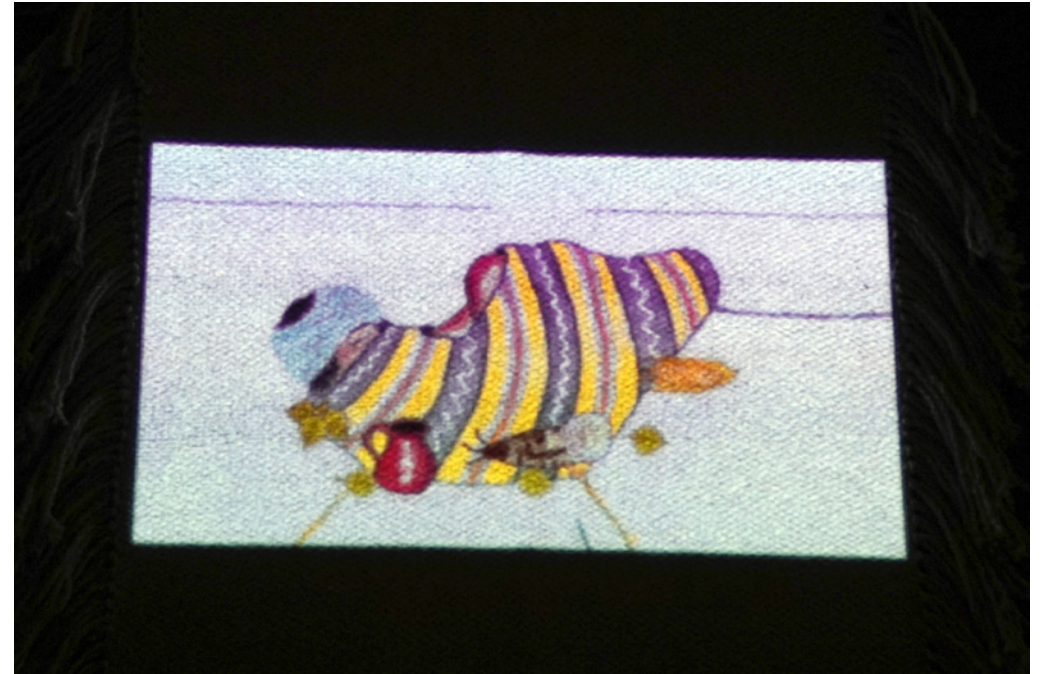
Textile installation view at Palacio Pereira Museum
Santiago de Chile 2024/25
Handwoven textiles made of alpaca wool and sheep
Animated film loop 2 minutes
Dimensions 360 x 360 cm.

Group exhibition "Una Tumba de Chiu Chiu"
(a tomb of Chiu Chiu) Curated by Juan José Santos

Link to Vimeo:
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1075108363>



Suyis Liq' cau group working one of the textiles



the animated film projected on a textile

The textile installation Ckunna tackatur ttasturckota was created collaboratively by the women's collective Suyis Liq' cau (1) and Marcela Moraga. The five textiles are intended to embrace, carry and "rematriate" (2) the ancestors of the Lickanantay, whose remains were stolen from Chiu Chiu, a Chilean village in the Antofagasta region of the Atacama Desert. Four of the textiles depict the cycle of the four times of day: Sunrise, noon, sundown and night. Their colors are oriented towards the llamas, sheep, plants and soils of the Atacama Desert. They were woven by Suyis Liq' cau on a traditional comb loom. The warp of this loom is made of alpaca wool from the wetlands of Colchane in the Tarapacá region, while sheep's wool from the wetlands of Turi in the Antofagasta region was used for the weft (3).

A video animation by Marcela Moraga is projected as a loop onto the central textile. It is based on a series of drawings made by hand with pencil and ink on paper. The images show the burial of a man accompanied by a jar, a woven bag, a corn cob and coca leaves. A weave links all these elements like a constellation. The subsequent drawings document the complete dismemberment of the grave into its individual parts: Vessel, bag, corn cob and leaves are transformed into singular museum objects, while the indigenous body is also objectified in a western knowledge system and cataloged as a "mummy". In further drawings, the hands of the women of the Suyis Liq' cau collective can be seen weaving and linking together as a symbolic act of repair - as a response to an endlessly repeating process of destruction and as an expression of their persistent demands for restitution.

In 1993, the Lickanantay people, also known as the Atacameño, began to demand the return of their ancestors. The series of grave robberies took place between 1850 and 1970, and many Lickanantay grandparents were still displayed unprotected in museum showcases until the beginning of the 21st century. Today, their remains are held in museum repositories and universities in Chile, the United States, Spain and Germany. Most of the offerings and objects placed in the tombs were lost during the plundering; only a few ceramics and textiles remain scattered in various museum collections today.



- (1) Suyis Liq' cau means "women's hands", translated from the Ckunsu language. It consists of a group of female weavers, some of whom live in Calama and others in Chiu Chiu. They have been working as a collective since 2012. They weave, knit and crochet dresses, scarves and decorative textiles and sell their creations at various handicraft fairs in Calama, Antofagasta, Caspana, Chiu Chiu and at festivals in the Antofagasta region.
- (2) "Rematriate" in this work means to bring the ancestors back to Mother Earth, in contrast to the word "repatriate", which alludes to a patriarchal culture of the state or nation.
- (3) The wetlands in the Atacama Desert, which include salt plains, swamps and lagoons, are located at an altitude of 3,800 meters and store water all year round, which is why several human communities live near them and practice pastoral farming. They also enable the growth of a variety of plants and are an important habitat for birds, llamas and alpacas.



View of the work in the group exhibition "A Home for Something Unknown" at Haus am Lützowplatz. Curated by Ines Borchart and Katharina Schilling. Berlin, 2024
Jacquard textil document, copper sheet and screws. 150 x 300 cm



Máxima is a principle in Spanish, it also refers to something big and to the upper limit of what can be achieved. In the Andes lives Máxima Acuña, a farmer and weaver who has won a legal battle against the world's largest mining company (1). The mine operators are not allowed to extract the gold and copper on her land, however, the woman is constantly threatened by the company's security forces.

In this new textile document, Marcela Moraga multiplies the figure of a woman with coca hands that appears between illustrations of extractive interventions and reinterpretations of Andean textile designs. It is a confrontation of different forms of production and technologies that come together in the woven image.

The Andean textile is closely interrelated with the mountains. Its complex technology includes not only the tools and knowledge of weaving, but also the interactions between people and their environment. It reflects the dynamic relationships of plural presences in the landscape.

For example, the staggered pattern that is repeated in the weavings corresponds to terraced cultivation - an agricultural technology that is

integrated into the geography of the mountains and contributes to the diversification of vegetation. The Andean textile documents this space and the production process with the changes in the living environment as a social and collective instrument of memory.

Modern mining operates primarily under capitalist premises. Its technology forces the mountains to endlessly supply minerals for the global extractive industry. To this goal, huge settlements are being built, both above and below ground. The geography of the mountains is intervened by roads and infrastructure and hollowed out by reservoirs to store water and toxic waste.

Using satellite images of the mining settlements of Yanacocha and Las Bambas in Peru, the artist draws the deep tracks that run through the Andes. These and the other drawings in the composition were converted into vector graphics and then woven on an industrial loom. A copper plate and a series of screws are part of these woven cartographies.



(1) Newmont Mining Corporation <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newmont>



"Objeto Sagrado" is a collective video performance that was created as part of the workshop 'Ecosistema Textil, historias de Montañas y Extracciones' (Textile Ecosystem, Mountain Stories and Extractions) under the direction of Marcela Moraga. Nine young artists from the mining city of Calama took part in the project. The performance was filmed in the Atacama Desert between the village of Chiu Chiu and Calama in the Antofagasta region of Chile. The workshop focused on the textile culture of the Andes. Fabrics were seen as living ecosystems in which socio-cultural, economic and political relationships arise - especially in forms of expression such as clothing, architecture and rituals, including the traditional carnivals of this region. The workshop dealt with archaeological, industrial and mestizo textiles (1) in the context of a region heavily impacted by mining.



Together, the artists visited the textile collection of the Museo de Historia Natural y Cultural del Desierto de Atacama (Museum of Natural and Cultural History of the Atacama Desert), an institution run by a Lickanantay family. The fabrics kept there were excavated in the 1970s at the Topater cemetery, a 2500-year-old burial site. Here, archaeologists found the remains of Lickanantay, Quechua, Aymara and Urus ancestors from the Amazon region - proof that this area has always been a hub of trade and cultural exchange. In addition to the deceased, the archaeologists discovered personal goods such as bags, pipes, corn cobs and ceramics - objects that had accompanied the person's entire life. The researchers referred to these finds as "sacred objects", a term that originated in European archaeology.

In developing their video performance, the artist group decided to define water as their "sacred object" (2). The images show blue bottles of drinking water, as sold in various cities in Chile. In the vicinity of Calama, there are four large open-pit mines that lead to massive air and water pollution. To avoid illness and poisoning, people should only drink the water from the canisters.

For the creation of the performance outfits, each artist received an industrial Awayo (3). A long white fabric was also made available, which was intended to be cut and divided among each performer; however, the artists decided to use the fabric collectively "to wear a large poncho and become a mountain range". Additionally, they incorporated their own fabrics, weavings, and ornaments into their clothing.





Objeto Sagrado

Participating artists:

Litchckane Cka Bautista, Natalia Flores, Sashi Gallardo, Angélica Gamboa, Rodrigo Paredes, Maru Ckamur, Mar Rodríguez, Aldo Salgado and Valeria Valenzuela

Work in Progress

4K and HD Film 1 Channel – Video Installation (Color and Sound)

Teaser video: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1086725241>

produced by: H Residency, 2023

funded by: Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Community

(1) (3) The artist refers to the industrial *Awayos* and the variety of fabrics used in this region for making carnival costumes as “Mestizo textiles”. These fabrics have been integrated into the Andean identity, into the daily and ceremonial life of both the indigenous and non-indigenous populations. *Awayo* is a type of textile made by the Aymara and Quechua peoples from llama, sheep, and alpaca wool. The industrially manufactured *Awayos* are woven with yarns, many of which have very bright colors. Both Marcela Moraga and the artists participating in this workshop have used industrial *Awayos* in their artistic projects.

(2) The concept of the object originates from colonial contexts and is critically employed by the artist group. Many objects in ethnological collections were acquired violently or through asymmetric power relations. These objects are not just material things, but often bearers of spiritual, social, or political significance, which have been decontextualized through their uprooting and categorization in Western museums. (see, among others, Azulai, Ariella (2019): *Potential history. Unlearning imperialism*. London, New York: Verso). In the context of the artistic project, “sacred object” consciously corresponds to a re-appropriation and is used by the artists in a self-determined way.



Installationview solo show "The Mountain as Warp" in MommSEN 35 Gallery. Berlin, 2021

In the project "The Mountain as Warp", the artist imagines the Andean mountains as a large warp in which the Andean textile culture is interwoven and where modern mining intervenes. Andean textiles are produced in reciprocal interaction with the mountains, their complex technology is understood beyond the loom. The process of weaving begins with the care of animals and the soil. Once materialized, the textiles have the capacity to connect the social, economic and spiritual dimensions of Andean societies and ecologies. Their geometric, symmetrical and modular designs are derived, at the same time from textile techniques and from the organization of production, e.g. irrigation systems and the distribution of cultivation in the soil (1).

Mining technology, on the other hand, follows the western division between man and nature. Through its mining tools such as drills and excavators, it develops a technology of separation and fascination with machines and engineering. Its production cycle leaves enormous traces in the geological material, such as cracks and burns. It dries out the soil and pollutes the waters of the diverse, multispecies ecologies of the Andes.

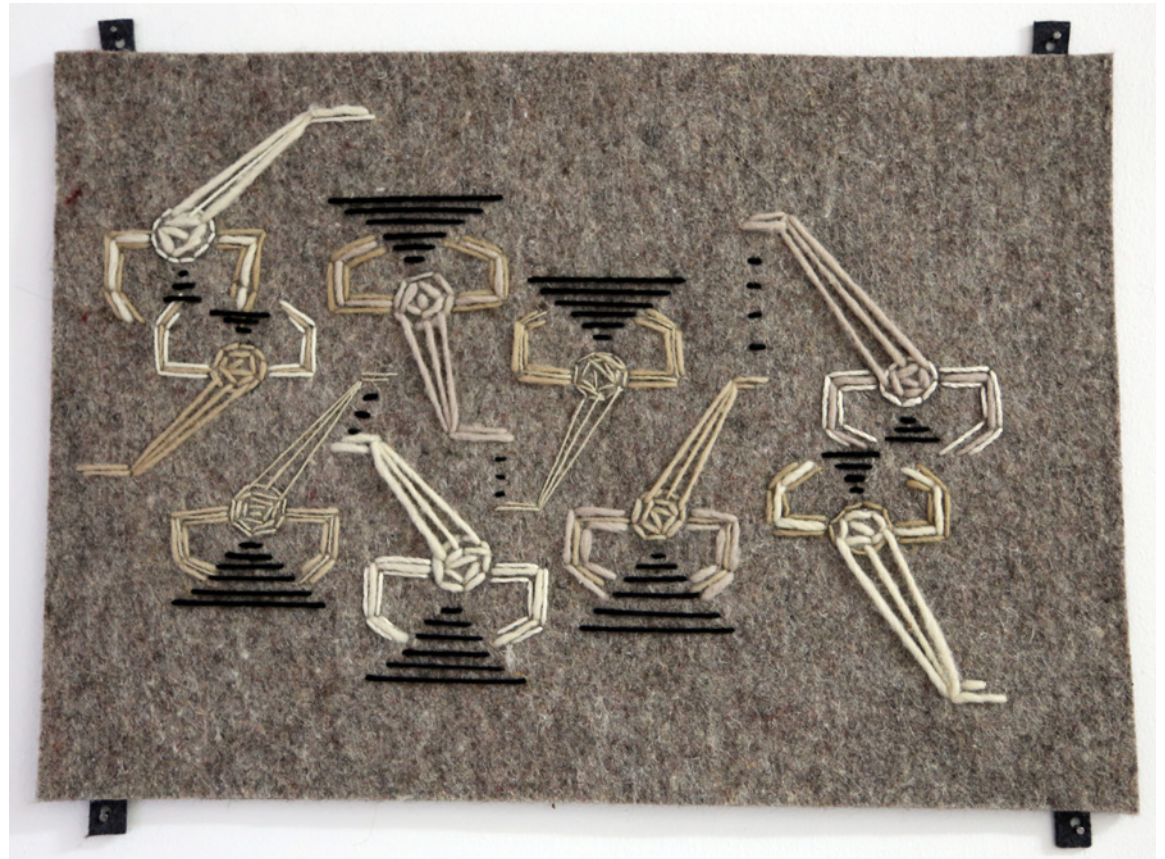
In "The mountain as warp" the artist develops a series of textile documents based on the intervention of felt and industrial Awayos (2). Images of mining technology such as excavators, drills, trucks and their traces in the geography intervene in the designs of plants, animals and irrigation channels, transforming the history and body of the Awayo. The artist embroiders the geological wounds of the mountains and, at the same time, emphasizes in her work the complex textile technology of the Andes, which opposes, resists and merges with the technology of extraction.

Marcela Moraga grew up with technical drawings and photos of mining machines while her father repaired their damaged parts. She often accompanied her father to the mining sites and experienced the huge scale of this technology and the damage it causes.

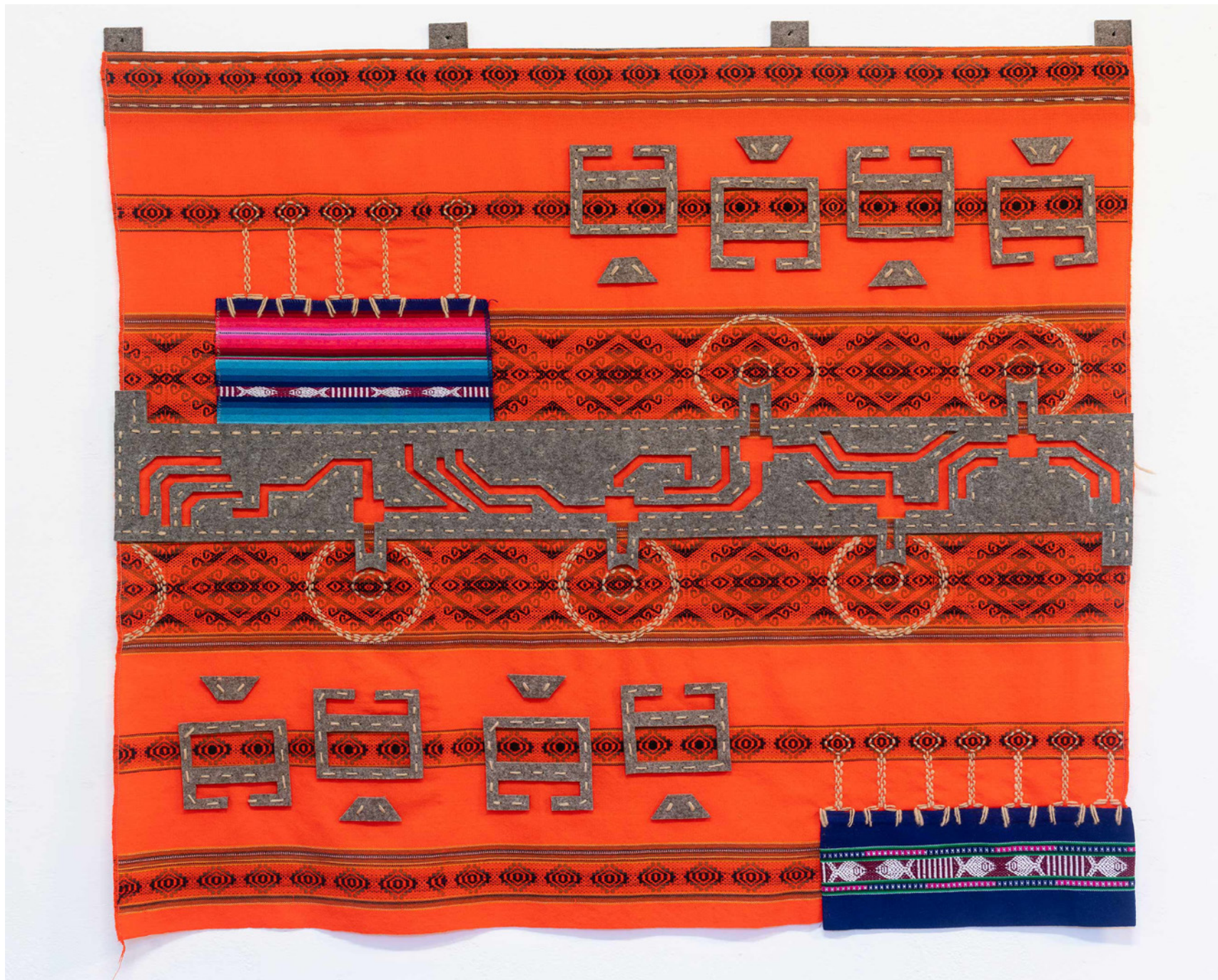
(1 "El textil tridimensional. La naturaleza del tejido como objeto y como sujeto" by Denise Arnold and Elvira Espejo

(The three-dimensional textile. The nature of fabric as object and as a subject)

(2) Awayo is a type of textile produced by the Aymara and Quechua peoples, whose patterns have become mass-produced through industrial Awayos. For the artist, the industrial Awayo is a mestizo child of the Andean universe, it has been integrated, it is loved and participates at all times in the life of the indigenous and non-indigenous population.



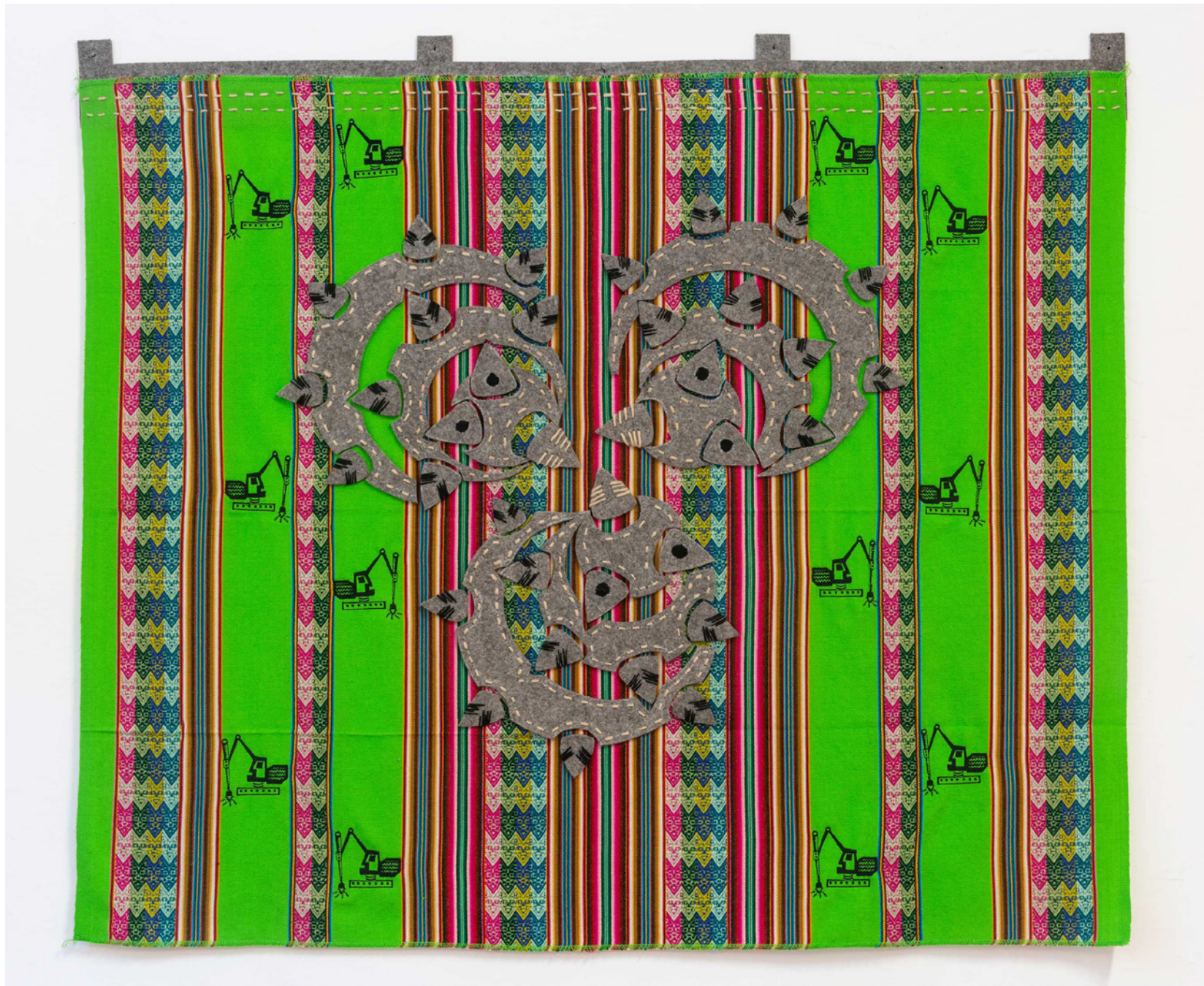
CHOREOGRAPHY OF A SCHIPMENT
embroidered felt with wool. Size: 45 x 70 cm. 2017



SUNSET AT THE TAILINGS DAM industrial Awayo and embroidered felt with wool and thread. Size: 110 x 110 cm. 2019



YANACocha, CHUQUICAMATA, LAS BAMBAS embroidered felt with wool. Size: 145 x 145 cm. 2019



ROTARY BITS AND BLASTHOLE DRILLINGS

industrial Away, sewed felt and industrial embroidery. Size: 120 x 110 cm. 2019



MINERS, MACHINES AND WATER

industrial Awayo and embroidered felt with wool and thread. Size: 125 x 127 cm. 2017



NAPA
Installationview of a 100 Meter long rope. 2021



WHO HAS INVITED THESE PLANTS?

Under strict security measures, a firebug that has been living in the Plänterwald since the 70's will guide us through the ruins of this park for human entertainment. After more than half a century of constant laughter and screams, the sepulchral silence that today dominates this mythical landscape allows us to listen attentively to the voice of this small insect.

Between choreographies, flapping wings and its work as a pollinator, the firebug takes the time to share stories such as that of the traditional plant communities that grow in the ironworks of the 20th century, that of the weeds that resist glyphosate, the story of the flowers that will survive climate change and also some mythologies of forbidden plants.

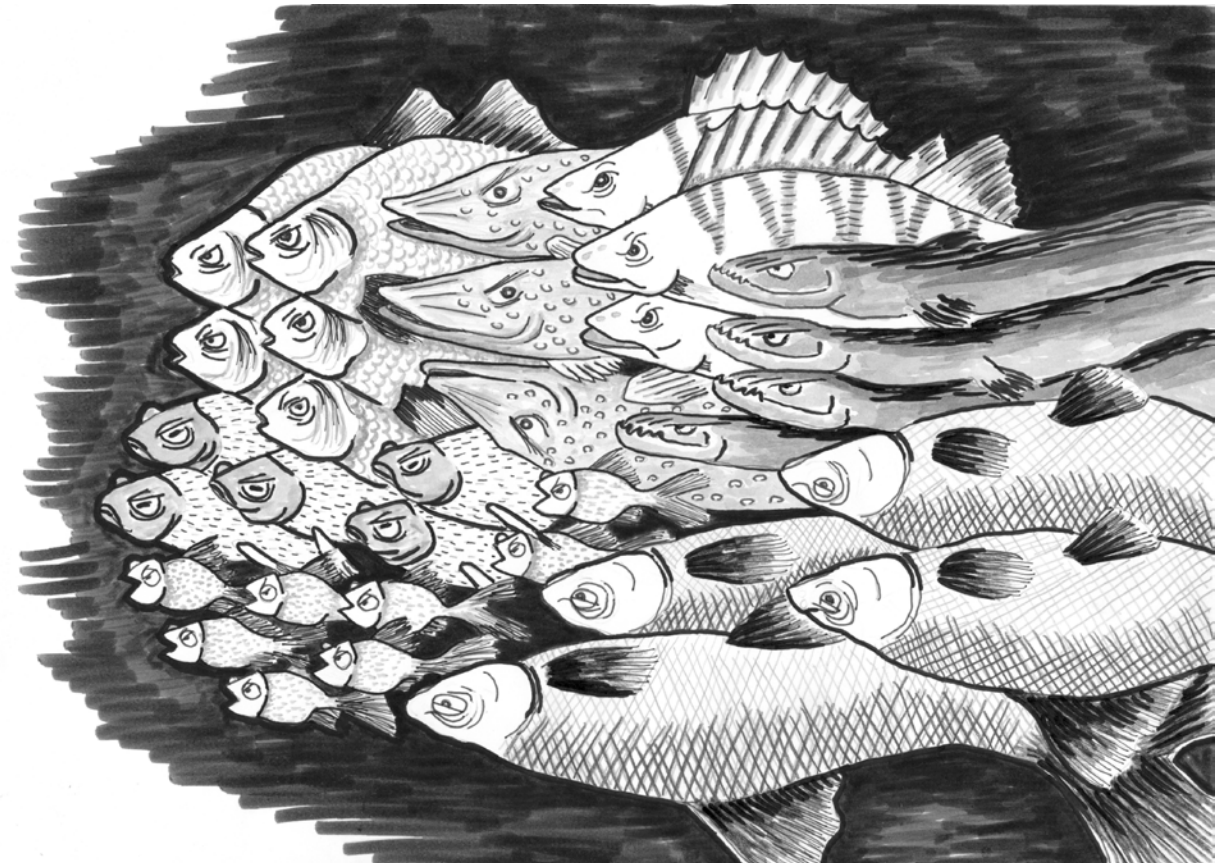
In short, great post-industrial attractions that you will never find on your screens.

Who has invited these Plants? took place as part of the "Swamps and Stars" festival, which was conceived and produced by the Planetary Listening group.

Walk - Performance
Spreepark, Berlin 2023



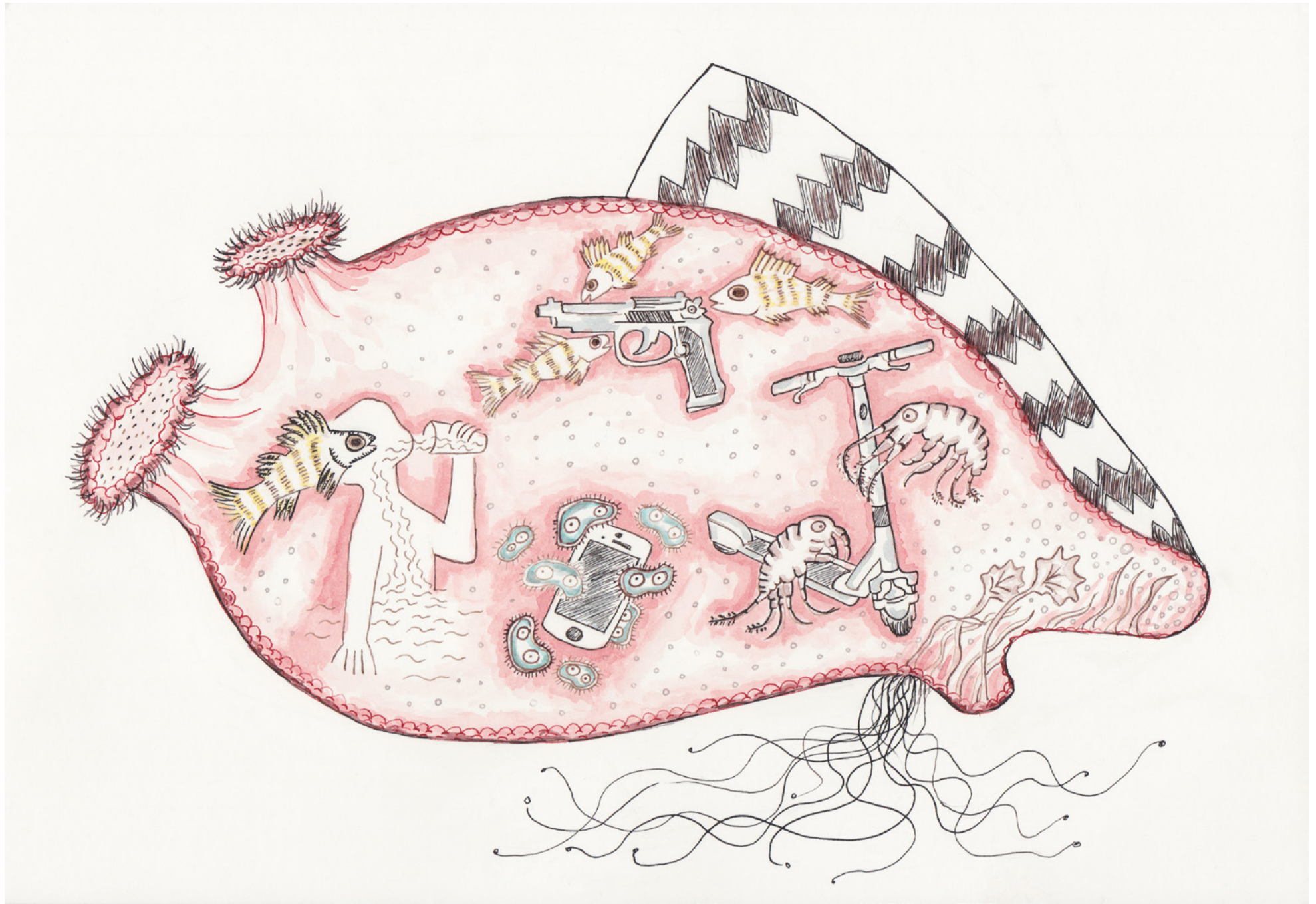
EIN FLUSS, EIN ARCHIV. DIE BERLINER SPREE (A river, an archive. The berlin Spree)



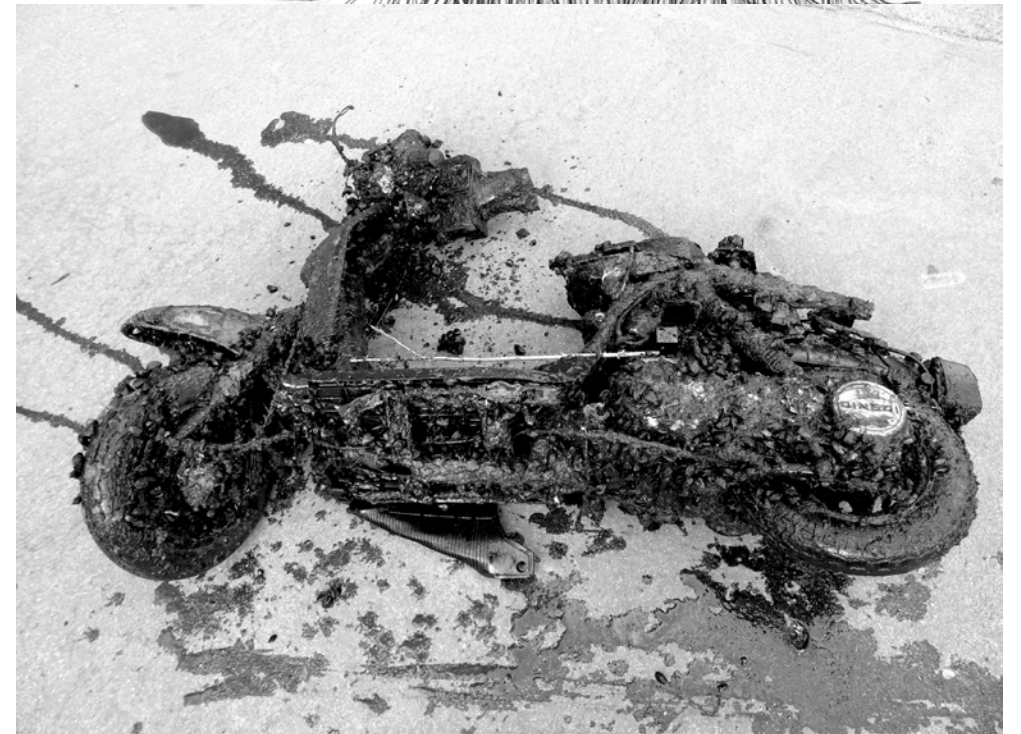
The artist Marcela Moraga lives in Moabit and, during her walks along the banks of the Spree, reflects on the state of the river and what happens under the surface of the water. For the author, rivers are spaces where humans make all sorts of things disappear. „The Spree in Berlin is like a court archive, at the bottom of its waters lie forgotten files...” writes Marcela Moraga. Between fiction and reality, the artist tells in her publication how this archive is formed, for example with the story of the barbel, a fish native to Berlin’s waters that disappeared in the early 20th century. Or the zebra mussels, which cause a very interesting phenomenon in the Spree, and the magnet fishermen, who uncover the industrial landscapes hidden at the bottom of the river.

„A river, an archive. The berlin Spree” is about a fanzine that includes texts as well as drawings and photographs by the artist.

This was produced as part of the „Crossings” project curated by Chiara Figone and Paz Guevara. A collaboration between Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) and Archive Sites. The publication is in German. Berlin 2022



„Zebra mussel“ ink, water of the Spree river and various pencils



Drawings: ink, water of the Spree river and various pencils
Photo: motorcycle „fished“ from the Spree by the Magnet Fishing Association

THE HUMBOLDT PENGUIN



Photo documentation of the performance. It was presented as part of the project „Desviarios“ (Course Deviations) at the Volkspark Humboldthain. Berlin, 2021. Curated by Paz Ponce Bustamante.

Most humans believe that penguins live only in Antarctica. But the Humboldt penguin originally inhabits the Pacific coasts of Peru and Chile, where the cold waters begin to warm. Many penguins of this species also live in many zoos around the world. This versatility in adapting to different landscapes allows this bird to have a diverse knowledge of climate change and human behaviour. On a walk along the border of the Humboldthain Park, where there is a transparent, shiny wall separating the city from the park, the penguin told us about its knowledge of botany, the planets, America, Antarctica and zoos; and he read some paragraphs from the books: “The Wall” by Marlen Haushofer, “The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt’s New World” by Andrea Wulf and “Neither spices nor species. Chronicle of Patagonia” by Marcela Moraga.



*Hello, I am Spheniscus Humboldt or Humboldt's Penguin.
I am romantic
I belong to Alexander von Humboldt, ever since he decided to cross
the Atlantic.
Welcome to the edge of the park or the border,
this way is a magical portal, here the 19th century left us bipolar monuments:
vegetation and city,
recreation and work,
animals and men,
darkness and hygiene,
botanical landscape and urban landscape,
the history of trees and plants, and the history of people.*



Videoinstallation view at Villa Romana, Florence. Exhibition "MAI Museo Antropologico Immaginario" 2020

The man of stone and other treasures deals with the genocide in Tierra del Fuego, the survivors and the human remains that can be found in various museum collections in Europe, Chile and Argentina. The starting point for the research was the collection of the Museum of Anthropology in Florence and the book *Studio sopra una serie di Crani di Fuegini* (Study of a Series of Skulls of Indigenous Fuegians) by anthropologist and museum founder Paolo Mantegazza.



The wall projection shows how Marcela Moraga was leafing through this book as part of her research when she happened to find a postcard of Carmelo, an Indigenous child. During her research she met Carmelo's family, who are portrayed in the video installation in the form of a family album.



wooden box with photographs
size: 32 x 16 cm.



One monitor displays drawings of various skulls and human remains of the people of Tierra del Fuego that were brought to European museums during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

On another monitor, the artist presents a series of photographs of the sculpture David as well a figure of a giant Indigenous person from Tierra del Fuego, which belongs to the collection of the museum in Florence. The story of *The man of stone*, which recounts the horror of the Yagan people (Yamana) during the genocide, was collected by the ethnographer Martin Gusinde.

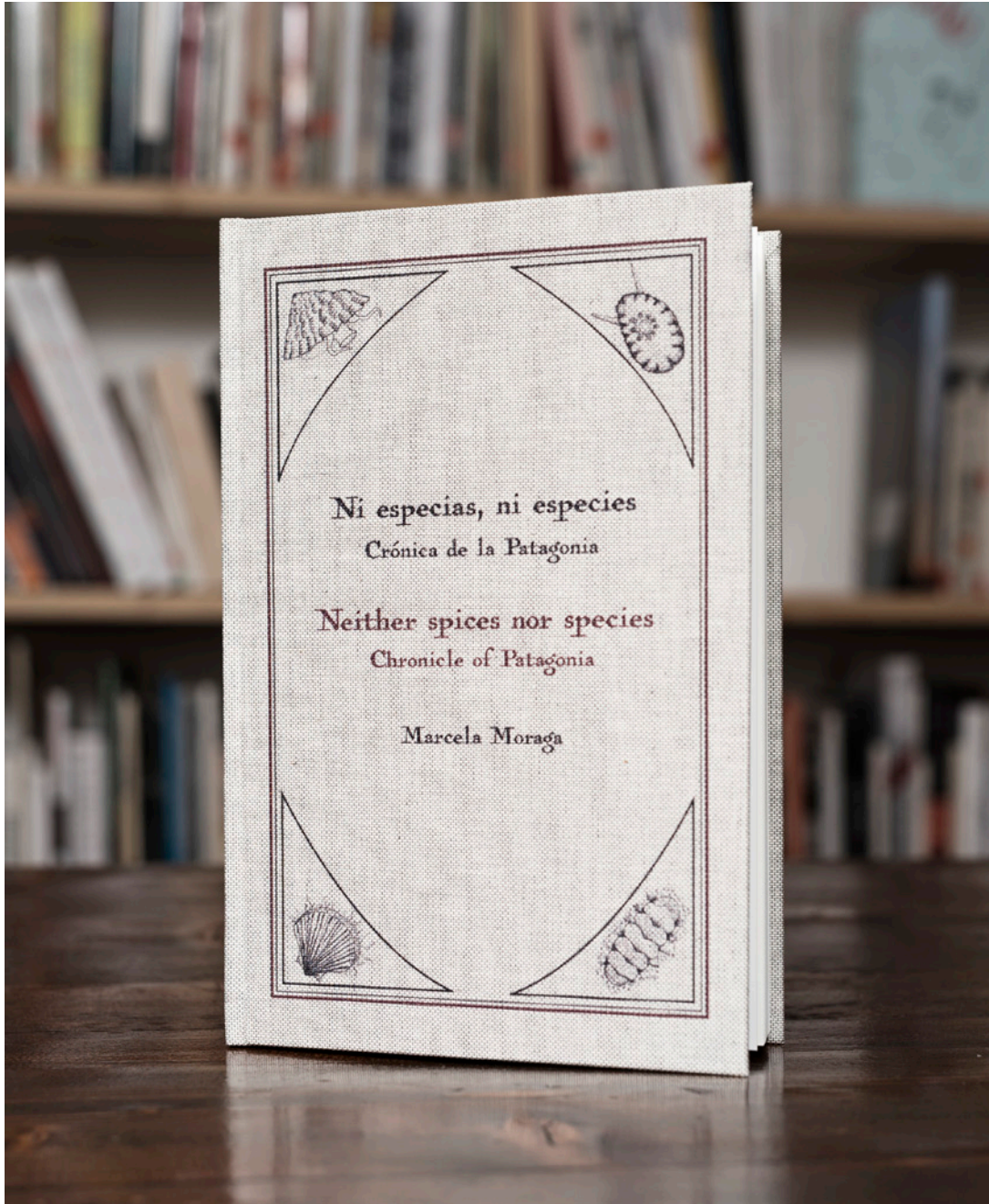
The installation consists of three videos, a box with photographs, two insects, a piece of tree trunk and an audio piece. All these elements refer to the old cabinets of curiosities. Many pieces of the collection of the Museum of Anthropology in Florence have their origin in the cabinets that belonged to the Medici family, pieces that correspond to objects, human remains and different 'treasures' brought from the colonized countries.

Link to Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/724537039>
13'43"





In different sources of ethnographic literature from both European and American countries, it is stated that the indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego are extinct. On the other hand, from time to time different media both in Chile and Argentina report that the last Yagan speaker or the last Selk'nam descendant has died. During the research on the genocide that occurred in Tierra del Fuego, the artist meets several relatives of survivors, the new generations of Yagan, Selk'nam and Kawésqar. They are constantly fighting for recognition of their existence and their cultural identity, beyond the colonial portraits from the 19th century. Marcela Moraga invites Leticia Caro, Kawéskar, Cristina Zárraga, Yagan, her daughter Hani Kipa Yagán-German and José Luis and Héctor Vásquez Chogue Selk'nam to a video call so that they could get to know each other, have a conversation and manifest that they are not and will not be the last of their people.

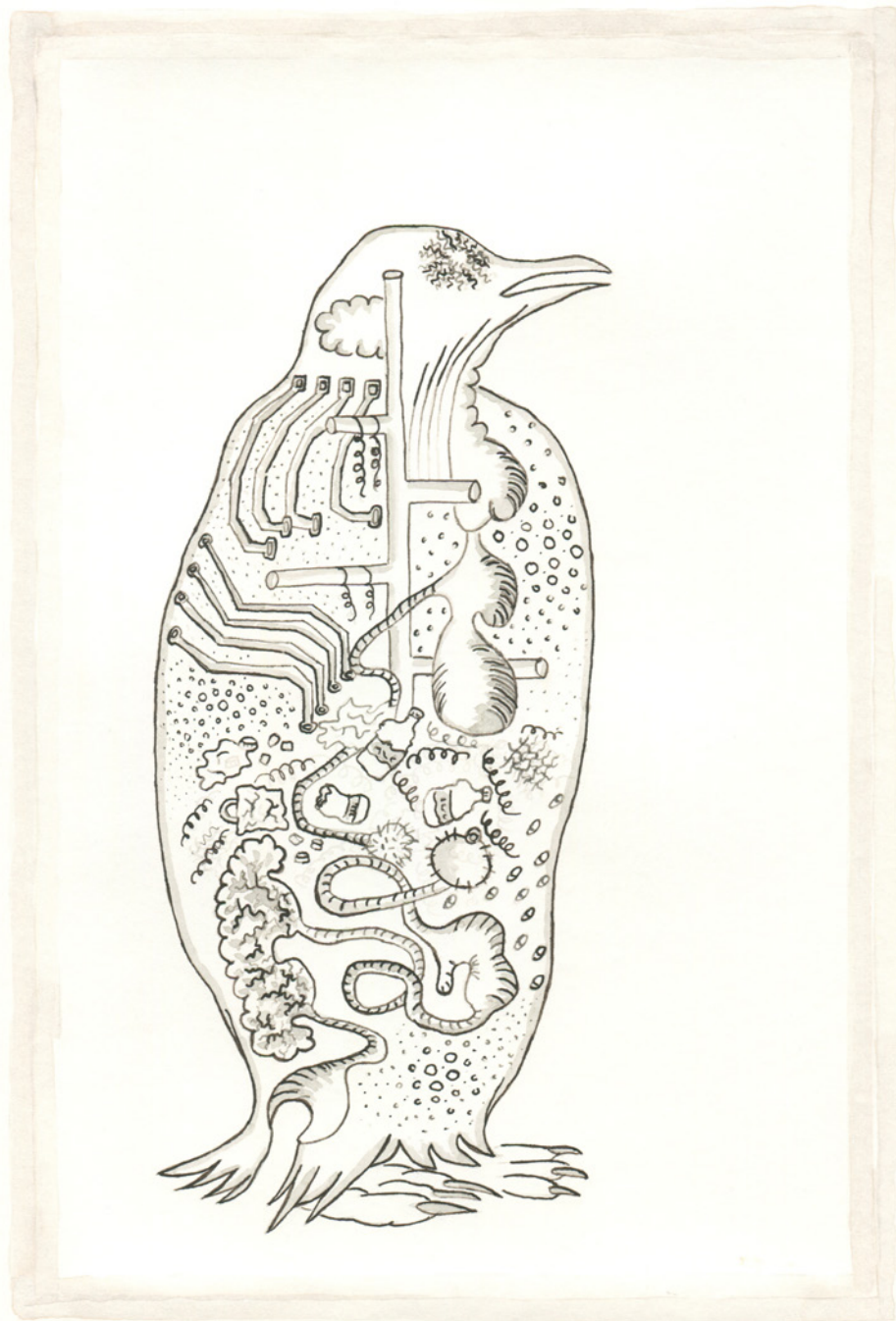


NEITHER SPICES NOR SPECIES. Chronicle of Patagonia

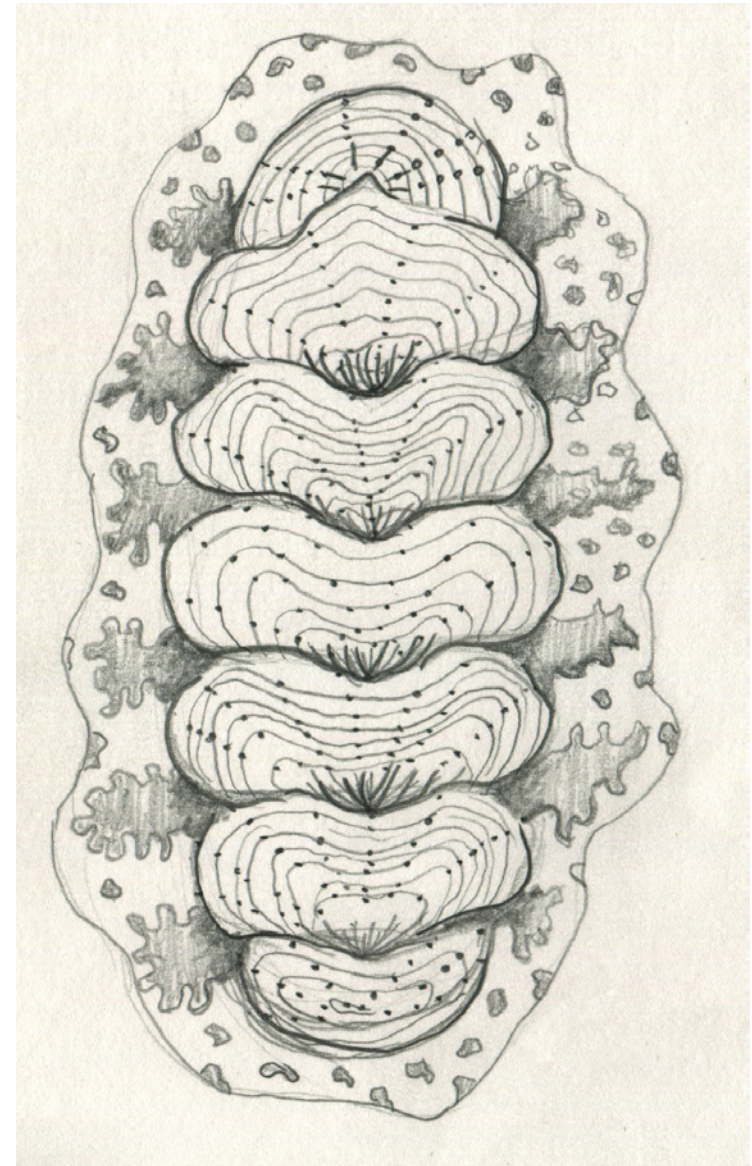
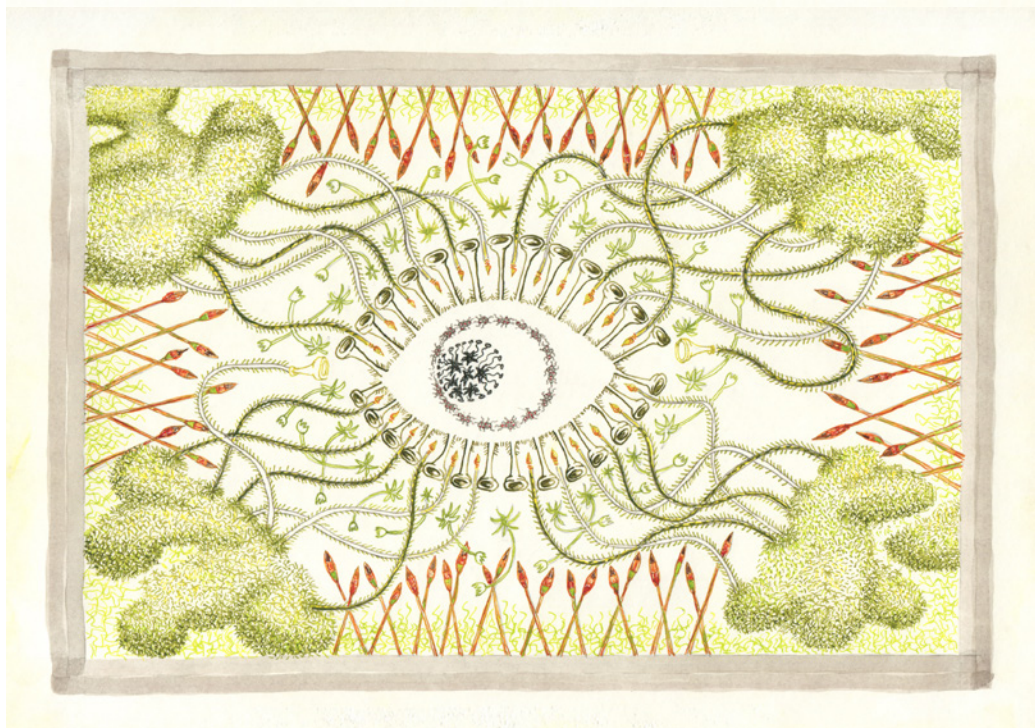
In 2018, Marcela Moraga participated in the artistic research program “Magallanes 2020” in Punta Arenas, Chile, an initiative coordinated by the Universidad de Magallanes with the Goethe Institut Chile. The artist was invited to realize her own project during her stay in Patagonia, which was supposed to include contacts with on-site research institutions in the fields of ethnobotany, marine biology, archaeology and history as well as with the local community.

Marcela Moraga left Berlin-Moabit, having prepared herself by reading the diaries of the Italian explorer Antonio Pigafetta and other travel reports of historical expeditions to Patagonia. What she actually found on her journey, however, differed significantly from the naturalistic and colonialist descriptions of the 16th-18th centuries. Neither spices nor species documents the artist’s own journey with drawings, photographs and texts. In a playful authentic way, these notes disguise themselves as an old travel diary. The written and drawn sketches cover a wide range of topics, from local myths about the ocean, stray dogs, climate researchers to activist ducks fighting the Coca-Cola corporation. With her tales, Marcela Moraga counteracts imaginative ‘discoverer’ narratives by undermining their structure with irony and subtle humour. She contrasts the idealized natural landscape of Patagonia with new fictions and stories that speak imaginatively about actual realities such as social and ecological collapse, oral traditions, science and boredom at the end of the world.

Published by Ediciones Popolet, 2019. Spanish / English
Texts, drawings and photographs by Marcela Moraga
Design by Martin La Roche



Drawing: graphite, ink, nib and brush. Paper for ink drawing. Size: 210 x 297 mm.



Drawings: graphite, ink, nib and brush. Paper for ink drawing.
Size: 210 x 297 mm.

COMMUNITY WATER MUSEUM - RENAICO RIVER



Renaico is a small town located in the Araucania region, in Southern Chile. It also gives name to the river that crosses this town. This area is home to the largest forest industry in the country, which has caused severe drought and pollution in several rivers. The Renaico river is drying since nineteen years. *Salvemos el río Renaico* a young activist group are worried about the river situation. Together with them and several associations we founded the Water Community Museum - Renaico. The collection of the Museum is formed by old photographs, children paintings and three films. The museum first opened at the riverbank in 2016. The museum's website was released in 2023: <https://riorenaico-mca.org/en/>



SALVEMOS EL RIO RENAICO

This documentary has been produced in collaboration with the activist group „Salvemos el río Renaico“ (Save the Renaico River). It presents a two-year investigation conducted by with the activist group, where the residents narrate their memories and perceptions regarding the situation of the river today. The aim is to inform on the abusive water extraction by the forest industry. In the same way, it attempts to be a reminder of the emotional bonding between the Renaico community and their river.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aA113EaXW3w>

Film with english subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3YPkISMzpc>



BOTTELAS CON MENSAJES (messages in bottles)

Intervention organised with a recycling association of women. They collect mostly non-returnable PET plastic bottles in the Renaico town. These bottles are also found in large quantities in the river. The Renaico community was invited to write letters to the river and to slip them inside PET bottles. Then, the bottles were hung from the bridge, so that all the people could see them. The letters - messages could also be read from the bridge during two days. Renaico, Chile 2016. (messages in bottles)

Video documentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRuQz1YcXBQ>