

To craft and to name
Creating ways to relate to each other



Image: José Vera Matos, *Hand transcription of "1440: The Smooth and the Striated" from A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia [1988] by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Spanish translation by José Vázquez Pérez con la colaboración de Umbelina Larraceleta (2002), 2022. Photograph by Juan Pablo Murrugara, courtesy of the artist.*

Exhibition ideas and questions

Text: Gisselle Giron

Images: Courtesy of the artists as detailed in image notes

Prelude: I have been trying to work on my writing. I want to really talk about artworks, to really dwell on their intensity, in their urgency to point toward the immensity of life nowadays. With no success, I turned again to artists' textual experiments.

In Peru, as in many other post-pandemic contexts, the sense of urgency towards understanding the various crises our planet faces has been stressed after a global health emergency. This difficult extended period has proven how many risks of our own making we face; How difficult it is to make sense of them and feel them as ours beyond the daily anxiety that apocalyptic semantics of crisis causes us. Facing very particular categories of political, economic, climate and social crises in the last five years, many Peruvian artists have attempted to make sense of the emergency process. They have done so by crafting semantic utopias through writing and material experimentation or announcing the end of times through readings of speculative understandings of contemporary societies. Both strategies' heart lies in a linguistic desire and needs to recraft ways to relate to each other. To make sense of each other's crisis contexts, keep each other company on either the route to the end of times or in the arduous labour of crafting different futures.

I find myself writing away from Peru, having migrated to a different hemisphere. Despite learning English from a very young age, I often struggle to move from one language to another. I have made the in-betweenness a comfortable home, where I usually use my hands and fingers to further elaborate and finish the translation process when talking. Living in-betweenness has forced me to re-read my old self, who comfortably wrote in one language to a target audience native in the same. In this review, I found that I often used language to seek communication, asserting that the text, my curatorial text in the case of exhibition-making, was the ultimate key to navigating the artworks featured in the exhibition. I struggled with how normative my approach to writing for an exhibition was. My immediate response was to call for a disappearing act and mitigate the curatorial text. Soon I found that the art exhibition became a secretive affair, sometimes read as selfish and entitled in assuming that visitors could access the exhibition without the hurdles of deciphering artworks. But I did not want artworks to be "deciphered". I wanted artworks to be a tool, to be in the visitors' life the same springboard for ideas that they had been for me. I want the language to be a tool. I wanted language not to be binding for the "meaning" of each of the words about the artwork. I want the language to be a tool to look again at the artwork and think about it.

I have now decided to present a text to visitors as a list of ideas when making an exhibition—thoughts provoked by artworks, which I select and place together to raise ideas about contemporary urgencies. The urgency which gathers these artworks is *how to learn to write again*, for, in writing, we are creating different ways to relate to each other. On this occasion, I am learning how to relate to you, dear visitor, and you are learning how to relate to the artworks in this exhibition. *To craft and to name* showcases the work of 6 Peruvian artists who are finding answers to reformulating relationships between different subjects in revisiting craft processes, textile-making and ceramic-making. In thinking of craft, the artworks make visible structures of thought and power that have a stronghold in conditioning their reading as temporally in the past and creatively lacking. Many of the artworks dwell on interweaving

experiences of crisis that are strategically worked through the practice of weaving and textile-making and aesthetic references to coding as a contemporary language of representation of short circuits of thought. The works act as an exercise in freedom, the need to craft and name to keep each other company in the face of catastrophe. Here are some ideas about this urgency, looking for a different tool for writing, in craft, and exercising freedom in unity.

Language, as we know it, language is disciplined and works in creating categories, boundaries, and defined bodies of thought. How do we think of language differently? If context, and space, define our tongues, how can we create a space that favours unregimented language?

1.

The first time I read *A Thousand Plateaus*, I could barely understand one or another sentence given to us by Deleuze and Guattari. I would later find out that each plateau or chapter was very peculiarly written. The philosopher and psychoanalyst take alternate turns in writing so that one would write a few sentences and the other some sentences, and so on. At first glance, it would seem that the writing is purposefully confusing. Still, on the second or third reading, the reader understands that the book is trying to reflect its rhizomatic way of thinking stylistically, understood as theory and research with multiple and non-hierarchical points of entry, promoting planar trans-species connections. Some of the plateaus in the book, particularly those in the first half of the book, spend time thinking of the limitations of the study of linguistics, introducing the idea of language performativity and binary structures in language. Other plateaus, particularly those in the second half, look into mathematics, popular culture and the natural world to introduce different ways of understanding the environment and space, such is the case of the very last chapter: *1400: The Smooth and the Striated*.

José Vera Matos characteristically uses words architecturally in his compositions as means to construct shapes and shine meaning through semantic landscapes rather than the actual meaning of the words transcribed. The adaptation of this chapter into drawings feels like an exercise in self-awareness. The very drawings are questioning the limitations of the margins of the cotton paper or the restriction of their own use of language as a pillar to its constructions. Unlike other of his drawings, where the base reticula are erased after the inscription has finished, the reticula is very much another dimension to the complex landscape of letters. The mood in the drawings is not determined. It resembles a never-ending pattern, imitating nature's own infinite patterns, and in others, they look like a geometrical adaptation of geographical plateaus, constructing a meditative mood. But in one, a sad face appears. It resembles the face one gets on the blue screen of death when a computer has experienced a problem and is no longer running. Throughout this last plateau, Deleuze and Guattari explain the characteristics of both smooth and striated spaces through 6 models or examples. For me, the maritime example collapses both the profound sadness and earnest hope in the world. I certainly had the same feeling when reading the mentioned chapter, not out of confusion but despair at how segmented and stratified things in the world are. Our daily life makes you reconsider your own notion of "freedom" and "agency". But later in the chapter, they also assert that:

“nothing completely coincides, and everything intermingles or crosses over. This is because the differences [between the smooth and striated] are not objective: it is possible to live striated on the deserts, steppes, or seas; it is possible to live smooth even in the cities ... There are not only strange voyages in the city but voyages in place. Voyage in place: that is the name of all intensities, even if they also develop in extension. To think is to voyage...In short, what distinguishes the two kinds of voyages is neither a measurable quantity of movement, nor something that would be only in the mind, but the mode of spatialisation, the manner of being in space, of being for space.”¹

In a world without Gregorian calendar restrictions, we would be presenting these drawings to you horizontally, on a table, giving you the possibility to both read the passages inscribed on the paper and position your body differently in relation to the text. I apologise for not having been able to do this for you. There are not the same on the wall, but hopefully, you will still be tempted by the invitation to rethink the manner of being in space.

José Vera Matos

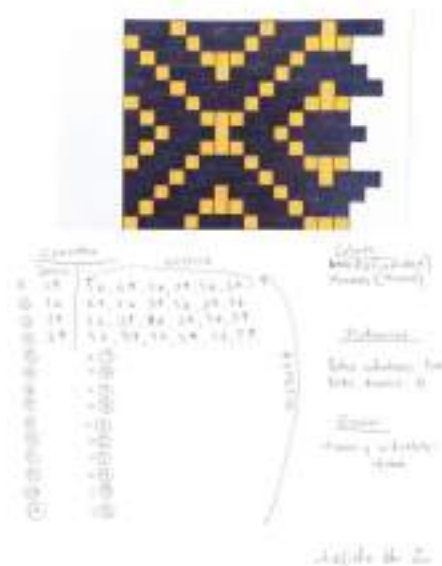
Hand transcription of “1440: The Smooth and the Striated” from A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia [1988] by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Spanish translation by José Vázquez Pérez con la colaboración de Umbelina Larraceleta (2002)

2022

Stylographic pens on cotton paper

Series of 9 drawings, each of 50 x 65 cm

We found another language in textiles.



Ximena's annotations and observations from the warp and weft. The artist shared these with programmers to translate to Javascript.

2.

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation and foreword by Brian Massumi. The University of Minnesota Press, 2005, p. 481-482.

Anthropology, philosophy and philology have explored the relationships between text and textiles, ranging from their shared Latin origin, *texere* meaning “to weave”, their potential to rethink the way we relate to the creation of form with materials, and their metaphoric power to reshape relationships between subjects through the components of weaving: warp and weft. I want to particularly highlight the way that sociologist and theorist, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, thinks of the textile as a means to rethink identity:

“I propose to think of identity, not as enclosed in a map, but as a fabric of exchanges, which is also a feminine fabric and a process of becoming”²

Textiles have historically been associated with touch; indeed, Deleuze and Guattari begin thinking about striated and smooth spaces through the model of textiles and patchwork quilts. For them, though looking apparently striated through their multiple unions, these confections are in themselves a space that embodies intense collaborative work and challenges barriers of a singularity. For **Ximena Garrido-Lecca**, textiles are akin to language in that they are both technologies that have the power to create communities. In the series of works *Redes de Conversión*, Ximena carefully studies diverse patterns in Andean textiles and reaches a formula where she can replicate the patterns using careful instructions of warp and weft movement and location. She finds the exercise a mathematical endeavour that, as in any language. To prove her suspicions, she worked collaboratively with software programmers who translated her careful instructions to Javascript, a programming language at the core of websites. Confirming the possibility of this translation, she later aimed to create a system that showcased these two languages in sync, operating as a means to produce energy, feeding each other and making it possible for us to read them in conjunction. Weaving these textiles on a continuous thread of insulated copper wire proved to be a massive challenge for Ximena, who worked with an assistant throughout the process. The final result is an alchemical endeavour to sustain that textiles are another means of language, in which thread in weaving has the potential to propose structures as something malleable, impermanent and infinitely reworkable.

- 2a. Ximena Garrido-Lecca
Conversion networks: Symmetrical satin diamond (purple and yellow)
Insulated copper wire and LED panel
2021
138 x 100 cm

- 2b. Ximena Garrido-Lecca
Linking stitches on base elements (purple, red and grey)
Insulated copper wire and LED panel
2021
178 x 110 cm

- 2c. Ximena Garrido-Lecca
Modulations: Gauze with floating weft
2022

² Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018. *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible. Ensayos desde un presente en crisis*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2018, p.126.

Copper rope textile
2021
186 x 124 cm

Take me to a space where textiles can be free, where we understand “craft” separately from the boundaries of fine arts hierarchies. Take me to a haptic place where we can read by touching.

3.

In Peru, as in many other non-hegemonic artistic contexts with a colonial legacy, the regime of aesthetics is also at the mercy of hierarchies that have carefully crafted a discourse associating crafts to the non-academic, familiar and pre-Columbian past and fine arts to the academic realm of Occidental life which looks to progress and innovation. Such discourse was perfected through the global project of modernity, which sought to promote positive attitudes toward technological development and mass media communications and raise socio-cultural norms in favour of work and production, giving shape to human life. For the past decade, **Fatima Rodrigo** has sought to study the experience of modernity in Latin America, looking in art history and popular culture for clues to reconstruct a history of modernism from a different vantage point.

Most recently, perhaps in the last 5 years, the Peruvian visual arts scene and popular culture have witnessed a reappraisal of crafts, which coincides with the effort to think of the categories and paradigms of value that the process of modernism left behind in the country. Some have made this out to sync with the populist left movements in Latin America, which look to empower overlooked populations and global fights to shed light on privileges and social differences between people for their race, age, gender and economic background. Fatima's use of textiles could have quickly fallen in recent endeavour to reappraise crafts through textiles. For her, it is impossible to divorce the specificities of her own identity from the way she approaches textiles. As an artist with a Fine Arts background rooted in the city of Lima and not particularly sharing a strong textile tradition with craft-making families, she wanted to create her own paths to textile making, *Contradanza 2* and *Contradanza 3* witness these journeys. If you look carefully at the bases of the artworks, they consist of metallic scouring pads used for cleaning non-stick pans and found in kitchens next to the washing liquid. She told me how she used YouTube Do-It-Yourself guides to sew and her mother's recommendations to construct these pieces.

Most importantly, she wanted to be truthful to herself, her own relationship with textiles, recognise the hierarchical relationships that posit objects sometimes in an ethical struggle, and freely let the material guide her craft decisions. In touching the scouring pads and fabrics, creating her own path to textile-making, she has perfected the craft of living in constant transitions. The transition from scouring pads of mass consumption, to an object of contemplation, to once again a product of mass consumption. While the artwork is a product of a more openly experimental phase in Fatima's artwork, it never abandons the sardonic humour that characterises her objects' strength. The title of these two textiles refers to the style of music popular in European colonial centres, which took a completely different turn after being imported to the Americas and the Caribbean. In Peru, mainly, the style came to be associated with the

way local servants perceived their Spanish masters' cultural products, resulting in a dance that mocks the assembly and a relatively disciplined manner in which occidental peoples approached their celebrations. If you would like to catch a glimpse of what this looks like, feel free to search online for videos of the "[Contradanza de Huamachuco.](#)"

- 3a. Fátima Rodrigo
Contradanza 2
2022
Textile made up of fabrics and metallic scouring pads.
159 x 117 cm

- 3b. Fátima Rodrigo
Contradanza 3
2022
Textile made up of fabrics and metallic scouring pads.
126 x 118 cm

...where crafts are seen in their power to go through temporalities and speak about the future in the present.

4.

Fátima's research into Latin American modernist discourse and its effects on popular culture has also dwelled in the fashion and textiles industry's exploitative use of textiles and patterns of Andean origin. Behind *Hologram III* and *Hologram V* stands closer research into textiles traditions in the Southern Andes of Peru, now not a mere backdrop but the main focal point. In many high fashion magazines in the last 10 years, the aesthetics and people of the Andes have been featured as mere props. Such as the case of exquisite wire mesh masks, traditionally featured in different carnival celebrations across the Andes, perhaps one of the most well-known ones emerging from Cusco, Ayacucho and Cajamarca. Fátima spotted these masks in Vogue UK's editorial photoshoot, published in March 2008, photographed by Mario Testino and styled by Lucinda Chambers. Featuring two supermodels of the 2000s, Lily Donalson and Daria Werbowy, the series depicts them as backpackers who arrive in Cusco, the Inca capital, and follows them as they get involved in different local festivities, communities and spaces. In this particular case, the models/tourists are the protagonist of a religious and folkloric ceremony in Paucartambo, Cusco, which takes place in July and celebrates Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which famously features a fantastic range of dances, musicians, dresses and mascaras.

When further looking into Fashion magazine, she identifies a trope: that of hegemonic visitors discovering authentic other cultures, which becomes the stage for their adventures. What is at stake is a complete erasure of those faces, communities, who do not only live to be a prop to a visitor. Particularly in Cusco, the most significant stake lies in the generalised belief and practice that culture is only worth analysing and appreciating when it is done from abroad. *Hologramas* is both an exercise in the critical understanding of the forces or hegemonisation of local aesthetics, as well as a celebration of the craft-making processes behind traditional wire mesh masks. What I like the most about these movable confections made up of beads is that it is both

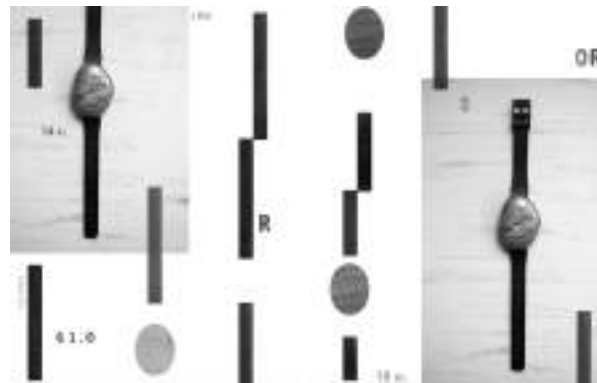
the protagonist. Who can miss the golden plates and coloured beads? But it makes you - the onlooker, exhibition visitor. It looks at you, and the eyes follow you through the space - what are you thinking of my beads? What are you making of our appearance? In a roleplay reversal, Fatima makes the crafted confections the protagonist and gives it agency to question its onlookers. A final thing, Fátima is fully aware that she is not showing you the actual faces behind the production of wire mesh masks. Doing so would run the risk of tokenising these subjects. Instead, she is pointing toward their work and craft. Just look at *Hologram V*; it features a carefully drawn hand and the outlines of its nails, care for detail akin to those identities behind the masks.

- 4a. Fátima Rodrigo
Hologram III
2019
Polished bronze and beads
113 x 46.5 cm

- 4b. Fátima Rodrigo
Hologram V
2019
Polished bronze and beads
78 x 15 cm

Does craft enable us to move from place to place? From space to space? Craft can sometimes be a journey that reveals the fragility of the urban structures. Can craft create different spaces for thought?

5.



Excerpt from Jimena Chávez Delion's contribution for Tim Magazine, issue "Jealousy", 2022.

The city of Lima in its intensity, in its permanent loops and forever endless becoming, the city of Lima has always been the space par excellence for creating spaces for living, thinking, and persisting. Navigation through the city is a constantly enriching experience, allowing us to have a more complex vision of coexisting in different temporalities through objects and memories. A word particularly grips the city with meaning: "Cachivache", or junk stuff. "Cachivache" is such a

great word in the Spanish language, its word “junk” in English comes nothing close to the rhythmicity of its counterpart. Unlike “junk”, Cachivache tells a story of a once-loved object, now discarded in the corner, forgotten and given a close to rubbish status. Cachivaches often live close to words like aged, broken, useless and unimportant. Lima is a city that collects cachivaches, lives amongst cachivaches, structures its dreams with cachivaches, and often thrives on the debris of cachivaches. **Jimena Chavez’s** work can also be understood as offering a parallel reality to Limenian cachivaches, giving them the status that they once had: desired, cared for, and most importantly, powerful in their potential to condense past and present in aspiration.

Jimena has been working on thinking of the languages of urban structural edifices in the city of Lima. Many of her walks through the city have mapped out materials, subjectivities, identities and memories that are fundamental in creating an interweaving of temporalities. She collects “cachivachitos”, and I have purposefully applied the “-ito” suffix, used in Spanish to refer to small, endearing things, mainly lovingly. Before making *Al Paso (II)* and *Me detuve aquí por un momento y seguí*, she collaborated with TIM Magazine. She produced a publication that dwelled on the intricacies of the role of language in memory-making. Through the narration of a childhood episode in which she painted rocks with nail polish and presented them as a golden treasure. Jimena explored the feeling of strangeness between the gap between what is real, what is narrated, what is remembered and what is fake. Unpacking the act of considering golden-coloured rocks as gold allows Jimena to trace the power of naivety. The quality of being “naive” is used to describe someone who lacks experience or has an idealistic personality. In this case, used to think of how aspiration can work in mysterious ways to produce gaps in reality, not real or false, but *fake*. It is real because it exists, it does not do so in the same way the object is trying to counterfeit, but it *exists*. These jumps between realities and temporalities were represented through plastic watch straps with no watch. This led to her accumulating a small collection of plastic watch bands, which she had gathered in her walks through the city. And it is necessary to mention that these plastic bands are not new gadgets but unused and unwanted watch straps found in a kiosk specialising in batteries and watch repairs. Watch straps often decorate the glass surroundings of this tiny edifice, and so they are often yellowish, damaged by the sun. They are only there to inform the pedestrian that the kiosk is dedicated to clock and watch repairs. These cachivachitos have another life in the works featured in the magazine.

Me detuve aquí por un momento y seguí echoes the outline of several brick structures in the centre of Lima and their contradictory nature. Despite being incredibly rigid structures, they witness incredible amounts of political instability and social unrest. The straps hold together a very fragile system, which lays bare the brittle foundations of the city, as well as the possibility of restructuring them.

- 5a. Jimena Chávez Delion
Me detuve aquí por un momento y seguí
Plastic watch straps, pvc and stainless steel cables
2022
181 x 134 x 1 cm

- 5b. Jimena Chávez Delion
Al Paso (II)
Stainless steel and plastic watch straps
2022
137 x 14 x 13 cm

Let's think about the stronghold and state mechanisms that have categorically named crafts as and placed them in a perennial past and what is their role in sustaining racist rhetorics.

6.

The idea that a museum is not a neutral space but rather a biased container that organises objects under a guiding principle rose to prominence in the 1970s. Under what came to be known as “institutional critique”, many artists, theorists and researchers were dwelling on what makes museums and exhibitions discourse machines, which exploit perceptions around objectivity and science to present themselves as neutral and educational space. Most saliently, I carry the words of the Argentine anthropologist Nestor Garcia Canclini, who, when speaking about The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City in 1995, underlines that its success in terms of visitors relies on its “skilful utilisation of architectural and curating resources”³. The comment always stuck with me in its praise and subtle appreciation of the anthropological museums as a calculated effort as a discourse machine used by the state. But as **Sandra Gamarra**'s titles for the two paintings present in this exhibition seem to suggest, “cryptomnesia”, as consumers and museum visitors, we might have seen to have forgotten these reflections and find the museum anew as a place of neutrality. In the USA, museums often rank among the most trusted institutions, and they have sustainably been regarded as the number one trusted source of information. Indeed research carried out by the American Alliance of Museums in 2021 reveals that over a third of people interviewed who expressed trust in the museum justify their claim by affirming that museums are “non-partisan/neutral”⁴.

The paintings are surrounded by newspaper clippings and scenes of extremely contemporary violence and crisis in each of its four corners. *Cryptomnesia VI (or in some museums, the sun never shines)* focuses on maritime experiences and satirising the museum's thematic classifications. Sandra has chosen clippings relating to migrants on the sea and contaminative spills on the ocean. I like to think the painting works as an anti-cartographic effort to problematise pseudo-neutralised discourses in museums and how they still respond to the nineteenth century's occidental beliefs of progress and bettering as inherently linked to white occidental peoples. Boats and maritime transports are the technology by excellence coupled to travel, discovery and the conquest of The Americas. In a way, the painting depicts, through different points in history, in different axes, the legacy of colonialism and its reductive

³ Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, London, University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p.120.

⁴ American Alliance of Museums, “Museums and Trust 2021”, published on Sep 30 2021. URL: <<https://www.aam-us.org/2021/09/30/museums-and-trust-2021/#:~:text=Museums%20consistently%20rank%20among%20the,a%20similar%20level%20of%20trust.>> Last accessed: 19/04/2022.

categorisations of thought. Reductive categorisations, which Sandra makes fun of, exploit and uses to showcase a localised picture of what lies behind the museum's discourses. I think we are often raised to believe museums are the places with answers, and whilst making sense of the history of peoples might be temporally satisfying, we need to be suspicious of discourses that present themselves as not only neutral but that operate as a "logical" justification for the current status quo. Life is never just cause-and-effect. It seems much more complicated than that.

- 6a. Sandra Gamarra
Cryptomnesia V (or in some museums, the sun never shines)
2020
Oil and newspaper clippings on canvas
120 x 120 cm

- 6b. Sandra Gamarra
Cryptomnesia VI (or in some museums, the sun never shines)
2020
Oil and newspaper clippings on canvas
120 x 120 cm

The process of domestication is often reserved for animals, understood as the process of taming a savage beast for either farming purposes or keeping it as a pet. In **Sandra's** works, words are carefully and substantially analysed as vaults of highly codified information, which unravel as threads of histories when juxtaposed to data from different temporalities. *Recurso* collapses colonial past, the history of pigments and contemporary social sciences to uncover the genre of landscape painting's complicity in violence. The work reproduces partially *Landscape* by the Belgian born Spanish painter, Carlos de Haes, known as one of the grandmasters of Landscape painting. This monochrome work has been painted with iron oxide in a particular tone known commercially as *Indian Red*. The pigment is often described as "one of the world's oldest" found in cave paintings. Unlike de Haes' work, Sandra's *Recurso* carries an inscription on the top of the painting, featuring a quote from German sociologist Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992), which reflects on the creation of "nature" as a concept divorced from society, a "utopia" as nature, as imagined in this discourse, does not exist as such. Reading Beck's ominous statement in front of de Haes' depiction of nature, once lauded for its "simple and real depiction of nature devoid of artifice", unmask the Eurocentric logic of nature and its justified exploitation.

- 6c. Sandra Gamarra
Recurso (from the series Rojo Indio)
2018
Iron oxide on canvas
80 x 100 cm

But let's dwell on "these" words, under what processes have they gained their pejorative nature and what they reveal about the tools used to perpetuate colonial thought in the arts.

7.

These vitrines form part of a larger project known as *Sala del Ostracismo* (or *Hall of Ostracism*) and showcase 2D paintings of Peruvian Pre-Columbian ceramics, currently in Spanish collections. For **Sandra**, displayed in these hermetic vitrines allows us to think of how museums often give objects a *new* origin story made up of clippings of diverse *other* cultures, now floating with a context, a locality. Painted on transparent plastic, they appear as if floating. When you get closer to see around them, you notice the flatness of the hyperrealistic painting, which ends up in a complete revelation of its ghost-like existence once you know the back of the plastic and only make out the silhouette of the ceramics inscribed with derogatory terms which make up the complex genealogy of terms which emerge in the Occidental world to refer to “othered” bodies. Whilst their content is personally painful, and it is tough to read these terms in the concoction, I also like to dwell on the fact that the 2D paintings of ceramics are together. Collectively they have the potential to showcase the museum’s biases, discourses, injunctions and expertise in using language in its favour to appear neutral.

- 7a. Sandra Gamarra
Vitrine I
Painting on methacrylate
2018 - 2022
8 paintings of various dimensions. Total size: 127 x 40 x 180 cm
- 7b. Sandra Gamarra
Vitrine II
Painting on methacrylate
2018 - 2022
8 paintings of various dimensions. Total size: 127 x 40 x 180 cm

If we are going to learn how to relate to each other, rethink language and how we use it, we must meet up, devise ways to live in power, where a language is a tool for thinking about the world differently, and live in togetherness.

8.

King Kong Theory by Virginie Despentes is a powerhouse, revolutionary prose, memoir and punk feminist theory to approach life in power. Her candidness, rawness and thought-provoking reflections on her own experiences are a fantastic testimony that language can create spaces for those outside the norms and status quo. Sometimes, I re-read her to remember that writing is not a futile mission. I was not surprised to have heard that **Elena** found her strength inspiring to venture to reflect on her own take on King Kong, one which embraces friendship and companionship as a means to freedom. In her own version, King Kong's girl befriends King Kong. Unlike the eponymous film, she chooses *not* to return to civilisation. Instead, she stays with King Kong, and together they exercise civil disobedience. Their relationship is now based on friendship and camaraderie. A friendship is also extended to Queen Kong, who emanates sexual powers and open kink.

The work functions as speculative theory. What would happen if we were to think beyond the heteronormative matrix of romantic sexual relationships and think of different ways to affectionately and caringly relate to each other? King Kong girl is no longer a poster girl of submissiveness and frailty but is an active agent, pursuing companionship and fighting strategies from King Kong and Queen Kong. In the lovingly colourful video, we see the girl in the streets of Lima practising karate movements. Once finished, she returns home, where she is awaited by the gorillas, who are exercising other types of defence strategies through chess. She would not have to fear the street dangers that are still a threat to women and gender and ethnic minorities in Lima, as she would have now gained the tools to defend herself from physical and emotional distress. In one of the drawings, we see a girl thriving in her furry limbs and carefully listening to conversations with gorillas. I often wish I was this girl. I want one day for me to be able to reconcile with my body and live fully in harmony with it. I really think there is a lot to learn from their friendship and from friendship in general, as intense relationships, caring and affectionate, can really act as a space of comfort and assertion of identity.

- 8a. Elena Tejada-Herrera
Girl learns how to fight and play chess [Niña aprendiendo a pelear y a jugar ajedrez]
2019
Video
- 8b. Elena Tejada-Herrera
Untitled (from the series *Queen Kong: The girls learn to fight*)
2019
Ink on Paper
31 x 41 cm
- 8c. Elena Tejada-Herrera
Untitled (from the series *Queen Kong: The girls learn to fight*)
2019
Ink on Paper
31 x 41 cm

...Perhaps the meeting must take place between different species to think beyond our human-centred experience.

9.

I wish for a community of thought that can speak in many tongues and always live in between languages, outside the norms of one specific set of language rules and living constantly slipping in and out of idiomatic expressions. Communities can continually reinvent their own idea of the local. I learned a lot from **Elena's** efforts to depict a world where Eduard Glissant's dream of multilingual relationships enables us to further crack down on totalitarian culture.

- 9a. Elena Tejada-Herrera
Untitled (from the series *Bilingual Drawings*)
2019
Ink on Paper

41 x 31 cm

- 9b. Elena Tejada-Herrera
Untitled (from the series *Bilingual Drawings*)
2019
Ink and markers on Paper
41 x 31 cm

The linguistic gap between emotions and material existence in the shape of sound waves sometimes can negatively affect perceived felt experience as inexistent and sometimes work positively in facilitating the space for creation, reinvention and constant mutation of language as a living organism.

10.

In an ever-evolving multilingual experience of the world, mistranslations and emotions stuck in the gap between different contexts, feelings of the uncanniness of time, imagery and contemporary iconography have become very commonplace in the shared experience of languages' limitations. In *Long Distance*, **Jimena** offers us a survey of hands, metallic and ceramic, which lie on top of a hand-drawn ceramic tile, as if wanting to touch them and reach out to them but never really getting close to them. *Long Distance* embodied longness for a haptic community. Produced amid *the* global pandemic, this installation borrows from Jimena's previous study of hands as a technology of exchanges. Having previously studied the transatlantic economic transactions at Money Transfer operators in Antwerp and Brussels, touch and community became a focal point for Jimena to analyse the making and development of relationships. These elements, *touch* and *community*, became a much rarer sight throughout lockdown. When Jimena looked in epicentres of community making spaces, such as public parks, all she could see was the overall structure providing for a community, benches, chess boards, tables and cycling paths, but no subjects or identities *living* as a community in these areas. The ubiquitous Burle Marx waving paving patterns once were walked on by several neighbourhood members are now empty but gloriously visible as a symbol of the dynamic promise of tomorrow. In referring to this pavement pattern, Jimena creates a circular portal for bodies desiring *touch*. Even the cold-feel ceramic and metallic hands cannot resist the warm, lyrical pavement waves.

Jimena Chávez Delion
Long Distance
Installation with wood and hand-drawn PVC sheets, steel and ceramics
2021
Timber and PVC drawn base 2 x 130 x 130 cm
2 steel pieces 35 x 40 x 1 cm
1 ceramic piece 35 x 40 x 2.5 cm

Textiles have historically provided a genealogy of words related to affection, warmth, nurturing and care. Is it the case that through understanding the complexity of care and textiles, we can also create paths to relate to each other differently?

11.

Elena has been thinking about this installation for many years. It lived as an urgent desire pending to be materialised. When I met her, she told me about it, and part of me felt that it had not happened because the context had not allowed it and certain *things* needed to coincide to make it happen. When I told Elena what I was thinking about this exhibition, she reminded me of this installation. It seemed fitting as I talked about textiles in their function as a technology of fashion and technology of survival through providing warmth and protection to our bodies. Elena thought of a washing line where undergarments, those traditionally targeted at women, hanged. These were propelled not by the wind forces but by air recirculation thanks to a standing fan blowing them over. A relatively simple idea and setup, possible due to the ideas I wanted to discuss and bring together. For two weeks before the exhibition installation, I worked on gathering all the items and materials needed for this piece. I had promised Elena I would work on it at home and send her pictures of the results before them being shown here.

I am struggling to tell you the following as I do not want to condition your experience of the piece, but I feel it necessary to share this with you to give you the possibility to work on answers to these questions. Once installed, I had a very intense emotional reaction to the piece, which I had not expected. I asked myself, who had left them behind? They were already dry. Why were they not being picked up? When I left my clothes on the drying line, I was physically unwell and could not move, and they ended up getting wet again, thanks to the British rain. I imagined if something had happened to the people who used these clothes. I realised perhaps they were no longer here to pick them up. When Elena first thought of this piece, she also thought of ways to overcome the misogynistic cultures, which kill women, promote transphobia, and eradicate pathways to freedom. I like to read these pieces, the Queen Kong series, Bilingual Drawings and this installation, in tandem as happening in different temporalities but aiming to show a world in constant contradictions, submerge in a language of control, but at the same time devising ways to defy it. When I shared with Elena how I felt after seeing the gentle and fleeting reminder of a body in her installation, she shared that she hoped for viewers and visitors to also work as a tool to make visible those bodies that the State does not name or recognise. After a very hard pandemic and lockdown process, we are working out how to make sense of those gone and relate to those still with us.

Elena Tejada-Herrera

Untitled

2016-2022

Brassieres, pants, plastic pegs, plastic clothesline and electric free standing fan.

Bibliography

- American Alliance of Museums, "Museums and Trust 2021", published on Sep 30 2021. URL: <<https://www.aam-us.org/2021/09/30/museums-and-trust-2021/#:~:text=Museums%20consistently%20rank%20among%20the,a%20similar%20level%20of%20trust.>> Last accessed: 19/04/2022.
- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation and foreword by Brian Massumi. The University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, London, University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018. *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible. Ensayos desde un presente en crisis*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2018, p.126.

