

Claudia Martínez Garay

**WAKCHAKUNA / We Who Share Everything and
Nothing**

Large Print Exhibition Notes

25.05-08.09.2024

Claudia Martínez Garay (b. 1983, Peru) creates paintings, sculptures, videos, and site-specific installations inspired by her Andean heritage, historic images and propaganda from her home country Peru. Her research often begins within European museum collections and archives of ancient cultures where she questions how objects and relics are collected, displayed and categorised by these official narratives.

For her solo exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary, Martínez Garay presents *Wakchakuna*, a new large-scale installation that addresses current debates around the originality and repatriation of stolen and looted objects. *Wakchakuna* takes the shape of a mountain referencing an excavated grave where

sacrificed and funerary objects can be seen partially unearthed amongst the soil, sand and rubble.

Drawings of native creatures including a cojinova fish, a spondylus shell, an otter, and a wild jaguarundi cat - whose bones were found as offerings in these burials - are printed on aluminium plates. These beings haunt and stalk the mountain, nestled amongst handmade portrait vessels and objects resembling human and non-human forms, relics of pre-columbian deities, and ancient prisoners kneeling with their hands bound. Referred to by Martínez Garay as 'wakchas', these objects are now orphaned, removed from their original home, funerary context, and intended purpose.

Wakcha is a word belonging to Quechua, an indigenous South American language that served as the primary language of the Inca Empire who ruled the region before the Spanish Invasion in the 16th Century. Wakcha translates to 'poor', not in the western understanding of not having means, but poor in the sense of something which is without family, belonging, or a community. Therefore, a wakcha is an orphan and

an outcast, unable to return to its homeland or people due to its origins being difficult to trace.

The 38 ceramic pieces presented here represent objects smuggled out of Peru in bird fertilizer and other exported materials by looters known as the Huaqueros, who sell their finds to antique markets and museums abroad. Many of the objects within UK national museum collections have a lack of provenance and vague information on the context of their origins. Labels on objects in the British Museum state simple descriptions such as, 'coast of Peru', 'probably Chimú or Inca', and 'date approx between 100-500 AD'. It is the uncertainty of the objects' authenticity, and their extraction from their sacrificial and spiritual resting places by colonial and imperialist agendas, that Martínez Garay critiques and discusses in her work.

Martínez Garay further blurs and complicates the origins and authenticity of these objects by creating replicas of a selection of artifacts which are currently kept in the storage of UK museums. In *Wakchakuna*

she metaphorically reclaims the looted tomb and gathers its orphan objects, putting to rest their lost and tortured spirits. As Martínez Garay describes, “imagine how the ancient Peruvians would feel seeing our world today. Modernity has shamelessly disregarded their traditions and beliefs. Offerings and artifacts were stolen and stashed away in Europe, lost and robbed of their purpose. But just as the ancient cultures couldn’t foresee our present, Europe can’t conceive a future deprived of these artifacts.”

Exhibition Credits

The subtitle of the exhibition is a direct quote from John Berger’s *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*.

Claudia Martínez Garay’s exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary coincides with her first solo exhibition in Scotland, opening at Dundee Contemporary Arts, 23 August – 17 November 2024.

Claudia Martínez Garay: *WAKCHAKUNA / We Who Share Everything and Nothing*, is generously supported by the Claudia Martínez Garay Exhibition Circle: Flavia Nespatti, Luis Oganés, Carlos Marsano and those who wish to remain anonymous.

The exhibition is curated by Katie Simpson.

Claudia Martínez Garay would like to dedicate this work to her family, the known and the unknown.

Special thanks to everyone who collaborated on this project, especially to Arturo Kameya, Mirella Moschella, Eva Lotte Lisander, José Hopkins, Marianne Peijnenburg and the Rijsakademie ceramic workshop, Carlos Marsano, Salma Tuqan, Katie Simpson, Sebastian Brandsen, Lorenza Brancadoro, and GRIMM Gallery.

Exhibition graphics by Studio Marie Lusa.

All works courtesy the artist and GRIMM, Amsterdam | London | New York.

Cover image courtesy Claudia Martínez Garay

Photo: Mirella Moschella

RELATED EVENTS

Artist Film Screening and Q+A

Sat 25 May, 2pm

A screening of Claudia Martínez Garay's short film, *Ñuqa Kausakusaq Qhepaykitapas / I Will Outlive You* (2017) followed by Q+A with Curator, Diego Chocano.

Exhibition Walkthroughs

Wed 5 June, 12pm

Welcome Walkthrough

Explore the exhibition with our team and community partners Ubuntu, followed by refreshments and conversation in the café.

Wed 12 June, 2pm

Curator's Walkthrough

Join Nottingham Contemporary's curators for a tour of our summer exhibitions.

Wed 19 June, 1pm

Wednesday Walkthrough

With Nastassja Simensky, artist, Archaeology-Heritage-Art Research Network.

Wed 7 August, 1pm

Wednesday Walkthrough

With Uncomfortable Cambridge, social enterprise.

12.30 Talks

12.30pm every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, starting 4 June Join one of our friendly Gallery Assistants for a short exploration of one of our exhibitions.

Summer Solstice Party

Sat 22 June

Join us to celebrate the summer solstice and our fifteenth birthday with a day of events, performance and activities.

The Screen at Contemporary

Our strand of arthouse, cult and classic cinema continues in August and September.

Free Family Activities

Spring Half-Term: 28 – 30 May

Summer Holidays: 30 July – 22 Aug

Explore the themes in the exhibitions through making and play.

For more information about the exhibition, related events and learning programmes, visit nottinghamcontemporary.org or scan here:



If you would like a quiet space to reflect during your visit, please visit Gallery 0 (room adjacent to Gallery 1).

If you would like to use any alternative forms of interpretation, we have a range of accessible versions on our Access Wall beside Reception.

Nottingham Contemporary is a registered charity and dependent on the generosity of our visitors, partners and supporters. Donate today to directly support our ambitious exhibitions, and the vital work we do with artists, schools, young people, and our local community.

Suggested donation: £5

Environmental: Nottingham Contemporary is committed to advancing sustainability within the organisation and aims to explore and embed sustainable working practices and habits within our workplace and across the sector. This includes standardising environmental considerations at all stages of decision making.

The artwork in *Wakchakuna* has been transported by consolidated road freight. This document is printed on FSC Mix paper (Forest Stewardship Council ®)

certified products manufactured with a variety of sources including FSC-certified virgin fibre, controlled wood and/or recycled materials). Please return to a member of staff or recycle should you not want to keep after your visit.