

# WAKCHAKUNA / We Who Share Everything and Nothing

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 Andean 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."

# Claudia Martínez Garay

## 25.05 – 08.09 2024

### 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

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

##### Wed 7 August, 1pm

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](http://nottinghamcontemporary.org) or scan here:



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 Rijksakademie 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

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.

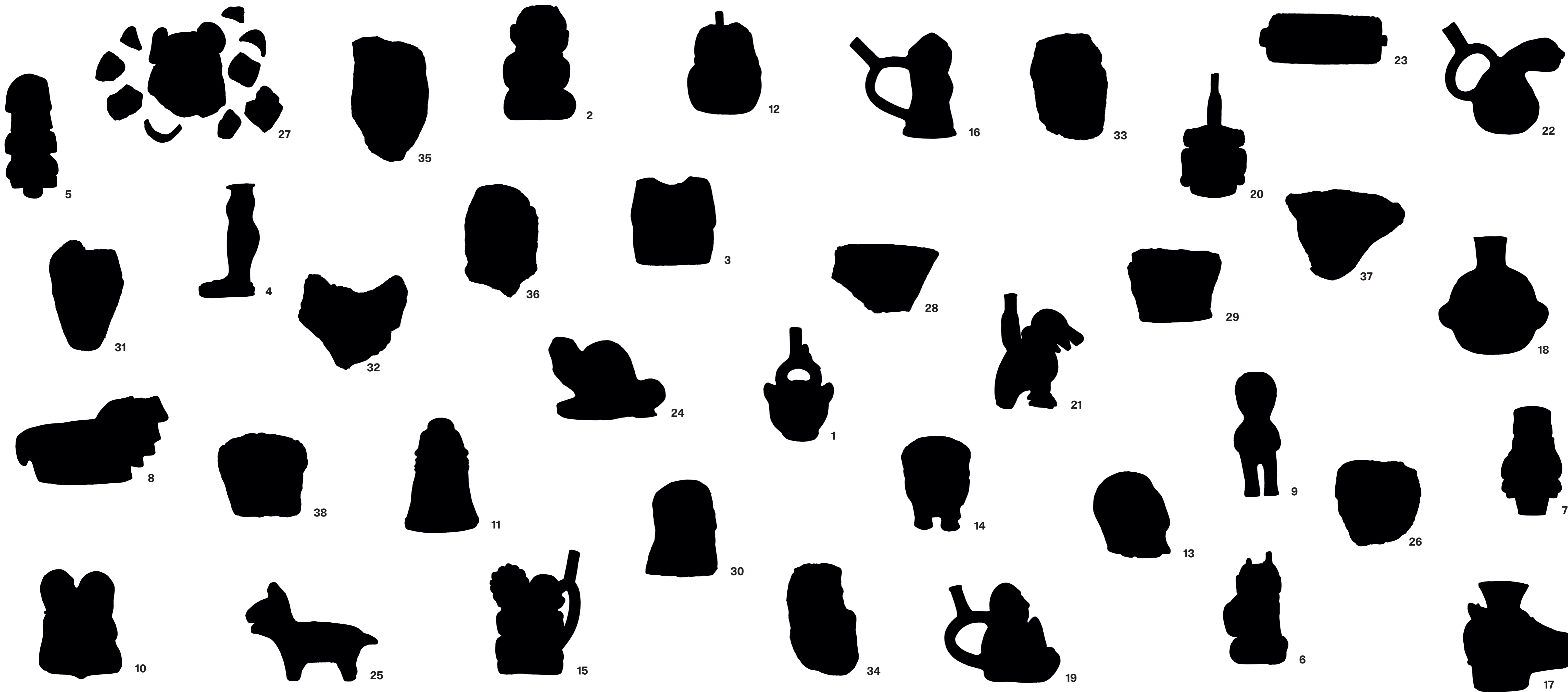
**Environmental:** Nottingham Contemporary is committed to advancing sustainability within the organisation and aims to explore and embed sustainable working practices and habits within our workplace and across the sector. This includes standardising environmental considerations at all stages of decision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

The artwork in *Wakchakuna* has been transported by consolidated road freight. The soil and rubble used in the exhibition will be re-purposed following the close of the exhibition. 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.

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Suggested donation: £5





<p><b>1 Am1955,+19.a-b</b> British Museum</p> <p>Found in Americas collections apparently unnumbered and unregistered. Formally registered March 2013. Acquisition details unknown, but known to have been in collection by 1955.</p>	<p><b>4 Am1947,10.13</b> British Museum</p> <p>Cultures/Periods: Inca Excavated/Findspot: Peru (?) Register addition "Moche".</p>	<p><b>8 Am1946,11.1</b> British Museum</p> <p>Figurine; container; conopa Register addition "ink-pot" Register addition "Modern" Register addition "Inca"</p>	<p>century the manufacture of objects purporting to be of pre-Hispanic date – including the so-called 'portrait' vessels, which perhaps represent heroes or rulers of ancient Peru – has been common in Peru. In recent times the use of genuinely ancient pottery vessels, remodelled and painted to turn them into more elaborate specimens, has caused considerable confusion: thermoluminescence dating often appear to support the authenticity of the piece. However, in the nineteenth century more common types of forgery depended rather upon the use of original pre-Hispanic moulds which are often found in the graves of potters. From these it was possible for the forgers to produce numbers of pottery vessels in perfect style. In many early examples little attempt was made to reproduce either the clay or surface finish correctly. Rather, the surface was 'aged' by making it appear black and dirty, and by adding to it fragments of genuine pre-Hispanic textile, abundantly available from mummy-wrappings preserved by the dry climate of coastal Peru. Since pottery vessels are equally abundant in these graves, it is perhaps puzzling that they should have been forged. However, genuine examples are often broken</p>	<p>and require considerable restoration, which then has to be concealed. Demand for Moche pottery vessels remains high, and recent forgeries are of great sophistication."</p>	<p>human elements in the form of curled hair, ears decorated with ear spoons and human hands.</p>	<p>Found/Acquired: Lambayeque (department) (?)</p>	<p>Latin America and the Caribbean → South America → Peru (uncertain)</p>	<p>Date made: Before 1949 Archaeological period: Chimu Date collected: By 1949 Donated: 1949</p>	<p><b>30 Am1954,05.148</b> <b>31 Am1954,05.162</b> <b>32 Am1954,05.158</b> <b>35 Am1954,05.151</b> British Museum</p>
<p><b>2 Am.7419</b> British Museum</p> <p><b>Curator's comments:</b> See BEP archive/Christy Correspondence (AOA - copy) Letter from Josiah Harris, 14 September 1871, donating a collection from the Macabi Islands made by his late son Josiah David Harris. Harris attaches extracts from his son's letters. The extracts refer to the discovery of many "curiosities" including stone and wooden items but this pottery vessel is not mentioned.</p>	<p><b>5 Am.7422</b> <b>6 Am.7424</b> British Museum</p> <p>"These extraordinary wooden sculptures, depicting officers, mythical beings and naked prisoners, were found off the coast of Moche territory on the Macabi Islands, along with other objects such as ceramics, textiles and shells. They were discovered during the late 19th century buried in layers of guano (bird excrement) when it began to be widely exported as fertiliser." in Pardo and Cooper 2021/Peru: A Journey In Time (p.133)</p>	<p><b>9 Am1927,1007.6</b> British Museum</p> <p>Figurine; offering gold</p>	<p><b>10 Am1947,10.6</b> British Museum</p> <p>Pottery stirrup vessel in the form of a skeleton and a woman embracing. The skeleton is gripping the woman's bottom lip, while the woman is holding the skeleton's penis.</p>	<p><b>12 Am1949,12.2.a</b> British Museum</p> <p><b>Curator's comments:</b> The head (with whistle mechanism) was removed in 1/1997 by Conservation Dpt. as not belonging to the vase.</p>	<p><b>16 Am1909,1218.48</b> British Museum</p> <p>Stirrup spout bottle in the form of a human hand, painted with dark brown on a cream slip background.</p>	<p><b>19 Am1858,0403.22</b> British Museum</p> <p>Vase, stirrup-spout vessel (female with child-shaped) made of pottery.</p>	<p>Field collector Ronald Hawksby Thomas (uncertain) PRM source Ronald Hawksby Thomas (uncertain) Donated: Unknown date</p>	<p><b>27 2005.91.1.1</b> Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford</p> <p>Part of a pottery vessel in form of a human head.</p>	<p>Sherd; made of pottery;  <b>Curator's comments:</b> Register addition "Peru". Register addition "Tiahuanaco".</p>
<p><b>3 Am1907,0319.655</b> British Museum</p> <p>Excavated/Findspot: Pacasmayo Valley Found/Acquired: La Libertad (Peru) (?) Found/Acquired: Ancash (?) Found/Acquired: Lambayeque (department) (?)</p>	<p><b>7 A.JC.90</b> National Museums Scotland</p> <p>Carved hollow wooden figure of a naked prisoner sitting cross-legged with his arms behind his back and a rope about his neck: South America, Peru, Macabi Island, Moche, 1- 750 AD</p>	<p><b>11 Am1909,1207.8</b> British Museum</p> <p><b>Curator's comments:</b> Jones 1990 Moche-style vessels from Peru "Since quite early in the nineteenth</p>	<p><b>13 Am1949,12.2.b</b> British Museum</p> <p><b>Curator's comments:</b> Head removed from vase by Conservation Department, 1/1997, as not belonging (though Moche)</p>	<p><b>14 Am.5974</b> British Museum</p> <p>Excavated/Findspot: Peru</p>	<p><b>17 Am1882,1014.10</b> British Museum</p> <p>Jar with flat pedestal base and flaring snout. Vessel portrays the head of a camelid – a guanaco? with a halter across muzzle and around the head.</p>	<p><b>20 Am1858,0403.3</b> British Museum</p> <p>Stirrup-spouted vessel (head-shaped) made of pottery.</p>	<p>Latin America and the Caribbean → South America → Peru Unknown</p>	<p><b>24 1884.41.8</b> Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford</p> <p>Latin America and the Caribbean → South America → Peru Chimbote</p>	<p><b>33 Am1954,05.167</b> <b>34 Am1954,05.167</b> British Museum</p> <p>Ferroc Bay Field collector Henry Ogg Forbes (uncertain) PRM source Henry Ogg Forbes (uncertain) Date collected: 1912? (uncertain) Donated: 1921, uncertain</p>
<p><b>10 Am1907,0319.655</b> British Museum</p> <p>Excavated/Findspot: Pacasmayo Valley Found/Acquired: La Libertad (Peru) (?) Found/Acquired: Ancash (?) Found/Acquired: Lambayeque (department) (?)</p>	<p><b>10 Am1947,10.6</b> British Museum</p> <p>Pottery stirrup vessel in the form of a skeleton and a woman embracing. The skeleton is gripping the woman's bottom lip, while the woman is holding the skeleton's penis.</p>	<p><b>11 Am1909,1207.8</b> British Museum</p> <p><b>Curator's comments:</b> Jones 1990 Moche-style vessels from Peru "Since quite early in the nineteenth</p>	<p><b>15 Am1909,1218.243</b> British Museum</p> <p>Vase (in form of man with animal made of pottery. The human figure is sat cross-legged with hands together looking upwards. On their back is a hybrid animal with feline traits such as muzzle and fangs, but</p>	<p><b>18 Am1907,0319.585</b> British Museum</p> <p>Excavated/Findspot: Pacasmayo Valley Found/Acquired: La Libertad (Peru) (?) Found/Acquired: Ancash (?)</p>	<p><b>19 Am1947,10.3</b> British Museum</p> <p>Pottery vessel in the form of a bird (vulture or condor?).</p>	<p><b>21 Am1947,10.3</b> British Museum</p> <p>Moche (Phase I (?))</p>	<p>Maker: Unknown Maker Field collector: Unknown Collector PRM source: Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers founding collection</p>	<p><b>25 1985.49.135</b> Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford</p> <p>Latin America and the Caribbean → South America → Peru Unknown</p>	<p><b>28 Am1954,05.165</b> <b>29 Am1954,05.143</b> <b>36 Am1954,05.164</b> <b>37 Am1954,05.163</b> <b>38 Am1954,05.161</b> British Museum</p>
<p><b>26 Am1949,1.87</b> Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford</p>	<p><b>28 Am1954,05.165</b> <b>29 Am1954,05.143</b> <b>36 Am1954,05.164</b> <b>37 Am1954,05.163</b> <b>38 Am1954,05.161</b> British Museum</p>	<p>Field Collector: Unknown Collector PRM source: Welcome Institute</p>	<p><b>29 Am1954,05.143</b> <b>36 Am1954,05.164</b> <b>37 Am1954,05.163</b> <b>38 Am1954,05.161</b> British Museum</p>	<p>These object captions have been copied from the British Museum, National Museums Scotland and Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford online catalogue records. You can search these databases by using the reference numbers above on the relevant museum website, or scan the QR code on the next page to visit our online resources where we link to the individual items.</p>					