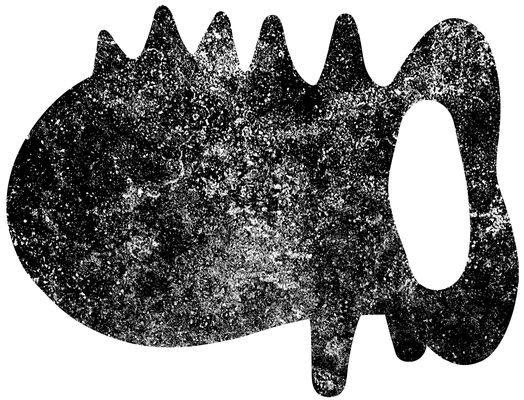
MUD IS EVERYTHING

Julia Isídrez

09.10.26–
10.01.27



When Julia Isídrez (b. 1967, Paraguay) goes out and gathers clay, when she reaches down and scoops it from the earth with hand or spade, she is not holding a singular thing. Earth is many things - sediment and minerals, microorganisms and insects, mycelia and plant roots. It is full of our ancestors, and so it might be said that earth, or clay, or mud, has a soul. As Isídrez has said - “mud is everything”.

All mud used to be something else, and it will be something else again. Mud is malleable but also holds memory. It can be squeezed and shaped, hardened and dried, fired and transformed.

Isídrez grew up in Itá, Paraguay, where Guaraní ceramic techniques have been passed down through generations and are amongst only a few practices that can be traced back to pre-Hispanic times. Through this inheritance, Isídrez learned under the guidance of her mother, the renowned artist Juana Marta Rodas, who in turn learned from her own mother. This mode of sharing passes on a knowledge not just of making, but of being – with clay and the memories it holds of people and more-than human lives, grounded in reciprocity between people, territory, ancestors, plants and animals.

Like mud, Guaraní ceramic traditions used to be something else, and will be something else again. They have shifted alongside turbulent times and changing pressures – Spanish colonialism, sociopolitical shifts, globalisation, and destabilised climates and ecosystems. As specific forms and functions declined from daily use, replaced by objects made from glass, plastic or metal, the nature of the ceramics evolved. The spout of a water jug transformed into the gaping mouth of a lizard; a handle morphed into the elongated neck of a llama. Guaraní practice has continued not because it has remained rigid, but because it has continued to transform.

This exhibition brings together key examples of Isídrez’s work across forms and scale, made over the course of her practice. The exhibition has been designed to present a chorus of creatures meandering on forest paths.

Nottingham Contemporary

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OLNEY GLEASON

JESSICA SILVERMAN

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Headline Supporters: Gomide&Co, Olney Gleason, and Jessica Silverman.

The Julia Isídrez Exhibition Circle: ANTESALA / Flavia Nespatti, Hanneli Rupert and the Embassy of the Republic of Paraguay to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The accompanying publication Julia Isídrez *Mud* was generously supported by Fundación Itaú.

Exhibition graphics by Waste Studio.

We would like to extend our deepest thanks to all the lenders who have supported us in bringing together this selection of Julia Isídrez’s works: Gomide&Co, Olney Gleason, Jessica Silverman, Ary Perez, Fernanda Feitosa and Heitor Martins, Isabel Ralston, Livia Debbane, Jorge Enciso, Cleusa Garfinkel, Elisa Mofarrej and those lenders who wish to remain anonymous; to the contributors to the accompanying publication and live programme, whose ideas and research will offer new viewpoints into Isídrez’s practice: Damián Cabrera, María Wills Londoño, Katya García-Antón, Ticio Escobar and Museo Del Barro, Dr. Sofia Gotti, Sophia Mena, Ruby Daley, Dr. Lara Pucci, Irina Razumovskaya and Matthew Chesney; and to Felipe Mujica, Shweta Venkat and Loreto Solis for bringing the publication to life.

And finally, a very special thanks to the entire team at Nottingham Contemporary.

Nottingham Contemporary is a registered charity and dependent on the generosity of our visitors, partners and supporters.

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

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.

In *Mud is everything* we have reused some materials from previous exhibitions to build the framework for the plinths. Where possible other materials have been borrowed, re-used or re-purposed. The exhibition graphics have been produced by local suppliers Hayman Creative. Since spring 2026 we have switched our wall texts from cut vinyl to Xanitaprint, a recyclable material. Our exhibitions are always built and installed by local fine art technicians. Our exhibition notes are 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).

RELATED EVENTS

WALKTHROUGHS

Wed 21 Oct, 1pm
Curators’ Walkthrough

Join Nottingham Contemporary’s curators for a tour of our autumn exhibitions.

Wed 2 Dec, 1pm

With Dr. Sofia Gotti, Lecturer in Curating at the Courtauld Institute.

Wed 16 Dec, 1pm

With Sophia Mena, Somos The Podcast founder and host.

12.30 Talks
12.30pm every Tue, Thu, Sat, and Sun, starting Tue 20 Oct

Join one of our friendly Gallery Assistants for a short exploration of one of our current exhibitions.

WORKSHOPS

Sat 31 Oct, 2pm
Workshop on speculative design histories by Pina and Biblioteka

An interdisciplinary workshop exploring the design histories of exhibitions and libraries as worldview machines.

Sat 21 Nov & Sun 13 Dec, 1pm
Unearthing: a workshop in story and clay by Ruby Daley

Explore your personal histories and our collective dreams of a life lived closer to clay in this hands-on making workshop.

PERFORMANCES

Fri 13, Sat 14 & Sun 15 Nov, 12pm-2pm & 3pm-5pm
Bar Tango by Benni Bosetto

Join us for this new production exploring the corporeality of love through stage objects and a surreal choreography in which tango dancers inhabit costumes inspired by animals, plants, and minerals.

CONTEMPORARY X ART HISTORIES

A collaborative strand of programming between the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Contemporary.

Wed 25 Nov, 3pm

Ways of Seeing, Learning and Making: With art historian, Dr. Lara Pucci (University of Nottingham), in conversation with ceramic sculptor, Irina Razumovskaya (Royal College of Art).

Wed 9 Dec, 3pm

Ways of Seeing, Learning and Making: With Backlit Gallery Co-Director, Matthew Chesney.

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

Curated by: Salma Tuqan and Niall Ó Faircheallaigh, assisted by Klara Szafrańska

Curatorial Admin: Xin Chen and Caitlin Irwin

3D Design and Exhibition Build Lead: David Thomas

Exhibition Build and Installation: Helen Bartholomew, Jon Chambers, Jack Narewski, Craig David Parr, Emily Stollery, and Hannah Templeman

Condition Checking: Jenna Jones, Lara Mattinson, and Simon Withers

Development: Emma Graves and Antonia Seroff

Marketing: Catherine Masters and Holly Nowak

Learning Programme: Sandra Austerfield, Amelia Daiz, Chan Hyacinth Fagan, Pasha Kincaid, Susannah Lambert, Milee Lee, Ursula Rae, Peter Rumney, Rachel Scanlon, Amanda Spruyt, Andrew Martyn Sugars, Holly Tea, Charlotte Tupper, Stephanie Wardle and Sian Watson Taylor

Exhibition Invigilators: Winter Beaumont, Tom Chamberlain, Nadim Chaudry, Lynn Chippendale, Olwen Davies, Quinn Greytryx, Lachlan Hui, Jenna Jones, Milee Lee, Karen Lunt, Lara Mattinson, Craig David Parr, Millie Quick, Nikki Stevenson, Olu Taiwo and Simon Withers

Visitor Experience: Emma Beischer, Paul Buddle, Nadim Chaudry, Olwen Davies, Sam Harrison, Jenna Jones, Lucy Martin, Holly Matthews, Craig David Parr and Jordan Sterry

People and Culture: Lauren Riley

Finance and Operations: Andy Batson, Jon Chambers, Mandy Newbold and David Thomas