

## Teacher / Group Leader Notes

Julian Abraham 'Togar': RECONCILIATION  
Claudia Martínez Garay: WAKCHAKUNA / We Who Share Everything and Nothing  
Hamid Zénati: Two Steps at a Time

25 May – 8 Sep

**Featuring:** Sculpture and kinetic sculptures, sound, installation, textile and ceramic paintings, artefacts, video

**Curriculum:** Art & Design, Music, Technology, History, PSHE, Citizenship.

**Themes:** Social justice, colonial legacies and museum practice; visual language, colour, pattern and artistic inspiration; creative collaborations, creative spaces and social relationships.

Each of our three very different exhibitions ask questions about gallery spaces, the role of museums, their relationship to the world and to people's experiences and lives. They also explore creative inspiration and collaborations.

### Gallery 1 - Julian Abraham 'Togar': RECONCILIATION



Studio of Julian "Togar" Abraham at the Rijksacademie 'Open' (2021).  
Photo: Josien Pieterse. Courtesy of the artist and Framer Framed.

Julian Abraham 'Togar' is a musician and artist who uses sound and music to bring people together to listen closely, talk and create. At the core of his exhibition is *OK Studio* (2020 – present), an immersive environment and chorus of kinetic, automated sculptures. Alongside are musical instruments - guitars, keyboards, piano and drum kit. Visitors are invited to play and jam together and to be part of the artwork by adding to the layers of sound within the space.

In the months leading up to this exhibition, Togar spent a month in Nottingham exploring the local arts and music scene and meeting other musicians, including members of the Robin Hood Youth Orchestra. A newly commissioned video work documents a jamming session between the orchestra and Togar.

Included in the exhibition are a series of posters that play with words and music references, and newly commissioned rugs with colourful patterns that disguise repeating words and text. Togar is interested in the sound of words and playing with words like a musical score.

The gallery is further activated through events, workshops and jamming with local creatives. By transforming the gallery through sound and by creating a communal space, Togar brings the gallery to life and questions the role they can play.

### Gallery 2 - Claudia Martínez Garay: WAKCHAKUNA / We Who Share Everything and Nothing

Claudia creates work inspired by her Andean heritage and home country, Peru. Her exhibition addresses very current debates around how objects and relics are obtained, categorised and displayed in European museums, and draws attention to the spiritual meanings they hold for indigenous people.



Claudia Martínez Garay, *The Creator* (detail) 2019, Courtesy of the Artist and GRIMM, Amsterdam / London / New York Installation view of "Ten Thousand".

Claudia's large-scale installation takes the form of a mountain of earth imitating an excavated Andean grave. Visible are replicas of objects that would have been buried with the deceased as sacrifices and offerings for the afterlife. The 38 ceramic pieces represent objects smuggled out of Peru by looters who sell their finds to antique markets and museums abroad.

Also visible are aluminium prints of native animals and plants. Claudia calls these objects, 'wakchas', meaning 'to be poor' in Quechua, the indigenous South American language of the Inca civilisation. Here, poor means being without family or belonging. Claudia describes them as being orphaned from their original home and purpose.

Objects in UK museums are rooted in our colonial history. Often, they were not willingly given, and their stories are still overlooked or unknown. Often labels have limited 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 that Claudia criticises in her work.

Claudia says, "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." In this work she metaphorically reclaims the looted tomb and its objects and puts them to rest under the protection of native creatures and ancient kin.

Debates in society and in museums focus on better representation of the histories of collections and some museums have committed to returning stolen artefacts to their country of origin. Claudia worked with the British Museum, National Museums Scotland and Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford to research and create this artwork.

### Gallery 3 and 4 - Hamid Zénati: Two Steps at a Time

With his own distinctive visual language and a huge creative output, this exhibition celebrates the creative energy of self-taught artist, Hamid Zénati. Across the two galleries you can see his signature 'all-over' style, developed through his practice of drawing and painting instinctively on whatever surfaces were available to him.

Hamid worked onto walls, furniture, and found objects such as musical instruments and ceramics. However, his preferred medium was to paint onto clothing and textiles because he enjoyed their versatility and possibility for movement.

His artworks were often displayed and 'performed' in interesting ways, not in a gallery but draped over banisters, suspended on washing lines, or activated in the sea. He liked to work with everyday materials and for artworks to be part of people's lives. Our Gallery Assistants will be wearing and activating some of Hamid's designs during the exhibition.



Photo: Hamid Zénati © Hamid Zénati Estate.

Hamid found inspiration everywhere. His childhood was spent in Algiers where the mix of languages, cultures and the fight for independence was a huge influence on his life and work. Archival material provides context of French colonial rule and Algerian independence.

He also found inspiration in the landscape of the Algerian Sahara, which he believed gave rise to the most perfect patterns, and the motifs and cultural traditions of its indigenous people. Also present are Hamid's photographs of his travels and the poetry and political books from his studio. Greatly inspired by music, his eclectic CD collection plays in the gallery. Like, Togar's exhibition, visitors are invited to spend time and relax in the gallery.

During his life, Hamid received little recognition by the art world. Indeed, this is only the second ever exhibition of his work, yet his creative energy and imagination remained unshaken. He produced over 1000 artworks, experimenting with a variety of techniques and materials, and rich with forms, patterns, and combinations of colour.