Multiple Contemporaneities in Peruvian Art as seen through the practices of Dora Panduro Silvano and Claudia Martinez Garay

by

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ABSTRACT

This major research paper explores contemporary Peruvian art through a decolonial lens to examine how memory and identity are central to histories of colonial oppression and displacement. Drawing on concepts of multiple contemporaneities, creative adaptations, and alternative modernities, I focus on the work of two contemporary Peruvian artists, Dora Panduro Silvano and Claudia Martinez Garay, to explore how each artist embeds in their practice the cultural transmission of memory as distinct sites of resistance and resilience in response to histories of colonialism and state violence. I analyse how the Andean concept of pacha (non-linear space-time) and mestiza identity are central to the hybrid qualities of Claudia Martinez Garay's artworks, and how Amazonian Indigenous cosmologies are central to Dora Panduro Silvano's artistic practice. The paper concludes with a discussion of how my own positionality as a displaced Indigenous-Peruvian, adopted as a baby and raised in Canada, led to the themes and artists explored in this paper.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

There can be no discourse of decolonization, no theory of decolonization, without a decolonizing practice[1].

- Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa*: *A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization*

What is Peruvian Contemporary Art?

The representation and analysis of Peruvian contemporary art, which is rich in cultural diversity, is often constrained by colonial paradigms, reducing it to a narrow European art historical perspective. Several scholars, critics, and curators have observed that despite Peru's many cultural influences and Indigenous heritage,[2] the contemporary art circuits in Lima, the national capital and cultural epicenter, are structured to support Western aesthetic values which reaffirm colonial histories.[3] These scholars have further

[1] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (2012) : 100, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1472612.

[2] It is important to note that while Peruvian culture is also expressed through its African, Japanese, and Chinese diasporas, due to the scope of this paper, the focus will be on its Indigenous and mestiza expressions.

[3] To read more about how the art circuits in Lima are structured to support Western aesthetic values and reaffirm colonial histories please see works by Germana and McElhone, Borea, and Buntinx.

Gabriela Germana and Amy Bowman-McElhone, "Asserting the Vernacular: Contested Musealities and Contemporary Art in Lima, Peru," *Arts* 9, no. 1 (2020): 17; Giuliana Borea, "'Arte Popular' y La Imposibilidad De Sujetos Contemporáneos; o La Estructura Del Pensamiento Moderno y La Racializacion Del Arte_2017," n.d. (2017): 97-8; Gustavo Buntinx, "Communities of Sense/Communities of Sentiment: Globalization and the Museum Void in an Extreme Periphery" *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations,* (2006): 219-246.

observed that the inability of Indigenous and vernacular art to fit into Western models of modernity has created a void that obscures these artistic expressions' legibility and representation.

In their essay "Asserting the Vernacular: Contested Musealities and Contemporary Art in Lima, Peru," scholars Gabriela Germana and Amy Bowman-McElhone suggest utilizing the concepts of multiple contemporaneities, alternative modernities, and creative adaptations to make visible the complexities of the work by Indigenous artists in Peru.[4] These concepts acknowledge realities outside of Western paradigms and create space for cultural analysis that reveals layers of meaning that were previously obscured. It is within the concepts of multiple contemporaneities and creative adaptations that two significant aspects of Peruvian Indigenous art emerge: 1) the interrelationship of politics and art, and 2) how artists express their lived experience and cultural identity through cosmologies, such as Andean cosmological concepts and Amazonian cosmovision. In this research paper, I examine two notable contemporary Peruvian artists, Dora Panduro Silvano and Claudia Martinez Garay, through the lens of multiple contemporaneities to explore how they address the complexity of their sociopolitical reality and shape their cultural identity through themes of resistance and memory.

As a Shipibo-Konibo ceramic artist from Peru's Amazonia, Silvano's practice embodies traditional Shipibo aesthetics and methodologies that reflect the ontological

[4] The term "creative adaptations" was originally coined by scholar Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar to acknowledge the sites where people question the present and "make" themselves modern through the negotiation of local culture and politics, while still existing within larger structures of modernity.

Dilip Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," *Public Culture* (1999):16, doi:10.1215/08992363-11-1-1.

and epistemological cosmovision of her people. Through an analysis of her life and work, the ongoing effects of postwar colonization become visible, alongside the resilience of contemporary traditional Shipiba artists to strategize methods of cultural transmission. On the other hand, Garay's life and practice reflect another aspect of Peruvian contemporaneity: the cultural mestiza[5] who embodies a mixture of both Eurocentric and Indigenous paradigms. Garay's mestiza influences can be seen in her art practice that draws on strategies of critical analysis, and in her artworks that express a desire to reconnect to her Indigenous roots through the exploration of Andean cosmological concepts. Her practice is interdisciplinary and fluid, manifesting in many genres of creative expression such as videography, printmaking, and tufting.

Together, these two artists can be seen as opposite sides of the same coin. While Silvano is carrying the past into the present, Garay is looking for the past in the present. Both shape culture through cosmological expression that mediates memory and identity from vastly different life experiences and relationships to contemporary Peru. Side by side, their work provides a glimpse into Peruvian contemporaneities.

[5] Mestiza is a word that refers to a person of Spanish and Indigenous mixed descent. Historically, it has been used for racial classification in Eurocentric colonial hierarchies in Latin America. Although in this light, it can be understood as a derogatory term, some people, such as scholar Gloria Anzaldua, have taken back the power to self-identify with the term mestiza to reflect the pride in having a uniquely insightful perspective of transnational culture living on the borders of Western, Spanish, or indigenous Latin American society. Further information on the subject can be found in her book
Gloria Anzaldúa*, Borderlands: La Frontera: The New Mestiza,* (Aunt Lute Books, 2012).

Historical Overview

To appreciate the depth of political meaning in each artist's practice that the concept of multiple contemporaneities makes visible, it is necessary to have an understanding of Peruvian history and politics that are relevant to Silvano and Garay's work. Thus, this section of the introduction provides a brief overview of the processes of colonization in Peru and the internal armed conflict of the Sendero Luminoso in the 20th century that shape Peru's cultural, political, and social contemporaneities. It is through an analysis of the colonial structures and their legacies that the sociopolitical realities of Shipibo-Konibo Amazonians like Dora Panduro Silvano and the tensions that inform cultural mestiza identity like Claudia Martinez Garay's are made visible.

Peru's initial colonization began in 1532 with Francisco Pizzaro and his Spanish conquistadors landing on the coast of Peru and lasted until 1572, when the Spanish conquered the Incan Empire in the highlands with the help of Indigenous allies. With the collapse of the Incan empire, a larger project of colonization that aimed at reforming the structures of society began. Initiated under the Spanish colonial administration, Peru was divided into three regions: Costa (Coast), Sierra (highlands), and Amazonia (jungle). These colonial territorialities remained in place after Peru fought for its independence from Spain in the early 1880s, and continue to the present day, with each region uniquely affected by forms of colonial violence.

In his highly influential 1928 book *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, the Peruvian Marxist writer José Carlos Mariátegui outlined how various colonial strategies

implemented during the Spanish conquest from 1572 onwards were manifested in the social structures of his time in the 1920s. Among these colonial strategies were the irregular development of regionally defined economies, the division of land, the imposition of religion, and the influence of public education. In the Andean Sierra, arguably the most detrimental colonial strategies used were the introduction of a feudal-like economic structure and the growing gap between the centralism of coastal urban cities like Lima and the interior mountain regions of the Sierra.[6]

Initially, the Spanish colonized the Sierra to establish large agricultural estates called haciendas that could produce goods for export. A Peruvian hacienda was akin to a plantation, as the workers were paid very little, if anything, and lived in poverty under the rule of the latifundista[7] (feudal lord). As time progressed and opportunities for capitalism emerged, it became evident that the socio-economic structure of the Sierra would not develop in tandem with its metropolitan centers. The economic circumstances established by haciendas did not support the development of towns. Haciendas controlled trades, transportation, land, and dependent industries, and since they were driven by economic power, they had no imperative to help Indigenous communities grow. Without the conditions to cultivate economic independence afforded by arable land, jobs, and opportunities of a developing town, many Indigenous farmers and workers lived in poverty,

[6] For an in-depth discussion of how the gap between regionalism and centralism relates closely to Peru's economic structures, please see Essay 6 in José Carlos Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), chap.6 ,153-181.

[7] Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretive Essays*, 23.

unable to take the next steps on a path toward capitalist modernity.[8] The colonial dynamics of the haciendas fostered social hierarchies that created associations of Eurocentric culture with modernity, and Indigenous Andean culture as a social marker for poverty, backwardness, and powerlessness.[9]

Racial hierarchies also extended into the realm of belief systems that resulted in the development of syncretic faith throughout Peru. The introduction of Roman Catholicism began in the early 16th century but never managed to replace Incan and Andean spirituality completely. Instead, communities in both the Sierra and Amazonia fused their traditional spiritual beliefs with Catholicism, often by imbuing spiritual imagery with double meanings, such as hiding the mountain of Pachamama[10] in the shape of the Virgin Mary's robes[11] or integrating crosses into traditional material designs such as kené.[12] These hidden meanings helped Indigenous Peruvians resist colonial oppression by allowing them to preserve their cultural identity without fearing the violent punishment of idolatry imposed by the Spanish.

Concurrently, the Amazonia was also undergoing its own distinct changes during the 16th century. Unlike in the Sierra, the intermittent contact with Spanish explorers and

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[8] Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretive Essays*, 19.
[9] For a nuanced depiction of the colonial ethos of the Sierra during the 1920's, see José María Arguedas, *Deep Rivers,* trans. Frances Horning Barraclough (Waveland Press, 2007).

[10] Pachamama is the deity representing Mother Earth in Andean mythology who rules over nature, agriculture, and life.
[11] Lynette Yetter, "Virgin Mary/Pachamama Syncretism: Exploring Filial Ayni Relationship with the Divine Feminine in Early-Colonial Copacabana, Bolivia," *Western Tributaries* volume, 4. (2017): 2.
[12] Kené is the Shipiba term for "designs" that are associated with a traditional material culture that is discussed at length in Chapter 1 of this research project.

missionaries did not completely redefine Indigenous economic structures. Communities largely maintained their subsistence-based practices built around agriculture, fishing, hunting, and gathering.[13] Instead, the colonial legacy in the Amazonia can be seen in the integration of extractive capitalism and its influence on Indigenous subjectivity. During the Rubber Boom from 1884 to 1912, Indigenous men were often forced through indentured service or slavery to collect natural resources such as rubber and timber.[14]

While contemporary practices of rubber tapping are no longer detrimental to Amazonian ecosystems, practices of logging, mining, and cattle farming continue to be destructive and continue a history of Indigenous subjugation. The integration of Western attire, Spanish bilingualism, and schoolhouse[15] education into Indigenous communities during the 19th and 20th centuries, while not inherently harmful, encouraged assimilation. When combined with the damage of extractive companies to land and resources, and the influence of colonial ideologies on Indigenous subjectivity, colonial assimilation encouraged the continuous migration of Indigenous communities out of the Amazonia, who were driven by various reasons, including the destruction of traditional

[13] Alaka Wali, and Claire J. Odland, "Introduction to the Volume," in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context,* ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 2.

[14] Dionisio Ortiz, *Pucallpa and the Ucayali, yesterday and today: 1943-1986,* (Apostolado Publishing House, 1984) 215; Daniel Morales Chocano et al., "Chapter 2: Continuity and Change Among the Shipibo-Conibo: Prehistory to Modernity" in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context,* ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, Fieldiana, Anthropology, new ser., no. 45 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 17.

[15] Alaka Wali, "Chapter 3: Contextualizing the Collection: Environmental Conservation and Quality of Life in the Buffer Zone of the Cordillera Azul National Park" in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context* ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 30.

livelihoods, the struggle for basic survival,[16] and the lure of urban opportunities like employment and education.

The Internal Armed Conflict

The revolutionary movement of Shining Path, or Sendero Luminoso, emerged in 1970 as an armed response to a history of colonial oppression and assimilation. Led by Abimael Guzmán, a former philosophy professor from Ayacucho in the highlands, Sendero Luminoso's main objective was to fight the systemic oppression of Indigenous Peruvians by overthrowing the government through violent tactics in alignment with Maoist-Leninist beliefs.[17] To grow Sendero's militant power, Guzman spent ten years traveling throughout the countryside and poorer urban districts of Peru to recruit Indigenous peoples as armed followers. May 17th, 1980, marked the first attack of the guerrilla group in Ayacucho's Chuschi district, where they burned the ballot boxes for the presidential election at the time. Their violent acts would only escalate from here.

From 1980 to 2000, the group perpetrated some of the most horrific atrocities of Peru's contemporary history, with anyone who stood in opposition to Sendero's insurgency tortured or killed. To counter this insurgent violence, officially described by the state as the Internal Armed Conflict and referred to by the Shining Path as "the People's War," the state began a counterinsurgency military campaign that matched Sendero's brutality. Under the

[16] Wali and Odland, "Introduction to the Volume," 4.
[17] Nathaneil Nash, "Blow to Rebels in Peru: An Elusive Aura Is Lost," *The New York Times*, September 14, 1992, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/03/your-article.html.

rule of President Alberto Fujimori, amnesty laws of impunity were granted to government death squads known to indiscriminately imprison, torture, sterilize, murder, or disappear Indigenous people on the assumption that they were affiliated with Sendero Luminoso. It is important to note that the term "disappear" refers to the capture of Indigenous civilians by the military, who were never seen again. Although the disappeared are presumed dead, most of their bodies remain unrecovered and reflect a physical and social erasure in Peruvian society of Indigenous victims of the conflict.

After the capture of Guzman and the defeat of the Sendero Luminoso as an insurgency threat, the Peruvian government created the Truth and Reconciliation Committee or CVR in 2001 to investigate the human rights abuses that occurred during the Internal Conflict. The CVR's 2003 joint report with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) estimated that over 69,280 people had been killed because of the conflict. Using their collected data, they calculated that approximately 46% of the victims were attributed to the actions of Sendero Luminoso, and approximately 30% were victims of state action. AAAS has further stated in its report that:

> The report observes that the total estimated number of victims (69,280) differs considerably from the figures commonly advanced before the creation of the CVR. Earlier information came from the centers of social, economic, political and cultural power within the country. Drawing on the detailed discussions presented in the CVR report, we note that the geographic regions where the conflict was most intense are remote, and that the people who were affected were primarily peasants in rural areas, poor people, and those culturally farthest from the "western" world. Given these factors, it is disturbing but not, perhaps, surprising that so many of these citizens of this

> "ignored" Perú perished in the face of the ignorance and even indifference of the official, modern, and "western" Perú.[18]

This excerpt from the report is provides crucial historical context for understanding of contemporary Peruvian art because it highlights what is often left unsaid about the sociopolitical underpinnings of Peruvian society: the further the region from the centralized Westernized power of Lima, the greater the susceptibility to violence (physical or systemic) due to ignorance or indifference. The socioeconomic structures of Peru remained unchanged by the Internal Conflict, and its aftermath revealed the continuation of systemic violence against Indigenous Peruvians perpetrated by the state.

In his essential book *Mourning Remains,* scholar Isaias Rojas-Perez examines the sociopolitical landscape of Andean communities in the aftermath of the Internal Armed Conflict, primarily through conversations with the mothers of the disappeared.[19] After years of unsuccessfully trying to locate the remains of their loved ones, the mothers spoke to Rojas-Perez about the long journey of their suspended mourning, and the alternative ways they enacted memory, reformed community, and redefined identity amid the utter negligence of the state and fellow Peruvian nationals. Rojas-Perez argues, however, that

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[18] Patrick Ball et al., *How Many Peruvians Have Died?: An Estimate of the Total Number of Victims Killed or Disappeared in the Armed Internal Conflict between 1980 and 2000* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2003), 1, https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/s3fs-public/Peru2003.pdf.
[19] To read an in-depth account of how Isaias Rojas-Perez relates the aftermath of the Internal Conflict to the lives and actions of the mothers of the disappeared specifically, please see Chapters 4-8 of Rojas-Perez's book *Mourning Remains: State Atrocity, Exhumations, and Governing the Disappeared in Peru's Postwar Andes*, 2017.

ritual concern should not overshadow the political nature of the mother's responses, because a political reckoning is required before a ritual one can be enacted.[20]

In their confined state of suspended mourning, the mothers grew increasingly critical of the state's power to extend into the realm of necrogovernmentality that dictated the conditions of recovery, exhumation, reburial, and memorialization of their dead. The mothers subverted the state's self-appointed governance over the proper place, time, and way of memorialization by creating memorials grounded in the reformation of their own body politic outside of national identity, through Andean community ritual, and by walking an undesignated path in memory of their disappeared. Their actions illustrate how acts of memory can be a form of resistance to state erasure or subjugation. Supporting each other through communal ritual practices or by sharing stories helps reform a body politic that transcends nationalism, resonating instead through cultural connections, shared experiences, and resilience. It also highlights how silence, which is often attributed to trauma or fear, can be selective. Rojas-Perez observes that the mothers are not silent with each other, but in public communication with the state due to a deep distrust of the state's intentions and willingness to act.[21] It is through sharing their memories with each other that the social location of facts of terror is relocated from private to public spheres, shifting the idea of silence as private trauma to a public one of political reckoning.[22]

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[20] Rojas-Perez, *Mourning Remains*, 133-4.
[21] An example of the mothers' suspicions towards the state's intentions can be seen in the military's attempts to block the mothers' memorial site. This action raised concerns that the authorities were trying to cover up evidence and promote a desire to forget the atrocity. Rojas-Perez, *Mourning Remains*, 227.
[22] Rojas-Perez, *Mourning Remains*, 92-3.

Identity, Memory, and Resilience

Reflecting on the historical context outlined by Mariategui in his *Seven Essays*, it becomes apparent how the patterns of colonial strategies have evolved into systemic structures. The beginnings of class division and uneven economic growth, which exploited Indigenous land, labour, and resources, have continued from the times of the latifundia and the rubber boom, manifesting into large-scale national and international extractive practices. Additionally, the Indigenous subjugation that drove syncretism foreshadowed the racist, ignorant, or indifferent reactions to Indigenous genocide during the Internal Conflict.

Nevertheless, the resilience of Indigenous Peruvians is visible in their resistance to complete assimilation and cultural erasure. The syncretic practices of transposing a cosmological double meaning onto Catholic figures, and the actions of the mothers of the disappeared in reforming their communities and redefining memorials, demonstrate how Indigenous resilience can sometimes appear hidden when looking at it through a Eurocentric lens. As Macarena Gomez-Barris discusses in her book, *The Extractive Zone,* her concept of "submerged perspectives" helps to illuminate how local knowledge—not colonial capitalism—can shape our understanding of extractive zones.[23] This concept of submerged perspectives can work as an extension of multiple contemporaneities in the analysis of both Silvano and Garay's artistic practices. Seeing the submerged layers of Silvano and Garay's work centers the local knowledge of Indigenous Andean and Shipiba

[23] Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives,* (Duke University Press, 2017), 11-12.

cosmologies within the contexts of contemporary issues in the Sierra and Amazonia. Both Silvano and Garay, who use themes of memory and resistance to sustain their cultural practices in the present and future, can be considered "pathfinders." In her chapter "Codetalkers Recounting Signals of Survival," scholar Cheryl L'Hirondelle discusses the role of pathfinders as key to Indigenous cultural survival. According L'Hirondelle, "pathfinders" are Indigenous innovators who have adapted and translated traditional knowledge and worldviews for future generations.[24] In this respect, Silvano and Garay can be understood as both approaching the role of pathfinder from the distinct positions of a traditional Indigenous artist and a cultural mestiza.

In Chapter 1: The Life and Art of Dora Panduro Silvano a closer examination of Silvano's practice reveals a process of discernment regarding the aspects of her Shipibo culture that are most significant in their contemporary contexts. Her consideration of cultural transmission oscillates between sustaining practices of Shipibo material tradition, such as ceramics and kené formation, and demonstrating how creative adaptations can better serve the current needs of the community, such as the shifting role of joni chomos to align with communal and feminist values. In response to the effects of extractivism, Silvano's migration out of the Amazonia exemplifies the issue of displacement faced by many Shipibo peoples. Her adaptation of traditional artistic practices outside of her ancestral land and community highlights how aspects of material traditions, such as the clay used in ceramics

[24] Cheryl L'Hirondelle, "Codetalkers for Cultural Survival" in *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways in New Media Art,* (University of Calgary Press, 2016), 148-151.

and symbolism of wearable kené, have evolved into sites of memory and colonial resistance in the context of forced migration.

In Chapter 2: The Art and Processes of Claudia Martinez Garay, a reverse pathfinding process in contrast to Silvano's cultural transmission can be seen. Rather than focusing on ways to carry cultural knowledge into the future, Garay's practice is often intentionally critical and exploratory. She frequently employs symbolism to craft abstract narratives that address colonial politics and history, while also expressing a desire to reconnect with an Indigenous worldview beyond Eurocentric frameworks. By intertwining critical theory with Andean concepts such as pacha (the Quechua term for space-time), Garay creates sites of pachakuti (the Quechua idea of upheaval and renewal of the world),[25] while the imagery of her work often expresses notions of anticolonialism within visual language that is legible and supported in Western academic and museal spaces.

Central to Garay's practice is contending with the concept of decolonization, both systemically and internally. Her works convey themes related to ethnopolitics, the liminality between memory and forgetting, and the double meanings of mestiza culture. Utilizing the aesthetics of collage, Garay reconstructs a sense of memory and identity that has been fragmented by the state. Through the cultivation of her own visual language using collaged archival imagery and referencing Andean cosmological concepts, she illustrates what pathfinding might entail for other mestizas or mestizos eager to reconnect with their submerged Indigeneity. By creating liminal spaces that explore social, cultural, and

[25] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (2012): 96, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1472612.

personal memory while challenging Western modes of remembering and oppression, Garay presents a non-linear journey of cultural resilience through reconnection.

Chapter 1: THE LIFE AND ART OF DORA PANDURO SILVANO

Silvano's Life and Traditional Context

Dora Panduro Silvano of the Indigenous Shipibo-Konibo community was born in 1958 and lived most of her life in the village of Nuevo San Rafael in the Ucayali region of the Peruvian Amazonia. Following ancestral tradition, Silvano's mother and grandmother passed down their knowledge of pottery to Dora matrilineally. In Shipibo pottery, many aspects of its materiality and process become inseparable. Utility, aesthetics, cosmovision, healing, and reciprocity are all reflected at once in this art form, and although the linear "kené"[26] that are painted on the ceramics are specific to the individual artist, the material skills needed to create them are inherited collectively.

As a young girl, Silvano was tasked with the duty to create plates and other utilitarian ceramics to help her family.[27] Forming the clay was a regular part of life that upheld Shipibo communal values of responsibility and strengthened Silvano's pottery skills by developing muscle memory and dexterity. Daily exposure to her family member's kené on pottery, clothing, and other textiles opened an imaginary space in her mind and dreams where her own linear designs could start to take shape.[28] Although there are many

[26] Shipibo term for "designs." Wali and Odland, "Introduction to the Volume," 2-3.
[27] Prof. Alessandro Jara, "Chunubiri Una Alfarera Shipibo," Ucayali, Perú, uploaded June 4, 2017, YouTube video, 1:00-1:34, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3b7GTh6t1U&t=60s.
[28] This imaginary space is part of a cosmological concept called "shinan" which refers to the "thought" space where imagination and dreams aid in the formation of kené and is often practiced in girlhood. This form of kené cultivation does not necessitate a ritual element, but can be used in conjunction with ritual methodologies, including ayahuasca or piripiri. Belaunde, "Chapter 7," 81.

methods for girls to develop their kené, exposure to familial and communal designs in everyday life is often their first introduction.[29]

In her text, *Kené: Shipibo-Conibo Design,* author Luisa Elvira Belaunde provides an in-depth look into the various methods and inspiration that form kené. One method involves transmitting the "rao" or power from plants through ingestion. Men often perform shamanic ceremonies that involve ritual singing and the ingestion of the ayahuasca plant to help community members heal from physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. The mixing of plant sap and blood during ingestion is believed to transmit plant knowledge, which can manifest in a multisensory experience that includes the visualization of geometric, symmetrical kené patterns.[30] Despite acting as the guide for shamanic healing, men traditionally do not depict the kené revealed in ritual; rather, it is the role of women to connect the spiritual and material worlds by transposing the designs onto their art and bodies.[31]

Dora and her husband had practiced this method, and it is important to distinguish that her husband's role was as a guide to a higher spiritual perspective through his singing, while Dora's were creative and interpretative, with her distinctive kené patterns shaped by her spiritual connection to her physical environment.[32] Examples of her kené can be seen

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[29] Belaunde, "Chapter 7," 81.
[30] Belaunde, "Chapter 7," 81-3.
[31] Belaunde, "Chapter 7," 81-2.
[32] It is a cosmological belief adjacent to the wisdom made visible by "rao" that the Shipibo, like many Indigenous Peruvian groups, recognize the importance of sharing the world with other people, animals, plants, and even rivers. There is no binary of "living" and "non-living" like there is in Western ontology, but connections between all things; and within Shipibo cosmovision, a great reverence for rivers as they are symbolic of pathways and the great cosmic serpent.

painted on her ceramic pieces, *Woman Carrying a Quenpo Vessel* and *Mucahua*. *Woman Carrying a Quenpo Vessel* is a ceramic vessel approximately 32 cm tall, 23 cm wide, and 21 cm deep. The vessel itself is referred to as a joni chomo because of its anthropomorphic features that resemble a woman carrying a vessel on her head, with her hands raised to steady the vessel. Both the woman and vessel shape that comprise the actual vessel's composition are covered in intricate geometric kené in three distinct patterns, one that covers the vessel on the woman's head, one that covers her skin, and one that adorns her skirt, which mirrors the kené embroidered on Shipiba women's pampillas (skirts).[33] The piece's earthy color palette is predominantly light beige and umber brown, with minimal sienna details.

Similarly, *Mucahua* is an effigy vessel of a comparable size and color palette to *Woman Carrying a Quenpo Vessel*. However, its dimensions diverge as width is a dominant feature in *Mucahua*. Often used in ritual contexts, the swollen proportions of this joni chomo vessel appear to be able to hold more in its midsection, a characteristic that is further emphasized by the figure holding its belly. The focus on the figure's belly could be intended to draw attention to a woman's ability to be a vessel, instead of highlighting her ability to carry a vessel and partake in communal work.[34] Another distinction can be seen

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Daniel Morales Chocano, et al., "Chapter 2: Continuity and Change Among the Shipibo-Conibo: Prehistory to Modernity" in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context* (Chicago, Illinois: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 11.

[33] Belaunde, "Chapter 7," 86.

[34] This connection would align with Belaunde's conclusions of the chomo symbolizing a woman and her womb, which was based on the remarks of a Shipiba woman herself, Augustina Valera, referencing her book with Pilar Valenzeula, *Koshi Shinanya Ainbo, the Testimony of a Shipibo Woman*.

in the dominant kené pattern that covers most of the figure's skin in Silvano's *Mucahua* ceramic, whereas *Woman Carrying a Quenpo Vessel* has three separate kené patterns.

Belaunde states that while there are recurring geometric motifs that relate to the Amazonian Indigenous cosmovision, rivers, anacondas, square crosses, and mountains, for example, they are polysemic and influenced by the individual's feelings and life experiences. She explains:

> [kené]… is the embodied manifestation of an enduring worldview that inextricably ties the Shibibo-Conibo to their homeland. The Cosmic Serpent, the great river, the pathways through forests, and the plants that enable visions and dreams live on both through their physical manifestation and through symbolic representation. Material culture production thus is inextricably tied to Shipibo beliefs about their place in the world.[35]

Understanding the layers of memory contained in kené design renders its Western semiotic analysis insubstantial because it cannot access the artist's personal relationship to the land. Layers of meaning informed by intergenerational ritual practices, cosmological motifs, and personal relations to one's homeland and the natural world are further complicated by the pluralistic nature of kené throughout the Amazon and greater Indigenous Peru.[36] It would only flatten the depth of their artistic expression to try to decode meaning based on the iconographic qualities of each design motif. As the intimate and polysemic meanings of kené are impossible to analyze or speculate without Silvano's direct articulation, taking notice of the changing function of these vessels may be a way to

[35] Wali and Odland, "Introduction to the Volume," 5.
[36] Belaunde, "Chapter 7," 84.

consider how the creative adaptations of the Shipibo people reflect their conditions of contemporary life.

Contemporary Context

With a population of approximately 35,000 people or 150 communities, the Shipibo-Konibo are one of the largest and most well-known groups in the Peruvian Amazon.[37] Despite colonial influences imparted by intermittent contact with missionaries, Spanish settlers, and national and international extractive companies, the arduous terrain of the Amazon has served as a buffer against Western influences, allowing their traditional ways of life to persist more easily than in other areas of Peru.[38] This, however, does not mean that traditional artistic practices have remained static or unaffected by colonization or globalization. As discussed in the Introduction, the desire for financial security, physical safety, and the continuation of cultural legacy were all factors that have driven the Shipibo, including Silvano, to migrate away from her homeland in the Amazonia. Investigating how Silvano mediated the integration of her land-centered artistic practice into urban environments demonstrates the necessity of adaptation in the pursuit of cultural resilience. The concern of how to adapt is shared by many Shipibo-Konibo people amid the historical and contemporary challenges posed to Amazonian Indigenous ways of life.[39]

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[37] Wali and Odland, "Introduction to the Volume," 2.
[38] Wali and Odland, "Introduction to the Volume," 2.
[39] Melanie Dyck,"Precarious resilience: An ethnography of Shipibo communities," *Tropical Resources,* no.39 (2019): 1–10, https://tri.yale.edu/publications/tropical-resources-bulletin/tri-bulletin-archive/tropical-resources-vol-39.

As part of an online conversation[40] with El Museo Nacional de la Cultura Peruana in 2022, Dora's daughter, Lily Sandoval, briefly discussed the evolving uses of Shipibo-Konibo ceramics. Discussion moderator Luis Ramirez opined that the shift from using quenpó (ceramic drinking vessels) in funerary rituals to vessels in social and festive settings is an example of positive change. This change is also referenced in *"The Shipibo-Conibo: Cultures and Collections in Context,"* when acknowledging the end of the ancient funerary quenpó tradition, which occurred about fifty years prior to the chapter's publication in 2016.[41] Even though the funerary tradition had long since ended, the vessel persists, demonstrating a cultural adaptation where the material characteristics are imbued with new meanings based on contemporary community use.

In another online discussion hosted by Central Museum in 2021, scholar Gabriela Germana references Silvano's work *Woman Carrying a Quenpó Vessel* and interprets it as a collective self-portrait.[42] Germana theorizes the joni chomo as representative of the women of Panduro Silvano's community, whose role it is to carry the jug.[43] While this interpretation aligns with Shipiba understanding, it is missing the symbolism of the manioc

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[40] "Encuentro de Artistas Tradicionales. Creando y Modelando," moderated by Luis Ramirez, video conversation, posted May 27, 2022, by Museo Nacional de la Cultura Peruana, Facebook, 1:04:55, https://www.facebook.com/mndcp/videos/561974585444953/.

[41] Daniel Morales Chocano et al., "Chapter 2: Continuity and Change Among the Shipibo-Conibo: Prehistory to Modernity" in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context,* ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, Fieldiana, Anthropology, new ser., no. 45 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 13-14.

[42] "[Conversatorio: Arte y saberes ancestrales en el Perú]," YouTube, moderated by Maria del Pilar Riofrío, featuring María Eugenia Yllia, Gabriela Germaná, Elena Valera, and Pedro González Paucar, posted December 10, 2021, by Museo Central, YouTube, 1 hour, 27 min., 07 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtYzf95R_B0.

[43] "[Conversatorio: Arte y saberes ancestrales en el Perú]," at 0:49:30-58.

vessel mirroring the womb[44] that seems to be present in *Mucahua* and shifts toward a social analysis. If the materiality of the quenpó has remained the same, but its use has transitioned from a funerary vessel to a festive vessel, what does it mean to interpret this change as "positive" as implied by Ramirez, or as having a social rather than ritualistic use as implied by Germana? What factors have led to this change? And what might Ramirez's or Germana's interpretations of the joni chomo reveal about how Shipibo-Konibo contemporaneity is understood?

In the broadest sense, the answer lies in how colonialism and its economic practice of extractivism—both cultural and environmental—have greatly influenced how Shipibo-Konibo culture is changing. The logging, rubber, and oil industries have been destructive forces in the Amazonia for over a century, continuing through to the present, with men participating in illegal logging activities when subsistence living and job opportunities are insufficient.[45] Extractivism has also indirectly affected migration and resource exploitation through the construction of highways such as the Lima-Pucallpa highway built in 1943, which increased the presence of non-Indigenous peoples in the Amazon[46] and the Interoceanic Highway linking Brazil to Peru that, while not near Shipibo lands, was

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[44] Pilar Valenzuela Bismarck and Augustina Valera Rojas, *Koshi shinanya ainbo: El testimonio de una mujer shipiba* (Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos), 62, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236634008_Koshi_Shinanya_Ainbo_el_Testimonio_de_una_Mujer_Shipiba

[45] Alaka Wali, "Chapter 3: Contextualizing the Collection: Environmental Conservation and Quality of Life in the Buffer Zone of the Cordillera Azul National Park" in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context*, ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, Fieldiana, Anthropology, new ser., no. 45 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 22-3.

[46] Dionisio Ortiz, *Pucallpa and the Ucayali, yesterday and today: 1943-1986* (Apostolado Publishing House, 1984), 169.

"expected to cause unknown and substantial demographic shifts, environmental changes, and further pressures of globalization."[47]

Some environmental changes have led to the reverse migration of the Shipibo-Konibo to cities, driven by the impact of pollution, dwindling natural resources such as potable water and fish, flooding, and stringent land tenure laws that destabilize their traditional subsistence livelihoods.[48] Additional factors that influence migration also include better access to healthcare, education for their children, reliable power supplies, technology, and transportation, all of which can be facilitated through participation in urban market economies. Aware of these factors, Dora Panduro Silvano started a collection of ceramics to be sold in Yarinacocha, Pucallpa, and Cusco while also teaching ceramic workshops and encouraging her family to do the same. By applying the logic of textile workshops proposed by Nancy Feldman, we can see how smart this is:

> Education links the aesthetics of material, production, and design to cultural value, allowing artists to sell their works at higher prices. Consequently, textiles [and ceramics] become a more valued entity, as social, cultural, economic, and political values are elevated not only within the immediate community but also within the greater national and even international communities.[49]

Currently, Silvano's daughter, Lily Panduro Sandoval, and niece, Leidy, are associated with Xaipiri Ground, an art space devoted to sharing Amazonian Indigenous cultures through exhibits, workshops, and lectures, which are contextualized by the joint

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[47] Chocano et al., "Chapter 2," 20.
[48] Wali and Odland, "Introduction to the Volume, 2"; Dyck, "Precarious Resilience," 1-10.

[49] Nancy Gardner Feldman, "Chapter 5: Evolving Communities: Aspects of Shipibo and Andean Art, Textiles, and Practice in Contemporary Peru" in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context*, ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, Fieldiana, Anthropology, new ser., no. 45 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 54.

efforts of curators working with artists directly. Silvano's daughters have also traveled to host ceramic workshops that further share their knowledge of Shipibo material tradition. The act of travelling to sustain their art form demonstrates their understanding of the need for creative adaptations to ensure cultural survival.

Severing the direct connection to their homeland that is intrinsic to the Shipibo cosmological worldview necessitates a reconsideration of how to maintain that connection through migration, which is increasingly common for the Shipibo in contemporary times. Although many Shipibo ceramic artists fear that their traditional art will fail to persist due to a lack of interest from younger generations,[50] cultural transmission is still underway, particularly in the form of kené integration in cities and urban centers. In her dissertation focused on the co-resilience and precarity of the Shipibo-Konibo culture, Melanie Dyck posits kené as another form of resilience:

> *Kené* have persisted in the Ucayali region for 4000 years and have been constantly adapted to new meanings and mediums — once used to paint canoes and summon spirits; now sewn into handicrafts for tourist souvenirs (Belaunde 2016, Morales Chocano, Mujica Baquerizo, and Weber 2016). Many styles of *kené* have disappeared over the years, but the essential design — the artistic knowledge — persists.[51]

While hopeful, the transmission of kené has not transpired without critical wariness. Urban Shipibo and Andean artists embrace the cultural visibility kené garners, while simultaneously questioning whether it will affect their perception as craft vendors within

[50] Claire J. Odland, "Chapter 4: The Making of Shipibo: La Pelicula de Nuestra Memoria (Shipibo: The Movie of Our Memories)" in *The Shipibo-Conibo: Culture and Collections in Context*, ed. Alaka Wali and J. Claire Odland, Fieldiana, Anthropology, new ser., no. 45 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2016), 48.
[51] Melanie Dyck,"Precarious resilience," 1-10.

tourist markets and not as “citizens of Peru;” and, if printed on cloth instead of continuing its handmade tradition, will it become a commodity and “adulteration of intellectual property”?[52] Feldman continues this thought, asserting that although kené persists, its meaning has shifted. What was once a practice that held layers of memory is currently losing some of its definition. The regional meanings of various motifs are being melded into an increasingly singular, generalized symbolism. This loss of detail is a natural consequence of Shipibo migration away from their homelands in the Amazonia.

The purpose of wearing kené is changing too. In response to the threat of cultural loss, mothers are encouraging their daughters to wear traditional kené in resistance to colonial assimilation.[53] It becomes, on the one hand, a mechanism to reinforce identity that signifies to those outside the community the persistence of Shipibo-Konibo women and, on the other, a site of memory for the Shipiba themselves. In this vein, bodies can be thought of as what memory scholar Pierre Nora would call *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory.[54] If the Shipibo-Konibo live under increasing pressure to migrate away from the Amazon, bodies adorned in kené could become movable sites of memory documenting

[52] The opinions of Shipibo residents of Cantagallo (a shantytown in Lima) were the basis of this opinion piece by Lee Omar Torres and Jimena Rojas Denegri,“Peru: La Selva en Lima: Una Mirada a la Comunidad Shipiba de Cantagallo Intercultural,” *Servindi*, November 1, 2012, http://servindi.org/actualidad/57183.
Torres and Denegri’s piece is referenced in Nanacy Feldman’s,“Chapter 5,” 57-8.

[53] Chocano et al., “Chapter 2,” 20.
[54] To gain a deeper understanding of how Nora’s concept of a lieu de memoire, or site of memory, is understood as a site where collective memory is imbued outside of confines of the archive, please see Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* 26, no. 1 (April 1989): 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.1989.26.1.99p0274v.

the convergence of traditional ritual practices, cosmovision, and community when supplanted from their homelands, offering them a sense of connection.

Other ways kené persists are through its expression in non-traditional materiality, such as the acrylic paintings and murals of urban Amazonian artist Olinda Silvano Reshinjabe, or incorporated in paintings that blend kené with other aesthetic styles, such as the figurative surrealism of Graciela Arias Salazar, and the more abstracted surrealist style of Rember Yahuarcani.[55] It is interesting to note that artists who blend kené with characteristics of western aesthetics, such as the large format canvases and murals of Reshinjabe's, tend to have further-reaching influence.[56] While Reshinjabe's works are powerful examples of how traditional culture can adapt and beautifully represent the Shipibo-Konibo culture in a contemporary context, their inclusion in contemporary settings does not negate the need for the inclusion of traditional material practices, such as the ceramics of Dora Panduro Silvano, on a larger scale as well.

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[55] More information about Shipibo artists and their practices in Lima and Pucallpa, including Graciela Arias Salazar and Rember Yahuarcani can be found in Nancy Feldman's "Chapter 5: Evolving Communities," 56-58.

For more information on the artists mentioned and to see some of their work, please visit websites:

https://joshlilleygallery.com/artists/rember-yahuarcani for artist Rember Yahuarcani
https://anturiongallery.com/en/graciela-arias-salazar/ for artist Graciela Arias Salazar
https://awarewomenartists.com/en/magazine/une-couronne-invisible-la-voix-dolinda-reshinjabe-silvano/ for artist Olinda Silvano Reshinjabe

[56] For an example of how Silvano Reshinjabe's works have been internationally celebrated, please see the article by Samantha Lance, "Olinda Reshinjabe Silvano: Finding Solidarity with Indigenous Communities through Ancient Shipibo-Konibo Practices," *ThePowerPlant.org,* Septemeber 21, 2023. https://www.thepowerplant.org/learn-and-explore/features/olinda-reshinjabe-silvano-finding-solidarity-with-indigenous-communities-through-ancient-shipibo-konibo-practices.

Although it could be argued that artists like Reshinjabe, who transmit the cosmology of kene using non-traditional Shipibo materials, like paint, are sufficient to transmit Shipiba culture, this perspective overlooks the importance of materiality. While there is certainly room for both Silvano and Reshinjabe to represent different approaches to Shipibo contemporary expression, Silvano's clay reveals an often-submerged truth about the Amazonia: the ongoing violence and destruction of the region by extractivism. In an interview with Professor Alessandro Jara, Silvano spoke about the dangers of continuing to gather the clay from her homeland in the Amazonia, even after she had migrated out. Making the long trek back to the Ucayali region highlights Silvano's commitment to sustaining her physical connection to her homeland. If in archival or museum settings, the obstacles to procuring her clay were contextualized with the materiality of her ceramics made from the lands of her community, there would be a more visible link to critical questions regarding the Amazonia, such as why the land around Silvano's home community is not as safe as it used to be? How does the call to migrate affect Shipibo cultural survival? What laws or extractive practices caused Silvano's homeland to become such a dangerous place to travel to in the first place? And, is there anything that can be done to protect this area of the Shipibo homeland in the future?

Contemporary, traditional art, when included in museums, tends to be framed as "ethnographic" or "anthropological," such as Dora Panduro Silvano's inclusion in the 2014 Grandes Maestros: Great Masters of Iberoamerican Folk Art exhibition held in the Natural

History Museum of Los Angeles County[57]. Germana and McElhone assert that while there is representation of traditional Peruvian art, it is rarely included in exhibitions, galleries, or archives within a contemporary artistic framework. This exclusion subjugates traditional art to the past and, in effect, submerges the perspectives of communities that still exist. When communities and their cultures are submerged, it often has the effect of excluding their consideration from legislation and alleviates pressure on the government to address their contemporary challenges.[58] In the case of the Shipibo-Konibo, this could mean not taking steps to give land back, extricating national and international extractive companies from the Amazon, or providing adequate healthcare and financial support for those who migrate to urban centers.

In conclusion, it is evident through the examination of Dora Panduro Silvano's life and art, that Shipibo-Konibo traditional lifestyle and cultural practices have undergone major shifts in our contemporary time because of neocolonial extractivism, globalization, and the desire to migrate out of the Amazonia. Despite these changes, cultural practices persist through transmission and resistance. The persistence of kené in paintings and other new media is an example of how Shipibo people and traditions have adapted to life in urban centers by embracing non-traditional materiality. When worn on the body, kené can also act as a lieux de memoire for the Shipibo, which conjures memories of their physical connection to the land of their original home in the Amazonia.

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[57] Laura C. Mallonee, "The State of Iberoamerican Folk Art," in *Hyperallergic,* November 28, 2014, https://hyperallergic.com/162640/the-state-of-iberoamerican-folk-art/.

[58] Germana and McElhone, "Asserting the Vernacular," 5.

In the analysis of Silvano's artistic legacy, it becomes evident that memory and cultural identity were more important to her than strictly adhering to tradition, as demonstrated by the travelling ceramic workshops Silvano's daughters and niece have taught to keep Shipibo ceramic traditions alive. Regardless of whether Silvano's adaptation of her joni chomos from having a ritual symbolism to having a social symbolism is regarded as "positive," its change still reflects a shift in traditional values. Now uprooted from their homeland, Silvano seems to value memory most. Perhaps more important than the ritual use of the joni chomos is their symbolism, one which affirms the strength of the Shipiba women to bind their communities through the recognition of the importance of community and cultural survival. Whether she was encouraging her daughters to share their Shipiba culture or wear kené in honor of their heritage, Silvano was working towards bringing her cultural identity into the future. Through the framework of multiple contemporaneities, Silvano's life and art disprove colonial narratives of Indigenous Peruvians as existing "in the past," and replaces them with examples of contemporary adaptation and resilience.

Chapter 2: THE ART AND PROCESSES OF CLAUDIA MARTINEZ GARAY

Claudia Martinez Garay's multidisciplinary approach reveals sites of memory that both overlap and diverge from Silvano's practice, particularly in how cosmovision is integrated into their artworks. While Silvano's artistic practice is based within a matrilineal tradition of ceramics and kené production informed by her Shipibo cosmological worldview, Garay's practice synthesizes Andean cosmological concepts within an academic framework of research and critical inquiry. Garay chooses the media of each project in consideration of how materials and forms further enhance their subject matter and conceptual layers. Rather than partaking in cosmological ritual practices or seeking contemporary methods of cultural transmission like Silvano does, Garay engages Andean cosmovision to help her understand her severed cultural identity on a deeper level and enact decolonial strategies from a conceptual standpoint. Often, the subject matter of her artwork explicitly challenges the colonial framework of Peru's historicization and the State's marginalization of its Indigenous communities in layers that are more legible to Western semiotic analysis. In order to understand how Garay's practice can hold characteristics of both Western semiotic and Andean cosmological layers to form a distinct perspective that I will refer to as culturally mestiza, I first contextualize her formative years as an artist/researcher.

As a young child in the mid-1980s, Garay was personally affected by the Internal Conflict. To escape the violence, she was adopted and forced to move from her birthplace in the predominantly Indigenous region of Ayacucho in the Sierra, which was at the heart of the Sendero Luminoso insurgency, to the capital coastal city of Lima, where the elite

power is concentrated in criollos (of Spanish descent). In an interview about her artist practice with Jelena Sofronijevic, Garay has said that this move severed her link to the traditions of her Indigenous community. In its place, her adoptive parents raised her in their syncretic Catholic faith and Ancash[59] culture, which she embraced as her own.[60] Garay's parents encouraged her to further assimilate by speaking in Spanish instead of Quechua out of fear of discrimination by those in the capital.[61] She has stated that forced migration and encouraged assimilation were common experiences shared by many Peruvians who were forced to migrate during the Internal Armed Conflict. As a form of resistance and reconnection to her roots, Garay has recently started to learn Quechua and often incorporates the language into the names or narratives of her artworks.[62]

Garay's migration to Lima facilitated her eventual enrollment at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, where she studied printmaking and taught upon graduation. She has stated that her university arts-based education would not have been possible without this move.[63] After six years of teaching, Garay relocated from Lima to Amsterdam

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[59] Ancash is a mountainous region in Peru, just north of Lima, where Garay's adoptive family is from.

[60] Claudia Martinez Garay, "Artist interview: Crossing borders with Andean artist Claudia Martínez Garay," interviewed by Jelena Sofronijevic, Go with Yamo, January 15, 2025, https://www.gowithyamo.com/blog/artist-interview-claudia-martinez-garay-at-nottingham-contemporary-dundee-contemporary-arts-and-frieze-2024.

[61] Garay, "Artist's Interview."

[62] Scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has articulated how the reclamation of the Quechua language can be considered a decolonial strategy in her text, "Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization", where she highlights that conceptual layers that can be lost in translation and reasserted when communicating cosmological concepts in their untranslated form.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization" South Atlantic Quarterly 111, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 105–106. https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1472612.

[63] Garay, "Artist's Interview."

for an artist's residency at the Rijksakademie art school, which gave her the physical and mental distance to reconsider how she understood her identity as a brown Peruvian. Garay has said that brown Peruvians from the Amazon or Andean regions are considered second-class citizens in Lima because of the racist "indoctrination" integrated into society;[64] and that moving away from Lima provided the distance she needed to reflect on her relationship to her Indigeneity and question what that could mean outside of the contexts of Peru.[65] This decolonial shift in her perspective began to change her artistic process from a research-based approach that focused on political propaganda tactics to one that also explored her Indigenous identity from an introspective perspective.

Although there are many strong, well-documented pieces in her oeuvre, for the purposes of this essay, I have decided to focus on three of her art projects that exemplify the diverse qualities of her practice: the videowork *Ñuqa Kausakusaq Qhepaykitapas (I Will Outlive You) (2017),* the *Pacha* series of tufted rugs (2020-ongoing), and her set of eight risograph prints[66] entitled *Intrusos en Sus Tierras (Intruders in Their Own Lands)* (2024). Expressed through these works are Garay's exploration of submerged histories, pathfinding of Andean cosmology, and critiques of Western archival and museal practices upheld by colonial paradigms. Encompassed in collage-like aesthetics that reference colonial histories and Andean symbolism, these pieces reflect fragmented memory and its

[64] Claudia Martinez Garay, "Claudia Martinez Garay," interviewed by Adriana Blidaru, *Living Content* 57, March 4, 2023, https://www.livingcontent.online/interviews/claudia-martinez-garay.
[65] Garay, "Claudia Martinez Garay" interview.
[66] Risographic prints are created through a process that blends elements of traditional and digital printing. Similar to silkscreen printing, images are printed using stencils that isolate layers by color and require each layer to be printed separately. The process of color separation is done digitally, typically through PDF files that are then sent to the risograph printer. The thicker inks used by the printer are soy-based and sit on the surface of the paper, which gives the print a hand-made aesthetic quality.

desire for renewal. As such, they require both Andean cosmological and Western academic frameworks for analysis.

Garay's video *"Ñuqa Kausakusaq Qhepaykitapas" (I Will Outlive You*) from 2017*,* exemplifies her early approach to artmaking where every element was intended to convey a conceptual meaning.[67] *I Will Outlive You* is a 15'37" minutes long single-channel video that uses first-person Quechua narration and Spanish subtitles to tell the story of a man who recounts fragmented memories of his life.[68] As his story unfolds in non-linear segments, the viewer learns that he was a prisoner of war who does not understand where he is or whether he is still alive. Recurring motifs in his narration, such as clay, water, and death, are used to guide his memory and hint at his current state. While the viewer listens, the video imagery oscillates between what appears to be a desert landscape and the interior of a dark cave with a circular opening in its roof that indicates the changing time of day. At times, the camera's perspective appears to be that of the narrator, who wanders while reflecting on details of his life, such as the loss of his brother, the role of Mama Cocha in providing rain for survival, and the sacrifice of his life and identity in an endless cycle. There are also mysterious elements, such as an alphanumeric code and a clay face. By the end of the video, the camera pans out, revealing that the narrator is the subject, a clay vase of a man from the Moche era, floating into the sky. It is now clear that the

[67] Garay, "Claudia Martinez Garay" interview.
[68] To watch the full version of this video please see Claudia Martinez Garay, "I Will Outlive You," program coordinated by Rafael Ortega, artist interview, posted January 13, 2021, by Museo Amparo, YouTube, 0:021:19- 0:35:42, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n6WXMo3UFM.

landscape and cave have been the contours of the inside and outside of the vessel, with the code at its base signifying its context within a museum cataloguing system.

Many layers of existence and personhood are explored through the narrator's transmutations in the video. Among the narrator's layers of existence are representations of the person he was when he was first alive, his symbolic personhood as a subject whose life is imagined in a non-linear narrative, the Moche vase that commemorates him as a human sacrifice, and the final form of his digitization. These different iterations situate his travels from the pre-Incan Moche region to the Ethnological Museum of Berlin and finally to his resting place in the digital archives of Peru.

In an interview with Rafael Ortega, curator of the Museo Amparo in Mexico, Garay stated that this project was developed in response to news stories regarding the repatriation and preservation of cultural artefacts around the time of its planning.[69] Partly conceived in response to collective Peruvian outrage from the blocked repatriation of the Codex Trujillo by the Spanish government in 2017[70] and partly in reaction to witnessing the destruction of art in the Islamic state, Garay was called to work through questions of archival violence and alternative strategies for cultural preservation. In response, she employed the Andean Indigenous concept of pacha (non-linear space-time) through new

[69] Claudia Martinez Garay, "I Will Outlive You," program coordinated by Rafael Ortega, artist interview, posted January 13, 2021, by Museo Amparo, YouTube, 1:07:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n6WXMo3UFM.

[70] To read more about the outrage regarding the possession of the Codex Trujillo please see, Sarah Cascone, "The Storied Codex Trujillo, a Rare Masterpiece Showing Life Under Colonialism, Returns to Peru Following Outcry," *artnet*, June 19, 2017, https://news.artnet.com/market/codex-trujillo-peru-vs-spain-997250.

media technologies and created a video project that served as an alternative strategy for cultural preservation that could explore layers of memory from various moments in Peruvian history, enhanced by its non-linear narration.

Her discovery of the original ceramic vase in the Ethnological Museum of Berlin occurred in 2017 after she had gained permission from the museum to work with its collection of ancient Peruvian artefacts. The vessel itself was over 1,200 years old and was crafted to commemorate the life of a man who was sacrificed in the mountains, a cultural practice of the Mochica who believed in life after death. Drawn to his sad expression, among the approximately 8000 artefacts in the museum's collection, Garay began to imagine his life. Through her research, Garay discovered that the vessel's naked appearance, bound hands, and noose around his neck were visual indicators of his status as a Moche prisoner.[71]

Crafting a story of the man commemorated by the vessel as a child and later as an adult who had to come to terms with his imminent death is a humanizing act that allows the viewer to explore themes of memory, death, and displacement in a culturally Peruvian context. The way Garay drew on the metaphor of the statue's life to visually approach what memory scholar Sadiya Hartman has called critical fabulation, or the necessity to imagine beyond the limits of the archive,[72] lends digital space to recall the disappeared, but from a distance. While it is not a substitute for the physical mourning of the disappeared that

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[71] Claudia Martinez Garay, "I Will Outlive You," program coordinated by Rafael Ortega, Virtual artist interview, posted January 13, 2021, by Museo Amparo, YouTube, 1:07:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n6WXMo3UFM.

[72] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14, https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-2-1.

many Peruvians have needed to suspend,[73] often due to an unrecoverable body, it may hold potential as a cathartic tool. The mental shift from framing the ceramic statue as an artefact back to the commemoration of a person who was once alive foregrounds the ethical concern of his final resting place. Currently, the statue is stored in a European light deposit box.

To read Garay's project*, I Will Outlive You,* through an Andean cosmological lens is to understand another layer of political connotation. In her work "Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization," scholar Siliva Rivera Cusicanqui explains the meaning behind the Andean concept of pachakuti. Relating to pacha or the indivisible dimension of space-time, she has written, "(t)he present is the setting for simultaneously modernizing and archaic impulses, of strategies to preserve the status quo and of others that signify revolt and renewal of the world: Pachakuti."[74] Acts of revolt and renewal are embedded in Garay's video *I Will Outlive You*, both in its subject matter and its approach to storytelling. In a decolonial act of pachakuti against the colonial possession of Indigenous artefacts, Garay rendered a digital copy of the vessel using photogrammetry and CGI as an alternative strategy of repatriation. Although this is not the same as returning the physical statue to Peru, it creates what I will call a digital pacha, or digital space/time, that allows Peruvians open access to a piece of their culture they may not have access to otherwise; and a space in which the memory of the original prisoner can find its way home. The contemporary process of using technology to digitize the statue

[73] See Rojas-Perez, *Mourning Remains,* 40-41, for more information about suspended mourning.
[74] Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa," 96.

and broaden its accessibility also ruptures the Peruvian state's preferred contextualization of Indigenous Peruvians as existing in the past, accessible primarily through visits to ethnological museums or tourist markets.[75] By using digital technologies Garay has contributed to an archival practice that is decolonial and congruent to the Andean cosmological view of time as spiraled.

At the same time, from within a semiotic analysis, the visualization of the Moche vessel with its Quechua narrator speaking of his fear of being buried in the mountains with the other nameless bodies, can conjure potential resonances with the history of the disappeared during the Internal Armed Conflict. In his chapter "Caprichakuspa" in *Mourning Remains*, Rojas-Perez talks about the act of the mother's walking as political and moral. The mothers walk in refusal to forget their loved ones or put the atrocity in the past. Similarly, through the voice of the narrator, Garay expresses the mirror image of anguish of the disappeared, which is their desire to recall their loved ones, and be remembered. The ideas mirror one another, walking and searching and remembering.[76]

Another form of remembering is explored in Garay's second body of work to be examined, her *Pacha* series. What started as a series of seven tufted rugs created in 2020 has continued to grow over the years. The *Pacha* series was conceived as a visual process to explore the Indigenous Andean concept of pacha. While Garay has self-categorized much of her early creative process as consciously signified and planned, here in her *Pacha* series, it becomes an intuitive process of personal exploration. Acknowledging her inability

[75] Germana and McElhone, "Asserting the Vernacular," 7-8.
[76] Rojas-Perez, "Mourning Remains,"135-164.

to articulate how she understands this polysemic term through words, each rug is an exercise to visually engage in another dimension of its conceptual meaning.[77]

Most of the images collaged in her rugs are taken from pre-existing sources, such as colonial botanical illustrations and historical schoolbooks. When situated together, they lend themselves to the consideration of how Peruvian visual culture has been represented in historical and educational contexts. Each visual reference adds a layer that, when arranged in a collage-like composition, contributes to the depiction of multiple temporalities and perspectives, honoring the characteristic of discernment that is inherent to the concept of pacha. Named using Quechua terms such as *Kimsa Pacha* [78](2020), *Chunka Iskayniyuq Pacha*[79] (2022), or *Chunka Tawayuq Pacha*[80] (2022), each piece acts as a portal into its own world of ideas that engages with a specific understanding of pacha.[81] Through the creation of each rug, Garay employs the Andean concept of pacha to try to understand a cosmovision that was buried beyond her view.

Analyzing Garay's exploratory depictions of pacha through a cultural mestiza perspective helps define some of the series' occlusions. Many qualities of the *Pacha* series reflect a bordering of Western and Indigenous aesthetics and ways of understanding. The materiality, for example, is textile, but instead of utilizing the traditional processes of weaving or embroidery associated with the Ayacucho region, each piece is tufted. Additionally, instead of depicting Andean motifs through a traditional composition, Garay

[77] Garay, "Claudia Martinez Garay" interview.
[78] *Kisma* is the Quechua term for womb or uterus; but can also refer to the mother-in-law of a man.
[79] *Chunka Iskayniyuq* refers to the number 12 in Quechua.
[80] *Chunka Tawayuq* refers to the number 14 in Quechua.
[81] Garay, "Claudia Martinez Garay" interview.

references diverse archival sources.[82] The images that form the collages of her pacha rugs do not come from a singular tradition or source, just as her sense of cultural identity does not. The act of constructing fragmented pieces is often present in the work of diasporic artists as it relates to constructed identity. Collaging the imagery together is an exercise in seeing how archive and memory relate, which can be political and introspective at the same time. The liminal qualities of Garay's work, which exist in the space where Indigenous Andean epistemologies intersect with the critical analysis of colonial paradigms, reveal a political dimension that surfaces when creating art that reflects a mestiza perspective. They also recall an adaptive approach of image making during the beginning of Catholic syncretism, where images were often imbued with a hidden double meaning.

Analyzing the piece *Chunka Tawayuq Pacha* can provide a more concrete analysis of the hybrid characteristics of a cultural mestiza perspective present in Garay's oeuvre. The roughly 2.5m x 1.5m vertical orientation of this piece depicts a llama standing in an empty room, bound by ropes connecting it to a variety of objects such as large seeds, a butterfly, a skull, and toilet paper, to name a few. The linear, rhythmic composition of the ropes forms a tree-like shape that appears to be resting on the llama's back. A small botanical illustration hovers in the center top of the rug's composition, suggesting it could

[82] The archival sources Garay pulls references from, include schoolbooks on Peruvian history, pre-Columbian iconography, ethnographic and archaeological journals, propaganda posters, botanical illustrations, and Andean cosmology symbols embedded in popular culture.

Grimm, ""Chunka Tawayuq Pacha" (2022) by Claudia Martínez Garay acquired by Krannert Art Museum in Champaign, IL," Grim Gallery, September 28, 2024, https://grimmgallery.com/news/200-chunka-tawayuq-pacha-ed.-3-3-2022-by-claudia/.

be the top of the invisible tree on the llama's back. The llama's height spans about a third of the composition and situates it in the lower half of the space, while the tree takes up about two-thirds of the composition, suggesting its importance. Contrasting the llama's depiction in grayscale is the bold color palette of the rest of the collage, which is full of various shades of red, blue, and yellow. There is a border around the image that frames it as a tableau, inviting the viewer to look in.

Garay has stated that structural elements of the implied tree were inspired by an Andean harvest ritual called the Corta Montes. This ritual consists of community members dancing around a tree with various banal, yet useful objects tied to its branches. Eventually, people take turns trying to cut it down with an axe to grab its objects, but there is a rule that the person to deliver its final blow must be the one to decorate it the following year.[83] The imagery appealed to Garay because it performs the dual function of depicting a rhizomatic structure, which is, more importantly, encoded in symbols that signify Andean cultural tradition. The weight of the rhizome on the llama's back is caused by the things it does not want to leave behind. It is a clever metaphor imbued with the Western theoretical understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic systems.[84]

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[83] Claudia Martinez Garay, "Claudia Martínez Garay – interview: 'I'm interested in the encounter, the meeting place between brown bodies and white bodies,'" interviewed by Veronica Simpson, Studio International, August 30, 2024, https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/claudia-martinez-garay-interview-im-interested-in-the-meeting-place-between-brown-bodies-and-white-bodies-nottingham-contemporary-dundee-contemporary-arts.

[84] In her interview with Veronica Simpson, Garay speaks about the allusion to a rhizomatic system in her work *Chunka Tawayuq Pacha*. For more information, please see Garay, "Claudia Martinez Garay- interview."

For a deeper understanding of their conceptualized rhizome, please see
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Bloomsbury, 1988).

Garay's final work to be examined is a set of risograph prints entitled " Intrusos en sus tierras " from 2024. " Intrusos en sus tierras " consists of 8 risograph prints, each measuring approximately 113 x 183.5 cm when arranged in their horizontal, diamond-shaped composition. Garay's process for this project began by planning the composition of each page, painting the images in acrylic, and then adjusting them during the printing process to match the color palette and size of school textbooks. By referencing the ubiquity and presumed accuracy of historical textbooks in Peru's education system, Garay creates the conditions for a critical analysis of Peruvian historicization and the channels that formally disseminate concepts of "truth" in Peruvian society.

Each print depicts its own scene and is thematically linked by the colonial framing of brown and white bodies. One print shows a Patrón's[85] black shoe crushing an Indigenous flute, which Garay has said was inspired by a scene that resonated with her in José María Arguedas' novel *Deep Rivers*[86]. In this scene, a hacienda owner overhears Indigenous workers playing their huaynos (traditional songs) in celebration and decides to crush their Andean flute. Without any power of their own, the Indigenous workers relinquished their celebrations, with their spirits deflated. This scene illustrates the stark power imbalance and oppressive ethos that characterized early colonial life in the Sierra.

Also depicted within the eight prints is an image of a brown head facing a white mask worn on the back of another brown head, as the person and mask stare at one

[85] Patron refers to the owner of the hacienda that exploits or enslaves Indigenous labourers.
[86] To gain a better sense of the ethos of the Sierra in the 1920s see José María Arguedas, *Deep Rivers,* trans. Frances Horning Barraclough (Waveland Press, 2007).

another in close proximity. The brown faces and white mask draw clear comparisons to Franz Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), where he asserts "that whiteness is the only destiny for the subaltern body."[87] Although depicting the same themes of brown Indigenous subjugation, the two prints signify distinct reactions to this reality. The first print that references Arguedas is imbued with a feeling of defeat against colonial powers. In contrast, the second print seems to recognize the systemic powers and allows (internalized) colonialism to fracture the relationship between two brown individuals, one of whom pretends to be white.

Emphasizing her critical positionality, Garay chose to arrange the eight prints in a composition that mirrored the Andean *Chakana* Cross. The geometric diamond-like configuration is a sacred symbol representing the three pachas in Andean cosmovision on a horizontal axis (high pacha, this pacha, and low pacha)[88]. The chakana cross traces the path between the dimensions of space-time, recalling their circular paths of communication.[89] The Chakana cross is only hidden by its illegibility through Western analysis, it is not forgotten and instead binds the content of every image in its foundation.

By embracing the call to question, challenge, and subvert both official and unofficial archives as colonial forms of power while also allowing reconnection to guide the exploration of her Andean cultural roots, Garay has cultivated a complex cultural

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[87] Diego Chocano, *"*Claudia Martinez Garay Borrowed Air*,"* press release, Grimm Gallery, December 13, 2014, https://grimmgallery.com/exhibitions/301-claudia-martinez-garay-borrowed-air/.
[88] Vincent Spina, "An Understanding of Deep Rivers through an Analysis of Three of its Main Symbols," *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective* 7, no. 2 (2013): 32, https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jgi/vol7/iss2/3.
[89] Spina, "An Understanding," 33.

mestiza positionality. The concept of pacha is present in each of her works examined here. Sometimes it is used as a mechanism to subvert colonial structures of power, like in the use of her digital pacha as a method of repatriation in *I Will Outlive You*; and at other times, pacha is used as a tool to help discern wisdom by examining her subject matter through the Andean lens of non-linear time, like she has in her *Pacha* series.

Garay's collage-like compositions and found archival source material approach the idea of cultural transmission in an inverse way to Silvano. Instead of looking for ways to adapt culture to contemporary times, Garay seeks to follow the symbols of cultural transmission back toward a place that illuminates an Andean understanding of the world. The fragmented aesthetic style of her composition also recalls motifs of diasporic artists like Romare Bearden, who combine disparate pieces to negotiate a self-made sense of identity. Regardless of which paradigms Garay engages with, or whether her work focuses more on cultural identity or history and politics, her practice is characterized by exploring the submerged perspectives of Peruvian culture and utilizing the memory, resistance, and resilience of a pathfinder.

CONCLUSION: Reflections on Memory and Pathfinding

Throughout the writing of this paper, I have sought to represent the complexity of Peruvian realities and to find ways to render visible the submerged layers of meaning in the artworks of Silvano and Garay. This has been important for both scholarly and personal reasons. As a Peruvian-born Indigenous adoptee raised in Canada and educated in Western frameworks, working on this project has been both an opportunity to contribute research to an area of study I believe is underrepresented and a way to seek answers to personal questions I've had about my cultural identity as an adoptee.

When I first began my research, I was seeking to develop a more thorough understanding of Peruvian contemporary art. I hoped that discerning a sense of the visual languages used by Peruvian artists might resonate with my own artistic practices and provide insight into a part of my Peruvian identity with which I felt an intuitive connection despite growing up in Canada. During the initial stages of this research, my focus began to shift towards finding an answer for why the examples of contemporary Peruvian art that were easily accessible to a researcher in Canada were so limited. Was this limitation a reflection of my research skills, the Western databases I was searching within, or because the art circuits in Lima did not support contemporary artists or their potential for transnational connection? At this point, it seemed as though my research required a different approach.

Electing to conduct field research, I travelled with my family to Peru for two weeks to gain a better sense of the land, people, and culture. Returning to Peru for the first time

since my adoption was an experience I could not anticipate. Our trip began in Lima, the coastal city from which I was adopted, followed by traveling to the Southern Sierra to visit Cusco, Machu Picchu, and the Sacred Valley.

Staying in Miraflores, one of the wealthiest districts in Lima, for the first part of our trip was not as big a cultural adjustment as I thought it would be. Many of the contemporary art galleries and museums we went to were not so different from the ones I frequently visited in Toronto, Canada. Aesthetically, there were clear parallels to contemporary Canadian art in both materiality and style. There was, however, a difference in visual language and references that demonstrated the prevalence of mestiza culture with Western and Indigenous influences.

Initially, the ethos of the city felt lively and open. There were countless moments when local people went out of their way to help us. Over time, however, it became apparent that the warmth of society was not extended to everyone equally. There were a few instances of quiet racism against Quechua-speaking people that informed my further investigation of the context of Peruvian art upon returning to Canada. The memories of these instances are what drove my desire to understand the history and sociopolitical underpinnings of Peruvian society that are outlined in the Introduction of this project. To not understand the colonial dynamics that are still active throughout Peru, is to not see the submerged perspectives that are the cosmologies of the Sierra and the Amazonia, and the political layers embedded in the art of Indigenous artists who continue to resist oppression.

While undertaking historical research that focused on the Spanish Conquest was imperative for contextualizing the submerged perspectives of the Sierra and Amazonia, it was the research regarding the Internal Armed Conflict that had the most significant impact on how I deepened my understanding of Peruvian culture. Due to the state's desire to relegate the Internal Armed Conflict to the past, there were not as many printed Peruvian sources that spoke openly about the aftermath of the Conflict as I had imagined there would be. The one source that was indispensable for its depth of approach in focusing on both the political and psychic effects of the Internal Conflict on Peruvian society was Rojas Perez's *Mourning Remains*.

At first, I found it too difficult to read *Mourning Remains* as thoroughly as it deserved. As a mother, the details about the violence perpetrated on the bodies of the disappeared even after death, along with the accounts of indescribable grief the mothers of the disappeared held unexpressed inside their bodies, were too overwhelming to immerse myself in. However, the mothers deserve recognition. Eventually, I reread the text, and in doing so, realized how crucial it was to understand the mother's actions of walking and forming their own community, developing new forms of memory, resistance, and resilience.

My comprehension of the mother's actions as generative and transformative for the cultural transmission of memory opened an understanding for me of how Silvano and Garay's practices were similarly developing new forms of memory, resistance, and resilience as tactics of surviving colonial and state violence. The conceptualization of alternative forms of memory as resilience resonated deeply with me as an adoptee. On our

second last day in Peru, my mother and I walked the streets that she and my grandmother would walk with me while waiting for my adoption to be finalized. During our walk, we both recalled a photograph of my grandmother pushing me in the stroller in front of a brick wall with overhanging bougainvillea and laughed about how we both recalled the same picture. By the evening, we had spent hours walking, talking, and taking photos by the Malecon de Miraflores (boardwalk park). I had listened to my mother's stories while trying to recall glimpses of my own memories that seemed to dissipate in the fog.

Then it was time to visit the MAC and see the exhibition of the Peruvian abstract-expressionist Ramiro Llona. Although his large-scale paintings that hung around the gallery were utterly immersive, we were drawn to a table in the back that held twelve visual anthologies of his works. Even though eleven of these books were collections of his paintings, my mother chose the only one that was a collection of Llona's photography and flipped open the book to a random page. Before us were two copies of the same photograph—the one on the left was the black and white version of the one on the right. The photo was an image of a near-empty street on a foggy day, with the focal point being a brick wall with bougainvillea spilling over the top of the wall, just like the one we had recalled seeing in the photograph taken of my grandmother and me 34 years prior. After overcoming a moment of shock, my mother and I looked at one another and were overcome with emotion. After an entire day of searching, walking, and trying to remember, it felt like a sign from my grandmother that she knew we were here, and our journey had come full circle. Reflecting on this experience, I appreciate this connection that

transcended time in a way that felt intuitively Peruvian, seeped in memory and hidden in plain sight.

Returning to the practice of Garay, I have wondered if, throughout her pacha explorations, she has experienced similar instances of inexplicable memory. The first time I saw her work, aspects of her visual language felt so familiar. I was immediately drawn to her vibrant color palettes, collage aesthetics, and the diversity of materiality she worked with. The further I researched her life and practice, the more I related to her cultural explorations as both an artist and an adoptee who was on a journey to reconnect with their Indigeneity. The freedom and vulnerability with which Garay approaches aspects of her creative practice have led me to believe in her ability to enact L'Hirondelle's pathfinding from within the experience of a mestiza.

Silvano engages in pathfinding's ability to transmit a connection with ancestral culture in another way. What first drew me into Silvano's practice was the skill apparent in both her delicate way of shaping the forms of her joni chomo vessels and the intricate kené patterns she adorned them with afterwards. Silvano's skill was evident, and the more I learned about her creative process, the more apparent her signs of resilience became. Every aspect of her practice is carefully considered in relation to Shipibo challenges of cultural survival. Although I cannot relate to her lived experience as directly as Garay's, the illegibility of her submerged perspective is something that feels familiar to my experience as an adopted person, with which most of the world has no point of reference. In this regard, it felt imperative to broaden my understanding of Peruvian culture through this

project to extend beyond the confines of the Sierra, with which I have already been acquainted, to the Amazonia.

In writing this paper, one of my most pressing concerns was not to reinforce colonial language, structures, or dynamics through the way I discussed the lives and practices of the artists and the histories of submerged perspectives in Peru. Gayatri Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak* kept coming to mind.[90] Due to my complex relationship with the subject matter of this project, I was overrun with ethical concerns regarding my place in the transmission of certain knowledges into a Western academic database. What if my interpretations misrepresented or flattened the culture I was trying to extend a platform to? Just because I am Peruvian by birth and an artist does not de facto qualify me to discuss Peruvian contemporaneities. On the other hand, what are the consequences of not trying my best to contribute to this area of research? Would I become one more instance of someone in the global north looking away from realities in the global south that seem far too complicated to address?

When the complications of research began to feel overwhelming, I would imagine talking to the artists and those whose lives were touched by Peru's violent histories as if they were family or friends, to ask if they felt my conclusions were fair, or if something was missing. While I may have missed something, this form of reflection helped me believe in

[90] The ethical questions of who speaks and for whom would continuously resurface in my mind. Even though I believe in decolonial action through drawing on submerged perspectives, my positionality is still privileged and informed by Western frameworks. A essay that has adressed the complexity of knowledge production in the cultures of peoples systemically oppressed by colonial and neocolonial systems is
"Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea, ed. Rosalind Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 27–72.

this paper, and to the importance of writing about contemporaneities in the work of Silvano and Garay, no matter how incompletely. In conclusion, this project aimed to highlight the complexities inherent in the art and practices of Silvano and Garay and offer perspectives of Peru's multiple contemporaneities that are only legible outside of colonial paradigms. Within the analysis of each artist, there are visible acts of pathfinding that either seek methods of cultural transmission, like the ceramic workshops of Silvano and her family, or practices that seek a path of reconnection, such as Garay's *pacha* series. When situated in the landscape of sociopolitical history, an artistic analysis that employs the concepts of multiple contemporaneities, creative adaptations, submerged perspectives, and pathfinding offer the potential for decolonial understanding, in the context of Peru, and elsewhere.

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