



Carmen Victor

FROM ABIYALA TO TURTLE ISLAND

Turtle Island is the name for which North America is known by some Indigenous communities, including the Hodinoshoni and other Woodland peoples. Abiyala, “land of vital blood” is a name for Latin America in Guna, Indigenous peoples whose territory spans the nation-states of Panama and Colombia. Despite being one of many names, Turtle Island has come to be known by many Indigenous communities and settlers alike to refer to North America, and it is useful in that it does not defer to colonial naming practices; likewise, for Abiyala vis-à-vis Latin America. While both names originate from particular Indigenous communities, Turtle Island has come to be accepted by many communities, and the use of Abiyala is rising in usage and recognition. The etymology of *America* originates from 15th century Italian merchant Amerigo Vespucci who participated in at least two colonial expeditions sponsored by the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and who proposed that the land Columbus had alighted upon in 1492 was a distinct continent. These lands became known as America more broadly when German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller recognized that Vespucci had identified them as a separate continent from Europe. Since then, the colonial name has remained, and even more pernicious, the name *America* has been subsumed to signify one particular nation-state that occupies these lands while conveniently erasing Canada and Mexico—

which are also America. Abiyala is not yet as well known in Latin America as Turtle Island is in North America, but familiarity with the term is increasing.

As a scholar who studies experimental film, media, and contemporary art in and of the Arctic region, and whose family on the maternal side resides in and originates from Abiyala,¹ when the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery contacted me to do a public talk on Gerald McMaster, Nina Vincent, and Noor Alé’s exhibition *Arctic/Amazon: Networks of Global Indigeneity*, I was especially interested, because it represented a merging of my ethnic identities with my research interests. The exhibition, its many associated projects, the intellectual work to create the artworks that were included in the exhibition, and especially McMaster’s lifelong commitment to these critical research endeavours—all the labour to conceive of and assemble an exhibition this layered and complex—is attributed to the formidable talents of the artists, the exhibition curators, and the people and institutions that supported them in order to realize this project. This is not a comprehensive discussion of all the works that were included in the exhibition, and this interaction was just a very brief journey through.²

The premise of the exhibitions that emerged from the Arctic/Amazon Symposium, an initiative of the Wapatah Centre for Indigenous Visual Knowledge research centre, took place in September 2019 at the

Biret and Gáddjá Haarla, Outi Pieski, *Guhte gullá / Here to Hear* (2021). Multi-channel video installation, 8:30 mins. Photo: Mauri Lähdesmäki.

“Distinctions between time and space have not mattered among the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island or Abiyala.”

Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, and honoured the significant conceptual and research contributions made by artists addressing the complex issues of climate change, globalized Indigeneity, and political contact zones.³ As a result of the symposium, four thematic pillars materialized. These pillars—Traditional Knowledge, Indigenous Ontologies, Land Relations, and Contact Zones—in turn came to inform the exhibitions at the Image Centre, Toronto Metropolitan University and the Power Plant, the latter of which was held 1 October–31 December 2022 and included a series of associated events. Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and Abiyala have been historically separated across time and space. However, the rise of communication technologies has enabled the fostering of a North/South dialogue (or rather a Turtle Island/Abiyala dialogue) among Indigenous artists of the Americas. Developing this ongoing dialogue is what McMaster was instrumental in extending through the development of this exhibition. Distinctions between time and space have not necessarily mattered among Indigenous peoples living on Turtle Island or Abiyala—while technological advances have indeed provided for the opportunity of increased dialogue, there is a mutual ongoing interest in fostering mutually supportive networks of Global Indigeneity between and amongst these places, of which the symposium and exhibition are examples. Seeking to expand upon connections and understandings between Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and Abiyala, the exhibition *Arctic/Amazon* highlighted the interconnections between the First Peoples of these lands to their communities, to the lands at large, and the connections and relations forged through the constellations of the exhibition at the Power Plant. Instead of repeating tropes of trauma caused by colonization, *Arctic/Amazon* disengages from colonizing narratives and

seeks out synergies and commonalities that strengthened networks between Indigenous peoples with an ethos of resurgence, resistance, and affirmation.⁴ Four thematic pillars reverberated throughout the exhibition: 1) Traditional Knowledge, understood as exchanges through storytelling and art that connect and strengthen language, identity, and culture across Indigenous communities; 2) Indigenous Ontologies, traditions passed down from one generation to the next in order to maintain a deep connection to nature in both the Arctic and Amazon regions; 3) Land Relations, as rooted connections to the land bound by tradition and ceremony; and 4) Contact Zones, supporting and strengthening the exchange of knowledge between Indigenous communities from diverse and geographically remote areas, grounded in traditional knowledge that exists across time and space.⁵ These themes served as philosophical entanglements that both grounded and linked the various works.⁶ In what follows, I narrate a possible navigation, one of many possible paths through the *Arctic/Amazon* exhibition, highlighting works by Indigenous artists from Sápmi territory, Nunavut, Kalaallit Nunaat, and the Amazonia areas of Venezuela and Brazil.

Works on paper *Misikirima hena* (*Prickly Leaf*) (2020) and *Yaa misikipima hena* (*Prickly Vine Leaf*) (2020) by Yānōmami artist Sheroanawē Hakihiikwe serve as sentinels at one possible entry point for the exhibition. They are mounted with rare earth magnets on transparent Plexiglas, allowing viewers to encounter and take in the works distinctly, but this particular mechanism of display also allows viewers to see beyond the works, with sight lines traversing well into the gallery simultaneously. This particular way of mounting Hakihiikwe's drawings emphasizes the interconnections between his work and others in the gallery space. By repetitiously depicting flora and

fauna of Amazonian species throughout the body of work, Hakihiikwe employs rhythm and patterning to develop a counter-inventory of plants, species, and lifeforms from Yq̄nōmami territory which—with motifs as seeds and ornamental patterns—are then disseminated across the world. In representing Yq̄nōmami imagery, viewers can experience some of the Yq̄nōmami worldview through Hakihiikwe's drawing, painting, markmaking, and silkscreening on hand-made paper using particular pulps and fibres to depict patterning derived from the immediate Yq̄nōmami lived environment. Hakihiikwe's practice serves to compile these patterns, motifs, symbols, and drawings as a means to retrieve part of the oral, graphic, cosmological, and traditional living memory of the Yq̄nōmami. It is important to recognize that the patterns both apparent and recurrent in this work are not symbolic but rather closely related to the artist's familiar world *urijii* (jungle). Hakihiikwe's patterning represents an ecological relationship that anchors the work he produces. The materiality of the jungle is reflected in Hakihiikwe's delicate drawings. While to Western eyes the patterns and motifs seem abstract, they are not; the imagery is a completely representational expression of identity and space. Each motif is drawn directly from Yq̄nōmami experience of the world, and the relationship to life-sustaining land. Hakihiikwe's drawings represent a lived relationship to the jungle, including the movements of animals normally imperceptible to us. Our art historically-inflected eyes are informed by recent post-war art movements of abstraction, disguising the fact that the patterning is steeped in content and narratology, an immersion into ancient visuality.

A video work by Greenandic Kalaaliit and Danish artist Pia Arke is mounted on the wall, diagonal to Hakihiikwe's double-sided drawing. Arke's *Arctic Hysteria* (1996) is a work that interrogates what happens to the landscape when it is mapped, explored, and exploited by colonial powers. Naming, claiming, and categorizing supposedly

“empty” lands was an oft-relied upon pretext for colonization in the Arctic, in the desert, in the jungle, and elsewhere. A result of the Enlightenment and industrialization, mapping and owning supposedly undiscovered land was a constant preoccupation for Europeans. The thinking was: If it is mapped and named, then the land is owned. The Arctic was perceived as *terra nullius*, as wide-open empty space, devoid of communities, people, and life. Thus the land came to be understood as ripe for being claimed by outsiders—a narrative that is continually reinforced in service of colonization. As soon as the advent of photography and the medium of film emerged there were photographs and films shot in the Arctic, and these were often initially on (doomed) sponsored voyages of exploration into the Arctic regions; always taken by white European men seeking to conquer and dominate the north through technology, with their mere presence, leaving behind a legacy of extraction and exploitation. In *Arctic Hysteria*, Arke slowly crawls nude on the floor on top of a photographic depiction of the landscape in her community in Greenland. She attempts to interact with the surface of the photograph as if trying to register it through the haptic sense of touch. Over the course of the 5:44-minute video, Arke lays across the landscape, stretches out over it, writhes on it. Finally, 2:46 minutes into the video, her hand falls upon the edge of the photograph, and she immediately begins to tear it. Arke rips up the photograph, still nude, shredding it and discarding the remnants until the entire landscape has disappeared. Arke performs these actions in various states of sitting up and reclining. Eventually, she is surrounded by shreds of the former photograph. She gathers up the shreds to herself, further tearing apart any larger pieces, and crawls back out of the frame from the same direction she entered. The relation between physical body and the land is central to all of Arke's works. For example, in her piece *The Three Graces* (1994) (not shown in the *Arctic/Amazon* exhibition) Arke poses with



Sonya Kelliher-Combs, *Shedding Skin* (2022). Steel needled, nylon thread. Courtesy of the artist. Installation view: *Arctic / Amazon: Networks of Global Indigeneity*, The Power Plant, Toronto, 2022. Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid.

two of her relatives, holding objects representative of their ethnicities while staring directly into the camera lens, standing in front of a large-scale photograph of the Greenlandic Arctic landscape. And Arke's series of photographic images titled *Imaginary Homelands*, in which Arke used her body in the production of the images by literally placing herself inside a large-format pinhole camera. According to Kirsten Thisted: "The relation between man [sic] and (the Arctic) landscape was at the center of Arke's interests from the very beginning of her artistic career,"⁷ and similar to *The Three Graces* and *Imaginary Homelands*, in *Arctic Hysteria*, Arke literally and conceptually disrupts the notion of barren, white, Arctic lands devoid of peoples and communities.

Delicate craft-based works by Sonya Kelliher-Combs (Inūpiaq) were installed adjacent to Pia Arke's and Sheroanawë Hakihiikwe's works on the first floor of the installation at the Power Plant. Kelliher-Combs had several works in this exhibition: *Idiot Strings—Credible* (2022) and *Small Secrets—Red, White, and Blue* (2022), both of which are handmade, craft-oriented sculpture that engaged with mapping, garments, remnants of the everyday, and the harms of the church. But in particular, I wish to highlight the incredibly labour-intensive piece *Shedding Skin* (2022). *Shedding Skin* is made up of steel needles and nylon thread. The needles are meticulously placed in straight lines across a supporting wall, with endless reams of coloured nylon carefully threaded through the needles, creating continuity and cohesion despite occasional disruption to the patterning by select threads left hanging down to the ground. The threads are systematically placed on the wall and the nylon is threaded through the needle eyes. Threads hang gently from each needle, sometimes falling to the floor, other times gracefully connecting to an adjacent needle and so on across the width of the supporting wall. The work itself is a feat of endurance, an attestation to cultural continuity; it is about resilience and fragility and inter-

connectivity. *Shedding Skin* is incredibly complex yet abundantly self-evident, using everyday objects and tools to expose the ways in which culture and knowledge can be communicated through time and space, non-linearly. *Shedding Skin* defies linearity and linear narratives of progress. It is circular and interconnected, each layer building upon another to create a cohesive whole. Despite occasional threads becoming lost and then found, transforming into new forms, *Shedding Skin* reifies transformative aspects of continuity. Culture—exemplified by the nylon—is fragile, is lost but then is picked up once again ephemerally and pushes on. *Shedding Skin* gracefully evokes the precarity and resilience of culture, inferred through the delicate lines of thread that are periodically continuous, broken, and regained.

Sculptural works by Couzyn van Heuvelen (Inuk) occupied a large portion of the exhibition space on the first floor of the Power Plant. Van Heuvelen's work draws heavily from Inuit carving, hunting and fishing practices, and living on the land. People in the South are generally disconnected from life-sustaining food systems. In monumentalizing some of these objects, van Heuvelen's sculptural work reminds us of the importance of these tools and activities, despite being aestheticized. Van Heuvelen's *Avataaq* are helium-filled mylar balloons in the shape of, and with the patterning of inflated seal skins—a common tool used by Inuit when ice fishing. When a hunter's harpoon lands its mark, the *avataaq*, an inflated seal skin attached to the harpoon, deploys, signalling to the hunter where the catch is located under water. The *avataaq* floats upwards still attached to the *nittsiit* (lure). Van Heuvelen's *Avataaq* are shiny, silver, glossy, glittery objects that draw the eye. They are helium balloons acting as buoys, signalling a practical use. But here they are aesthetic objects that recall less Andy Warhol, who dabbled in silver inflatable balloons, or Claes Oldenburg, who monumentalized everyday objects such as food and household items. Here, van Heuvelen is in dialogue with Inuit art practice and

“As much as we try to decouple from nature and land, treating both as commodities, the interconnectedness between human and non-human life is reinforced.”

lifeways, and with objects of importance to life on the land, which honour cultural practices over objects with manufactured and mass-produced origins.

In transforming a useful object into an aesthetic one, van Heuvelen reinforces the object's importance. And while the objects are aestheticized, they are based in practicality. Monumentalizing nittsit is an antidote to the way colonizers have been known to treat the possessions of Inuit. This mistreatment is exemplified in Zacharias Kunuk's documentary film *Kivitoo: What They Thought of Us* (2018), a film which recounts Inuit oral histories by those who lived through the forced displacement in the early 1960s enacted by the RCMP and the Canadian government. One sequence in particular recounts forcibly displaced peoples' feelings of horror and sadness upon finally being able to return to their sod homes at Kivitoo, Qikiqtaaluk (Baffin Island) only to discover their homes had been pointlessly bulldozed and their possessions needlessly and cruelly destroyed and dispersed. Van Heuvelen's work can be understood as subverting such traumas and rather elevating everyday objects in the context of exhibiting them in a contemporary art context, so that we take note of the small, important things which sustain life and that we might otherwise take for granted. Apparent on one of the suspended nittsit within the area of the Power Plant devoted to van Heuvelen's work, is an echo of renowned Inuit artist Kenojuak Ashevak's motifs—this serves as an indication as to whom van Heuvelen's affinities lie. Inlaid into a monumentalized, acrylic nittsit is a clear reference to *The Woman Who Lives in the Sun*—a stone-cut print by Kenojuak from the 1960s. We also see a fibreglass nittsit adorned with *tunniit*—markings or tattoos on Inuit women's faces and hands that are

imbued with symbolic meaning and which are resurging as a cultural practice. Also among the suspended nittsit is an elongated *qilaut*, or drum—an important communal tool with which to invoke the ancestors. There is also an older-style fishing lure, increased in scale, that would have been carved from driftwood or a tooth to emphasize historical and contemporary connections between Inuit ways of knowing and living. Hunting is a daily activity but also a challenging one, steeped in traditional knowledge that requires awareness of the land and of knowledge transmission. Thus, van Heuvelen's monumental artifacts are also understood as amulets, or inanimate objects that have souls or spirits. All of these works emphasize, in some way, reciprocal relationships with the land.

Van Heuvelen also includes a monumental soapstone *qamautiq* (sled) in another sculptural reversal which transposes practical use and aestheticization. Inuit have used *qamautiq* to travel long distances over sea ice, to carry food for the journey, and to bring back the yield of the hunt. While Inuit art has a long history tracing back to the emergence of Thule culture (Thule were predecessors of Inuit and Yup'ik peoples who migrated across the North), contemporary Inuit art for commercial exchange began to be exported regularly to the southern part of Canada, where the majority of the Canadian population resides, beginning in the late 1940s.⁸ The stone typically used in contemporary Inuit sculptural works can be a combination of stone from the Arctic regions and stone that is imported. Van Heuvelen renders this massive *qamautiq* in the same material that many Inuit stone carvers render their imagery for consumption by art markets in the South—in imported stone. It is an extremely fragile sculptural

object that cannot be manipulated while on display in the gallery context. An authentic qamautiq would have an undeniably haptic element; a dynamic aspect to it with riders constantly touching, riding, and adjusting an actual qamautiq in practical use. Van Heuvelen's qamautiq, however, is not utilitarian, but moreso ironic in its isolation as a sculptural object for visual contemplation. In rendering a practical object into a sculptural one, and transposing the material used to construct this qamautiq with the stone that is used commercially by Inuit carvers and artists who make work for the South, van Heuvelen reifies both the realities of Inuit life on the land, and those of an urban Inuk.

Taking up space on a large-scale, red painted wall on the first floor of the Power Plant is photographic and performative work by Emerson Uýra, an Indigenous, trans artist from Brazil. Selected images from the series *Retomada* (2017–2021) appear in a constellation on the wall, in which Uýra, in their drag persona Uýra Sodoma, integrates their body with the land and landscape in a literal embodiment of environmental or ecological drag. The title *Retomada* is not so much a narrative of “land back” as we, in Canada, know the phrase but rather an enactment of the land taking itself back. Embodying and integrating with rivers, forests, and landscapes, Uýra is indelibly attuned to the land, using natural features and remnants from the land to enact an ecological drag in which Uýra's body seamlessly merges with the flora. As a trans artist, Uýra disengages from binary notions of gender, but this work also uncouples from binary distinctions between human and non-human life. In disguising and adorning the body with natural features—leaves, coral, foliage, dirt, feathers, sand, water, land—we understand that humans are connected to nature in a cyclical manner. We are not apart, separate, or distinct from nature's cycles and developments. Uýra's photographic works demonstrate that roots crack cement, and as a trans artist, the well-known aphorism so often invoked in times of strife—“they

tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds”—resonates in a number of ways. As much as we try to decouple from nature and land, treating both as commodities, the interconnectedness between human and non-human life is reinforced. These performative, photographic works by Uýra emphasize reclaiming a symbiotic relationship with nature as a way forward; something that these diverse, yet atomized works by (primarily) Indigenous artists have in common with one another.

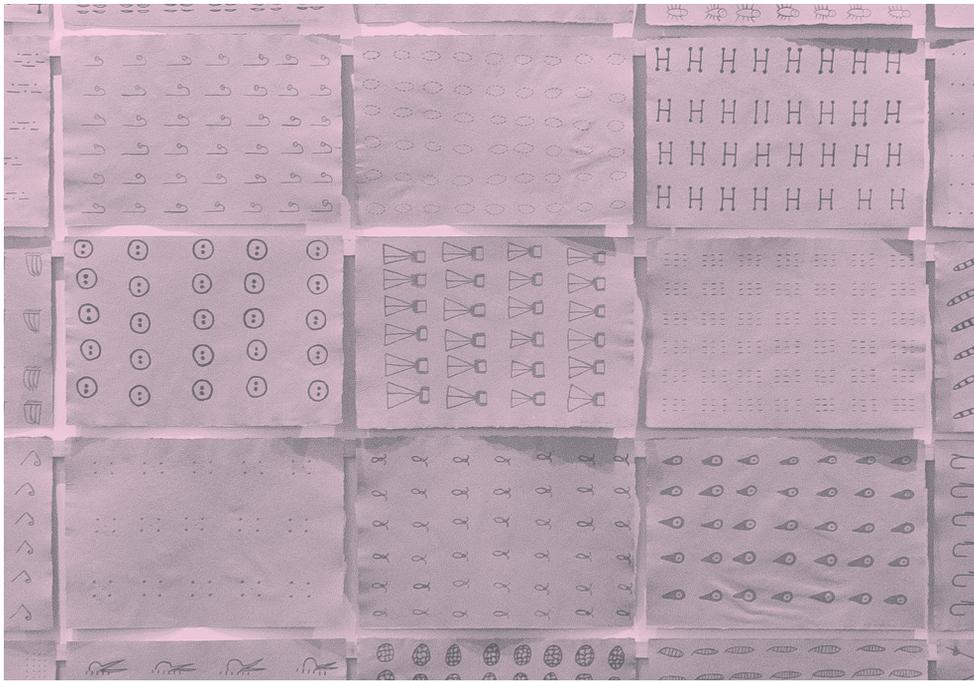
A woven, sculptural work made of colourful threads suspended in a series of rowan saplings shaped into vertical chevrons by Sámi artist Outi Pieski festoons the Power Plant's clerestory. Sámi culture, language, and lifeways were marginalized, as many Indigenous cultures have been, by the colonizing, industrialised culture. Pieski's *Guržot ja guovssat / Spell on you!* (2020) is a significant intervention in this respect, in that it celebrates *duodji*, Sámi material culture, costuming, activities, lifeways, and cultural continuity.⁹ Adornment and costuming form part of Sámi *duodji* and worldview. Moreover, the particular adornment of Sámi costuming does not exist for purely decorative reasons. Sámi traditional dress, *gákti*, serves as part of living culture and as a narrative which recounts the wearer's parentage, place of origin, and marital status.⁹ Sámi culture is embedded within its costuming and dress, and colour itself is extremely important (as it is for all the nations whose artwork was included in *Arctic/Amazon*). But colour is especially important in Pieski's piece, because Sámi were prohibited from using colour in their costuming and dress from the late 1800s to the 1970s during a period of assimilation, limited to using white fringes during that time.¹⁰ Pieski describes the type of weaving and threading she employs in works such as *Spell on you!* “as 3D drawings ... that show [they] still exist.”¹¹ The rowan sapling branches knotted with fringes of colourful threads infer the landscape and skyscape in Sápmi. Colour, patterning, material, and form, here, are existence and resistance.

“According to the Shipibo-Conibo origin story, the piri piri plant emerged from the ashes of the primordial anaconda.”

Colour, pattern, and form are also central to the collaborative murals produced by Olinda Reshijabe Silvano, Wilma Maynas and Ronin Koshi, Shipibo-Conibo artists from the Amazonian region who created a series of three monumental murals titled *Non Kenébo* (2022), installed at the Power Plant.¹² The patterning on the murals is *kené*, the practice of patterning geometric designs on the surface of objects and bodies. The marks are primarily made by women, and the designs have been described as creating a “hyperskin the [sic] embellishes and completes a three-dimensional body.”¹³ Peruvian scholar Luisa Elvira Belaunde describes *kené* patterning as *horror vacui*, a phenomenon where the surface of an artwork is filled with detail and content, leaving as little emptiness as possible.¹⁴ But *kené* is not just patterning for the sake of it. Belaunde argues that *kené* could be considered a mode of writing that forms cosmological pathways through which “beings move, travel ... [and] communicate with each other.”¹⁵ Non-human and human relations feature prominently in the practice of *kené* and throughout these murals, the primordial anaconda *ronín* (or *yacumama*) is central to Shipibo-Conibo cosmology. The divine anaconda is closely aligned with flora of the Amazon region. The patterning on its skin is closely identified with piri piri and ayuwasca, two Amazonian plants which are used by Shipibo-Conibo to enhance shamanic visions within their life-ways and cosmology. Although a division exists in the way *kené* manifests between genders. According to the Shipibo-Conibo origin story, the piri piri plant emerged from the ashes of the primordial anaconda. At a young age, Shipibo-Conibo women employ piri piri in a ritual to “inspire them with *kené* visions and enable them to draw *kené* with great skill.”¹⁶ This ritual enables Shipibo-Conibo women to materialize visions of *kené*, brought on by piri piri,

by “painting them, weaving them, and embroidering them on cloth, bodies, and utensils.”¹⁷ *Kené* motifs are recurrent patterns that are colourful and hypnotic, consisting of healing and spiritual properties and connotations. These artists want to share Shipibo-Conibo culture by exhibiting *kené* as art in urban contexts to bring attention to their own community’s role in enhancing the cultural continuity of Shipibo-Conibo motifs and practices, to share and disseminate their cosmology, and to broadly create resonance around Indigeneity in new spaces. The collaborative, performative, and monumental aspects of this work speak to its inherent synaesthetic dimensions.

A video work by Outi Pieski resonates with cosmological expressions of Sámi origin in *Guhte Gullá | Here to Hear* (2021). *Here to Hear* is a powerful two-channel video installation in which two distinct videos are projected on opposing walls in a darkened, enclosed gallery space. The videos play alternately while remaining synchronized. When a quieter segment augmented sonically by *yoik*¹⁸ and consisting of a particular embodied dance sequence performed by Pieski’s daughters, Biret and Gáddjá Haarla Pieski, plays on one wall, this is contrasted by a techno music sequence by Tuomo Puranen and a single dancer on the other. The videos cycle through each segment (slower versus more animated and vice versa) over the piece’s eight-and-a-half-minute duration. During the sequence augmented by *yoik*, Biret and Gáddjá Haarla Pieski move through a series of choreographed movements that are in constant relation to one another but also reminiscent of the movements of reindeer. The dancers are utterly responsive to one another—each shift and movement in one part of the body by one dancer is reciprocated by corresponding movements in the other. They move in unison at times, and at others, in response to one another.



Sheroanawē Hakiiwiwe,
Kamie ya uri ji pi jami
Parawa ujame theperekui
uri ji ter-imi thepe komi
kua / Donde yo vivo en mi
selva y en el río Orinoco
también viven todos estos
animales / Where I live
in my jungle and in the
Orinoco river all these
animals also live (2018).
 Acrylic on 79 sheets
 of cane fibre paper.
 Colección Patricia Phelps
 de Cisneros.

The dancers wear Sámi *gakti* and distinctive *ládjogahpir* (horn hat) headresses from a particular time period, identified by a distinctive crown-like protrusion. The style of *ládjogahpir* worn by Biret and Gáddjá Haarla Pieski had been outlawed for Sámi by colonizing forces starting in the 18th century and were actively gathered and destroyed by Læstadian priests in Norway and Sweden.¹⁹ The re-emergence of this particular style of *ládjogahpir* worn by the dancers is part of cultural resurgence and Sámi cultural continuity.

While the duology plays on one wall, a sequence of a single dancer appears on the opposing wall. The solo dancer is engaged in active and dynamic movement that appears to be contemporary, as neither Biret and Gáddjá Haarla Pieski are dressed in *gakti* or *ládjogahpir* during these sequences. Heavy, melodic techno beats and a strobe light highlight that vigorous movement is taking place, even in moments of darkness. Each dancer has a distinct solo sequence, which plays alternately to the duology, simultaneously. While appearing contemporary, each dancer's movements recall non-human movements of reindeer

as well as those reminiscent of a techno dance party. Pieski describes the work as:

... an underground cave party! Young people dance to escape the angst of world destruction, summoning the aid of the forgotten Sámi earth deities Uksáhkká, Juoksáhkká and Sáráhhká. We are losing our connection with the earth and our ancestors who rest beneath the soil. It is time for us to reconnect with the sacredness deep within the earth.²⁰

The installation is powerful to witness—at times quiet and considered, and at others vibrant, emotional, and affective. Sámi goddesses Uksáhkká, Juoksáhkká, and Sáráhhká are hauntingly invoked through dance and communing with the land with—and amongst—its human and non-human inhabitants in a dynamic, kinæsthetic space, transcending time periods while reinforcing kinship and Sámi cultural continuity. The tired colonial and religious fears of the supernatural, of the undivine, of animal impulses, and the fear of the divine—the superhuman, or gods within ourselves—

“I had simply traversed Abiyala and come to Turtle Island—the land remains connected.”

become anodyne. Harmful colonizing ideas and assumptions coalesce here but are reclaimed, remediated, and become exorcized.

The final work discussed here²¹ is a collaborative one between Sámi artist and activist Máret Anne Sara and Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña, titled *Gákte-Quipo* (2017–2021). The work is comprised of Sámi *gákti* knotted together in the form of a monumental *quipu*, suspended from the ceiling. Quipu are sophisticated recording devices used for 4,000 years; used in several cultures, empires, and regions in Latin America—most recently by the Inca Empire—until they were designated as idolatrous by colonial powers. And the knowledge therein became destroyed, sidelined, and forgotten. Nevertheless, quipu contain sophisticated numerical recording systems that enabled the Inca and preceding empires to retain and transmit knowledge. Quipu not only contained detailed numeric and decimal systems for tracking food, supplies, and stores, but cultural information as well.²² Sara collected *gákti*, highly personalized and customized Sámi clothing and *duodji* where all elements contain deep meaning to both the wearer and the observer, and Vicuña assembled these *gákti* into a monumental quipu. *Gákte-Quipo* is knotted Sámi *gákti* assembled into large-scale quipu form. *Gákte-Quipo* is monumental pluriversality—the literal and figurative flourishing of many worlds within one world, a “world where many worlds fit,”²³ and a manifestation of the coexistence of multiple and diverse ontologies and epistemologies. Gloria Anzaldúa’s words resonate:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.²⁴

In conclusion, commonalties and synergies were highlighted between distinct cultures and artworks by Indigenous artists from Nunavut, Sápmi territory, Kalaallit Nunaat, and the Amazonia areas of Venezuela and Brazil. And while not Amazonian, Vicuña is an outlier from Chile. Throughout my thinking, walking through, and talking about the *Arctic/Amazon* exhibition, I came to a realization about my own liminal identity. I hadn’t moved to Turtle Island from Abiyala; thought of as separate, distinct places and continents. I had simply traversed Abiyala and come to Turtle Island—the land remains connected. Though throughout the journey, I was in various states of being and at different points in time. 🌍

NOTES

- 1 It is of course more complicated than that, but it suffices to say I am a first-generation Canadian settler with no ancestors on Turtle Island. My family on my maternal side is from Venezuela and my extended family still resides there. My family’s presence in Latin America pre-dates colonization. I was always told that my melanated Venezuelan grandfather was originally French (wanting to emphasize his European-ness). However, in 2023 my mother revealed that my grandfather’s family were Haitian—not European at all. My father is a first-generation settler to Canada from the UK, and his father immigrated to the UK from Russia. The idea of the pluriverse, that is, existing within a world in which many worlds fit, is a state of being reified by my own lived experience.

- 2 The full list of artists and works that were included in the exhibition is available in the exhibition catalogue on the Power Plant website and on Wapatah's website.
- 3 As described in the literature from the Arctic/Amazon Symposium: <https://wapatah.com/arctic-amazon> (accessed March 9, 2023).
- 4 Extended descriptions of the four pillars are available on the Wapatah research project website: <https://wapatah.com/arctic-amazon> (accessed August 15, 2023). The pillars developed out of the symposium and were further honed and refined for the exhibition by the curators.
- 5 McMaster, in conversation, August 22, 2022.
- 6 McMaster, in conversation, August 22, 2022; Gerald McMaster and Nina Vincent, *Arctic/Amazon: Networks of Global Indigeneity* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 2023), 202–251. The four pillars: Traditional Knowledge, Indigenous Ontologies, Land Relations, and Contact Zones are described within the cited pages of the exhibition catalogue, and they were also part of the didactic information that was included in the exhibition layout at the Power Plant.
- 7 Kirsten Thisted, “De-Framing the Indigenous Body: Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke,” *Nordlit* 29 (2012), 283.
- 8 From 1999–2001, I was employed by gallerist Av Isaacs. Isaacs was instrumental in the development of the commercial art market in Toronto. His interests ranged from conceptual art to contemporary works in a range of media and Inuit art.
- 9 Eeva-Kristiina Nylander, a scholar, researcher, and museum professional focusing on Sámi repatriation and cultural heritage, who works closely with Outi Pieski, emphasizes the difficulty in translating duodji, seeing as many objects, activities, and practices make up duodji. But the practice of duodji also encompasses the Sámi worldview. See Eeva-Kristiina Harlin, “Returning Home: The Different Ontologies of the Sámi Collections,” in *Knowing from the Indigenous North: Sámi Approaches to History, Politics and Belonging*, eds. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Sanna Valkonen and Jarno Valkonen (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 52.
- 10 Saara Tervaniemi and Päivi Magga, “Belonging to Sápmi—Sámi Conceptions of Home and Home Region,” in *Knowing from the Indigenous North*, 84.
- 11 Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, “Outi Pieski—Meidän maa, meidän väreillä | Yhteiselo,” YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FofcrT_UW5M (accessed May 11, 2023), 4:12.
- 12 Ibid., 2:44–3:22.
- 13 The *Non Kenebo* murals were created in the Great Hall at OCAD University and subsequently transported to the Power Plant for the exhibition. As part of the broader project, Olinda Reshinjabe Silvano and Inuk artist Niap (Nancy Saunders) also collaborated on a mural, *Paisajes de Nosotros (Landscapes of Us)* (2022), that was commissioned by the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Image Centre and is now permanently installed on the exterior of TMU's Kerr Hall, located at the corner of Gould Street and Nelson Mandela Walk in Toronto.
- 14 Luisa Elvira Belaunde, “Kené—Shipibo-Conibo Design,” *Fieldana Anthropology* 4.5 (2016), 81.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid., 86.
- 17 Ibid. Olinda Reshinjabe Silvano describes her experience of developing kené from a piri piri ritual as a child in: The Power Plant, “Interview with Olinda Reshinjabe Silvano | The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery,” YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C99Qig4UoXQ> (accessed May 11, 2023), 0:32–1:00.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Yoik is Sámi traditional singing and cultural expression, in this case, performed by Sámi singer Mari Boine.
- 20 Læstadianism is a conservative christian revivalist movement in Sápmi, an offshoot of protestant lutheranism. For an in-depth discussion of the movement and its integration with Sámi culture, see Torjer A. Olsen, “The River Breaks and Freezes: Sámi Women and Læstadianism,” in *Knowing from the Indigenous North: Sámi Approaches to History, Politics and Belonging*, eds. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Sanna Valkonen and Jarno Valkonen (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 86–99. Also, Eeva-Kristiina Harlin, “Máttaráhku Ládjogahpir—Foremother's Horn Hat,” *Goethe Institute Finland Magazine*, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/fi/en/kul/mag/21661135.html>, and Eeva-Kristiina Nylander “Ládjogahpir Rematriated: Decolonization of the Sámi women's hat of Pride,” in *The Sámi World*, eds. Sanna Valkonen, Áile Aikio, Saara Alakorva, Sigga-Marja Magga (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), 446–464.
- 21 Outi Pieski, “*Guhte Gullá | Here to Hear*,” Outi Pieski's website, <http://www.outipieski.com/installations-collages/guhte-gulla-here-to-hear> (accessed May 11, 2023).
- 22 Notwithstanding Tanya Lukin Linklater, who had a number of videos and sculptural work in *Arctic/Amazon*, as well as a video by Uýra, a sculptural installation by Máret Anne Sara, further works on paper by Sheroanawē Hakihiikwe, and videos by Morzaniel Framari Yanomami, and Gisela Motta and Leandro Lima.
- 23 In 2022, the British Museum held an exhibition in partnership with the Museo de Arte de Lima, Perú, in which curators highlighted the data contained in ancient quipu. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mvjIMjZf-4> (accessed August 15, 2023), and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrfKQQKyfE> (accessed August 15, 2023), for additional detailed information.
- 24 Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2018), xvi.
- 25 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 3.

Copyright of PUBLIC is the property of Intellect Ltd. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.