



## Patricia Domínguez's Scientific Odyssey

At Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, the artist uses theories from quantum physics to weave a narrative of human connection

BY ELLEN MARA DE WACHTER IN EXHIBITION REVIEWS | 14 OCT 24



The central character in the hour-long video *Tres Lunas más Abajo* (Three Moons Below, all works 2024) is on a mission to reconnect with her entangled particle: a concept from quantum physics whereby two linked particles can share states and communicate, even when separated by vast distances. After meeting her animal guide – a Harris's hawk native to South America – a cyborg version of the bird perches on her shoulder as she journeys towards her entangled counterpart. On the way, she uncovers a petroglyph hidden in the sand, meets a pair of entangled Pleiadians from Andromeda, who hand her a broom with which to cleanse herself before she can re-entangle, and heads to the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), where she dons a hard hat and visits the Antimatter Factory and Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment.



Patricia Domínguez, 'Three Moons Below', 2024, exhibition view. Courtesy: the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects; photograph: Lucy Dawkins

In the gallery, two robotic hawks (*Rocky 1* and *Rocky 2*) flash their red laser eyes across the walls and artworks, and onto the large flatscreen on which the video plays, which is installed within a golden wall relief made of recycled acrylic. Also embedded within this relief are several watercolours which visualize apparent occurrences of transcendence – a woman levitating at the centre of the solar system (*Busco a mi partícula entrelazada. No sé si esta en Andrómeda o en una rueda de auto* [I'm Looking for my Entangled Particle. I Don't Know if It's in Andromeda or in a Car Wheel?!]) and connecting with the three moons of Mars and Earth via colourful channels of energy (*Acaricio a mis tres lunas interiores* [I Caress my Three Inner Moons]) – as well as technical depictions, including the motherboard of a sidereal clock (*Me trago el reloj sidereal* [I Swallow the Sidereal Clock]).



Patricia Domínguez, *Busco a mi partícula entrelazada. No sé si está en Andrómeda o en una rueda de auto* (I'm Looking for my Entangled Particle. I Don't Know If It's In Andromeda or in a Car Wheel), 2024, watercolour and gemstones on paper, 62 cm x 62 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects; photograph: Eva Herzog

The culmination of a residency which involved time at CERN and the European Southern Observatory in Chile, the video raises questions about the material and formal choices artists make in order to communicate issues of environmental dysregulation and sustainability. For Domínguez, part of this work is a recognition of both the differences and the similarities between the experimental framework of science and the empirical wisdom of ancestral spirituality – a field the artist immersed herself in during an extended stay with an indigenous healer in Chile.

The work is haunted by an awareness of the fractured relationships humans have with animals, the planet and the wider universe, engaging with topics ranging from trans-species psychology to astronomy, indigenous wisdom and quantum physics. As our protagonist, who embodies the science-fiction trope of the last human on earth, makes her way across space and time towards her entangled particle, she discovers 'ways to generate energy that don't depend on squeezing Gaia'. Moving through the desert and the laboratories at CERN, she touches surfaces and equipment with a gesture that evokes both a blessing and an operative interaction with a touchscreen. The work's sci-fi feel is amplified by its videogame-style narrative arc and fantasy aesthetics, which include graphic synthetic bodysuits and techno-symbolic jewellery.



Patricia Domínguez, *Tres Lunas más Abajo* (Three Moons Below), 2024, analogue photograph. Courtesy: the artist; photograph: Emilia Martín. Produced with the support of Fundación Botín, Arts at CERN, ESO Observatories, Pro Helvetia Southamerica, Corporación Chilena de Video, Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio de Chile, and Cecilia Brunson Projects

The environments the central character passes through suggest a future in which advanced technology is part of the process of reconnecting with nature, but that doesn't mean the presence of such technology is innate. This tension between the technological and the natural seems to dissipate when, towards the end of the video, the footage switches from digital to analogue, with shots of sunlight shimmering on water, flowers blowing in the breeze and horses cantering across a field. This glimpse of a more rudimentary, idyllic world is what she sees as she dreams her way to an awareness of her true nature and the long-awaited re-entanglement with her lost kin.

*Patricia Domínguez's 'Three Moons Below' is on view at Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, until 25 October*

Main image: Patricia Domínguez, *Tres Lunas más Abajo* (Three Moons Below), 2024, analogue photograph. Courtesy: the artist; photograph: Emilia Martín. Produced with the support of Fundación Botín, Arts at CERN, ESO Observatories, Pro Helvetia Southamerica, Corporación Chilena de Video, Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio de Chile, and Cecilia Brunson Projects.



ELLEN MARA DE WACHTER

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# THE TOP 6 ART EXHIBITIONS TO SEE DURING FRIEZE WEEK

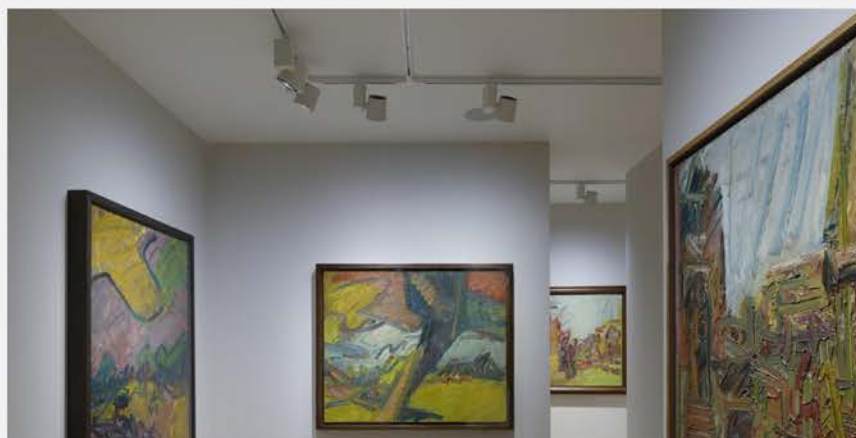
By Tabish Khan • 4 October 2024  
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Tabish Khan the @LondonArtCritic picks his top 6 Art Exhibitions to see in London during the hectic Frieze Week, and it's been expanded from his usual top 5.



Saad Qureshi: Handful of Paradise @ IDE V / l'étrangère, Fitzrovia

I love the intricacy of his sculptures that create fantastical realms based on memories, held in the types of old drawers we fill with keepsakes and on wheels as our memories allow us to travel in time and space. What was new to me was his woven wall works which look like singular pieces but are made from cutouts carefully woven together reflecting on his personal family history and how weaving was a key part of his mother's life. Both sets of works come together in this stunning exhibition in an upstairs gallery, **Until 14th December**.



Frank Auerbach: Portraits of London @ Offer Waterman / Francis Outred

This museum-quality exhibition across two spaces and several rooms brings together top-drawer landscape paintings of London by Frank Auerbach – who has lived through London's development over several decades and is still painting today. Whether it's Oxford Circus, Euston or Primrose Hill you feel like you could dive right into these thick layered paintings and soak up the smells of the city. **Until 7th December.**



Jessie Stevenson: from hiding places ten years deep @ Berntson Bhattacharjee

Her latest exhibition at Berntson Bhattacharjee in Fitzrovia sees her returning to childhood memories of Cairo, which you can see in her new colour palette that captures the searing sun you only get in warmer climes. I also love that she's gone huge so you can immerse yourself in these landscapes, with works embedded into wooden structures so it's like a window into her world. **Until 26th October.**



Patricia Domínguez: Three Moons Below @ Cecilia Brunson Projects

Patricia Dominguez takes her fantastical art to a new level by including references to quantum entanglement, based on her residency at CERN. The exhibition centres around a film where the artist wanders through the desert with robot birds with laser eyes perched in the gallery watching us as we watch the film. This immersive exhibition is layered and fascinating, and I now want a robot bird with laser eyes. **Until 25th October.**



Muhammad Ali in Focus: The Greatest by Chris Smith @ Alon Zakaim Fine Art

Will there ever be another boxer with the talent and charisma of Muhammad Ali? Possibly not, but while he was at his peak photographer Chris Smith captured some of his iconic shots inside and outside the ring, including this famous one of him 'knocking out' The Beatles. **Until 8th November.**



Anna Blom: Transference, curated by Jenn Ellis @ Gallery 46

As much as the natural world around us changes, so do we as we go through difficult times and grow emotionally. Anna Blom brings these together in her semi-abstract paintings that incorporate ghostly figures and are painted outdoors resulting in nature's detritus embedding into the works as they hang on the walls or in one large-scale case are draped across a table, chair and door. **Until 13th October.**

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FIG. 1 *HEXEN 2.0/Historical Diagrams/From ARPANET to DARWARS via the Internet*, by Suzanne Treister. 2009-11. Ink and watercolour on paper produced as a digital print, dimensions variable. (Courtesy the artist, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



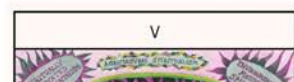
FIG. 2 Still from *The Holographic Universe Theory of Art History (THUTOAH)*, by Suzanne Treister. 2018. Video, duration 16 minutes 54 seconds, with sound, duration 51 minutes 16 seconds. (Developed as part of the Collide International Award; co-produced by Science-Art Network for New Exhibitions and Research; courtesy the artist).



FIG. 3 *THUTOAH/The Holographic Boundary (2)*, by Alessandra Gnecci, theoretical physicist at CERN. 2018. Watercolour and pencil on paper, 21 by 29.7 cm. (Courtesy Suzanne Treister).



FIG. 4 *Cámara de transhomologación*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2023. Watercolour on paper, 72 by 44 cm. (Courtesy the artist and The Ryder Projects, Madrid).



## Dreaming at CERN

by Patricia Domínguez and Suzanne Treister  
[Articles / Artist dialogue](#) • 12.09.2024



The artists Suzanne Treister (b.1958) and Patricia Domínguez (b.1984) first met in 2022, when they were both commissioned to produce public murals in the Danish town of Holbæk. There, they spent two weeks living as neighbours and formed a close friendship. Many shared themes and interests emerge throughout the artists' multifaceted practices, which are centred on ideas of technology, spirituality and ecology. A pioneer in the new media field since the 1990s, Treister works with video, interactive technologies, photography, drawing and watercolour to interrogate the relationship between technologies, societies and alternative belief systems. Domínguez often stages shrine-like installations that incorporate video and sculpture to exorcise the effects of late capitalism and ecological destruction, while also exploring the potential of artistic imagination as a form of psychic emancipation.

Both also share the experience of having undertaken research at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, Meyrin (CERN). In 2018 Treister received the Collide Award, which allows artists to spend time working alongside particle physicists and engineers. Treister arrived at CERN with a research question: 'Is the holographic universe principle – the theory that our universe could be a vast and complex hologram – something artists may have unconsciously sought to express since the beginning of our civilisation?'. Her project, *The Holographic Universe Theory of Art History (THUTOAH)* (2018), projects over 25,000 images from art history and conceptually echoes the actions of the Large Hadron Collider, accelerating at twenty-five images per second in a looped sequence. Four years later, Treister returned to CERN for *Scientific Dreaming* (2022), in which she attempted to expand the unconscious imagination of scientists in order to envisage positive futures. In 2021 Domínguez was a recipient of the Simetría Prize, a dual residency between CERN and the European Southern Observatory (ESO) astronomy facilities in Chile: Antofagasta, La Silla and the ALMA observatory. The culmination of her time at these sites, the video *Tres Lunas Más Abajo (Three Moons Below; 2023–24)*, will premiere at Cecilia Brunson Projects, London, this month (17th September–25th October 2024).

In this conversation, the artists reflect on their research and projects at CERN and discuss entangled particles, dreaming with machines, the ethics of developing technologies and the role of optimism and empathy in envisioning alternative futures.

**Suzanne Treister:** You wrote the other day that reading Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Talents* (1998), given what's been going on in Chile with the droughts and crime, made you really question how pessimistic or optimistic you are, or should be. It made me realise this is something I personally worry about a lot of the time – a constant undercurrent to everything I make as an artist. I feel like I naturally oscillate between the two, always looking out for dangerous paths and hypothesising better futures, but through my lifetime it's been getting harder and harder to be optimistic. One has to dig deeper and deeper into all possibilities in order to find some light at the end of the tunnel. And at the centre of what I do is always the question of technology.

**Patricia Domínguez:** I believe that we live in a spiritual reality and at the end of the end, all will be fine. I hope. There's an intelligence that can't be touched and that can regenerate everything in new forms infinitely. But I'm also prepared to live in an expanding sense of apocalypse, of deep ecological and social mourning. Almost all the houses around here in Puchuncaví have been assaulted. Mine is probably next. The soil here is polluted with arsenic, which keeps getting worse with all the factories around. We live inside what has been called a 'Sacrifice Zone'. Sadly, I don't think things will get better until all the forms as we know them have collapsed.

I'm putting together a garden in a place that's also devastated by dryness due to the privatisation of water. I wonder if all the efforts by the local community of renewing the native trees are worth it as the mega-drought permanence is imminent. I have a recurrent nightmare. A very subtle one. Nothing really happens apart from me in the future watching my garden die in front of my eyes because of the lack of water. This, which is small by comparison to what's happening to the rest of the human planet, drains me a lot. And I wonder if I should allow that continuous draining or if I should gather all my enthusiasm and try to build better futures with more strength. At least the path on what to do to make things better is clear.



FIG. 5 HEXEN 5.0/Tarot/V The Hierophant – Spiritual Ecology, by Suzanne Treister. 2024. Watercolour on paper produced as a digital print, dimensions variable. (Courtesy the artist, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



FIG. 6 HEXEN 5.0/Tarot/Seven of Chalices – Solarpunk-Hopepunk, by Suzanne Treister. 2024. Watercolour on paper produced as a digital print, dimensions variable. (Courtesy the artist, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



FIG. 7 Still from *Tres Lunas Más Abajo (Three Moons Below)*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2023–24. Video, duration 53 minutes 53 seconds. (Commissioned by Arts at CERN; courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



FIG. 8 SOFTWARE/Q. *Would you recognise a Virtual Paradise?/Sacred Vision*, by Suzanne Treister. 1993–94. Oil on cardboard boxes and floppy disk, 2 parts, each 22.5 by 16 by 4 cm. (Courtesy the artist, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



Going back to the point about pessimism and optimism, I guess your new tarot deck is half positive, half honest, with all the dark forces around that are at play? Is it more one half than the other? Is technology and how it is, and will be, utilised, a reflection of our inner states?

ST: Yes, my new tarot deck *HEXEN 5.0* (2024) is an attempt to bring my previous tarot, *HEXEN 2.0* FIG.1, up to date. It's also a way for me to critically and historically explore new global developments in terrestrial and interplanetary technologies; science and communications; corporate and governmental forces; the ecosystem and climate crisis; recent and traditional fields of knowledge and spirituality; new branches of bio-sociopolitical theory; contemporary countercultural and futuristic movements; and new directions in science fiction, towards proposed solutions for an ethical survival of the human race. Hopefully when it's published it will be used as a learning tool for groups to discuss and envision positive alternative futures.

What are your thoughts about possible futures of technologies such as the internet and Web 3.0, the blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI) and the possibility of artificial general intelligence and the singularity? Do you think new technologies can solve the climate crisis? Clearly, it's about which technologies, who's using them and for what purpose, the ways they're controlled and the collateral damage they may cause, but do you feel they could be more useful than destructive for the future of humanity and the planet?

PD: In the end, I believe that this climate crisis is more of a human crisis. We'll solve it if we want to, with technology or without. I think that our technologies, organic and electrical, are mere extensions of our inner configurations. This possible positive use of technology will have to come from within. But now it's escalating into unprecedented, dark places – like machine cruelty, with drones with zero empathy targeting people in genocides, for instance.

One of the ideas that stayed the most in my mind after my residency at CERN was quantum entanglement – the notion that we might have entangled particles all over the universe. Maybe that's the reason I've been feeling so hypersensitive all my life – a symbolic hypersensitivity similar to some of Butler's protagonists, who suffer from Hyper-empathy syndrome: the inability to observe someone in pain without sharing that pain, to debilitating effects. Since my first visit to CERN, I've been training myself to feel where my distant particles are and imagine that I can connect with them. I'm living my life, but I'm also feeling lots of other lives. I might have an entangled particle on the wheel of a car, but also in some of the people in Palestine, and I can't stop feeling the suffering of the people there. On the other hand, I might have another particle in Andromeda, which gives me a broader understanding of time and the cosmic process. Where do you feel your entangled particles are? How open is your sense of being – where, or how, do you think you are you?

ST: Well, we all originate from exploding stars, not necessarily the same one though, and I often feel that I have entangled particles in a part of outer space; or perhaps in a Polish shaman living in a forest near the Ukrainian border; or in a line of Kabbalistic text; or inside my grandmother waiting in the queue for the gas chamber; or in my own childhood; or even in my old age, where I imagine looking backwards on my life. I'm often in the mountains, living in a hut, making do, or part of a few mountain stones, arranged by myself on a hillside into a small cairn, resting in the morning sun. I always worried about being an insect or wildflower, so easy to be trodden on by a clumsy human. Did you know that Middle Eastern Jews and Palestinians share a significant amount of genetic ancestry? It's always sad to watch brothers fighting. I feel that too.

When I was at CERN, making *The Holographic Universe Theory Of Art History (THUTOAH)* FIG.2 I questioned the theoretical particle physicists about the holographic principle: the idea that two-dimensional versions of three-dimensional reality exist on a boundary somewhere out there, farther than we could travel in the universe. One of them did a watercolour of a person moving towards this boundary, becoming hot molecular code FIG.3.

PD: I feel the crossing in that watercolour! I made one of a person FIG.4 crossing an energetic boundary to homologue with a bird and gain its vision. This comes from the meditations I do to connect with energetic animals, who are my teachers.

Do you think that Hyper-empathy, plus the deep understanding that quantum physics offers, will help us rethink how we utilise technologies? And maybe finally get through this insular belief that societies have of only worrying about their own immediate territory, and instead think about what they encompass and what they're really connected to. What is your favourite technology in your new deck, the one that gives you more faith?



FIG. 9 *SURVIVOR (F)/One Million Years Before And After The Internet*, by Suzanne Treister. 2016-19. Oil on canvas, 213 by 152 cm. (Courtesy the artist, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



FIG. 10 *Kabbalistic Futurism/Manuscripts (09) Blue Galaxy*, by Suzanne Treister. 2023. Oil on canvas, 213 by 152 cm. (Courtesy the artist, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).

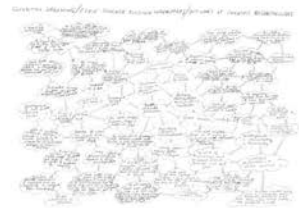


FIG. 11 *Scientific Dreaming/CERN Science-fiction writing workshops/Outcomes of Scientific Breakthroughs*, by Suzanne Treister. 2022. Pen on paper produced as a digital print, 42 by 29.7 cm. (Courtesy the artist, Annelly Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



FIG. 12 Still from *Matrix Vegetal*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2021-22. Video installation with sculpture-totems and dry Brugmansia flowers, duration 21 minutes 12 seconds. (Commissioned by Screen City Biennial; courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



FIG. 13 Detail of *Matrix Vegetal*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2021-22. Video installation with sculpture-totems and dry Brugmansia flowers, duration 21 minutes 12 seconds. (Commissioned by Screen City Biennial; courtesy the artist and The Ryder Projects, Madrid).

ST: I guess that's what I'm trying to encourage with *HEXEN 5.0*. For the tarot cards, I'm using alchemical drawing structures to describe these technologies and everything else, to entwine them into a mystical space where they become differently animated and resonant. There are amazing developing technologies for renewable energy and food production, but it's the evolving new fields that inspire me with more hope for the future – such as spiritual ecology fig.5, nexus thinking, astrocognition and some of the new countercultures of refusal and renewal, alongside new directions in science fiction, like solarpunk and hopepunk fig.6. The people involved in these fields are some of the people we need to effectively direct, promote and make use of these technologies in ways that help us all. How do your thoughts about technology play out in your work and your imagery?

PD: I love your card about spiritual ecology. I'm excited to show it in *Future Ours*, the New York billboard project I'm co-curating.<sup>1</sup> It will be an incantation, a counterspell, to show that card in the public space!

I see my work as a technology itself – an artistic-spiritual-experimental one. I focus on tracing digital and spiritual relationships between living species in this increasingly corporate and violently oppressed cosmos. I guess it's my way to not dissolve into despair. I reimagine these relationships and weave them together in a way that honours a more connected, planetary memory.

The cosmos is collective; it includes electrical technology too. I've invented my own rituals to survive in this system and transcend some of my own culturalisation. I see the way I use technologies as a sort of capitalist hack, as I re-choreograph and recode their possible uses in order to honour injured birds, evaporating water, dry bodies, ancient petroglyphs, songs for the water, healing plants, vegetal intelligence and terrestrial intelligence. I arrange video-shrines as new world configurations.

I perceive my practice as a stomach that digests the symbols and motifs of late capitalism, recoding them into myths of multispecies resistance. Once, a friend of mine, the curator Pablo José Ramirez, wrote about the inversions that my projects propose. Here is a quote that I love:

Following the traces of symbols and cultural objects as they enter digital grounds and come back to the physical world transformed, the movement that Patricia performs is similar to a material hacking exercise: if the digital corporatism operation implies turning what is alive into pixels, stripping it of all traces of planetary and ancestral memory, her movement is inversely opposite; she materializes what is digital, in order to connect it with memory.<sup>2</sup>

I feel like catching and materialising pixels of information coming to us from the sky. This new video and watercolour series I'm working on now, *Tres Lunas Más Abajo* fig.7, is a spiritual pilgrimage to cutting-edge technologies. It's a journey, a video prayer to broaden my cosmological sensor.

For your project at CERN, *Scientific Dreaming* (2022), I loved that you made the scientists dream. Can you show me one of their dreams? When I was there, I wanted to dream with the machines, but I only dreamt with my mom!

ST: I'm so excited hearing you talk about your work like this. It really resonates with how I've felt about my own, from early paintings, computer work and *SOFTWARE* project fig.8 to the more recent *SURVIVOR (F)* fig.9, *The Escapist BHST (Black Hole Spacetime)* (2018-19), *Technoshamanic Systems* (2020-23) and *Kabbalistic Futurism* fig.10, in which I'm trying to imagine and connect transcendent scenarios of deep history, possible futures of technology, existence and understandings of the universe.

In *Scientific Dreaming*, I attempted to hypnotise a group of particle physicists to allow them to access other parts of their brain in the hope that they might come up with new solutions to the climate crisis. I led each scientist through a series of prompts, which resulted in them making a plot diagram for a science fiction short story that they would later write. I only told them at the end of the workshop that their drawing was for this purpose. One of the prompts was to ask them to describe a dream experienced by one of the characters they'd invented, which could be a dream they'd had themselves. Examples of their dreams were: flying close to the sun; walking in the Vatican; a robot dreaming of the person who built him; modelling future worlds; cycling by a river where the water is rising too high; travelling through the universe as an ethereal being; realising how to measure the cosmological constant in the universe; rivers full of fish; and a world of truth and justice. I created a diagram for the results of each prompt fig.11.

PD: I see kittens, dreams of winning the lottery and ethereal travelling! It's such a good exercise to have new thoughts and connections. For me, this is a crucial thing to do at the moment.





FIG. 14 Still from *Tres Lunas Más Abajo* (*Three Moons Below*), by Patricia Domínguez. 2023-24. Video, duration 53 minutes 53 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



FIG. 15 Still from *Tres Lunas Más Abajo* (*Three Moons Below*), by Patricia Domínguez. 2023-24. Video, duration 53 minutes 53 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



FIG. 16 Still from *Tres Lunas Más Abajo* (*Three Moons Below*), by Patricia Domínguez. 2023-24. Video, duration 53 minutes 53 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



FIG. 17 Still from *Tres Lunas Más Abajo* (*Three Moons Below*), by Patricia Domínguez. 2023-24. Video, duration 53 minutes 53 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).

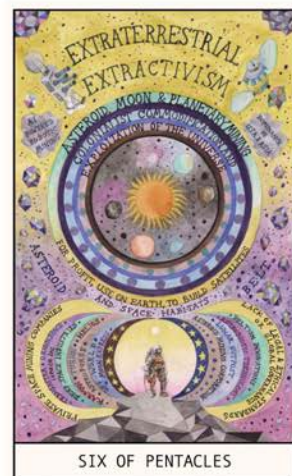


FIG. 18 *HEXEN 5.0/Tarot/Six of Pentacles - Extraterrestrial Extractivism*, by Suzanne Treister. 2024. Ink and watercolour on paper produced as a digital print, dimensions variable. (Courtesy the artist, Anneli Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



ST: I would love to hear more about your new video. Since leaving CERN, have you been able to dream with the machines?

PD: I haven't been able to dream with machines yet, can you believe it? I keep dreaming about organic technologies and expanding my vision. I guess my biggest interest is to empower our bodies and their possible quantum functioning: the ultimate organic technology.

The new video is the second part of a personal inquiry, which I started in 2021, to broaden my understanding of the invisible. My previous video installation or 'door' *Matrix Vegetal* FIG.12 FIG.13 is the 'vegetal door' of the shamanic universe of plant intelligence, and this new work is the mirror 'video door', which explores mysticism and ritual while navigating fundamental science and cutting-edge technologies. The film is a quest of decoding and recoding how we understand reality and how we can shift perspectives.

In the video, the same actress from *Matrix Vegetal* - Claudia, my best friend from Chile - is guided by a bird-robot FIG.14, who leads her through the quantum worlds of CERN and the machine there that studies the smallest particles FIG.15; ancestral spaces in a petroglyph in the Atacama Desert, hidden under the sands; and the world's most precise observatories at the ALMA and La Silla Observatories in the Atacama Desert FIG.16. She embraces different machines and technologies to acquire their capabilities. She longs for the vision and understanding that these objects can give her, so that she can broaden her cosmological sensor - her connection to the universe, galaxies, animals and the unknown. The video ends with CERN's Large Hadron Collider telling her to go and dream, which ends up being the space where she can finally connect with her entangled particles FIG.17. I'm trying to embed the video with the experiences that most expanded my thinking during my own 'pilgrimage' to these places and concepts.

ST: To go back to where we started, I think we both now have entangled particles inside Butler's *Parable of the Talents*, we both experience forms of Hyper-empathy and some kind of Lauren Olamina-type drive to rescue the human race and restore the planet. Despite acknowledging the incalculable, complex horrors of present-day realities, we both believe we can contribute positively through art, through illuminating the deeper levels of connection and inhabiting the bad parts in order to make them better. And if only a few people are energised by our work, then we're not totally delusional!

PD: Yes, if one person is touched by what we do it's worth it. The end of Butler's amazing novel was a bummer though, right? I was so curious to see how all the mess would unfold, and they ended up jumping into ships to colonise other planets.

ST: Yes totally, I was surprised by that part. But it was written in 1998, before Trumpian ideas of mining Mars and the Moon, before Foster + Partners had designed potentially realisable Mars habitats, and her fantasy was socially inclusive. I'm all for exploring outer space - it's part of the inevitable human search for knowledge - but in non-colonialist, non-destructive ways. I've just finished another *HEXEN 5.0* work FIG.18, which has a text about the perils of government and private space colonisation:

Postcolonial, planetary chauvinistic, imperialist development of space, extending coloniality into space in a perpetuation of settler colonialism and manifest destiny, by government space agencies, contractors, and wealthy elites affiliated with private corporations, leading to interplanetary contamination/destruction, possible extinction of indigenous extraterrestrial life, and endangering of any extraterrestrial first contact.

What is your feeling about humanity entering the cosmos?

PD: I think we should wait until we fix our mess here, and learn to live together before putting a foot in outer space. If not, it will be controlled, as you say, by governments, power and greed. I feel we're not worthy to go into space yet. For now, we can travel with our imaginations across different dimensions, learning to open the portals here on Earth.

ST: Yes, I totally understand that position, but this situation is already happening. It's unlikely anyone can stop governments and corporations developing their extractivist colonialist space programmes, just as it's unlikely anyone can stop the tech community developing more and more sophisticated AI. These people have power and are obsessively driven. But what we can do is imagine and advocate for inclusive, ecologically safe and ethically driven alternatives in these fields.

For example, my designs for psychedelic spaceships FIG.19 and dresses for space travel, although purely dysfunctional and imaginary, are meant to be ways of suggesting this direction, like a fantasy of countercultural space exploration, which was maybe more what Butler was getting at? It doesn't necessarily mean we have to go out there, but imagining positive ways of being out there is important somehow.

**FIG. 19** *TECHNOSHAMANIC SYSTEMS/Spacecraft Designs/Crystal Spaceship 06*, by Suzanne Treister. 2019–20. Watercolour on paper produced as a digital print, 21 by 29.7 cm. (Courtesy the artist, Annely Juda Fine Art, London, and PPOW Gallery, New York).



**FIG. 20** Still from *The Eyes of Plants*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2019. Video, duration 24 minutes 53 seconds. (Commissioned by Gasworks, London; courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



**FIG. 21** Still from *Madre Drone*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2020. Video, duration 20 minutes 51 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



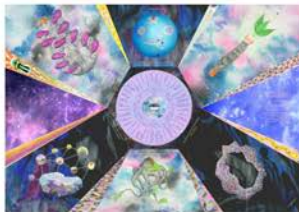
**FIG. 14** Still from *Tres Lunas Más Abajo (Three Moons Below)*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2023–24. Video, duration 53 minutes 53 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



**FIG. 15** Still from *Tres Lunas Más Abajo (Three Moons Below)*, by Patricia Domínguez. 2023–24. Video, duration 53 minutes 53 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



51 seconds. (Courtesy the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).



**FIG. 22** Side 2 of *The Museum of Ethics and Interplanetary Technologies – A Dowsing Poster*, by Suzanne Treister and Patricia Domínguez. 2022. Double-sided poster, 70 by 100 cm. (Courtesy the artists, Annely Juda Fine Art, London, PPOW Gallery, New York, and Cecilia Brunson Projects, London).

There are other issues, though. There is the emerging field of astro-cognition, which considers possible changes in our brains, thinking and belief systems in extraterrestrial environments. There is also Liu Cixin's idea of the dark forest in his science-fiction novel of the same name: the idea that civilisations from other planets may be hostile and that we should perhaps hide our presence in the universe, adopting a so-called 'dark forest strategy'.

**PD:** I woke up today thinking that maybe the universe is the one that needs to learn to be at peace with itself? We're just minuscule parts of it, trespassed by these strong forces. Who really knows what is happening outside? I think that your new tarot deck will offer a total update of information, new sciences and the strong forces that are at play in the universe.

And, yes, I agree that we can hack the system from the inside and advocate for new uses of technology. In my work, I've made bio-prospecting drones cry alongside indigenous vases for the extracted land **FIG.20**; prayed for the quartz that is being mined for the processing chips in our computers in *Quartz, cactus and silicon chip meditation* (2020); imagined an LED light woman who can neutralise stressed robots and liberate their rational mind using medicinal plans **FIG.21**; and asked to absorb the pixelated vision of a blinded police drone so I can expand my own, so I can imagine new futures in the cracks of this era.

I wish that we had come to terms with the ethics of the new AI technologies before they were developed. We have to consider everything – all species, the planet, water, soil, the universe, all peoples, the resources they used and their biases – along with the immense amount of electrical energy that AI is consuming. Lots of people are pushing to challenge those who create and programme new forms of AI. Yesterday, I gave a talk about the relationship of my work to the planet and technology, which was shown at SIGGRAPH 2024, a tech conference in the United States. There was discussion about the fact that engineers are designing things like NFTs or the Metaverse, but they keep falling apart because they have no content or criticality. They don't have a root to the Earth, to life. So, this year they're inviting artists, peace advocates and people from the healthcare system to help them advocate for everything that's left behind after this brutal digitalisation of life.

With that equation activated, we can then programme AI to help us take better care of the planet. I know it sounds totally utopian. Talking about utopias, I recited to them the technologies we invented for the Museum of Ethics and Interplanetary Technologies:

Technologies for distributing the most healing plants around the universe between civilizations

Decodification of the languages of the cosmos

Technology to activate unused and dormant cells in the brain

Unlimited interplanetary energy sources through dark matter/dark energy invocations

Interplanetary species empathy exchange technology for experiencing each other's position

Ethical assessment technology for intergalactic welfare.

Seeing how corporations control AI, and most of all, technological innovations, I'm much more interested in learning about spiritual, healing and artistic technologies – 'technologies with no hardware' – and consulting the intelligence of the planet. I know you also draw on this, and also cosmic information. It's crucial to find and sustain this direct access to reality, new thoughts and techniques as a counterspell.

**ST:** I agree, and it was amazing to make that poster with you for Transmediale **FIG.22**, inventing together those technologies for non-invasive and peaceful interplanetary coexistence for the Museum of Ethics and Interplanetary Technologies.<sup>3</sup>

I can't wait to see your new video. I know I'm going to find it energising! I wonder what it would feel like to look back on our work, if it still exists, a hundred years in the future?

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Future Ours* will be presented inside the United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 13th–29th September and on hundreds of New York bus shelters from 16th–29th September 2024. Afterwards, *Future Ours* will be presented as part of Kunsthall Charlottenborg Biennale across Denmark in 2025.

<sup>2</sup> P.J. Ramirez: 'SOLO SIGA LAS SEÑALES: Futurabilidad y desdoblamiento en la obra de Patricia Domínguez', in exh. cat. *sone@cermamicas.cl*, Santiago (Sala de Arte CCU) 2017, pp.14–52, at p.50, translation the artist.

<sup>3</sup> In *The Museum of Ethics and Interplanetary Technologies – A Dowsing Poster*, the artists, concerned about possible upcoming risks for planet Earth and the universe resulting from potential private and governmental space invasion technologies and programmes, imagined six alternative technologies for non-invasive and peaceful interplanetary coexistence with other consciousnesses.

## Sensing the Cosmos: An Interview with Patricia Domínguez

by Lorna McDowell // Feb. 16, 2024

*This article is part of our feature topic [Utopia](#).*

At the height of catastrophic and man-made late-capitalism, what can the organic world, and plants in particular, teach us about potential utopias? Merging her experience in ethnobotany—the study of human-plant interrelations—with artistic practice, Chilean artist, educator and activist Patricia Domínguez explores the dimensions of spiritual and non-human intelligences. Her works, often presented as shrine-like assemblages, are both ancestral and futuristic. They become rituals, exorcisms and a form of meditative prayer, unveiling a poetic vision of contemporary life that is deeply connected to the Earth, and opposing our present colonial and extractive relationship with it.

In 2023, Domínguez's video work 'Holographic Milk' (2021) was featured in 'Ether's Bloom' at Cropius Bau, an exhibition that kicked off the museum's first programme on Artificial Intelligence. She has also recently undertaken research at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, in Switzerland, engaging her practice with technologies that expand human sensors and connection to the cosmos and celestial beings. We spoke with Domínguez about artistic imagination as a portal to envisioning what the notion of utopia could mean today, and about new ways of being and existing together.



Patricia Domínguez, portrait // Photo by Emilia Martín

**Lorna McDowell:** What led you from the field of ethnobotanical research to becoming an artist?

**Patricia Domínguez:** It was the other way around. I was always an artist, always connected with animals and plants, to the Earth and waters. Back when I was

studying art at Hunter College in New York, I also studied botanical illustration and scientific illustration. I studied at the New York botanical garden for two years and then worked at the Natural History Museum of New York drawing fossils. I wanted to understand the relationship between the scientific gaze and living species. At first I was fascinated, but I reached a point where I was drawing a plant and I thought, "this can't be the only way of describing this multi-dimensional being." I knew it was much more than these hyper-realistic botanical drawings. I experienced a clash of views and became more interested in the relationship—symbolic, emotional or spiritual—that people can establish with plants or animals. I began to realise that I wanted to explore this via art, having the freedom to use fiction and to reimagine those relationships. Our relationship with the cosmos is still so limited, there's so much that we can expand.

Art is a tool where imagination and emotion are the fuel. It can't be defined by science and is just another language. Western science is so tightly tied to facts that I couldn't really move out of that worldview if I worked in that area. I actually opened a school of botanical illustration when I came back to Chile, which I ran for 8 years. It was beautiful because it ended up being a way of really connecting with the local plants, learning about the ecosystems and their current destruction. The school became an activist activity. We would sit for hours drawing plants, without our phones, which was a very calm and meditative way of learning. When you paint one leaf you'll never forget it. The drawing process is a tool for absorbing the information. It was a "scientific meditation" rather than believing that this is the ideal way of depicting plants. I truly think they're multidimensional beings and that we need to invent new ways to represent them, at least from our human perspective. We need a much more experimental and spiritual "botanical illustration."

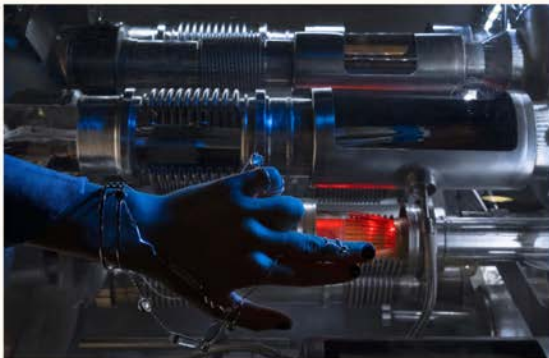


Patricia Durriguzar: *Materia vegetal*, in collaboration with Emilia Martín, 2022, commissioned by Screen City Biennial with the support of Cecilia Brunash Projects.

**LM: There's been a lot of discourse in recent times around Indigenous knowledge and plants. What can plants and ancient botanical wisdom teach us about how to live in these times? And about viable alternatives for the world?**

**PD:** I believe Indigenous knowledge is sacred, and that we have a lot to learn from Indigenous communities because they know how to be here, on this planet. They have built a way to interact with the cosmos that is kind, respectful, a way that is really "sustainable," to put it in Western terms. In these times of brutal ecological crisis, it makes total sense to me to want to learn from their ways. To rethink our models of extraction. My teachers and friends that are Indigenous or Mestizo have a spiritual and respectful approach to the planet, the mountains, the Earth, and they honour them instead of extracting from them or using them for money or power. They know how to never overuse them, and ask for permission before harvesting them, for example, they have alliances with the plants, collaborating with them and their healing medicinal qualities.

I feel this is the main approach we need to take in order to deal with this crisis. Where I live, Chile, is a lab for neoliberalism. Everything's been extracted; the water is privatised, the forests are cut down, mining pollutes the few remaining waters. These days the central region is burning with fires that have caused great losses, especially of the few species that are still standing after the mega-drought, which was mainly caused by agriculture and forestry. It's clear that this path is the path to destruction. Indigenous people also have an honoring approach to planetary memory. They know how to communicate with the elemental spirits in a dialogue that has never been broken. They are in a profound conversation with everything that is living, using a nonverbal language that cannot be explained rationally. Their science is spiritual.



Patricia Durriguzar: *Three Moira Belah*, 2024, with the support of Fundación Borch, Arts at CERN, ESO Observatorio, Pro Helvetia, Corporación Chilena de Video and Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio de Chile

**LM: Can you explain a bit about your research at CERN in Switzerland and how this has fed into your work?**

**PD:** I came to CERN on the Simetría Residency in 2021, a collaboration between CERN and Chile. It's a beautiful residency because they offer you access to CERN experiments such as the ProtoDune (Neutrino Detector), n\_Tof (Neutron time of flight) or CMS (Compact Muon Solenoid), among many others. Also the ESO

Observatories in Chile; ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array) the biggest radio telescope in the world, as well as the LSO (La Silla Observatory), which is located beneath the clearest skies in the world in the Atacama Desert. Visiting these places felt like a pilgrimage to the higher-end technologies of Western science. These technologies are expanding our connection to the cosmos, to celestial beings and to the invisible.

Coming to CERN really changed my mindset, as I was able to combine my own knowledge and learnings from spiritual techniques with the work of the scientists here. Witnessing their sense of wonder about the unknown is mindblowing. I got a sense of the microcosmos that even changed the way I dream. It opened up a strange immensity of reality. I learned that our particles can be entangled with particles in the Andromeda Galaxy, for instance. It made me ask: "Where is my limit?" It's been very interesting for me to look at the LHC (Large Hadron Collider)—the world's largest and highest-energy particle collider—as a mythological machine. Also, to think in terms of this spiritual connection that we were talking about before, whereby Indigenous communities can communicate with plant species or read people beyond time and space—they're accessing a field, a dimension of consciousness, that we still don't understand or know how to name.

I'm working on a fiction video called 'Three Moons Below,' which is a speculative, ancestral and futuristic video that explores mysticism and ritual while navigating fundamental science and cutting-edge technologies. In the video, a woman is guided by a robot bird on a pilgrimage to embrace different machines and technologies to acquire their capabilities. She longs for the vision and understanding of the radio telescopes of the ALMA astronomical observatory, the pre-Columbian petroglyphs of northern Chile, the neutrino detector and CERN's LHC. They are artifacts of connection to the cosmos, to the Earth and to the irreducible reality. There are two doors, one to Western science, and the other is a shamanic portal to the universe. The protagonist moves through these two portals to activate new understandings. It's a fictional way of depicting what has happened to me. The video production is supported with a grant from the Fundación Botín in Santander, Spain, and the finished work will be shown there in November 2024.



Patricia Domínguez: 'Three Moons Below,' 2024, with the support of Fundación Botín, Arts at CERN, ESO Observatories, Pro Helvetia, Corporación Chilena de Video and Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio de Chile

**LM: Why is it important to you that your work is both therapeutic and optimistic, as well as giving a strong political statement?**

**PD:** What I do through my work is a ritual. I see it as late-capitalism hacking—a stomach that digests elements from the system and rearranges them into a sci-fi aesthetic, but where, actually, everything comes from the present. I re-appropriate objects from the internet in a way that honors planetary memory. The digital turns what is alive into pixels, whereas I materialise what's digital, in order to connect it with memory, as pixels of information coming into us from the sky. By chance I was in the Bolivian Chiquitania doing a residency during the forest fires and I helped out at an animal rescue sanctuary, where an injured, half-blinded toucan kept appearing. I made a video of it as a container or depository of memory. The toucan appears in 'Madre Drone' (2019-20), where I give him the mythological quality of being an animal with the ability to acquire a new kind of vision. The toucan appears crying, which was inspired by the tears of the students blinded with teargas by the police at protests during the social uprising around that time.

I see my works as emotional-organic technologies, where emotion is the fuel. It links the cosmos and more-than-human beings with the human viewer. The stories, narrated visually, extend a cord that moves through the eyes of the viewer, carrying the emotional experience of the work into their heart. The work is also bidirectional, linking the human to the animal or plant represented. This kind of emotional weaving is totally left out by the capitalist, corporate system we are in. The best thing that ever happens to me is getting messages from people who have seen my work, telling me that the toucan showed up under their dining table during a dream. The work has broken through their emotional and psychic barriers, placing this animal in their consciousness. I think of it as like an environmental service or offering, in a way.





Patricia Domínguez, 'Madre Drone', 2019, commissioned by Centro Centro and produced in Residencia Kiosko, Bolivia

**LM: In these times of despair about the tragedies happening in our world, what can the concept of "utopia" possibly mean for us? And what tangible role can artistic communities have in imagining and materialising something better?**

**PD:** I think it's a very difficult and complex question, and I think about it all the time. These days, for me the strongest potential utopia would come from combining the Buddhist tradition with permaculture philosophy. The idea that we are all interconnected and that if one person suffers, we all suffer, has stayed in my mind. We really need to activate a view not only of kindness for humans, but for all living beings, and to think about ourselves as a collective. Cosmos means community, too. Ideally we would think as one body distended in the planet, leaving nobody behind, right? Everyone, humans and those more-than-human, needs to be taken in consideration. We need to learn how to share. From there, we can start expanding the capabilities that we haven't even started to activate. Invisible and organic technologies. But first we need to learn how to live together.

As for artistic communities, there are many and I can't speak for everyone. But I resonate most with the experimental ones that embody art as a language to activate new understandings, technologies, invent new relationships, new world views, and who are critical about this digital age. Of course we all use technological tools—computers, phones—but I like the approach of emotionally connecting with what is living, beyond this fascination with machines and human made technologies.

I think all kinds of activism can be valid, whether going into the streets to protest or using social media. But personally, I was trapped in a violent cycle when it came to being an activist, and I thought, "okay, I need to learn new words, new ways of being, not only with humans but with all species in a way that is in solidarity and sustainable." Now, my biggest form of activism is reimagining our planetary relationships, and how they might propose new ways of being and existing together.

#### Artist Info

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ART REVIEW

## The Beat of a Wing, A Rush of Wind: The Butterfly Effect at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

Christian House

23 May 2023 | 2 Min Read



Jumana Manna. *Foragers*. 2022. Film still. HD video. 63 minutes 34 seconds. Image courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London © Jumana Manna

In *The Butterfly Effect* at Turin's Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, 11 artists come together to reinterpret the exhibition's eponymous theme, which evokes the entropic consequences of our actions in nature.

Our precarious relationship with the botanical world oscillates between two lines of thought. Plants provide food, medicine and shelter, they bring solace and nourishment. For centuries, physic gardeners have made poultices of ground leaves to ease our woes. But we can also see flora as a harbinger of doom: consider the malevolent and carnivorous plants in John Wyndham's classic 1951 science-fiction novel *The Day of the Triffids*. We love petals, we hate thorns.

*The Butterfly Effect*, a new group show at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, touches on these polar aspects. It also broaches a surprising array of other issues, including notions of desire and gender, the pharmaceuticals industry, race relations and how the botanical realm can find itself caught between the incompatible interests of different communities. The show, co-curated by Irene Calderoni and Bernardo Follini, includes work from 11 international artists and spans painting, sculpture, installations, ceramics and video.

"The artists traverse the natural sciences, with a particular interest in botany, as terrains of conflict governed by dynamics of exploitation and oppression," notes the curator's exhibition statement. It's a fair indication of the gothic pieces on view, from Sharona Franklin's sculptures of hypodermic syringes and IV drips encased in epoxy resin – sinister medical objects worthy of a David Cronenberg movie – to Zoe Williams's *Algo's Maid* (2021), a glazed ceramic bust of a woman with worm-like tendrils growing out of her mouth and eyes. Both Franklin and Williams present the normal in uncanny forms: Franklin twists a fork into a surgical device; Williams creates Murano-glass eyes with green tears.

The exhibition's title alludes to a question posed by the American mathematician and meteorologist Edward Norton Lorenz in 1972: "Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?" Lorenz's theory, known as the 'Butterfly Effect', suggests that small acts can have huge consequences in other places, at other times, and to other people. In light of the present environmental crisis, it's a pertinent point. However, the works in Turin engage with the theme in unusual ways, from the blunt to the mercurial. There is even a foray into the comically odd, with Rachel Youn's kinetic sculptures of artificial plants vibrating on massage machines which jiggle and jive at the exhibition entrance.

One of the most effective works, and the most literal illustration of the inadvertent involvement of plants in the follies of humanity, is the video piece *Foragers* (2022), in which multidisciplinary artist Jumana Manna addresses the impact of the Israeli government's nature protection laws on the Palestinian population. Filmed at sites across the Golan Heights, Galilee and Jerusalem, and incorporating both fact and fiction, the video follows various characters as they covertly pick and prepare ecologically protected edible herbs, such as the artichoke-like 'akkoub and za'atar (thyme). "For Palestinians, these laws constitute an ecological veil for legislation that further alienates them from their land," notes Manna. It's a reflectively paced video that allows for humour in a tale of policing culture and cuisine.

Another effective and moving video work, *Dungeness* (2008) by Isaac Julien, pays tribute to a very real garden on the south coast of England. In the early 1990s, a makeshift plot of driftwood and sea kale at his beach cottage provided solace for the dying filmmaker Derek Jarman. This intriguing split-screen video collages Jarman's archive Super-8 film stock with Julien's elegiac contemporary digital footage (including a scene in which Jarman's friend and muse Tilda Swinton visits his grave). Here, plants are markers of a final flourishing of spirit.

The variety of media, ranging from the delicate to the sharp, adds to the show's impact. The exquisite fairy-tale watercolours of Chilean artist and ethnobotanical researcher Patricia Domínguez bely their serious message: compositions of figures, both human and animal, alongside surveillance drones speak of the uncomfortable interaction between technology and natural resources. Meanwhile, the barbed wire works of Lungiswa Gqunta highlight how balletic forms can be made from the harshest of materials. The South African sculptor and visual artist has spun compositions out of barbed wire that are graceful in their gambolling spirals and yet which speak horribly of confinement and constraint.

The issues, often alluded to quietly, are also diverse. Sebastiano Impellizzeri's strange and ghostly cartographic works on paper – reminiscent of Edvard Munch's late pastoral paintings – refer to the cruising grounds of gay lovers. Meanwhile, presented in the corridor outside the main galleries, the Brazilian non-binary artist Jota Mombaça presents a conflation of two works, a sculptural installation of water-stained cotton with their video piece, *Waterwill* (2022). Among other issues, they consider watery sensibilities, climate anxieties and migration. With imagery of sails and ropes and seaweed, combined with gargled, fuzzy audio, an uncomfortable sense of drowning is conjured.

Does this exhibition affect the viewer? As these artists flap their wings, are we disturbed? Largely, yes. Individually, the artists invoke feelings of dismay, sympathy and curiosity. Collectively, they provoke an overwhelming sense of a moment in time when humanity is becoming disconnected, both with the natural world and to itself.

*The Butterfly Affect runs until 15 October 2023*

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canvas





## Super Natural

Tune in to being a tree, explore the world through the 'eyes' of a potato ... Rather than dwelling on our devastation of plant life and biodiversity, this exhilarating show offers constructive ways to connect with nature



Installation view, *Super Natural*. Image courtesy Edén Project.

Core Gallery, [Edén Project, Cornwall](#)  
24 September 2022 – 26 February 2023

by ELIZABETH FULLERTON

"Can you see with your skin and hear with your arms? Can you think together with the air and the sun and the soil? Can you dream with your feet?" The Edén Project's excellent and timely group show *Super Natural* poses such questions, inviting visitors to reflect on what it might mean to commune with nature on a much deeper level. Featuring large tactile sculptures of seaweed, totemic altars to plants and an interactive artwork with potatoes, *Super Natural* is the Edén Project's first contemporary art show since before the Covid pandemic and aligns closely with the venue's mission of building harmonious relationships between people and the natural world to protect the planet.

The opening quote comes from a memorable audio work *Vegetal Transmutation* (2020), a collaboration between Argentine artist Eduardo Navarro and philosopher Michael Marder, the author of *Plant Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*. Accessed through headphones, the piece at first feels like a meditation as the narrator tells you to "draw a cosmic breath with your whole body" but, in fact, it is about tuning in to the experience of being a tree. "Your fingers are roots and branches ... One arm stretches tall. The other seeks deep in the soil. Span these extremes with your midsection, your chest, your trunk." Some visitors may find this exercise of embodying a tree beyond their comfort zone, but many mythologies have envisioned human metamorphosis with nature. In Greek mythology, the most obvious is that of Daphne who was turned into a tree to escape the advances of Apollo.



Eduardo Navarro, *Photosynthetics (Fotosintéticos)*, 2021. 24 charcoal drawings on biodegradable envelopes that depict part-human, part-plant beings. Each envelope contains a London plane tree seed. Image courtesy Edén Project.

Navarro's screen of 24 charcoal drawings, titled *Photosynthetics (Fotosintéticos)*, 2021, gives the idea material form. In his organic hybrid shapes, leaves enwrap foetal bodies, heads grow roots and saplings sprout figures. Drawn on biodegradable paper envelopes, each containing a seed from a London plane tree, the works are intended to be buried to rejoin the cycle of natural renewal once they have completed their exhibition life.

In a similar vein is Chilean artist Patricia Dominguez's 2021-22 video installation *Matrix Vegetal*, set within a totem displaying mandrake, a root used in ancient times for fertility and healing in childbirth. In her enchanting video, the protagonist undergoes a ritual cleansing of digital traces from her body in order to embark on a futuristic journey into a silent vegetal realm. A magic neon ring with an invisible digital touchpad serves as a portal to a plant dimension where she forms "a vegetal alliance" with the lush forest around. The imagery becomes increasingly otherworldly, as if viewed from the plants' perspective; the flowers are magnified so that petals encompass entire landscapes and we lose our bearings.



Patricia Dominguez, *Matrix Vegetal*, 2021-22. Video and sculpture. Image courtesy Eden Project.

As part of her research, Dominguez spent a month living with a shamanic healer, Amador Aniceto, in the Peruvian rainforest and the project includes a video interview with him. Aniceto's insights into the medicinal benefits of psychedelic plants such as ayahuasca and the inseparability of the plant and human worlds underpin the installation. This and the other works in the show endeavour to shift away from the humanocentrism that has dictated the west's exploitative relationship with nature.



Ai Weiwei, *Fly*, 2019. Iron, cast from giant tree root sourced in Brazil. Image courtesy Eden Project.

Staying in Latin America, Ai Weiwei's 2019 iron sculpture *Fly* is a massive root of the endangered Brazilian Pequi Vinagreiro tree, cast in two pieces and joined together, resulting in a form that has something carcass-like and melancholic about it. The exhibition literature draws useful links between the theme of uprootedness, Weiwei's own situation as an exile and the refugees he has documented.

Kedisha Coakley's installation *Horticultural Appropriation* (2022), conceived as a cabinet of curiosities, also meditates on themes of heritage and roots. Displayed on transparent acetate shelves held together by delicate steel wires, miscellaneous objects such as passion fruit, lychee, tamarind, a cotton pod, oyster shells, volcanic rock and driftwood seem almost to hover in the air. Some are cast in bronze, others displayed as found.



The work is titled after a 2021 pamphlet about the need to decolonise horticulture as is slowly happening with museum collections. What knowledge has been accrued by these objects, what effects have their displacement had? The cotton pod, for instance, may evoke associations with slavery, the British empire, the Industrial Revolution. Such references inhere in Coakley's objects, but are equally layered with her personal memories, rituals and stories.



*Iman Dattoo, Making a Name. An interactive and collaborative artwork composed of audio instructions inviting participants to be inspired and derive new names for plants through non-verbal methods of interacting with a potato. Image courtesy Eden Project.*

Iman Dattoo is similarly concerned with provenance and extractivist colonial histories, but in this installation focuses her attention on one plant: the humble potato. Her 10-minute video *Kinomic Botany* explores the world through the "eyes" of the potato, pondering its origins, associations, habitats and growth rhythms. Somewhere along the way, we have managed to drastically reduce the potato's variety in our mania to classify, name and intensively harvest nature's gifts. Dattoo's film is accompanied by an exercise with real potatoes titled *Making a Name*, a brilliant way of helping us to interact meaningfully with the tuber. Audio instructions guide you to stare into your potato's "eyes", write down its expression and an animal that its skin calls to mind. With those answers, you then create a name: mine was beige-wise-whale. "Together we have imagined a world where botanical names are allowed to become increasingly intertwined with our unique and personal interactions and experiences," the narrative says.



*Ingela Ihrman, Sea Belt, 2019. Dyed silk based on *Ulva Intestinalis* - a thin, tubular algae, commonly known as 'mermaid's necklace' or 'gut weed'. Image courtesy Eden Project.*

Swedish artist Ingela Ihrman highlights our affinities with plants; her two large-scale soft sculptures titled *A Great Seaweed Day* (2019) draw visceral links between seaweed and the body's intestines. The first, *Gut Weed*, is a green mobile sculpture that dangles over the atrium in stringy loops, the second, *Sea Belt*, comprises dark red skin-like expanses hanging over a metal rail. The series title *A Great Seaweed Day* allude to entries found in the diary of Victorian housewife and marine botanist Margaret Gatty, who was a passionate seaweed collector.

Tucked away from the Eden Project's main attractions, with views of plant-filled biomes outside, *Super Natural* is an exhilarating experience. Rather than dwelling on mankind's depressing devastation of plant life and biodiversity, it offers constructive ways to connect with nature. You don't even have to journey to the depths of the rainforest; these artists propose forming a "vegetal alliance" through a little imagination and empathy. Books like Peter Wohlleben's best-selling *The Hidden Life of Trees* have taught us that trees live in communities like human families, sharing food, nurturing the weak and even warning each other of dangers through root signals. This show encourages us to focus on our similarities with plants rather than our differences, our mutual dependence rather than human superiority. While the audio and moving image works convey this most innovatively, the others add formal heft as well as variety to the show's rhythm. Towards the end of Dominguez's film *Matrix Vegetal*, the narrative voice is given to nature: "The Earth dreams through us plants and you humans. In those dreams we meet: plants, butterflies, meteorites, clouds, humans." The challenge is can we make those visions a reality?

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INTERVIEWS

## FRIEZE LONDON OPENS TO LARGE CROWDS WITH VISCERAL SENSATIONS

October 13, 2022



Installation view, Patricia Domínguez solo exhibition "Indra's Net," curated by Sandhini Poddar, Cecilia Brunson Projects Frieze London booth 2022, Courtesy Cecilia Brunson Projects. Photograph by Eva Herzog

text by Jennifer Plejko

The early crowd snaked through Regent's Park in central London, pouring into the tents of the 19th annual Frieze Art Fair from the moment the doors opened. After a string of quiet art-fair seasons, the morning circus of 160 temporary galleries, pop-up cafes (city favorites Petersham Nurseries, Jikoni, and Bao among them) and champagne counters was seemingly full from day to evening.

Perhaps the nearly three years of online viewing rooms, PDF sales lists, and isolation have left us with a longing for the deeply personal as well as the three-dimensional, as the engaging paintings on view leaned into the visceral, from Romanian painter Marius Bercea's wistful portraits of friends and figures, mostly women, from his native Cluj at Los Angeles and New York gallery François Ghebaly. Hints of the seams of social construction—such as the aftereffects of the country's 1989 revolution and the resulting creep of consumer capitalism into Romanian society, modern femininity and womanhood, and alienation—are disclosed in the details of his paintings, whose stylings recall paintings by Impressionist artist Mary Cassat and Milan Kundera films.



Marius Bercea  
Untitled, 2022  
Oil on canvas  
40 x 50 cm  
Courtesy François Ghebaly Gallery © Marius Bercea

Warsaw and Cologne gallery Wschód present a series of canvases by Polish artist Joanna Woś that depicts scenes from Renaissance painter Filippo Lippi's fresco *The Feast of Herod* (1466), part of *Stories of St. Stephen and St. John the Baptist* inside the Prato Cathedral in Tuscany. The diaphanous figures in shades from sand to terra cotta share side glances and intimacies while seeing right past and through each other. At the other end of the scale, Gagolian presents a towering row of seven paintings by British artist Jadé Fadojutimi, timed with her solo exhibition "Can we see the colour green because we have a name for it?" at the Hepworth Wakefield in West Yorkshire. Neon lines and forms of abstracted foliage race across the canvas in pure, frantic saturation.



Installation View, Joanna Woś, Galeria Wschód Frieze London booth 2022

Reaching out to visitors, works highlighting texture and dimensionality filled the fair, begging to be touched or crinkled in the hand: Shin Sung Hy at Gallery Hyundai (Seoul), Suki Seokyeong Kang at Tina Kim Gallery (New York), Joanna Piotrowska at Phillida Reid (London), Barbara Bloom and Karla Black at Gisela Capitain (Cologne), Acaye Kerunen at Pace, Rossella Biscotti at mor charpentier (Paris and Bogotá). It's a scandalous feeling now that we've gotten accustomed to mediating nearly every work through a digital screen.



Installation View, Acaye Kerunen at Pace Gallery Frieze London booth 2022 © Pace Gallery, London 2022  
Photograph by Damian Griffiths, courtesy Pace Gallery

Among the fair's usual sections Focus and Editions, this year's special section is "Indra's Net," curated by Sandhini Poddar from the Guggenheim Museum in Abu Dhabi. Titled after the ancient Buddhist and Hindu concept of dependent origination, illustrated by intertwined cords that hold a multifaceted jewel at each knot, where each jewel reflects every other jewel, connecting the entire universe. Works included here reflect connections and exchanges in language, history, ancestry, consciousness, and futurity. At New York gallery Jack Shainman's booth, Richard Mosse's work *Flooded Municipality*, *Amazonas* captures the environmental damage inflicted on the Brazilian Amazon in the craggy reds and blacks that eat away at a flooded residential neighborhood, chronicling ecocide by drone in his signature conceptual photographic technique. At London gallery Cecilia Brunson Projects, Chilean artist Patricia Domínguez's works stem from her interest in fantastical ethnobotany. Trained in botanical illustration, she used her recent artistic residency at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) in Switzerland and time with a Peruvian plant healer to inform the hybrid foliage-and-black box paintings (with gemstones), sculptures, and video here. Seen together, it might offer a roadmap into our next dimension. See you in the line to get in there, too.

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# Rooted Beings

Words by Anna Souter

"Illustrations of plants in historical botanical collections are beautiful; they seem very gentle, very innocent. But the stories behind them can be very violent," says Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz, curator of Rooted Beings, which opens at Wellcome Collection in March 2022 in London, UK. The exhibition reimagines our relationship with plants and fungi, exploring what we can learn from plant behaviour and how we can rethink the significance of plants beyond simply resources for human consumption. The curatorial team have brought together works from the Wellcome Collection's archive of botanical illustrations with artists' commissions to form an open-ended narrative about vegetal life in the context of the climate crisis, from the perspective of environmental and social justice.

Rooted Beings maps the emergence of agriculture around 13,000 years ago (a tiny blip in geological time) as a moment that radically changed human-plant relationships. This arguably marks the origins of western culture's extractive approach to plants. One of the oldest objects in the exhibition is a papyrus manuscript from 400AD, which is "one of the earliest existing fragments of an illustrated herbal for medicinal purposes. It's an ancient example of our instrumental relationship with plant life." However, Rodríguez Muñoz also draws attention to new theories around the introduction of agriculture, through which human beings began to domesticate plants: "Plants also domesticated us. We had a more nomadic life, but the introduction of agriculture meant we had to stay in a single place. So we domesticated each other."

Many stories like this can be found in the work of Patricia Domínguez, which explores experimental research on ethnobotany (the study of how people from particular areas or cultures use indigenous plants), healing practices, and the commercialisation of wellbeing. Her commission, *Matrix Vegetal*, consists of a series of totemic sculptures, each featuring a vitrine containing objects from the archives at Wellcome Collection and Kew Gardens. The installation is the largest in the exhibition, innovatively combining an artist intervention with the institutional display of museum objects. Each sculpture focuses on a different plant, exploring bodies of research drawn together by a team of researchers from Wellcome and Kew, combining western scientific traditions and histories with Indigenous forms of knowledge. The back of each totem displays a watercolour painting made by Domínguez in response to the multipartite narratives surrounding each plant.

These plants include both medicinal and toxic plants originating from different ecosystems, such as cinchona, brugmansia (also known as angel's trumpet, a highly poisonous and hallucinogenic flowering shrub), the plants used for ayahuasca, and mandrake. The mandrake display, Rodríguez Muñoz explains, tells a story of traditional wisdom in Europe, which is often forgotten: "This knowledge was held by women, who were using these root plants for healing - but they were then framed as witches and persecuted. We wanted to recognise this knowledge, which has been erased for the same reasons as Indigenous knowledge in Latin America has been erased, because of religion, patriarchy, and so on."

By weaving objects from the archival collection closely together with the work of contemporary artists telling stories of violence and indigeneity, *Rooted Beings* seeks to collapse some of the taxonomies and binary systems used to categorise both people and plants. According to Rodríguez Muñoz: "The exhibition critiques the artificial separation between nature and culture, and how this results in acts of violence - environmental violence and racist violence against human and nonhuman lives."

*Rooted Beings* attempts to "challenge the idea that we are independent entities, that our selves stop with our skin. The theme of 'wilding' helps us to talk about all the ecosystems that exist within our bodies and that we are part of outside our bodies. Everything is porous; these walls we have created aren't really there."

The exhibition helps visitors to reimagine themselves as interwoven with the lives of plants and to recognise the fragile but vital relationship between plants, humans, and planetary health. If we are better able to understand human-plant interconnections, we may be able to learn from plants' capacity for living in communities and for being adaptive, attentive, and rooted.

"The way we live has led to the extinction of many species," Rodríguez Muñoz concludes, "but we also have the capacity to nurture ecosystems. In the approach to this exhibition, we don't run away from the violence or the crisis, but we try to move beyond them and think about our role as agents that nurture the ecosystems we inhabit."

## PATRICIA DOMINGUEZ, unearthing plant knowledge

Biomedica, CTM/transmediale, Interviews, Sound



Patricia Dominguez is an artist, educator and activist from Chile whose work merges socio-political and economic matters with mysticism and ancient botanical knowledge. She is also the founder of Studio Vegetalista, which has existed for more than 10 years serving as a platform for producing experimental ethnobotanical knowledge and research through interdisciplinary practice that combines art, ethnobotany, and healing cosmologies.

Studio Vegetalista is the crystallisation of the artist's individual journey; after studying a certificate in botanical and scientific illustration at the Botanical Garden in New York, and working in the palaeontology department of the Museum of Natural History, she reached a point where the scientific approach to studying and understanding plants was falling short for her.

It leaves little room for imagination and experimentation, and it has a complicated colonial base as it originated to document knowledge about plants to be renamed, classified, and exploited for their possibilities of generating profit from a western point of view, disregarding and undermining previously existing indigenous knowledge. Together with collaborators and peers, Dominguez has developed a school, publications, interviews and experimental essays around the current relationship between humans and plants.

She approaches art as a field of possibility, understanding how it can disrupt predominating narratives, challenging established interpretations and imagining new ways of approaching the issues we face as a society. Her work is very much connected to her activism and takes on different manifestations from print publications to video works, sculptures and workshops that try to analyze, understand and represent the complexity of these relationships in the 21st century.

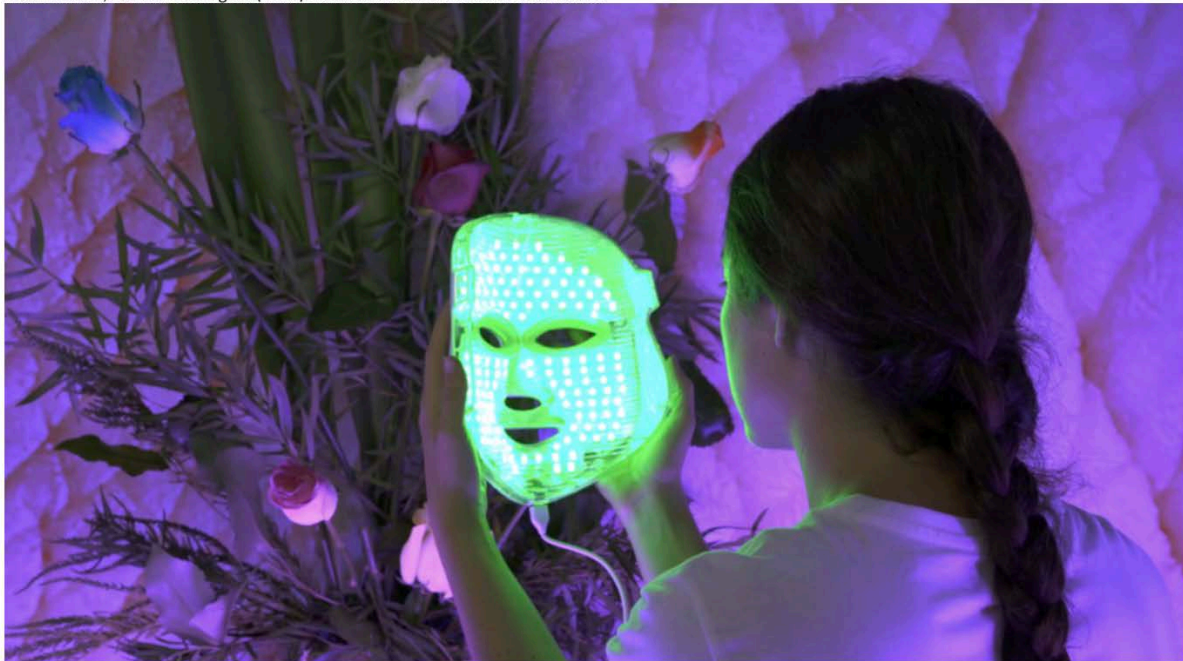
Rich in symbolism, her work invokes through totem-like figures the ideas she explores, connecting to a practice human beings have done since immemorial times (think for example about Paleolithic paintings like the bison of Altamira). Symbols can also be used by one culture to dominate or overpower other cultures, as it happens in our globalized world where the mainstream imaginary is completely westernized. Dominguez's work is infused with indigenous symbolism, all the while incorporating elements of global culture and new digital aesthetics.

The interactive publication *GaiaGuardianxs* (2020) for example, is the culmination of three years of research and the artist's personal journey through water-related conflicts in Latin America. Much like most of her works, it's very sensitive to the post-colonial extractivist policies that are affecting the land and seeks to reflect the existing frictions between the worlds of the oppressor and the oppressed.

She is currently carrying out research at [CERN](#), taking part in the second edition of the *Simetria* residency, a program that looks to promote exchange and collaboration between artists and scientists from Chile and Switzerland. As well as CERN and as part of the *Simetria* program, she will also stay at two astronomical observatories in Chile, together with Swiss artist Chloé Delarue: ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array) and the Paranal Observatory.

In this interview, she delves into the motivations and meanings behind one of her latest projects, *Madre Drone* (2020).





*Eyes of Plants*, Patricia Domínguez (2019). Film still, 4K video, colour, audio, 24:54 min. Commissioned by Gasworks.

**Tell us a bit about Ethnobotany as a discipline; how you have incorporated experimental research in ethnobotany in your practice, and what role it plays in your way of seeing the world.**

Ethnobotany is interesting to me as a discipline, but it has its limitations and its colonial origins since its focus is often placed on economic relations, or on analyzing the gaze of an "other" or an appropriation of ancestral knowledge, identifying resources to extract.

In addition to being a visual artist, I have a background as a botanical and natural science illustrator. I studied at the New York Botanical Garden and worked in the department of the American Museum of Natural History. There I reached a rational wall and was able to see the limitations of the scientific gaze. I still respect it immensely, I even teach scientific illustration at the university, but I am very aware of its limitations. So this updating of the representation of plants that I propose in my work comes from a critical twist from within the scientific language.

For me, plants are a source of knowledge rather than subjects to be studied. They are powerful terrestrial technologies, with the capacity to be allies of humans in the processes of change we are going through. Plants can give us vision, reset us, cleanse us, heal us, guide us, challenge us, accompany us in our contemporary rites of passage. That is why I approach ethnobotany in a sacred, emotional, experiential way.

What interests me are the current or futable relationships between humans and plants. I am interested in finding new ways to represent and speculate with the plant world in this technological age and in the context of the cyborg qualities we are incorporating into our holograms.

These days I consider myself a student of the language of plants. As Eduardo Kohn says, forests speak through images, like dreams. They have a complex non-verbal language, with multiple layers and temporalities. This is why I think we have to let go of science and jump into the void of the perception of the *Vegetal Matrix*.

**Tell us how *Madre Drone* came to be, as it seems like it was a very organic process, and ongoing for a while. How did it start and evolve through time, did you have a clear concept, idea and storyline from the beginning or was it taking shape as you went, etc.**

*Madre Drone* examines the complex flows of water as a function of the possibilities of crying, environmental and social crisis, healing and spirituality in the digital age. *Waters, vapours, terrible thirsts, tears.*

*Madre Drone* was made along the way. At the end of 2019, I was caught by the apocalypse with a camera in hand. I navigated a series of events that began in the Bolivian Amazon fire in 2019, followed by the civic strike in Bolivia because of the electoral frauds of Evo Morales and then I jumped to the Social Outbreak in Chile. During the same month, the fires symbolically jumped from Chiquitanía, to Ecuador and Santiago, leaving animals and blind people in their wake. In this journey through the deep social, environmental, human and multi-species crises, my way of digesting them was through this video and publication.

As I was in Bolivia doing a residency at that time, I changed my plans and ended taking care of animals affected by the fires. One day, I had to take care of a toucan that was partially blind. While I was at the shelter taking care of him, I wrote the following:

*"Quiet, the blind toucan felt me with his right side. It also looked at me from time to time with its left side. It is a mystical mask, a mythological animal that has emerged from the fire of the Chiquitanía and the Amazon. He has two faces, they have burned his right side, the masculine side, the side that capitalism requires of all of us. By losing his eye, he has been transformed into one of the seeing machines, into monsters that see beyond the visible".*

After the residency and being caught at the civil strike with no food, cash or mobility, I returned to Chile and jumped into the social outbreak where more than 407 people have suffered eye injuries from police repression. This *blindedness* narrative started emerging, where the eyes of a toucan blinded by the fires were the witnesses of a bastard reality crossed by a thousand stories and the eyes of a blinded human, were the brutal consequences of the social protests in Chile in 2019.

In the video, the eyes of the toucan and the human eyes cry together, in a South American cosmic cry. A myth in which drones weep, where blinded toucans can no longer see fire and where young humans protesting for dignity are forced to transcend the visible for the invisible, for a new vision, in every sense. They become a kind of amulets that try to capture the spirit of the contemporary.

**You also feature images that not only you shot, but other people (such as those from the revolts in Chile). How did those collaborations come to be?**

I have been working for some years with Pamela Cañoles and Emilia Martin, artists working in film, audiovisual and experimental sound production. Throughout the videos we have made together, we have developed a creative relationship of trust, friendship and a deep understanding of our artistic endeavours, visions and ideas behind our respective works.

When the social revolt exploded in Chile, I was locked in the Kiosko residence because of the civic strike due to the crisis caused by the frauds in the elections of Evo Morales in Bolivia. I had just finished a month of filming *Madre Drone*. On the last night of filming, we had to finish earlier because the civic blockade began and we could not continue working.

That same week, in the images coming from Chile, many laser pointers appeared in the protests, influenced by the recent protests in Hong Kong. Lasers were being used as community 'light weapons' against police repression. Many lasers together, focused on a tank or drone, are capable of momentarily blinding us and giving them time to escape. Using the blinding potential of laser pointers, they spontaneously brought all their light beams together, and all aiming at a spy drone at the same time, they shot it down. The social struggle was transferred to the air, using the transparency of light as a weapon.

Emilia and Pama live very close to Ground Zero, the epicentre of the protests. They started documenting the revolt from the beginning. So, I asked them if they could shoot a few days of footage for my video, with a focus on the laser lights; some abstract images of the green laser pointers, so I could connect them with the lasers I had used in Bolivia in the video I was shooting. These green lights were the visual way I found to weave together and choreograph the deep social and environmental crises we were living during those months (And that they continue to happen until this date).

Part of the communal energy of the social outburst has been based on collaboration, so it is significant that this video was shot among several hands. On the other hand, at that time I had a production budget that I had been given from CentroCentro in Madrid for the exhibition I was preparing, so it was nice to share it among my friends who collaborated in the video, in times when work was scarce and everything was half paralyzed.

***Madre Drone* is full of symbolism. Take us through some of the most important symbols in it, and what they mean to you. (The boy, the fox, the toucan, the drones, the robotic figure at the end...)**

Yes, I see the symbols in the video as technologies of encoding information and experiences that reach the viewer through emotion. A symbol is when an event has given a second meaning to an object. It is an element of the tangible world that has been trans-signified by an event or person. The expression of the mystery or the immeasurable must be through the symbol since it is something analytically immeasurable. Let 's go on a journey through each one.

The carer in charge of the toucan was Darwin, a 17-year-old youth who worked at the sanctuary. He was the one who received the last links in the Darwinian chain where the strongest survived. He received the burned, dead, dehydrated animals.

One day, we received a dead fox. He died of dehydration on the way to the animal shelter. Its body was a scapegoat, a sacrificial. And who deals with the body? Darwin. Who buried him? Who returned it to the earth? Darwin. What to do with his grief? Does he offer it to the earth, to the coca leaf, to his motorcycle, to his smartphone? *You're a silent hero, Darwin! Armed with a cellphone that thumps out reggaeton and your perfume of fire.*

Although the word "guardian of the earth" is problematic because of the idealization and romanticization of the people that defend and take care of the land, I wanted to portray him as a guardian who exudes green. A true guardian of that forest. A servant of that forest.

I took a photo of him next to 'Maléfico', ('the Evil One'), a green parrot. The green exuded by their bodies remained captured in the image. Green, the colour that keeps us sane. *Darwin and the Evil One.* What a couple! They make me think about the theory of species and the survival of the fittest. These burnt animals are the last links in the chain of creatures affected by fires. *Darwin's fucking theory.* There's nothing left now but their burnt skins.

Those charred skins cover wild spirits expelled from their forest by the fire. Sick and burnt in their new cages, they are still beings with free spirits. After the fire, they are in the first phase of domestication. There is no turning back, and they can no longer survive without humans. Witnessing their indomitable and feral impulses inside their cages was an experience I am still unable to put into words.

And the next day, we received several toucans. Some had burned wings or legs. One had lost its sight and was very disoriented. At noon it was time to move the toucans to their provisional new cages. I was asked to hold the blind toucan and put a cap over it so that it would not escape. I placed my hands on it carefully and felt it quiver through and through with fright. Its whole body was shuddering under my protective grip.

*Toucoutoum toucouthoum toucouthoum.*

*Toucouthoum toucouthoum toucouthoum.*

*Toucouthoum toucouthoum toucouthoum.*

I closed my eyes and connected with it. *Toucouthoum toucouthoum toucouthoum.* We palpitated together, the bird in its terror and me in my attempt to contain it. We were synchronised for a few seconds. I could feel the beating of everything alive through that bird, the palpitation of the earth.

Looking after the blind toucan was my way of touching the spirit of the forest. I felt scanned by the bird. When I brushed one of its feathers, I was vertiginously connected with the immensity of the vegetation.

One month after that experience, In the context of the protests in Chile, I've heard the buzzing of police drones spying on activists. *Dzzzdzzzdzzzz, dzzzdzzzdzzzz.* I've seen those unmanned crafts with my own eyes flying down into the inner courtyards of buildings, looking for faces, spying on assemblies, hovering over the protests, filming and indexing guilty parties through its pixelated vision. *Dzzzdzzzdzzzz.*

I define a drone as an "astral extension" of a human being that allows them to move across the world above. A flying eye. A vigilant eye. An eye suspended in the air. They are the new power animals, representing this new era of vigilance and control.

*I raise my eyes towards the sky full of green lights pointing at the drone. I feel the presence of the toucan flying around it in circles as it falls. I ask these blind birds to activate my vision of the invisible. An era of police astral flights is dawning. Their visions, enhanced. The drone, the watchful eye of this era, is destined to be brought down by the collective.*

*Laser bird, do a scan on us.*

*Activate our weapons of light.*

*I wrap myself in green to exude forest, to palpitate with living.*

*I endure.*

*Our suns fall in a scroll down,*

*Updating the fire holograms.*

The robotic figure at the end brings an outdated image of the future. One of the main questions I ask myself nowadays is to what kind of technology we ultimately connect with and what is the true meaning of connection, these days. In *Madre Drone*, the outdated image of the robot symbolizes the idea to blindly follow to the future and gets replaced by the communal forces of the protest, of refusal. Maybe that's a non-mainstream vision of the future too? A vision where we learn to use our biological technologies more than depending on the flow of information coming on our technological devices.

Some people have told me that the blind toucan has visited them in their dreams. Another person told me that he cried with his male eye (the right one) when seeing the video. These kinds of events are interesting for me, as they confirm that certain symbols transcend my personal experience and have a life of their own, being ambassadors of these multispecies resistance myths I'm portraying in the video.

### **What were the two altars in the Transmediale installation representing, were they meant to be a space to pay tribute to the animals lost in the fires and to the people fighting for their rights?**

What moves in the spiritual world needs its double in the physical world, so every object on the altar means something and has an internal logic. That's how altars can be portals to connect with certain events and energies that are being invoked. We need connectors from the invisible energies to the tangible world. The configuration of the objects of the altars move and reorganizes those invisible energies.

The altar we set up at the Transmediale was an altar to honour *vision*. Physical vision and metaphorical vision. That vision that we are acquiring to expand our paradigms, our cosmologies, our outdated systems.

I decided to make a sculpture to honour the eyes wounded by police repression and another for the wounded eyes of the blinded toucan. Through these meta-eyes that cry, we can symbolically access all the other human beings or animals that have been assaulted, mutilated, abused, burned. I see the sculptures as gateways. And these gateways had vegetal offerings of medicinal plants and also round stones presented in multispecies hands, in order to symbolize the lost eyes.

These offerings appeal to our quantum existence. An intentional offering in Berlin for a person who lost his or her eyes in Chile can perhaps be felt in some invisible way by the person? The quantum field, like the spiritual, has no physical distances.

***Madre Drone* has a very Sci-Fi feel. Is that something you are into? What are some of your literary and visual references, both for this project in particular but also in general?**

My visual references come mainly for things I see in this territory. For example, the ancestral masks of the festival of La Tirana with their LED lights, the light of our cell phones shining on our faces at night, knowing that we have the same silice as the quartz chips in the centers of our smartphones. Pre-Columbian thought, the futuristic myths of the Pachakuti by instance.

Although my work looks sci-fi, the wells from which I drink really come from the street and its markets of cheap objects that look like they were just downloaded from the internet, or from the spiritual information that we investigate in the different study groups I participate in, or from dreams. And a lot of the internet as well.

Chris Marker's *Jetée* is one of my great inspirations in relation to sci-fi. Also the ancient pre-Columbian Mayan and Diaguita representations of their technologies of connection. Octavia Butler's writing. The inquiries of Carlos Castañeda's reveries and Marisol Hume's Oniro Navigation techniques. Marosa di Giorgio's shape-shifting writing in *La Flor de Lis*. *Mount Analogue* by René Daumal.

Although I don't feel very identified with science fiction, I do believe that fiction is crucial. Fiction has to be needed as artist Walid Raad told me one day when I had a studio visit with him in 2013. We are used to accessing information in the same ways, the ways of access seem to be standardized. From fiction, we can imagine other possible ways of accessing reality, imagine other ways of reorganizing the present and projecting what is to come.

I'm interested in multi-species science fiction, a spiritual one, not one of conquest or domination. An organic science fiction. That's the ultimate sci-fi utopia for me. To learn how to use our organic

**What is your chief enemy of creativity?**

My chief enemies of creativity are 1. fear and 2. lack of epic-quantum thinking.

**You couldn't live without...**

My multispecies allies and friends.



FIG. 1 Installation view of Patricia Domínguez: *Green Irises* at Gasworks, London, 2019. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Marco Godoy).



FIG. 2 Installation view of Patricia Domínguez: *Green Irises* at Gasworks, London, 2019. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Marco Godoy).



FIG. 3 Still from *Eyes of Plants*, by Patricia Domínguez, 2019. 4K video, 24:54 min. (Gasworks, London).



FIG. 4 Still from *Eyes of Plants*, by Patricia Domínguez, 2019. 4K video, 24:54 min. (Gasworks, London).



FIG. 5 Installation view of Patricia Domínguez: *Green Irises* at Gasworks, London, 2019. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Andy Keate).

## Patricia Domínguez

by Anna Souter  
Reviews / Exhibition • 22.08.2019

Patricia Domínguez's solo presentation *Green Irises* at Gasworks, London, consists of a multi-screen video installation integrated with a series of altars and totemic figures (FIG.1). Drawing on the artist's long-term exploration of South American ethnobotany and indigeneity, the exhibition examines and imagines healing practices that emerge in the liminal spaces created by colonialism.

Across the gallery's two exhibition spaces, human and botanical objects and images are combined with technology (FIG.2). There are holograms, dead flowers, resin models of hands in various positions of prayer or blessing, items of clothing printed with images from a poorly worded Google search, fake rocks, emojis, plaits of hair, feathers, pottery, new-age crystals and masks. The titular 'green irises' appear in the form of a pair of videographic green eyes, whose gaze roves over the exhibition space like a fantastical surveillance-era T.J. Eckleburg. There is a lot going on: a web – or network – of associations, allusions and experiences. This is ethnobotany with a post-internet aesthetic, a hyperlinking of how we relate to indigeneity, colonialism, plants and computing.

At the centre of the presentation is the twenty-five-minute video installation *Eyes of Plants*, which combines digital animation with filmed footage of actors performing healing rituals old and new, showing both traditional indigenous techniques and Western 'wellness' routines. Many of these healing practices involve roses, introduced to South America by European settlers and adopted as a powerful mystical symbol by the unique Catholic culture that developed as a result of colonisation. In the legend of Our Lady of Guadalupe, for instance, the Virgin Mary caused roses to bloom for the first indigenous American saint, Juan Diego. The film's hallucinatory scenes – in which Domínguez employs her family as actors – bring together indigenous characters, plants and contemporary technology in an uneasy bricolage. In one sequence, a man lying on a modern massage table is stroked with roses. In another, an older woman spits into a plastic tube for a DNA test before unplugging the USB connection from an LED light therapy mask worn by the younger woman beside her (FIG.3). Some characters' faces are superimposed with emojis (Domínguez frequently chooses the 'Pile of Poo' emoji). Viewers are left with a powerful sense of uncertainty over which cultural thread will prove dominant – or whether cultural superimposition ever really succeeds in blotting out the layer beneath it.

Central to the film (and to the holographic animation beamed out in front of the video screen) is the *jarro pato* – a South American ritual vessel shaped like a duck, which is often depicted weeping, combining human and animal attributes (FIG.4). In the artist's newsprint publication that accompanies the show, Domínguez comments on the duck vase's tears, which she claims:

run down into a river of cosmic weeping. We all have cried the exact same recycled waters. The same tears running down the cheeks of indigenous peoples run also through the cheeks of settler-colonists, eventually falling down from the eyes of our contemporaries, glued to the screens of their mobile phones. *Little by little, all these tears have reshaped my face.*<sup>1</sup>

The text is accompanied by the 'Crying-Face' emoji; perhaps this little yellow symbol is the contemporary *jarro pato*, a talisman that both expresses and safely externalises our emotions.

This externalisation – akin to the fetish – can be found throughout *Green Irises*. The video monitors are set up on a sort of cybernetic altar. The screens are arranged like a triptych, with the central film flanked by the artist's green eyes, a symbol of her European colonial heritage. Holographic lilies bloom below, playing out a parody of organic growth and reminding us of our tendency to project our emotions onto flowers and plants in human rituals of love and death.

The totemic figures placed around the room could be interpreted as worshippers at this technological shrine, but they also appear altar-like themselves (FIG.5). Clothes give them a humanoid appearance and they have both hair and hands; but the positioning of these hands in gestures of blessing recalls devotional statues from the Catholic tradition. The figures are raised on pedestal-like fake rocks (FIG.6), and the inclusion of dried leaves, feathers and printed pictures of material goods (FIG.7) recall offerings left at shrines, suggesting the fetishistic worship of human-like figures.





FIG. 6 Installation view of Patricia Domínguez: *Green Irises* at Gasworks, London, 2019. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Andy Keate).



FIG. 7 Installation view of Patricia Domínguez: *Green Irises* at Gasworks, London, 2019. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Andy Keate).

This notion of objects as personages – as both worshipers and worshipped – perhaps relates to what Domínguez refers to in her text as ‘channelling’, or ‘connecting oneself to another entity so as to call down intangible energies’. She notes that: ‘When I channelled the *jarro pato*, I became that vessel. But now this object stared back at me. I could see myself through its ancestral eyes’. In this context, objects can become interfaces for interconnection, from the ancestral vase to the smartphones and screens incorporated into the installation.

Interconnection, or recognising the inextricability of all human and nonhuman lifeforms, is a fundamental principle of emerging ecological and ethnobotanical studies, as well as of many indigenous world views and Eastern religions. Separation, on the other hand, is a key premise of colonialism, capitalism and anthropocentrism. Domínguez’s practice as an artist helps us to recognise the multidirectional interconnectivity of existence and to accept a worldview in which mud and flowers and rocks can offer both spiritual and physical therapy. Domínguez’s work puts her in the position of a healer, helping viewers to recognise new ways of negotiating a broken world and to find new possibilities of living, like plants, between the cracks of modernity.

*Green Irises* offers a many-sided narrative about living in an ongoing state of transformation. Her video and totemic figures feel inherently open: to interpretation, to different worldviews, to technological change. They suggest that our current ways of living are making us sick, but that we still retain the power of healing ourselves through our interactions with plants and objects – as long as we retain an open mind.

### Exhibition details

#### Patricia Domínguez: Green Irises

Gasworks, London  
4th July–8th September 2019



### About this book

#### **Technologies of Enchantment: When a Ceramic Vase and a Drone Cry Together**

By Patricia Domínguez  
Gasworks, London, 2019

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### About the author

#### **Anna Souter**

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### Footnotes

- 1 P. Domínguez: *Technologies of Enchantment: When a Ceramic Vase and a Drone Cry Together*, London (Gasworks) 2019, p.2