

RE-COLLECTIONS

February 9 - May 10, 2024



Featuring

Karina Aguilera Skvirsky | Roxana Barba | Nyssa Chow
Morel Doucet | Estelle Maisonett | Nicole Marroquin
Marisol Ruiz | Kukuli Velarde | Martín Wannam

Curated by Daniel Arturo Almeida
for The Latinx Project at NYU

RE-COLLECTIONS

Re-collections surveys cultural extraction, Eurocentric archeology, and biased museology. Echoing an increasing demand for the restitution of looted cultural artifacts and monuments, the exhibiting artists unveil co-opted narratives obscured under the lens of ethnographic scholarship. Their collective artwork deconstructs colonial myths by destabilizing manipulated frameworks of knowledge conditioning, history making and museum display. From probing conspiracy theories plaguing the understanding of ancestral civilizations, to exposing the unethical auctioning of cultural heritage, to manifesting liberatory practices of preservation beyond the institutional gaze, the exhibition voices a need to author history and redefine heritage outside of outdated structures of legibility.

Re-collections unmounts colonial histories, fostering a space to transgress entrenched narratives and the methodologies behind their documentation, transcription, and dissemination.

Read the full curatorial essay at:
latinxproject.nyu.edu/re-collections

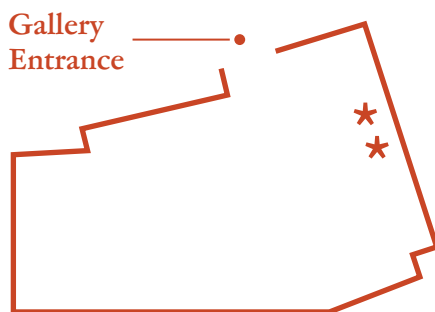


A MI VIDA

About Kukuli Velarde's Work

In her series *A Mi Vida*, Kukuli Velarde creates several portraits of her daughter, Vida, embodied in the form of pre-Columbian vessels. *Re-collections* houses two of the earthenware sisters, *A Mi Vida IX* and *A Mi Vida VIII*. Nestled atop strollers and shielded from the museological display, the works underscore the vulnerability of children under oppressive systems that devalue life.

In describing these deeply personal pieces, Velarde says “They are heavy, delicate and valuable, as the life of any child should be for all of us.” At the time of the project's conception, *A Mi Vida* began as both a homage to the arrival of Velarde's daughter and a profound response to the atrocious separation of immigrant children from their families and their inhumane detention. Velarde's extensive artistic trajectory articulating pre-Columbian visual language and sensibilities serves as a conceptual proposition to elevate the rich heritage of Latin America.



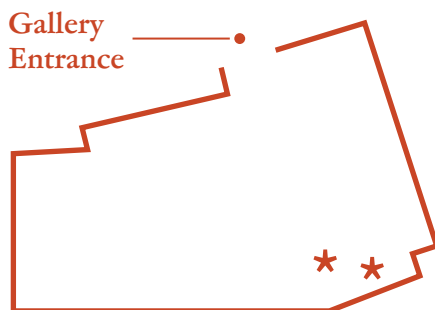


SOÑANDO CON INGAPIRCA

About Karina Aguilera Skvirsky's Work

Soñando con Ingapirca and *Virutas* are part of a series of multimedia artworks by Karina Aguilera Skvirsky that emerged from years-long research on the myths and conspiracy theories surrounding Ingapirca, an archeological site in Ecuador carrying unique features that differ from the architectural canon of the Inca Civilization. The temple is the result of ancestral stone working techniques practiced by the Inca but using the labor of the Cañari, a local Indigenous community colonized by the Inca Empire in the early 16th century and enlisted to build massive monumental structures. In addition, it was built in the shape of an ellipse which is one of the only examples of Inka architecture using that shape. Like Machu Picchu, the uniqueness of the site has been distorted by pseudo-archaeologists who speculate that the engineering feat is the product of an advanced extraterrestrial civilization.

In her Creative Capital project, *How to build a wall and other ruins*, Skvirsky interviews pseudoscientific charlatans speculating alien intervention as well as members of the local community, scholars and scientists keen in debunking racist theories undervaluing the achievements and wisdom of Indigenous communities. Absurd fabrications, like those concocted about Ingapirca's genesis, are neither new nor isolated. Entire shows devoted to promoting paranormal conspiracy theories proliferate across TV networks, YouTube channels, and streaming services. The phenomenon is symptomatic of centuries of historical campaigns infantilizing cultures outside of western civilizations.



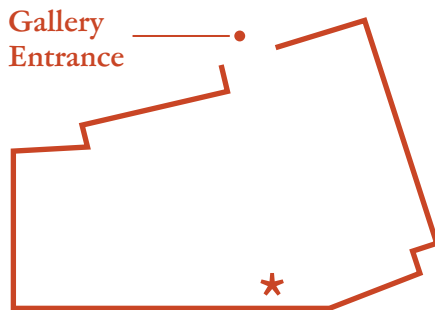


GAG

About Nicole Marroquin's Work

Nicole Marroquin's *Gag* is a mixed media installation featuring a life-size earthenware figure emerging from the wall opening her mouth to expel a litany of heteropatriarchal creatures perched on a deep purple bile in the shape of a speech scroll. Marroquin uses a rich parodic language full of ironical hybrid forms to poke at stories connected to colonial thinking.

Her mastery of clay is palpable on the complex compositions she stages, remixing a collection of matador figurines, long-haired flaccid gun barrels, and nipples chilis that speak of violent systems of objectification and dehumanization. The satirical transformation of these icons exposes and stifles the visual language of heteropatriarchy. *Gag* also prompts the viewer to think about how history is articulated and disarticulated to service doctored narratives.



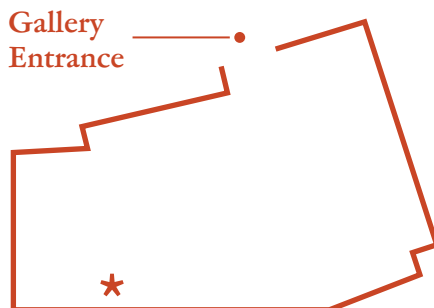


BLACK MAIDEN DAUGHTER OF THE COPPER SUN

About Morel Doucet's Work

Morel Doucet's *Black Maiden (Daughter of the Copper Sun)* renders the bust of a woman holding her head high with a peaceful yet commanding expression. Glazed in a deep blue, the sculpture sits atop a tall pedestal, placing the eyes of the figure at a higher elevation. The display calls into question the hierarchical dynamics of looking and being looked at. Blue is a central motif in Doucet's practice. For him, it "holds a unique significance, as it historically possessed the power to safeguard enslaved Africans and their descendants, such as the Gullah Geechee, from malevolent spirits. This concept resonates with the tradition of hanging blue glass bottles in trees to ensnare evil marauders."

Morel co-opts the French Rococo style of architecture and décor to comment on the degradation of communities afflicted disproportionately by economic inequality, racism, and environmental gentrification. This specific form of gentrification is the harsh reality for South Florida's historically Black and Brown neighborhoods, such as Little Haiti in Miami, located at a relatively higher elevation and further away from the coast. As floods intensify in lower elevation neighborhoods, communities like Little Haiti have become embroiled in a real estate crisis defacing the neighborhood's cultural identity while displacing families and residents.



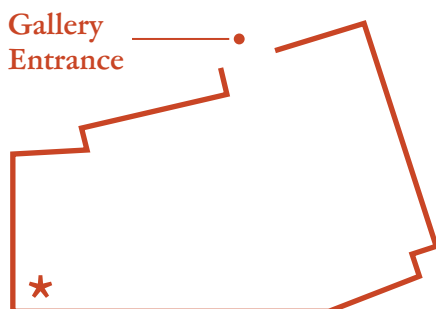


THURSDAY AFTERNOON, WISHING FOR PEACE, AND THINKING OF YOU

About Marisol Ruiz's Work

In Thursday afternoon, wishing for peace, and thinking of you, Marisol Ruiz depicts a space embodying the architectural and decorative essence of Spanish colonial style—a ubiquitous presence in the social landscape of former Spanish and European colonies. Lavish ironwork, intricate patterned tiles, and *queiebrasoles* (sunbreakers) create a mental image of the Caribbean and Latin American. However, these elements carry a conflicting nature, serving as both a nostalgic snapshot of home for many and a poignant reminder of erasure and destruction.

Reflecting upon memory and coloniality, Ruiz articulates her work as a “critique on colonialism’s unexpected intimacy.” Within her paintings, she employs illusionistic, abstract, and patterned frames at the fringes of the overall composition. These frames act as windows or portals, prompting us to recognize that what we perceive is a constructed reality. In the center of the image, a state of flux unfolds, unraveling the ornate markers of settler colonialism. Amidst the intricate ironwork, a night sky peeks through, while the tiles on the floor appear to clash in the midst of a seismic disturbance within the illusory picture.





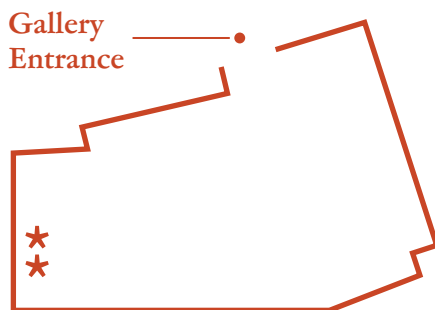
LA ETERNA INJUSTICIA

About Martín Wannam's Work

La Eterna Injusticia is a series of multimedia photo collages by Martín Wannam which question the machinations of heteropatriarchal ideology manifested through public monuments. The artwork frames a collection of images from iconic statues scattered across Guatemala City, interspersed with brown silhouettes that both acknowledge the presence of the effigies while negating their image and the ideologies they represent. Wannam describes the existing monuments as beacons of “violent, oppressive histories, especially in relation to treatment of the LGBTQ+ community in Guatemala.”

Wannam further resignifies the images by applying stickers and brightly colored die-cut acrylic forms in the shape of graphic decor such as flames and stars to embellish the surface, resulting in a maximalist remix of popular cultural references, politically charged text, and secular symbols. The bricolage imbues an irreverent character, emulating the camp decorations of decommissioned US school buses that find their way to Guatemala's secondary market to be repurposed as public transportation. These bombastic buses are wallpapered with images ranging from religious devotion to cartoon characters.

The artwork ultimately restages the public statuary to disrupt the site of the monument as a space open for reclamation through a queer lens and reimagination beyond the forced inheritance of oppressive protagonists.



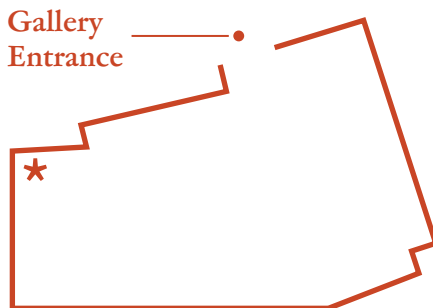


DE HUACAS Y HUAQUEROS

About Roxana Barba's Work

Roxana Barba's video installation, *De Huacas y Huaqueros*, foregrounds the excavation and contraband of pre-Columbian artifacts ranging from gold, textiles, jewelry and ceramics. Among these are earthen vessels known as huacos, linked to ceremonial and everyday life uses. The term "huaquero" is used in Peru to describe those who dig into Peruvian soil searching for extant huacos and valuables. Huaqueros work under deplorable and often life-threatening conditions in hopes of cashing a modest profit by selling their bounty to a third party, who later resells the artifacts on the Pre-Columbian antiquities market for thousands of dollars. A vast number of items sold through auction houses lack recorded provenance, accentuating the looting of the Andean country's cultural heritage. Despite Peruvian laws prohibiting extraction of antique pieces, Huaqueo persists and has been ingrained as a pipedream to escape poverty.

Barba's video installation uses the body "to carve out archaeological desires," commenting on the decontextualization and commodification of Indigenous sacred rituals and offerings. *De Huacas y Huaqueros* is an extension of her multimedia stage performance, *Apuntes Americanos* (2022), exploring the origins of Eurocentric views of ancestral Peru, with a focus on skewed accounts by 19th-century French explorers. Barba exposes systems behind the legitimized roles of cultural institutions and the dubious origins of ethnographic scholarship.





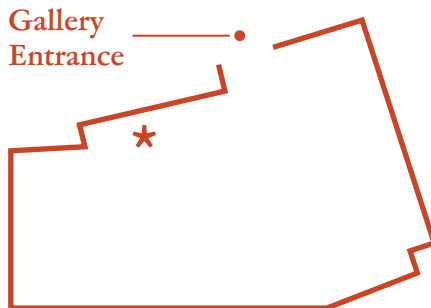
A JURACAN OF FEELS

About Estelle Maisonett's Work

In *A Juracan of Feels*, Estelle Maisonett frames the image of a 1000-1500 AD Taíno pendant auctioned in 2021 by Christie's in Paris as part of a controversial collection of thirty eight Taíno artifacts. Maisonett uses collage and acrylic to convey the flattening and sterile commodification of invaluable pre-Columbian and Taíno masterworks. Her artwork echoes the international outcry for the works to be returned to their ancestral communities.

The pendant depicts Guabancex, the Taíno hurricane goddess, a zemi/deity and cacique of the wind and weather. The brutal colonization in the Caribbean destroyed worlds and much of the material and cultural heritage of the Taíno people. Sacred items, while often subjected to capitalistic valuation, carry significance that extends beyond any monetary worth affixed by auction houses and collectors. These artifacts hold intrinsic cultural value that should not be reduced to tradable, commodifiable art objects. Preservation and repatriation is essential not only for the pieces' tangible qualities but also for the intangible aspects that connect them to the Taíno people's identity, spirituality, and memory.

Maisonett's work amplifies the ongoing debate around the ownership of cultural heritages from colonized communities and further questions who has access to works in museums and private collections, and who should.



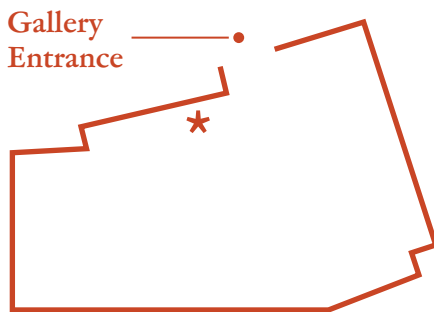


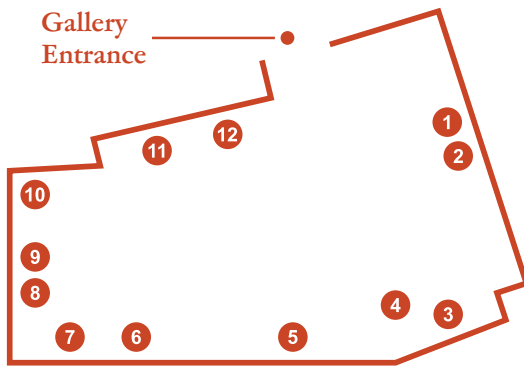
YOUR ARCHIVES CANNOT PRESERVE US

About Nyssa Chow's Work

Nyssa Chow contests the very notion of archiving against the intimate act of preservation. *Your Archives Cannot Preserve Us* speaks of lifeworlds and ways of living lost to the plunder of coloniality. For this social practice artwork and sculpture, Chow and her mother returned to the ruins of their generational family house by the sea in Trinidad. They collected things that were still theirs and burned them. The ashes become a testimony to the vanishing of entire ways of life and a refusal to forget that the world her loved ones cherished was precious.

Chow explains, “Our disappearing lifeworlds created the artifacts that sit in museums. This work challenges the logic of coloniality that seeks to preserve our objects but does not preserve our lifeworlds.” The artwork recreates a British colonial museum display, encasing the remains of Chow’s generational family home consumed by the flames. The cherry-stained wood framing, built by Trinidadian carpenters, vibrates to the distant sound of sea waves interspersing with the crackling of fire. Chow describes her home feet away from the shore as a site of tradition and belonging that was abandoned following generations of migrations under the grip of neocolonialism and its consequent vulnerabilities.





1. *A Mi Vida VIII*, 2020
Kukuli Velarde
15 x 10 x 10 inches
2. *A Mi Vida IX*, 2020
Kukuli Velarde
16.5 x 5 x 8 inches
3. *Sonando con Ingapirca*, 2024
Karina Aguilera Skvirsky
84 x 42 inches
4. *Virutas*, 2024
Karina Aguilera Skvirsky
120 x 62.5 inches
5. *Gag*, 2010-2023
Nicole Marroquin
72 x 48 x 18 inches
6. *Black Maiden (Daughter of the Copper Sun)*, 2022
Morel Doucet
12 x 9.5 x 16.25 inches
7. *Thursday afternoon, wishing for peace, and thinking of you*, 2023
Marisol Ruiz
30 x 40 inches
8. *El Imperio en llamas: Monumento*, 2023
Martín Wannam
24 x 36 inches
9. *Tecún Umán: Monumento*, 2023
Martín Wannam
35 x 40 inches
10. *De Huacas y Huaqueros*, 2024
Roxana Barba
Dimensions variable
11. *A Juracan of Feels*, 2022
Estelle Maisonett
30.25 x 48 x 1 inches
12. *Your Archives Cannot Preserve Us*, 2024
Nyssa Chow
29 x 14 x 47 inches

Special thanks to Xavier Robles Armas, Arlene Dávila, Gabriel Magraner, Jessica Enriquez, Orlando Ochoa, Jimmy Mezei, Edward Cabral, Claudio Marcotuli, Nikki Myers, Ana Hilda Figueroa de Jesús, Marlin Ramos, Delicia Alarcón, Andres Ibarra, Gioco Aleman, Alejandro Martinez, Mary Aleman, Ramon Yañez, Gustavo Almeida, Eglis Mayorca, Jennifer Wen Ma, Nicole Maynard, Lisa Fernandez, Asia Perrotti, Dulce Lamarca, and Sofia Dotta.

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