

THE LISTENING AND THE WINDS

Narratives and Inscriptions of the Gran Chaco



The fire burned against the wind and
so a way of existing
and an alliance was built¹.



THE LIVING LANDSCAPE

The winds planted songs and so the woodland grew.

We came afterwards, when the birds were not made of earth anymore and the heavens had melted.

We started walking, carrying songs that we are not going to sing. We are going to open them like ripe fruits to take out the seeds that keep all the information that we need to remember².

During the process of colonization of the American continent, the more "nature" was understood as an ally of the original inhabitants, the more it was hated. The habitat was not understood as a living landscape but as a political landscape³. The forest was considered to be barbaric, and by cutting the native trees what was sought was to cut off ancient memory, to drive it into strangeness to appropriate spaces which were signified as empty, like deserts. When the European missionaries arrived to these lands, they were obsessed with the scientific classification of trees, insects, mammals, fish, birds, rivers, as well as the diverse smells, perfumes and humidity of the jungle.

The colonizers dedicated themselves to sort out and order what they perceived to be a chaos because they did not understand or tolerate the woodland's own harmony.

From the mentality of a religious economy, they fabricated a model of Gran Chaco which was destined for exploitation.

Every living organism could serve a productive and profitable end; those who didn't, were destined to disappear, thus giving space to cows, wheat, mules⁴ and anything that could be taken advantage of as a fuel and for the functioning of a region which they dreamt of turning into a great factory.

"Sometimes I feel that we are already walking without a world", says Juan, who is an indigenous cacique, defender of the native woodland which still survives in Tartagal⁵, and is enclosed by extensive crops which are overflowed by airplanes which give off poison⁶, urban life and a political landscape which points out to the *pueblos originarios*⁷ as a problem. The problem of not adapting, not integrating, not disappearing. But even though they feel "without a world", it is them who listen to the voices of their ancestors in the winds, understand the bird's language and find information in the silent songs of the seeds, who are, in turn, the mothers of the woodland.

In the first three months of the social preventive isolation in Argentina due to the coronavirus pandemic, three thousand hectares of native forest were dismantled in Salta⁸, one of the Argentinian provinces with more deforestation in the last decades. Between 1998 and 2018⁹, more than one and a half million hectares of native forest were obliterated. The principal cause of these clearances is the progress of the agricultural border, mainly for the production of cattle raising and soy.

1 Juan de Dios López.

2 Free interpretation of messages of the winds, transmitted by Juan de Dios López.

3 Mapelman, Valeria. "Octubre Pilagá. Memories and archives of the massacre of La Bomba".

4 The mule is a hybrid, sterile animal, which results from the cross between a mare and a donkey. It is used for tasks which require strength or resistance.

5 Argentinian city located northeast of the Salta province, close to the border with Bolivia and Paraguay. It is a key point of relations between the territories of the participants of this exhibit.

6 Agricultural system of production with the use of toxic chemicals. In this territory, the main produce is transgenic soy.

7 Translator's note: There is no translation for the term *pueblo originario*. The closest term in English would be "indigenous community".

8 Greenpeace, June of 2020.

9 Since the sanction of the Law of Forests in 2007 (Law 26.331 of Argentina's National Congress), half of the clearances were illegal.

*Since long ago we are fighting against the taking of our lands; this is how many people died in the hands of the military. Today this fight continues, but they kill us in other ways. They take the land and we get sick due to the fumigations of the soy fields. Now, even more diseases come*¹⁰.

The wichí¹¹ say that eternal life and all the water in the world were inside a great yuchán¹².

Nearby lived the people, because it gave them water and food. There was no water below the earth, all the water was inside this tree, it was like a great lagoon with many fish. One day, Tokuj¹³ came near the yuchán; people explained him what to do to be able to eat, which fish he could take out and how to respect life in that place.

But Tokuj wanted to prove that he could dominate nature by violating the prohibition of killing the fish which was the spirit sustaining all the other forms of life. He took a weapon and hurt the fish until he killed it. At that moment the yuchán opened, the water spilled and everything started to flood. Tokuj had to trace a way for the water with the same weapon he had used to kill, and this was how the water took the form of rivers and lagoons and did not overflow all around the world. But, actually, although Tokuj killed that fundamental spirit, it could continue to live in a different way and this is why life continued.

The quest to understand how to keep on walking, living, in this world which is becoming stranger every day, is today shared by different ethnic groups. The performance of Tokuj, who spilled the water to then contain it, thus avoiding the world to flood, repeats in multiple human behaviors.

The wichí narrative, as well as our present situation point out that, what dies, does not necessarily disappear.

10 Benito Arias. Toba Danagay community, KM 6. Tartagal, Salta, 2020.

11 Pueblo Originario, people who speak different varieties of the wichi-lhamtes language and conform an extended net of communities which extends throughout the north of Argentina and in the riverbank of the Pilcomayo river in Bolivia.

12 Ceiba speciosa, also called "drunken stick".

13 One of the first four spirits of the earth in the cosmogony of the wichi community. It has an alter ego, Takuj who, according to the register of narratives of Juan de Dios López made by the anthropologist Leda Kantor, can also be called – sometimes – Ahatai. This last term is also the form in which the wichi name the "white", non-indigenous man. These three characters are different but, at the same time, they are the same.





FOLLOW THE TRACE

We decided to take the inland road into the woodland to go back to the city. Everyone in the community tells us it is easy, that the road is clear and so there is no way get lost. We went further during one hour. We had just started to doubt when we saw walking trails on the side beginning to open, and were getting wider, and we asked ourselves if we were on the road which was to take us "out". We arrived at a small, quiet community. Below a tree's shadow, a group of women were weaving, sitting on the floor, barefoot. One of them comes to me as I have beaten my hands, calling. She smiles at me, taking my now silent hands and looks at me in the eye saying things without words. I ask her if we are on the right path to reach the route. She tells me "yes", even though I can barely hear her voice. Smiling, she looks at my unruly hair and my trousers. She touches her stamped skirt as if she was caressing it with one hand and, with the other, she points out to a place between the foliage, saying very slowly: follow the trace.

We keep going forward. Every space between the trees can look like a road. Every mark on the ground is the trace of something and points out to a different direction.

We stop before a lonely house surrounded by cow and goat leathers, extended under the sun. A man comes out putting on a shirt to cover his naked torso. After our question about the road, he loosens the words from his mouth, dyed in green by the coca leaves he is chewing: the trace is there, you can't get lost. Half an hour later, we are lost and counting how many hours remain until dawn. We get down of the van to get close to the earth and look at it, to understand which trace do we have to see to be able to come out, to return. We don't know how to see it.

The process we initiated with artists, craftswomen, activists, communicators and researchers at the end of 2019 to produce the work we expose in *The Listening and the Winds*, was like choosing this non-signalized road which goes through the woodland and demands that we learn to see that- what, before, was non-perceptible for us. This walk meant going in and out of the role of being 'the others' in different situations. The curatorial proposal asked to produce collective creations departing from dialogues which give the 'listening' the role of a fundamental, urgent, action. We work in groups, each one with at least one 'distant' person accompanying the production process of new communicational and artistic pieces.

We proposed to re-signify practices and tools by linking handcrafted products which normally circulate as merchandise in circuits of local social economy or design¹⁴, or are seen as messages or registers linked to militant actions or to academic research, to the field of art. In this road, we researched a new 'us' from the necessity to take, to the public sphere, narratives and messages in which individual authorships are erased together with our certainties. We are showing a set of signs linked to the search of new forms of doing and living from a border and multiethnic territory, which is the synecdoche of another, more extensive, territory: the Gran Chaco Americano. In the "chaco salteño", as the place we live in is called, many epochs confront, ignore and devour each other, as in many places of this continent where the dispute for the understanding of the territories and those who are part of them - the ancient memory which 'civilization' tried to cut - still continues.

14 Or decoration, as it is about objects of everyday use.



THE INDIGENOUS VOICE AND THE WORKSHOP FOR ETHNIC MEMORY



What Borders Contain¹⁵

Tartagal is an urban center, the result of processes of conquest and colonization, which are part of the territories which were inhabited, ancestrally, by the *pueblos originarios* wichí, toba-qom, chulupíes or nivaklés, chorotes, tapietes, guaraníes and chanés, whose lives were organized around recollection, hunting, fishing and agriculture, following the cycles of nature.

After the Independence wars in the colonies of Latin America, between 1816 and 1853, the Argentinian Nation-State was shaped. At this stage, a Eurocentric, hegemonic perspective was imposed together with the creation of an identity which was the result of hybridization and syncretism in which negation and the concealment of the *pueblos originarios*, massacred and relegated to the borders of what was being constructed as the Argentinian Nation-State, predominated. These borders were expressed geographically, symbolically and discursively in the official history of the country. The presence of the *pueblos originarios* was erased, bit by bit, with politics of extermination and annulment of popular imagination while, at the same time, European descent was exacerbated as the origin of "being Argentinian".

The singularities and temporalities of the history of the *pueblos* northeast of the province of Salta are different from other *pueblos originarios* in Argentina, because the final annexation to the systematic state controls dates of 1924; this means, less that one hundred years ago. "The conquest of the Gran Chaco" began in 1884 in the territories located between the rivers Bermejo and Pilcomayo, with strong rebellions and armed uprisings until 1917. It was the final escalation of the civilizational process of the Argentinian State to control the 'barbaric *pueblos*' that still lived outside the norms and the state legislations and, therefore, represented a great danger for a society conceived as 'civilized'.

15 Essay fragments from Mariana Ortega, CONICET/ICSOH researcher, written between 2019 and 2020 in the context of her doctoral thesis. She accompanied the development of the curatorial project *The Listening and the Winds* and is part of the companion team of ARETEDE.



In Tartagal live, approximately, eighty thousand people. There are communities of eight *pueblos originarios*¹⁶ as well as Bolivian, Paraguayan and Arab migrants, among others, shaping a society of plurilingual and intercultural character with permanent conflicts between dominations and resistances.

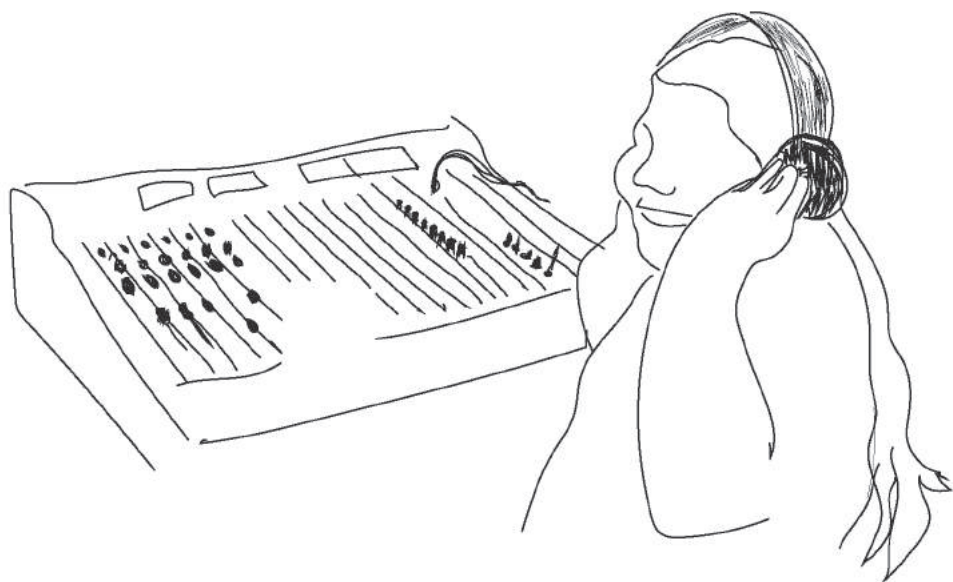
In a tropical climate, fruits ripen in the public urban space; the horizon is outlined by thick hills. Walking in the route near the city, there are long kilometers of void and, suddenly, islands of native trees appear; birds surround and penetrate the native trees, while herbs and flowers lie below their shadows, where the earth naturally fertilizes to become the witness of the growth of corn, pumpkin, cassava and watermelon.

This territory is recognized because it was the cradle of the first "piquetes" in the mid 1990's: massive route cuts¹⁷ as protest against the privatization of state enterprises linked to the extractivism and pillage of natural resources.

It is here that the Communitarian Radio *The Indigenous Voice* arose, the history of a struggle born of songs.

16 Each *Pueblo* preserves its language, but Spanish is the official language. The population is educated through this language from the state institutions.

17 This form of protest is still frequently employed for diverse collective claims.







Spilling Memories

Century after century my community has fed of the fish that we learned to catch in different ways, with spears or with nets (...). Our community has dreams in this river, has run between the trees and has drunken in the shadow of the locust trees talking with the owner of the fish, making friends with the animal's spirits, listening to the sounds of the jungle. But, little by little, the river has become alien, the missions and the strong ones changed the landscape day by day and the colonists wired the land fooling and offending our community¹⁸.

Toward the end of the decade of 1990, a group of women organized the first Encounters of Indigenous Women, events in which women from different ethnic groups of the north of Salta participated. These massive reunions ended with big marches through the streets of Tartagal in which "justice, land and freedom" were claimed. The silence and the shame moved backward as they advanced in the streets with banners, dances and fire torches, thus making their reaffirmation audible: here we are, fighting in the present.

We want to transform this reality and turn the silence into shouting, into many voices and keep on mobilizing. Women always together. Always fighting for our people, for our land, so that our children live in a better world¹⁹.

ARETEDE is an organization led by women of the *pueblos wichi, guaraní, toba-qom and weenhayek*, which has proposed, for two decades, to communicate the problems which *pueblos originarios* face. It presents itself as a collective "integrated by people, birds, trees, spirits, moons, tigers and eclipses". In the year 2000, this organization created the Workshop for Ethnic Memory, a space of encounter that allowed the expression of memories which had been silenced for many years, in a complex process which was key to overcome the shame and fear of speaking, consequence of the persecution and the politics of un-memory, designed to erase the diversity of the identities. The workshops for ethnic memory led to represent, in the community, the memories, sufferings, desires and the hope to build a more just and happier collective for the *pueblos* of these territories.

18 Fragments of the radio-theatre "Ocasos del pasado" (Sunsets of the Past), of the *Radio Comunitarian The Indigenous Voice* (2015).

19 These are the words of Norma Félix at the Encounter of Indigenous Women of 2004.



We have discovered our capacities and our rights because we want a society with social justice, equality and peace²⁰.

The task which women started was far from circumscribing to a dispute for the meanings of the past²¹; it rather catalyzed thoughts about the meanings and the building of the territory in terms of the struggles of the present, which are related to the defense of the communitarian lands through the rights of preexistence²².

The lack of access to massive communicational media and representation in it, mediated by stigmatizing and colonialist opinions, motivated the search for strategies to transform this exclusion, and, in this way, the construction of the Community Radio *The Indigenous Voice* started and was inaugurated in 2008.

The experience of the creation and sustenance of this radio tells of a series of actions for the defense of the land and the nature: marches, judicial presentations against felling and clearance, radial messages, murals and flags are, in the present, multiple shouts by the force of radio, which look forward to be heard²³.

Memory and communication joined in the construction of discourses and aesthetics: from the arrow to the spoken word.



20 Fragment from the brochure of Community Radio *The Indigenous Voice*.

21 Natalia Castelnuovo. "Guerreros y luchas por el territorio indígena: memorias de mujeres indígenas del noroeste argentino" (2017). (Warriors and struggles for indigenous territory: memories of indigenous women of northeastern Argentina).

22 The Constitution of the Argentinian Nation, reformed in 1994, incorporated human rights treaties in its article 75, subsection 22, and in the subsection 17 it recognized ethnic and cultural preexistence of the Argentinian *pueblos originarios*; it guarantees respect to their identity and the right to a bilingual and intercultural education; it recognizes the legal entity of the communities and the communal possession and property of the lands which traditionally occupy, and regulates the delivery of other suitable and sufficient for human development; finally, it ensures their participation in the referred management of their natural resources and other interests which affect them.

23 Mariana Ortega. "De la flecha a la palabra. La historia de una lucha que nace con canciones" (2020). (From the arrow to the word. The history of a struggle which was born out of songs).

A Spirit Dancing with the Earth

At the Gran Chaco, when an earth swirl appears, it leaves people in silence and alert. In the children's drawings who live at the riverbank of the Pilcomayo river, the dust swirls appear more as part of the landscape, as part of their communities. They say that swirls are understood, in the *pueblos originarios*, as a manifestation of the spirits; in the toba communities they have the custom of saying, every time they see them: "there goes a *peyak*²⁴, dancing in the dust"²⁵.

At the beginning of March of 2020, audiovisual producers Brayan Sticks and Marcos Agüero arrived to Tartagal after a long journey, which had been interrupted by route cuts, carried out by teachers who claimed their working rights; they had been invited to work with a group of young students aiming to be schoolteachers for the production process of the exhibit *The Listening and the Winds*. This group of students had recreated, in October of 2019²⁶ and at the main square of their city, a battle which took place a century ago between the Argentinian army and indigenous warriors, who were led by the cacique Taikolic. The dramatization was made with the accompaniment of anthropologist Leda Kantor and the reading of the still unpublished book about the memories around this toba cacique²⁷.

We took the task of documenting, in videos, the recreation of this battle from the perspective of the young students - a group of 17 students - and a group of communicators from *The Indigenous Voice*. The project was broadened toward the making of interviews to different social actors of the territory, each one sharing a different version of the same story. The territory appears in different discourses, named as: 'own, borrowed, occupied, encroached, reclaimed, negated'. The students told us that, from this experience, they could get to know another part and another version of the history of the place they were born, where they live.

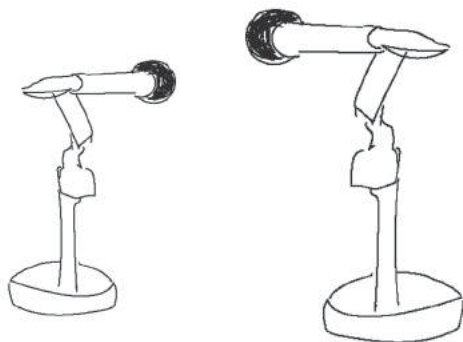
After the filming, Brayan stated that the testimonies and the struggles of the people he knew during this experience conform a unanimous cry of presence and resistance. This documental essay about a memory and an invisible history, that which is not settled in the founding books, opens the space for the presence of voices which overlap each other and create a new narrative as well as new processes of recognition.

24 A spirit, in toba language.

25 Rafael Karsten. "Los indios tobas del Chaco boliviano" (1993). (The toba Indians of the Bolivian Chaco).

26 At the anniversary of the arrival of Columbus to "America", on October 12.

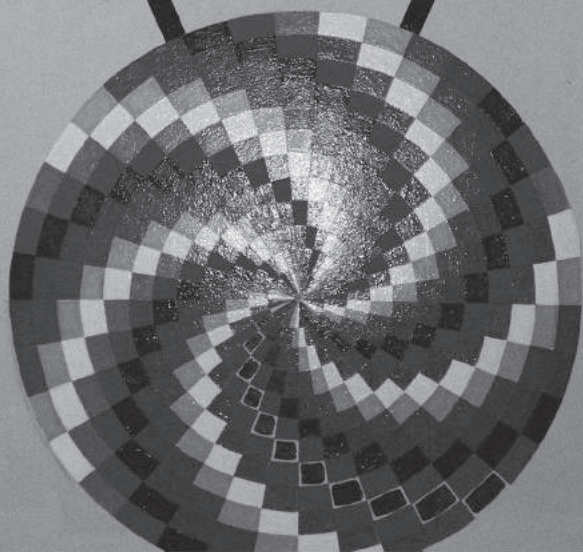
27 "Un peyak danzando en el aire" (A peyak dancing in the air), an unpublished book of the Workshop for Ethnic Memory.



FM 94.5

RADIO

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The Heat engraved on the Bodies

During many years of accompanying the Community Radio *The Indigenous Voice*, Mariana Ortega gathered and arranged images and audios of this collective's archive, thus giving form to a genealogy which recovers the memories of this history.

At the end of 2019 we shared this archive with filmmaker Daniela Seggiaro²⁸, who was moved in view of the truths and contradictions which appear in these registers. "They give an account of an urban landscape and, at the same time, an evocation of the woodland, of ancestral knowledge which is made present in contemporary activities, singings, words, gestures, political debates, claims of rights, indigenous women, boys, white women, different languages, urgent conversations, messages, dances, community names, Tartagal", writes Daniela, who proposed to generate an evocative piece of all this soundscape from the radio's audios and, particularly, from two radio-theatres.

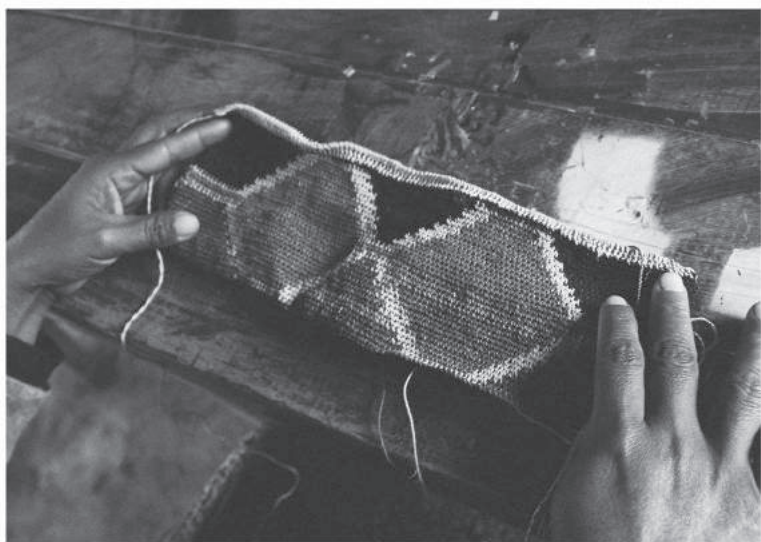
For this work, she convened musician and sound artist Cecilia Castro, with whom they worked from a particular point of listening in the productions which form part of this exhibit. Daniela and Cecilia generated a series of editing procedures in which they dispense some parts of the communicational narrative to expose the art and the infinity of messages which cross these pieces, fruit of the collective work made by the women and men from the radio²⁹, who recreated ancestral histories with the aesthetics of a contemporary sound, merging diverse thoughts and voices of the woodland in the known radial passage, with the irruption of the indigenous presence.

This soundscape evokes the landscape of the indigenous communities in the present, with hundreds of motorcycles circulating between the communities through the earth roads. Further, the voices appear like bursts which complete this landscape of vitality, resistance and multiplication of *The Indigenous Voice*.

28 Filmmaker who, in 2019, produced a second feature film with wichi communities in Santa Victoria Este.

29 Indigenous and non-indigenous, accompanied by the Faculty of Social Communication of the University of Salta, Tartagal campus.





THAÑÍ, WHAT COMES FROM THE WOODLAND

The river is a whisper which talks without keeping quiet.
A voice that repeats over and over its own history ³⁰ .

Yica, or Ilica, is a quechua³¹ word which is used in the Chaco salteño to name a bag used by great part of the population in the region. In its origin, the word refers to a woven travel bag. It also named a cumulus of valuable objects that marked the most important milestones of a life. In Santiago del Estero³² it referred to a very fine spider web. This word and the objects it names are associated to walking and to memory.

Indigenous women from the Gran Chaco³³ weave container objects, especially yicas. The weaving of bags is an activity which has been done, maybe, since ancient times, together with the weaving of fishing nets, hammocks and other textiles to store or carry things. Actually, the weavings are concocted in local³⁴ and foreign raw materials with different techniques; because of the combination of threads of different colors, complex geometrical designs are obtained. Each design has a meaning which represents a fragment of an animal or a vegetable from the woodland.

In the same way that narratives are repeated again and again to sustain a memory, even though they are always made poetics in different ways and in every interpretation, women also produce and create textiles like in a silent gesture of insistence, carried in the bodies that transit and are part of these territories. The yica is not an accessory which people take off when they arrive at some place, like they do with a wallet or a backpack, but it is a part of their dress, where valuable objects are kept³⁵ . Mountaineer people like the wichí use the yicas to keep what they gather when they go to the woodland. The form of the weaving, giving shape to what women call "eyes", allows the textile to expand, and so the "eyes" grow.

30 Julio Pietrafaccia. "La noche anterior había llovido" (2013). (The previous night it had rained).

31 Or *quichua*. It is a family of originary languages of the Peruvian Andes which extends through the occidental zone of South America throughout seven countries, including Argentina.

32 Argentinian province which forms part of the southern extreme of the Gran Chaco.

33 By making techniques linking threads made of different materials.

34 Especially in chaguar fibre: *Bromeliaceae*.

35 The popular expression of the chaco salteño "I have it in the yica" is used when someone gets something or even when someone "conquers" a person.



*The river has brought us together, the river has taught us and given us life*³⁷.

The Pilcomayo River is the geographic limit in the Chaco salteño, which separates Argentina from Paraguay and Bolivia, configuring a hot frontier like the climate of these latitudes. It is an entity which contains and gives life, in relation with it the life of the communities is organized. It is unbroken, sedimentary, with varied fauna and inhabited by other presences which escape western understanding. Also, in the summer, the river floods and razes, like in 2018, that it grew so much that it took a whole community. Only people were saved, they had time to leave and those families understood that it was time to look for a new place.

Guido Yannitto is a visual artist who explores structural aspects of planimetry through textile techniques. He grew up in the capital of Salta, where Rodrigo García Bes³⁸ taught him the basic notions of the technique he had learned from his father and his own experience. He produces works in collaboration with women weavers of northern Argentina and focuses his interest in the communication of the weaver's requisitions and proposals. His artistic practice approaches notions of identity and "dissolved identity", oral transmission, genealogy, subjectivity and collective work, which manifest themselves in the exchanges with the workers with whom he creates.

We invited Guido to work for this exhibit with a group of wichi women weavers who integrate the collective of indigenous women *Thañi/Viene del monte (Comes from the Woodland)*, which reunites more than one hundred and fifty craftswomen aiming to commercialize and spread their textile works with the support of public institutions which are linked to the care of the environment and the social economy. The communities of this zone make up a part of the Association *Lhaka Honhat/-Nuestra Tierra (Our Earth)* which, for more than thirty years, carries on the struggle for the recognition of community property for those who have always lived in this territory³⁹.

A group of twenty women of the settlement La Puntana, where twelve wichi communities from the Pilcomayo River live together, joined to participate in *The Listening and the Winds*. I met them three years ago, when I started to work with this group of women in workshops, to dialogue about their productions⁴⁰; they named themselves "daughters of the river" and, because of this, we invited them to take the Pilcomayo River as a starting point to select the ways in which we were to exhibit in Berlin.

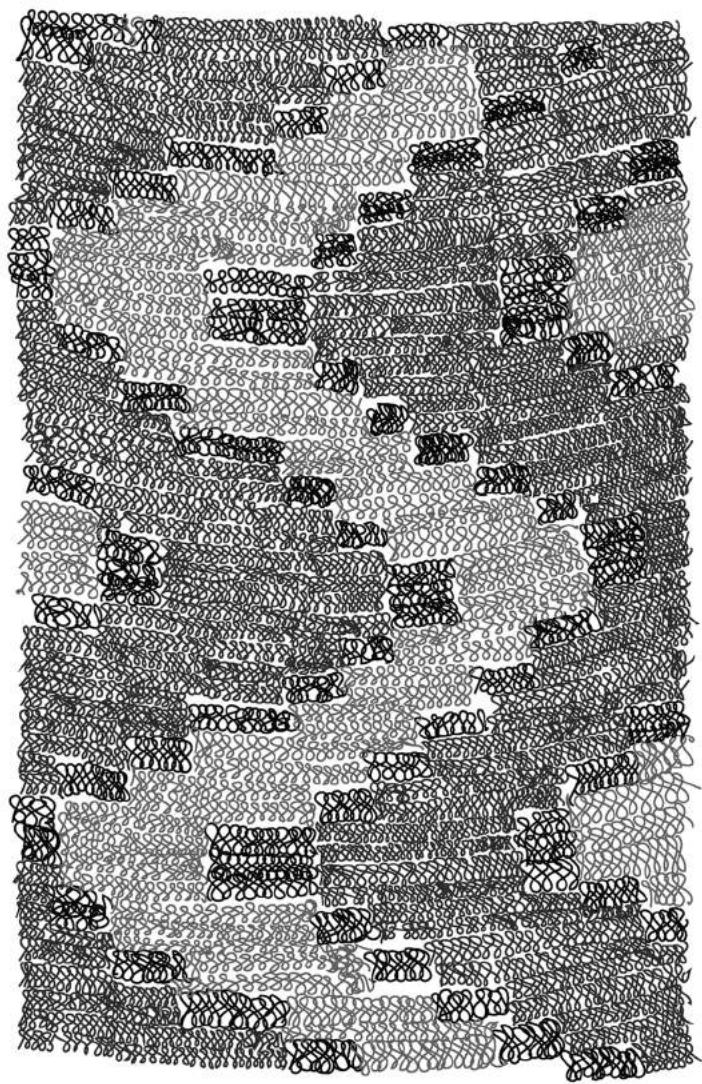
36 It means river in wichi language. This text was written with contributions from Guido Yannitto.

37 Fragment of the radio theatre "Ocasos del pasado" (Sunssets of the Past) from the Communitarian Radio *The Indigenous Voice* (2015).

38 He is the son of visual artist Carlos "Pajita" García Bes (1914-1978), from Salta, who worked in collaboration with craftsmen and craftswomen of the Argentinian north, putting value in ancestral knowledge; he is part of this exhibit with a piece which Andrea García has lent us.

39 The case "Comunidades indígenas miembros de la Asociación Lhaka Honhat (Nuestra Tierra) Vs. Argentina" (Indigenous communities, members of the Association Lhaka Honhat (Our Earth) against the Argentinian State: <https://www.-dar.org.pe/uncategorizado/el-derecho-a-un-medio-ambiente-sano-como-derecho-autonomo-a-partir-de-la-sentencia-del-caso-lhaka-honhat-vs-argentina/>)

40 Workshop for the innovation and production of handcrafted textiles, initiated in 2017 with the coordination of Andrea Fernández and financed by the Project for Native Forests and Community of the Ministry for Environment and Development of the Argentinian Nation and the accompaniment of the INTA (National Institute of Agricultural Technology), which is part of the National Ministry of Agriculture, Cattle Raising and Fishing - from the Agency for the Rural of Extension of Santa Victoria Este (Salta).

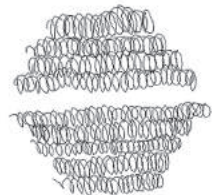
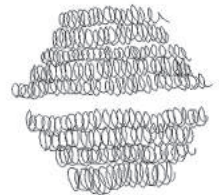


Guido inquired, in meetings with the women weavers, if there exists some type of geometrical pattern which represents water. Taking into account that abstraction in the wichí textile images creates a language of its own and very close to writing, he started to research if a “grammar of water” would be possible. Departing from these talks, the proposal came up to make pieces in which women weavers explore their technical and creative capacities in a more free and wayward form – rather than in the form they had usually worked for the making of the weavings, which was linked to the purpose of selling them as everyday objects.

Three groups of women were organized by their affective affinities. Each group worked with a different material which determined the colors and the techniques that were to be employed: chaguar fiber dyed with clay, plants and barks, using the traditional ancient stitching; industrial wool with the colors that women usually select to dress themselves and to make the *yicas* which they themselves, as well as their families, use with crochet technique; plastic threads, made by hand by craftswomen with recycled bags, as a variant of chaguar thread which was woven through “traditional stitching”, used in many communities due to the lack of chaguar, moreover in peri-urban zones and in the communities that lost their territory by the advance of the clearances.

The cloths created in collective form can be presented as flags that deploy the complexity of the reality of indigenous women aged from 20 to 60 years who live in and with the woodland but are not alien to that what happens in the cities, and constantly interact with other cultures, with the tensions between the desire to belong, but feeling free to choose how to live and how to exhibit themselves.

When we asked women weavers about the names of their works, we received a message by cellular phone stating the name *Silat*, which means notice, information, alert, announcement. “A message for all of them who do not know us or do not know that there are wichí women who work, weaving every day as well as their women ancestors did”, wrote Claudia Alarcón.





OREMBIAPO MAEPORA. OUR WORK IS BEAUTIFUL

The basic elements that we ceramists use are clay, water and fire. The right combination of the liquid with the earth allows us to model the clay. Fire physically transforms matter, vitrifies its body, makes it resistant.

There is no ceramic without fire, it is the final act in every ceramic process. There exists a fourth, intangible, ever present element in every ceramic piece that is mixed together with clay: memory.

A ceramic without a past, without a cultural burden, does not exist⁴¹.

Alicia takes the machete and lifts it delicately, as someone who makes a dance movement and, with strength and precision, makes it penetrate the clay pit which is now across the route, in front of her community. Her legs are flexed in a squat and her small black eyes shine in a particular way, concentrated in the extraction of the best clay to model and burn, which she knows well. She also knows how to select, in the nearby river, the stones from which she can get the colors to paint her modeling. With sadness, she tells that, before, she used a lot of white color which she took out of a clay which has now been left behind a wiring which does not let her reach it.

From the route which borders on the homestead to which her community was reduced, the tanks and the towers of the enterprise which processes gas and oil, which contaminate the soil where Alicia was born, can be seen. She works every day in silence, giving form to the clay she carried after asking permission to the owner⁴² and taking it out carefully.

She delineates figures, apparently whimsical, but precise, with a brush made out of the hairs of a rodent, the acuti. She sells her works to whoever comes to the community to look for them, or she exchanges them for commodities in the nearest city.

The *pueblo* chané lives in communities northeast of the province of Salta. Their ceramic production is an activity exclusive for women. Out of clay, they make jugs with human faces, different fountains, vessels with animal forms, sculptures which can fit in the hand and represent different animals.

For a long time, it was thought that this knowledge was disappearing but no, its practice was left aside due to the pollution of the ancient veins of the area, the replacement of the artifacts for industrial objects and the lack of demand for commercialization or barter. The knowledge did not disappear; its meaning changed.

41 Florencia Califano, "Pana pana maepora", 2020. Essay to which all fragments in italics in this paragraph belong.

42 For the *pueblos originarios* of this region, everything has an owner; a spirit that takes care of everything. Therefore, before entering the woodland permission is asked to the owners - and they are also thanked. It is the same with the river, the animals, the vegetables, the fruits, the clay, etc.



Ceramic links the life to agriculture, it organizes and constructs a community around the fire and the stored food inside their cooking pots. The morphology of each cooking pot is directly determined by its content, it is not the same to carry water or chicha⁴³ than cooking charqui⁴⁴ or corn. But the ceramic is also directly related with death, when it is used to bury the dead in vessels, especially modelled and decorated to contain that who left its human body. Cooked earth buried in fertile soil as a natural and primal shroud.

Orembiapo Maepora is a group of women of the Tutiati⁴⁵ Community, they work making paintings on wooden masks – which are shaped by the men of their families – and different ceramic pieces. This group's name can be translated as "our work is beautiful". We accompany them since their formation, in the middle of 2019, together with artist and teacher Florencia Califano, departing from workshops for the revaluation of this knowledge⁴⁶.

The way in which a potter modeled a bowl, a handle, or decorated a vessel, imprints in the baked clay a historicity, tells a narrative which goes through time and reconstructs the past. In this way, the ceramic culture of a Pueblo presents a material and symbolic code which connects us to ancestral memories of our own history.

Women, guardians of memory, extract the clay, prepare it and model it; gather the wood and bake the pieces in a solitary way. They make this process silently, stealing time from the chore overload to which we women are always subjected. They create, in clay pieces that represent the animals with which they live, those who they remember disappearing beside the overwhelmed mountain and those they imagine, thus expressing their right to create.

Orembiapo Maepora ceramists are united by the memory of their grandmother Leticia Mariquita, who transmitted this job to them, this task, that gives them some space where they can become absolute owners of both time and creative joy. Florencia's experience, integrated into the group and united to them through the job, thus erasing preestablished artistic categories, permitted them to think about their histories as women inside the same space and time both in the chané Tutiati community as well as in Florencia's house/workshop in the city of Jujuy⁴⁷. In both situations, a coexistence of guests and hosts resulted, changing roles in each case.

In this process of shared work, multiple talks took place which took us to question the meaning of our presence in the territory and our understandings of art. In this way, we could build bridges departing from trust and affection, finding ourselves united in a new form, and comprehending our differences as strengths.

As artists, we can reconsider our ways of doing to create new forms of artistic construction which are based in practices of love and care toward the other, taking into account the dynamic complexities of our identities.

43 Alcoholic, American drink made out of corn or fermented peanuts.

44 Salted meat, dried outdoors for its conservation without refrigeration.

45 Situated in the location of Campo Durán, in the municipality of Aguaray of the Salta province.

46 "Entrelazando saberes"(Interlacing knowledge). Cycle organized in the context of the international cooperation Project between the NGO Pro.-So.Co (Salta, Argentina) and the World Peace Service (Berlin, Germany) "Training and strengthening of indigenous entrepreneurs", with the accompaniment of public, local institutions.

47 It is a 9-hour journey from the ceramist community, by public transport.

OUR POETRY

They say that in the beginning it was water, then a clay like honey.
The ground was made afterwards, by the footsteps of walking.

The walked times are long
Many have been the transformations of the earth.
Through wishes, we have made real different roads in existence.

The constant fight is not to make mistakes, to respect each other,
to liberate ourselves from so much chaining to societies
and to prepare a new society on earth.

We know all the times.
The winds accompany these fights.
This is what we are, their effort and also their presence .



The Listening and the Winds

Narratives and inscriptions of the Gran Chaco

Curated by Andrea Fernández

Works

TERRITORY. Documentary essay by Brayan Sticks, in collaboration with ARETEDE.

Protagonists: Yanina Eliana Alborno, Melisa Gisela Olivera, Nelson Eduardo Domínguez, Jonathan Cabaña, Pablo Alberto Nuñez, Cecilia Domínguez, Karen Malena Castillo, Claudia Fabiola Pacheco, Andrea Micaela Romero, Franco Juan Pablo Aparicio, Cecilia Yanina Palavecino, Guadalupe Brizuela, Ana Marlen López Ceballos, Sandra Cecilia Fernández, Romina Pérez, Ezequiel Alexis Guía, Andrea Palenzuela, Leda Kantor, Benito Arias, Mónica Arias and Carlos Arias. Production House: El Azote Cine. San Juan, Argentina.

General Production: Noelia Ávila. Photo and camera direction: Marcos Agüero and Brayan Sticks. Edition and assembly: Marcos Agüero. Colour correction: Javier Carimedo. Design of credits and animations: Wilber De Hoyos. Music: Fabricio Pérez. Executive Production: Brayan Sticks.

SILAT. Women's textiles from the *Thañi/Comes from the woodland* group carried out in collaboration with Guido Yannitto.

Weavers: Anabel Luna, Miriam Pérez, Ana López, Estela Saavedra, Mariela Pérez, Isolina Pérez, Martina Arias, Graciela López, Erlinda Acevedo, Claudia Alarcón, Lilia Lucas, Ercilia Acevedo, Leila Lescano, Rosa Quiroga, Irene Acevedo and Clementina Pérez.

THE LITTLE WOODLAND. Ceramics from the chané women's collective *Orembiapo Maeopora* in collaboration with Florencia Califano.

Ceramists: Lilia López, Felisa Ruiz, Claudia Sánchez, Gabriela Orio, Vicenta Ovando, Alicia Saravia, Sandra Saravia and Ester López.

FROM THE ARROW TO THE WORD. Audiovisual pieces based on research by Mariana Ortega in collaboration with Daniela Seggiaro and Cecilia Castro.

Indigenous Women's Organisation ARETEDE, Community Radio *The Indigenous Voice* and Cultural Centre Litanía Prado.

Felisa Mendoza, Nancy López, Lidia Maraz, Edith Martearena, María Miranda, Cristina López, Mónica Arias, Ayda Valdez, Leda Kantor, Noemí Quinto, Silvina Quinto, Berta Sara Gómez, Yoselin Plaza, Marcelino Pérez, Saturnino Medina, Liliana Lizondo, Casandra Sandoval, Juan de Dios López, Luis Giménez, Anibal Guisano, Fabio Pistán, Marcelino Pérez, Saturnino Medina, Walter Arias, Carlos Arias, Jesús Giménez, José Giménez, Valerio Segundo, Isaías Fernández.

DANCE WITH OPHIDIANS. Carlos "Pajita" García Bes. Handmade Wool Textile (1975)

1. From the arrow to the word. Selection of visual and sound archives from the Community Radio *The Indigenous Voice* (LVI) by Mariana Ortega (2000/2020). LVI Operations: LVI Radio, LVI Soundscapes, LVI Video Loop I II III, pieces by Cecilia Castro and Daniela Seggiaro (2020).

2. Territory. Documentary essay in four fragments, by Brayan Sticks in collaboration with the Ethnic Memory Workshop of indigenous organisation ARETEDE (2020).

3. The Little Woodland. Polychrome ceramic pieces, made by Vicenta Ovando, Lilia López, Felisa Ruiz, Claudia Sánchez, Gabriela Orio, Sandra Saravia, Ester López and Alicia Saravia from the Chané Tutiati Community (2019/2020).

4. Silat (1). Handcrafted textile made from chaguar plant fibre by Claudia Alarcón, Estela Saavedra, Mariela Pérez and Isolina Pérez from Wichí communities in La Puntana (2020).

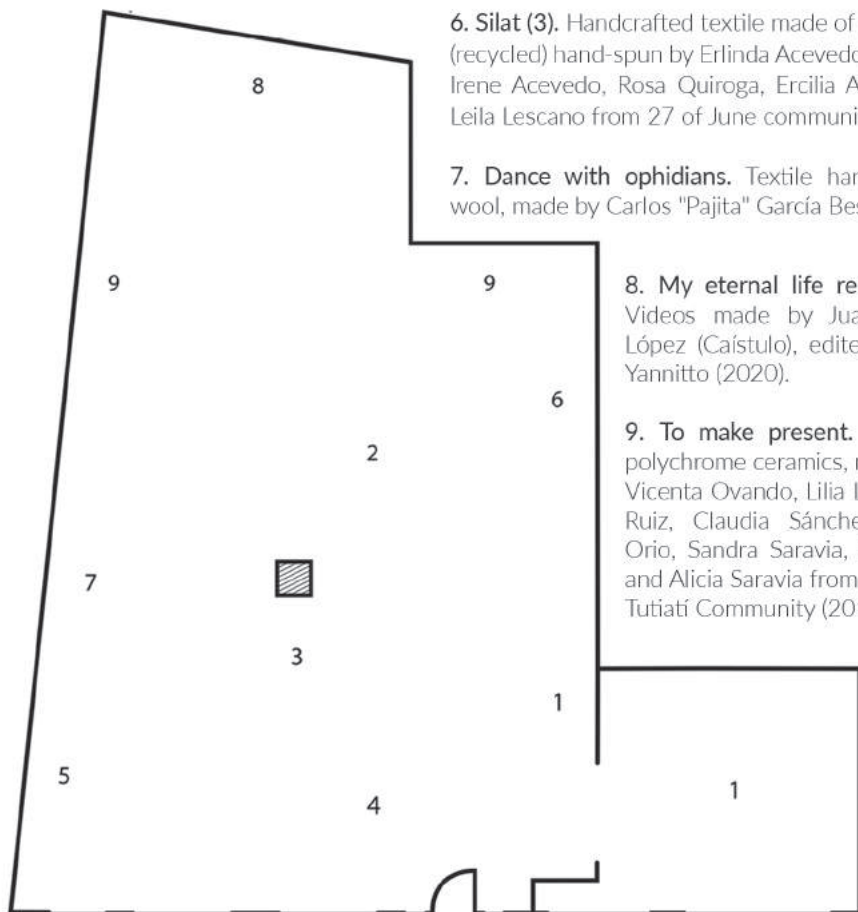
5. Silat (2). Handcrafted textile made from acrylic wool by Anabel Luna, Miriam Pérez, Ana López, Graciela López and Clementina Pérez from the communities of El Bordo and La Puntana Grande (2020).

6. Silat (3). Handcrafted textile made of nylon (recycled) hand-spun by Erlinda Acevedo, Lilia Lucas, Irene Acevedo, Rosa Quiroga, Ercilia Acevedo and Leila Lescano from 27 of June community (2020).

7. Dance with ophidians. Textile handcrafted in wool, made by Carlos "Pajita" García Bes (1975).

8. My eternal life remains here. Videos made by Juan de Dios López (Caístulo), edited by Guido Yannitto (2020).

9. To make present. Parts from polychrome ceramics, made by Vicenta Ovando, Lilia López, Felisa Ruiz, Claudia Sánchez, Gabriela Orio, Sandra Saravia, Ester López and Alicia Saravia from Chané Tutiati Community (2019/2020)



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The Listening and the Winds - Narratives and inscriptions of the Gran Chaco

23.10.2020 – 24.01.2021

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IFA-GALERIE BERLIN

Linienstrasse 139/140

10115 Berlin

T +493028449110

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