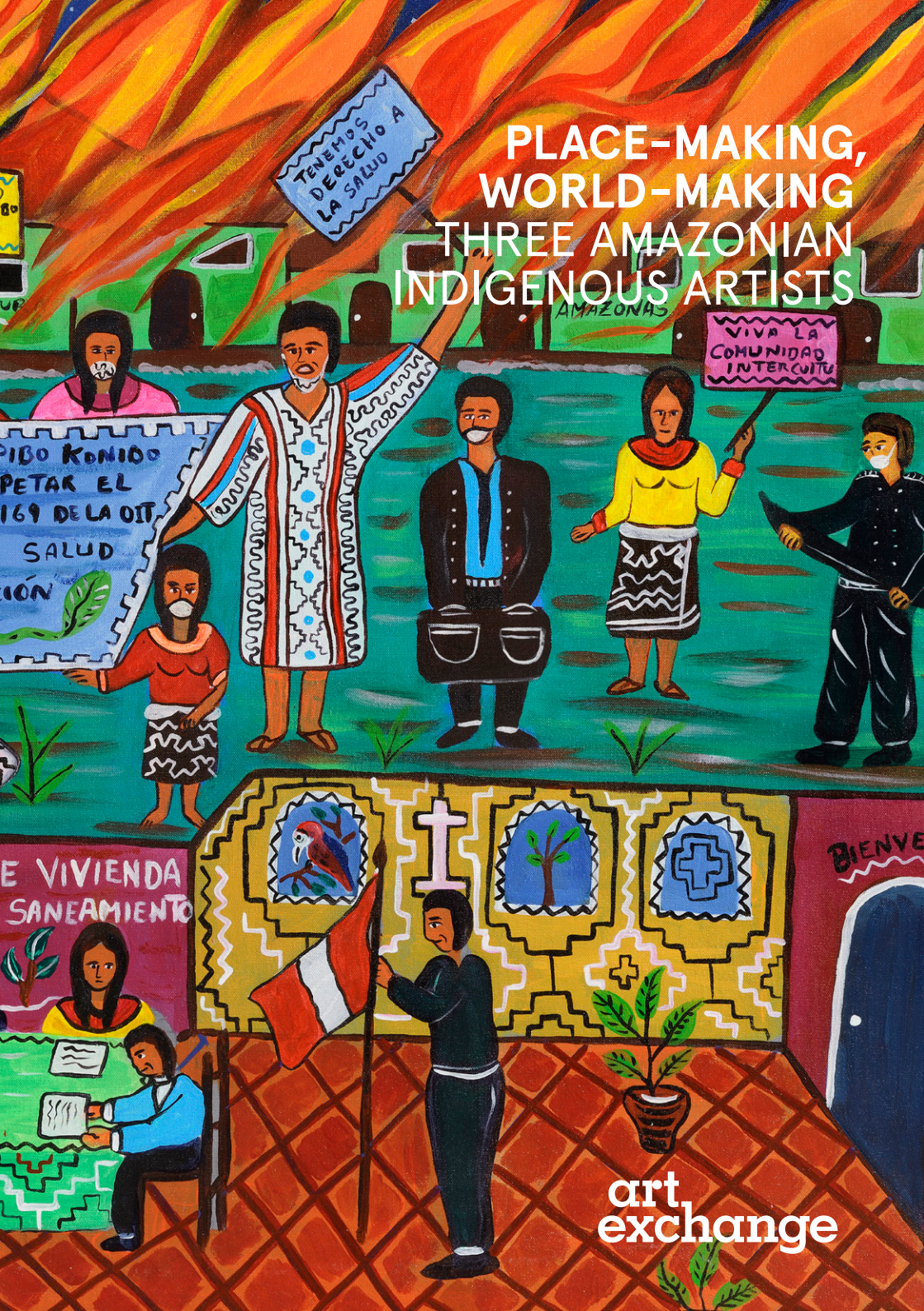


PLACE-MAKING, WORLD-MAKING THREE AMAZONIAN INDIGENOUS ARTISTS



art
exchange

**PLACE-MAKING,
WORLD-MAKING
THREE AMAZONIAN
INDIGENOUS ARTISTS**

Rember Yahuarcani
Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa
Brus Rubio

Curated by
Giuliana Borea

Amazonart Project

art
exchange

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Rember Yahuarcani
Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa
Brus Rubio

This exhibition features the work of a leading generation of Amazonian indigenous contemporary artists – Rember Yahuarcani, Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa and Brus Rubio – who explore indigenous Amazonians' practices of place-making and claims of belonging. Through their work, they highlight issues of spatial politics and ecological connections, migration, cosmopolitanism and their current living conditions, challenging the stereotypes that fix indigenous peoples in distant territory and the narrowed perspectives on art.

Rember Yahuarcani explores the mythology of his people, the Uitoto, showing how place-making is embedded into a network of relations between different beings and worlds, including the water-world, the forest-world and the sky-world. His paintings interrogate Western notions of representation and of place, thereby challenging the abstraction and one-world dimension of maps, which are utilised to foster extractivist exploitation of Amazonian lands and rivers, and in doing so, destroy indigenous worlds. In materialising the complexity of the indigenous worlds, Yahuarcani alerts us of their destruction.

Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa from the Shipibo people, highlights the process of migration and the battles in making the urban Shipibo Cantagallo community in Lima. Using bright acrylic colours on canvas, Pinedo's work highlights the tense relation of Cantagallo with the white mestizo Lima and the way indigenous places are constructed through the strong relationships amongst both native and urban communities – not only

in terms of culture and one-way migration to the cities, but also of the constant mobility of people and their battles for citizenship and a dignifying life. His work raises questions of government responsibility, housing rights and the provision of basic services with a focus on the current pandemic.

Finally, Brus Rubio from the Bora and the Uitoto-Murui groups reflects upon his intercultural biography and transnational mobility as an artist. His work imagines a future of true intercultural cities and institutions for which he has coined the concept 'Amazonizar' ('to Amazonise') that artist defines as: to make his culture prevail without another one consuming it, while at the same time recognising the creativity of others generating a new form of intercultural identity. Rubio makes recurrent use of self-representation assuming an active role for the dissemination of Amazonian knowledge and the creation of arenas of intercultural encounter, illuminating discussion on cosmopolitanism and world-making.

Place-making, World-making is guest-curated by Dr Giuliana Borea, as part of her Marie Curie Fellowship with the Amazonart project at the Department of Sociology, University of Essex – a project that explores the work, trajectories and activism of indigenous Amazonian contemporary artists as they enter global art circuits, and seeks to produce new curatorial narratives through a collaborative methodology with Amazonian artists responding to their aim of self-representation. This exhibition receives support of the Centre of Latin American and Caribbean Studies and the Centre of Migration Studies at Essex, and The Embassy of Peru in the United Kingdom.





Rember Yahuarcani
La creación del mundo
(The Creation of the World)
 2007

Natural dyes and acrylic on bark (Ilanchama)
 219 x 145cm

In this painting Yahuarcani produces a visual narrative of one of the three Uitoto myths about the creation of the world. Painted with natural dyes and acrylic on tree bark, the artist gives material form to oral mythological entities through his complex compositions.

This work explores the creation of Móó Buinaima, the Father Creator, who is sitting in his invisible seat – as yet there isn't any solid ground – after traveling across the universe following his ancestors' paths. The darkness is thick and the wind is the only sound to be heard. Móó Buinaima spits and his white saliva shatters the darkness. He forms circles of spit using his fingers and it becomes solid; and when he puts his foot on the saliva, he discovers it can take his weight. Buinaima walks in circles and his solid saliva spreads, creating a platform. Satisfied with his work, he falls asleep. In his dreams his ancestors and other gods – found at the top of the painting – guide

him in the creation of things and beings. Yet, one of these gods is Jusiñamo, Buinaima's rival and the creator of lightening. With his loud voice, the thunder – given visual form as white lightening – he kills the first people and destroys their first house. In another dream, the ancestors tell Buinaima that he must create the achiote tree and sing shamanic songs to its red seeds: thirty men were created from them and each one founded the thirty Uitoto clans, including Yahuarcani's the White Heron clan. After the creation of the world, Buinaima goes into the river and looks at his children. This complex painting allows us to immerse ourselves in the multifaceted connections between Uitoto beings and worlds.



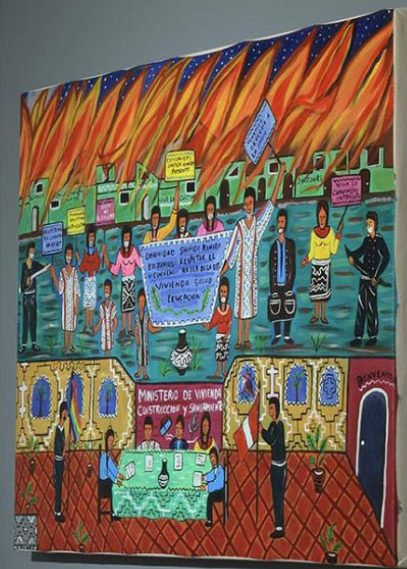
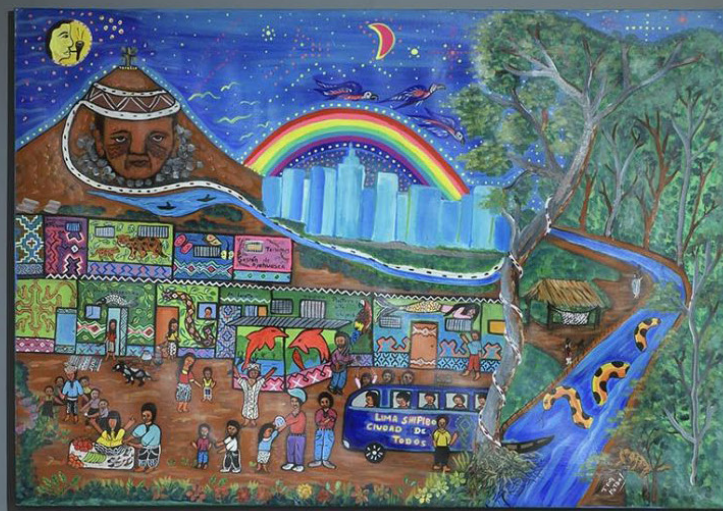
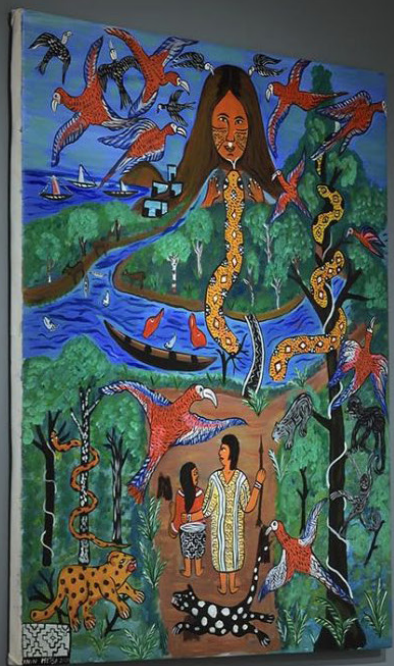
Rember Yahuarcani
De donde venimos
(Where we Come From)
2018

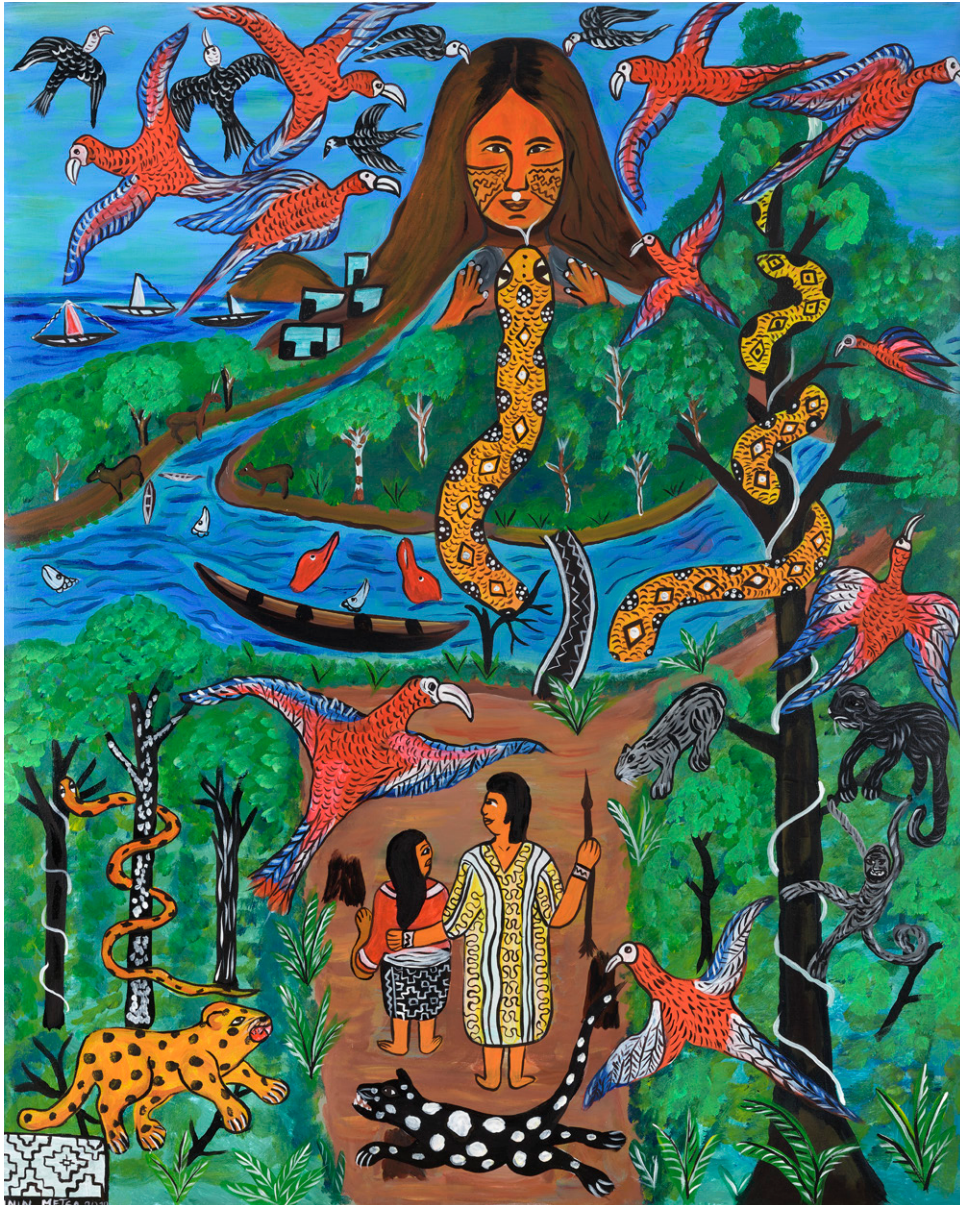
Acrylic on canvas
139 x 374cm

Working not only on bark, Rember Yahuarcani moves away from his previous full mythological narratives and extends his canvases to create a space for him to evoke sensations integrating different mythological characters and connect with all three Uitoto worlds.

Through the image of Buiñaimo, Moo Biunaima's wife, the three Uitoto worlds – the water, the forest and the sky – are evoked. Buiñaimo, unlike Moo Buinaima who sits under the water, is a constant traveller, connecting the worlds and transforming herself into different beings: in the water she is the anaconda – the Mother of the water beings, in the forest she is the achiote tree, and in the sky she is the rainbow. Here we see Buiñaimo lying at the bottom of the canvas and emerging as both an anaconda and as a rainbow – which creates a dramatic warm sky across the painting. The artist includes other mythological figures such as

Jitoma, Father of the Fire, and Aima, the most powerful shaman, found in the painting's top righthand corner. Across the centre of the composition a canoe glides, highlighting the mobility of Amazonian people through the Amazon and its connecting rivers. To its left, just above Buiñaimo's breasts, a number of small figures raise a green flag while simultaneously lowering the Peruvian one. Influenced by Joe Rosenthal's iconic photography of World War II, Yahuarcani proposes the birth of a new Uitoto generation whose territory, practices and politics are respected.



**Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa*****Migración III***
(Migration III)**2020**Acrylic on canvas
80 x 100 cm

A Shipibo couple look at each other, while in front of them a vast scene opens up showing the geographical trajectory that is experienced by the Shipibo who live in the communities of Pucallpa in Peru's central Amazon during their migration to the coast, specifically to Lima. This painting reveals the centrality of rivers, mountains and animals, showing a key role of other beings as agents of mobility, integration and place-making.

Pinedo's composition includes the Amazon forest, with its rivers beginning in the Andean high mountains, and the coast with the Pacific Ocean. A big, powerful anaconda emerges from the river to look at this geography and the coming of a migratory enterprise. Its tongue reaches up and touches the face of a mountain. This is the San Cristobal Apu (in Quechua a named mountain with power) under which the Shipibo urban community of Cantagallo will develop in Lima. In Pinedo's previous versions of this theme

of migration, the Apu San Cristobal is an Andean male entity, in this painting is a female Amazonian Apu, showing the artist's reassessment of symbols of power.

A bridge decorated with Shipibo patterns also shows how migration will turn this difficult geography into a connected territory. Compared to the migration from the Andes, which began in the 1930s, the Shipibo migration to Lima is more recent – only started in large number since the 1990s looking for better education, employment and peace due to the lack of adequate governmental provision, terrorists incursions and drug trafficking in the Amazon.

Pinedo's paintings show the dreams and experience of many Shipibos, including those of his parents who took him to a new urban Shipibo life when he was young.



Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa
Comunidad intercultural de la inmigración
(Intercultural Community of Immigration)
 2016

Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 90 cm
 Miguel A. López collection

This painting focuses on the Shipibo community of Cantagallo that has developed in the centre of Lima. It was finished after a fire burnt down much of the community in 2016, nostalgically harking back to the community as it once was.

With a colourful palette, Pinedo focuses on Cantagallo's daily life and shows how art, food and ayahuasca sessions have given Shipibo people a way of living in the city connecting with both locals and tourists in this unique community which the artist highlights as an intercultural community. The development of Cantagallo as an urban indigenous community has challenged Lima's urban policies and Peru's community recognition laws.

Pinedo's work also reveals how the making of Cantagallo is in constant relation with the Shipibo communities in the Amazon and people's mobility. A large tree marks the space between the urban and rural settings. A canoe is moored to the tree with a rope which becomes the mountain San Cristobal Apu's head band and the city roads. Next to the canoe is a blue bus on which Pinedo appropriates the Lima government slogan 'Lima the city of all' to include 'Lima Shipibo city of all'.

However, a closer look at this painting and a deep conversation with the artist reveals other complexities: the tense relation to the capital is alluded to by the separation of the river and the lack of colour of the modern buildings: 'We are in the city, but we are excluded. The reality is that we are excluded in the same place.'

I would like to thank Miguel A. López for the loan of this artwork



Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa

Cantagallo y nuestra lucha por Vivienda, Salud y Educación (*Cantagallo and our battles for Housing, Healthcare and Education*) 2020

Acrylic on canvas
100 x 80cm

A fire raged through Cantagallo on 4 November 2016 and the Shipibo community lost their homes, workshops, art workshops and schools. A child died due to burn injuries. The burning of Cantagallo evoked diverse reactions from Lima's inhabitants that ranged from feelings of empathy to racist comments such as 'why are they in Lima?' This accident occurred amid tensions with the city's government regarding a transport project that would affect the Shipibo community. After negotiations, the Shipibo accepted the relocation but with a newly elected major the terms of the initial agreement changed. With their community burnt, the Shipibos had to spread out and find a place to live elsewhere.

After three years without any governmental aid, and no meaningful responses to their protests, the Shipibos decided to return and rebuild Cantagallo. In the midst of building their homes again, Covid-19 reached the community when they lived in worse conditions than ever before; many lived without running water and sanitation.

This painting brings together the fire of 2016, the Shipibo's protests with banners that demand 'Stop racism', 'Shipibo people offers art and culture', 'The Shipibo Konibo community demands respect of the ILO convention 169: Housing, Healthcare and Education' as they are guarded by armed policemen. Below, seating around a table, we witness the last negotiations between the indigenous community leaders and the government officers during the pandemic, framed by both the Tahuantinsuyo flag as symbol of the original nations and the Peruvian flag. Through his paintings, Pinedo's work expresses indigenous agency and their ongoing battles for housing, citizenship and human rights.

The artist produced this work for this exhibition.



Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa,
La comunidad de Cantagallo bajo la protección de las plantas
 (Cantagallo Community under the Protection of Plants)
 2020

Acrylic on canvas
 55 x 77cm

This painting explores how Covid-19 was tackled in the Shipibo community of Cantagallo in central Lima with the protection of the powerful mountain San Cristobal Apu, shamans and medicinal plants.

Located a mere 20 minutes-walk from Lima's governmental palace, Cantagallo's lack of piped running water and sanitation were factors that accelerated the spread of Covid-19. In 2020, 80% of the population of Cantagallo were infected with coronavirus. In an excess of repression, the police surrounded the community and formed a blockade, while the rest of Lima was not on lockdown. Surrounded by the police, the Shipibo were supported by networks of friends and collaborators who brought aid to the community.

Rural and urban settings reinforced their mutual support, as Shamans investigated which plants could help in the pandemic – with the eucalyptus and the Amazonian *matico*, transported to the coast, becoming key plants in the fight against Covid-19.

Pinedo represents Covid-19 as yellow flying entities that belong to the yellow world – the world of disease. The artist reflects on the power of indigenous medicine and knowledge to state loudly: 'Cantagallo, renace luchando' – Cantagallo, reborn fighting.





Brus Rubio

El viaje de los seres míticos
(The Travel of the Mythological Entities)
2020

Acrylic on canvas, 30 X 30 cm
Private collection

This painting reflects Rubio's emotions as an immigrant as he faces the new challenges 'of the new paths, overcoming the fears of new worlds and living in them with the water beings and their ancestral dance.' He identifies with the first character, showing how his parents and ancestors' knowledge and wisdom accompany

him on his journey. They guide his artistic trajectory, which is enriched by the experiences gained by different places and encounters. In addition to evoke the mobility across places, his painting highlights other spatial connections: the links between the sky, forest and water worlds which are represented through the wings, masks and fins of the mythological figures. For the artist, this painting speaks to all immigrants around the world. Rubio imagines a new world order that values mobility, encounters and life at large.



Brus Rubio
La Restinga de Miami
 (Miami's Restinga)
 2018

Acrylic on bark (llanchama)
 142 X 84 cm.

The multiculturalism, resourcefulness and vibrance of Miami Beach had a marked impact on Brus Rubio when he was recently artist-in-residence there. He evokes Miami as a *restinga*: a small piece of high ground surrounded by water on which animals take refuge, enjoying the safety and the food they find there. Like a *restinga*, Miami Beach is rich in resources, with people from around the world enjoying its beaches and facilities.

The artist also establishes a link to Florida's native people, the Seminoles. As someone who belongs to original people himself, Rubio connects with the Seminoles who he sees as Florida's original historical base. Thus, in this work Miami Beach is being supported by Mother Nature. Rubio shows Miami's urban appeal with its tall buildings, modern cars, beaches, cruises, fishing and diving – and links its celebratory atmosphere with the Huangana (peccary) dance, which is performed during the Pijuayo Celebration in which exchanges between the Bora people and the water beings take place. Through this work Rubio blends the Amazon and Miami Beach, allowing us to rethink both places and imagine new possibilities and futures.



Brus Rubio

Un ojo amazónico en La Habana Cuba (An Amazonian Eye in Havana Cuba) 2017

Acrylic on canvas
250 X 150 cm

Brus Rubio painted this work after travelling to Cuba and brings together both his own experiences in Havana and Amazonian worlds. To the centre and left-hand side of the painting Rubio reveals how he saw Cuban people: Catholics, educated and bohemians who enjoy life in moderation. For Rubio both the Amazon and Cuba have had to deal with a difficult history of overcoming challenges and re-emerging with their knowledge and resources. Thus, at the centre of his painting a man comes out from the water holding across his back a book and tobacco. The importance of tobacco becomes another link between people and places: 'Cuba has their cigar, I have my *ampiri* (nicotine mixed with salt from palm trees). We are the Sons of the Tobacco,' says the artists who represents himself at the centre of the painting.

Amazonian forms of knowledge and celebration are addressed on the right side of the painting. Who organises the party – at the top – and leads the people – underneath – is Buinaima: this is Rubio's materialisation of the Creator. Together with the Amazonian trees, birds and mythological entities, Buinaima enters Havana to share and exchange knowledge and experiences. A Cuban woman sits on a root taking notes of the Amazonian world. Rubio's work advocates for mutual respect in today's world.



Brus Rubio

Museo Tate Britain y el Museo Amazónico Vivo (Tate Britain and the Living Amazonian Museum) 2020

Acrylic on canvas
190.5 x 106 cm

Rubio's Amazonisation project seeks to integrate indigenous knowledge, aesthetics and practices not only into cities but also into art spaces – he has produced paintings amazonising the Lima Art Museum and the Madrid Matadero Art Space. In this painting he amazonises Tate Britain.

Rubio was inspired by the neo-classical architecture of Tate Britain and the large number of visitors flocking to this revered site when he recently visited the UK for the *Invisible Forest* group exhibition in 2019. It reminded him of the ancestral Murui Bora big house (maloca), which receives tourists wanting to see indigenous performances and lifestyle. Inspired by a photograph of the artists outside Tate Britain, in this painting he replaces the image of himself at the entrance of the museum, with that of his grandfather from the sloth (pelejo) clan, whose presence seeks to open up a path for the arrival of Amazonian art to London and its art circuit. Including his grandfather also acts as a critique

of the rubber exploitation that fed the industrial revolution of Europe, while simultaneously fuelled indigenous slavery and massacres in which British shareholders participated at the beginning of the 20th century. Rubio critically addresses this issue by framing Tate Britain with rubber trees and on the left, we can see its being collected via a series of cuts in its bark: 'the tree is bleeding, and its cuts resemble bones'. The sloth clan saved its families from the rubber baron's torture and survived. Today they celebrate together in England, although the indigenous people have further claims. At the entrance of the museum Rubio has placed a Murui symbol representing the power of nature and the power of Amazonian knowledge *vis-à-vis* English art and power.

The artist produced this work for this exhibition.



Artists



REMBER YAHUARCANI
 (b. Loreto, Peru, 1986)
Lives and works in Lima and Pebas.

Rember Yahuarcani is a visual artist, writer and activist. He belongs to the Uitoto Aimenu people and lives between Pebas - his hometown situated in Peru's northern Amazon - and Lima, where he migrated in 2003. His artistic practice explores the complexity of the Uitoto mythology addressing the Uitoto's comprehension of humanity-nature and Amazonian worlds, working alongside his activist practice which urges the respect of indigenous worlds.

Yahuarcani's work has been exhibited internationally, including exhibitions in Peru, Brazil, Argentina, US, UK and China. Among his solo shows is 'When Animals were People' at the Cervantes Institute in Pekin (2019). His work has entered collections at the Lima San Marcos Art Museum and the Shangyuan Museum of Modern Art. He has won the II Intercontinental Biennale of Indigenous Art and participated in the 8th Beijing Biennial (2019). Yahuarcani has published extensively, including *Buinaima's Dream* (2010), *The Summer and the Rain*, (2017) and has been a recipient of Peru's National Award for Children's Literature. He is also recipient of the 'Art and Activism against repression during the Covid-19 crisis' grant of the University of York and has co-curated with Giuliana Borea, the exhibition *Ite!/Neno!/Here!:* Responses to Covid-19 at Crisis Gallery in Lima, Peru.



HARRY PINEDO/ININ METSA

(b. Ucayali, Peru, 1988)
Lives and works in Lima.

Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa is a visual artist and a primary intercultural teacher. He belongs to the Shipibo people from Ucayali in Peru's central Amazon, migrating to Lima in 1995 where he lives in the Shipibo's urban community of Cantagallo. His work focuses on issues of internal migration and the making of an urban indigenous community as he raises pressing questions about citizenship and housing rights, while also exploring Shipibo's ontologies and ecological issues. Pinedo's work encapsulate a wide range of ideas, tensions and dreams of interculturality and justice.

Pinedo's work started to circulate in Peru's contemporary art circuit since 2010 and has recently been shown internationally in Brazil, France and Spain. His first solo exhibition 'The Yanapuma Splendor' (2017) tackled the contamination in the Amazon receiving large coverage and local impact. With a BA degree in Intercultural education, Pinedo participates actively in debates and implementation of a public intercultural education, and he is managing a cultural art space in Cantagallo. He is also a recipient of the "Art and Activism against repression during the Covid-19 crisis" grant of the University of York, and his work has recently been featured in the exhibition Ite!/Neno!/Here!: Responses to Covid-19 at the Gallery Crisis in Lima, Peru.



BRUS RUBIO

(b. Loreto, Peru, 1983)
Lives and works in Lima and
Pucaurquillo.

Brus Rubio is a visual artist and the director of Invisible Amazonia art gallery in Lima. He belongs to the Bora and Uitoto Murui peoples from Loreto in Peru's northern Amazon, and lives and works in Pucaurquillo and Lima, where he migrated in 2009. His work addresses important issues including creating an intercultural world, dismantling power relations and the politics of memory with a focus on the rubber exploitation in indigenous lands and the massacre of indigenous people. His work imagines a cosmopolitan world in which indigenous people and their knowledge participate in equal ways, which he has coined as 'amazonise'.

Rubio's has exhibited extensively, including exhibitions in Peru, Brazil, Colombia, US, Switzerland, France, Spain, UK and China. Among his solo shows is 'Transits: From Pucaurquillo to Paris, a round trip' (Centro Cultural Inca Garcilazo, Lima, 2014). His paintings have entered the permanent collection of the Museo de Arte de Lima and he has participated in Art Lima Fair and at Madrid Contemporary Art Fair ARCO 2019. Rubio's residencies include Mana Residencies in Miami (2018) and Matadero Art residencies in Madrid (2019), and he has been recipient of the Artist Passport competition supported by the French Embassy in Peru (2011).

Guest Curator



GIULIANA BOREA

Dr Giuliana Borea is a post-doctoral Marie Curie Fellow at the Department of Sociology, University of Essex and a Lecturer in Anthropology at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Her research concerns contemporary art worlds and different epistemologies of art, art and political economy, politics and practices of museum, issues of place-making and sensory practices, with a focus on Peru and

Latin America. 'Place-making, World-making' exhibition is part of her current collaborative research project, Amazonart, which explores the work and agendas of contemporary Amazonian indigenous artists and seeks to provide new curatorial approaches.

Borea has built her career at the intersection of research, teaching, curatorship and cultural policy. She has been Peru's Director of Museums and Cultural Heritage, Coordinator of the Chavin National Museum and the Lima Museum of Contemporary Art, and co-founder of Tandem: Cultural Management for Development Association which fostered cultural policies from below. She is currently an Executive Council Member of the Latin American Studies Association's Visual Culture Section.

She has also been recipient of the ILAS Fellowship, the Wenner-Gren Foundation Fellowship, the NYU Thinker Fieldwork Grant, the Carolina Foundation Fellowship, among others. Her curatorial practice includes the recent exhibitions *Ite! Neno! Here!*: Responses to Covid-19. Santiago Yahuarcani and Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa (Lima, 2020), curated with Rember Yahuarcani. She has published extensively, including her volume *Arte y Antropología: Estudios, Encuentros y Nuevos Horizontes* (PUCP, 2017) and her book *Configuring the New Lima Art Scene: An Anthropological Analysis of Contemporary Art in Latin America* (Routledge, 2021).

Talks & Events

Amazonart: Curator's Talk

Wed 27 January
6:00 – 7:00 pm
Online via Zoom

Curator Giuliana Borea tells us about her work that creates a platform for the ideas and activism of indigenous Amazonian artists. She is joined by Rember Yahuarcani, Brus Rubio and Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa via video recordings made in their studios.

Indigenous Amazonian Urban Migration

Wed 10 February
3.30 – 5:30 pm
Online via Zoom

Dr Giuliana Borea explores the ways in which indigenous artists reflect upon spatial practices and mobility. Focusing on the work of artists Harry Pinedo/Inin Metsa and Elena Valera/Bawan Jisbe, Borea argues that through their art practice they have become central players in the politics of place and the demands for dignity.

Diversifying Collections: Reshaping Art and Art History

Wed 17 February
6.00 – 7.00 pm
Online via Zoom

Pablo José Ramírez, Curator of First Nations and Indigenous Art at Tate, and Diego Chocano, Assistant Curator of ESCALA join Giuliana Borea, curator of 'Place-making, World-making' to discuss the process of reframing art collections and the challenges posed

to dominant art histories by the practices of indigenous artists, as they explore new alternatives to create a space that recognises more plural aesthetics and agendas.

Ucamara Radio: The Voice of the People

Wed 10 March
6:00 – 7:00 pm
Online via Zoom

We are joined by the presenters of Ucamara Radio, a platform that connects indigenous people specifically of the Peruvian Amazon's Kukama nation – by communicating indigenous claims and rights through diverse audio-visual material including film and music videos. This event is chaired by Dr Lisa Blackmore.

The Indigenous Experience Today

Thurs 25 March
6:00 – 7:00 pm
Online via Zoom

Prof Andrew Canessa looks at the contemporary urban experience of indigenous peoples in the Americas and elsewhere and seeks to shed light on the myriad of ways people can be indigenous in the modern world. He will look at indigenous cosmopolitanism, the ways in which indigeneity can transcend national boundaries through music, migration and art.

All our events are free.
Head over to our website to book your place!
artexchange.org.uk

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We would like to thank the Embassy of Peru in London for supporting our exhibition by transporting the artworks to the UK. We are also indebted to Dr Giuliana Borea for all her hard work making this exhibition possible. Most of all, we are in awe of the work of our artists – thank you.

Guest Curator: Giuliana Borea
Director/Curator: Jess Twyman
Administrative Assistant:
Joanne Pearson
Film production: Noah Carter
Video content editor: Giuliana Borea
Video production: Daniel Martín Rodríguez, Rafo Talavera, Jair García and Lupe Benites.
Art Technicians: Edward Bennett and James Barnard
Texts: Giuliana Borea
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