

CAROLINA CAYCEDO

L AND OF F FRIENDS

28 M^{AY} 2022 - 29 J^{AN} 2023

Level 4 Gallery
BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

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Carolina Caycedo makes work that considers people and nature's social and political agency, whilst addressing environmental justice and cultural and environmental biodiversity. Working with video, performance, sculpture, installation and drawing, Caycedo's work features studio practice and fieldwork with communities impacted by large-scale infrastructure and other extraction projects.

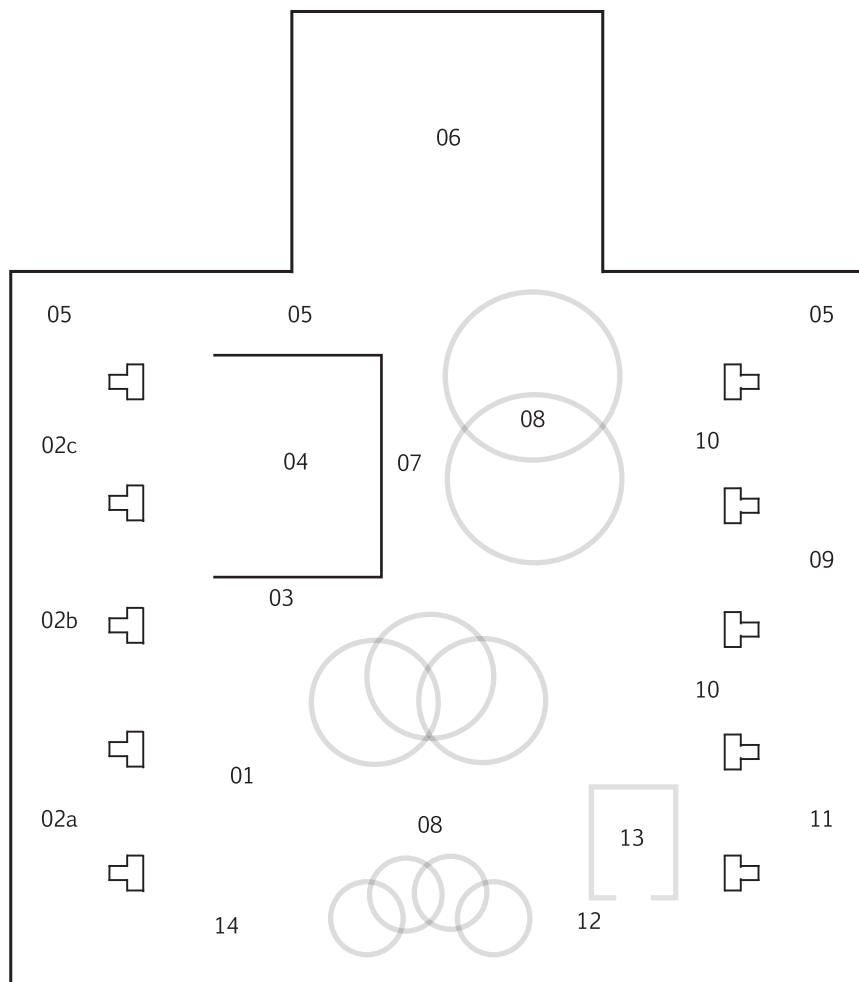
Movement, displacement, connection, language and exchange are key themes in her work, which she approaches through a strong commitment to feminist principles and a deeply ethical engagement with the world. Caycedo embraces decolonial ideas and Indigenous cosmologies and proposes counter-narratives to extractivist, colonial and patriarchal approaches that bring destruction, violence and inequalities to our world.

Land of Friends is Caycedo's first survey exhibition in Europe. It is also a kind of homecoming for the artist, who was born in London to Colombian parents. Her family left London a few years later, but Caycedo came back to live there as a young adult before moving to Puerto Rico and later to Los Angeles, where she is based today. The title of the exhibition refers to the meaning of Yuma, the ancestral name of Colombia's Magdalena River. It is also borrowed from the title of one of Caycedo's works, *YUMA, or the Land of Friends* (2014), which is included in the exhibition. *Land of Friends* proposes the exhibition as a space of encounter, between the works and visitors, but also between contexts from across the world, reminding us that rivers are the veins of the planet – living entities that connect communities and ecosystems.

The Yuma River is central to Caycedo's life and work. It is one of Colombia's major waterways, which was renamed Magdalena in 1501 by the Spanish during their

colonisation of the Americas. Until then, the river was called Yuma, named by the Muisca peoples several centuries earlier – a name still used by local inhabitants. Yuma became the starting point for Caycedo's long-term project *Be Dammed (Represa/Represión)* (2012–ongoing), which takes multiple forms and examines the environmental and social impact of dam projects, whilst highlighting the right of self-determination of people and rivers as sovereign beings. *Be Dammed* includes workshops and collective actions, which she refers to as 'geochoreographies', installations and large-scale photographic portraits of rivers, river drawings and an artist's book titled *Serpent River Book* (2017). Through *Be Dammed*, Caycedo counters dominant ideologies and narratives from multinationals and governments that promote and implement extractivist projects, which have a destructive effect on local ecosystems. Each work grows organically out of what the artist refers to as 'spiritual fieldwork' – field research that connects with local territories in depth through long-term relationships with riverine communities adversely affected by the privatisation of waterways.

As objects of connection between people and bodies of water, traditional cast fishing nets are central characters in Caycedo's work. They first appeared in her two-channel video essay *Spaniards Named Her Magdalena, But Natives Call Her Yuma* (2013), thrown by traditional fishermen and women. They also became key elements in performances such as *Atarraya* (2015) and *Geocoregrafías* (2014) in which the body is used as a political tool and the fishing net as a visual symbol of resistance. For Caycedo, a 'geochoreography' is an everyday gesture that is intrinsic to a specific geography, repetitively performed in relation to the immediate environment, such as casting a net or washing gold in the riverbank. Caycedo first used fishing nets



- 01 *Serpent River Book*, 2019
72 page accordion fold, offset, printed canvas hardcover, elastic band
- 02 Water Portraits Series, 2016-ongoing
a. *Wanaawna*, 2019
Photograph printed on cotton canvas
b. *Wanaawna Meets Salty Waters*, 2019
Photograph printed on cotton silk
c. *San Gabriel*, 2019
Photograph printed on cotton canvas
- 03 *YUMA, or the Land of Friends*, 2014
Digital print on acrylic. Courtesy the artist, Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles and Instituto de Visión, Bogotá
- 04 *Spaniards Named Her Magdalena, But Natives Call Her Yuma*, 2013
Two-channel HD video installation, 26:06 min. Courtesy the artist, Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, and Instituto de Visión, Bogotá
- 05 River Drawings Series, 2016-ongoing
All marker on Canson paper
a. *Yuma*, 2016
b. *Yaqui*, 2016
c. *Elwha*, 2016
d. *Watu*, 2016
e. *Iguaçu*, 2016
Both Collection of Musée d'art contemporain de la Haute-Vienne Château de Rochechouart
f. *Pisibaiya*, 2017
g. *Ume - Vindel*, 2018
Both courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, California
- 06 *Patron Mono*, 2018
Three-channel HD video with sound, 4:32 min. Courtesy the artist, Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles and Instituto de Visión, Bogotá
- 07 *Tyne Catchment*, 2022
Color pencil on paper. Courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles
- 08 *Plomo y Brea (Lead and Tar)*, 2018
Nine artisanal fishing nets, hemp, nylon, lead, steel, tar, fabric dye. Collection of Banco de la República, Colombia
My Feminine Lineage of Environmental Struggle-Expansion 1, 2019
Printed cotton canvas. Courtesy the artist and Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles
- 10 Women's Banner Group, *Durham Gala Banner*, 2017-18
Textile. Courtesy Women's Banner Group
- 11 *Not in My Name*, 2017
Video, 20:50 min. Courtesy the artist, Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles and Instituto de Visión, Bogotá
- 12 *Caminemos Juntas (Let's Walk Together)* 2010
Tent and metal structure. Collection of Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León and the citizens of the city of León
- 13 *Amber Films, Of Whole Heart Cometh Hope*, 2018
Video, 42 min. Courtesy Amber Films
- 14 *Museo de la Calle (Street Museum)*, 1998/2022
Donated handmade objects. Courtesy the artist and Colectivo Cambalache
- All works courtesy the artist unless otherwise stated.

in sculptural form in 2015 in three works, *Yuma*, *Yaqui*, and *Elwha*, which embodied three rivers in the Americas at different stages of privatisation or restoration. This shift towards sculptural work led the artist to develop a series of hanging sculptures made with traditional fishing nets titled *Cosmotarrayas*, of which the large-scale installation *Plomo y Brea* (2018) is presented here. The artist often dyes each work, and attaches various symbolic objects collected during field research. Each *Cosmotarraya* is linked to specific people, rivers, traditions, and cultures. Caycedo conceives them as symbolic objects that cast visual spells and embody the resistance of riverine communities against corporations and governments who seek to privatise bodies of water.

A range of works in the exhibition explore resistance and the forms it can take – a important theme in the artists practice. Banners are key tools of protest, which Caycedo has adopted in her own work. Her banner *My Feminine Lineage of Environmental Struggle-Expansion 1* (2019) invokes the voices of over 150 women environmental defenders from around the world. It is part of an ongoing series of portraits titled *Genealogy of Struggle* (2017–ongoing), which seeks to construct a visual history of environmental activism as a teaching tool.

Caycedo was keen to connect the exhibition to the UK context and her video *Not in*

My Name (2017) takes us back to February 2003, when the largest protest against the war in Iraq was held across the world. The artist filmed the London protest, showing the wide range of slogans and banners used by protesters. A banner created by The Women's Banner Group for the Durham Miners Gala in July 2018 is included in the exhibition to connect worldwide resistance histories with local feminist narratives and initiatives. This same banner is represented in Caycedo's work *Tyne Catchment* (2022), a new commission specially made for the exhibition. It presents multiple perspectives and reference points of the River Tyne across the years. These include vignettes of current sites, ecosystems, historical events, and mythological tales. The work notably features the region's historic bridges and industrial past, political gatherings, labour movements, migrant communities, and distinctive folklore.

This exhibition has been curated by Irene Aristizábal, Head of Curatorial and Public Practice at BALTIC.

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