

Audio Descriptive Script

‘Land of Friends’ by Carolina Caycedo

28 May 2022 - 29 Jan 2023

Written by Louise Ainsley

The audio description begins with some information about the exhibition and the artists. This will be followed by an orientation of the space with an overview of the works on show. There will then be a detailed description of individual selected artworks.

On entering the gallery, a wide and high space is open to view. Five structural pillars run parallel to both sidewalls about two meters out from each wall. The roof climbs up from the pillars to a rounded peak. The gallery is two storeys high. A large alcove, 8 meters square, is set back in the middle of the bottom wall.

Positioning of the artworks as seen from the Gallery entrance-

To the right is a **patchwork tent** made from recycled clothes. Inside the tent is a TV screen that plays a video. On the wall beside the tent is another screen relaying scenes from a protest and sound from both videos can be heard.

On the left, behind the pillars, **three lengths of dyed material** are suspended from bars. Hanging like large hammocks the material dips and flows in curves along the full length of the wall.

In front of the pillars on the left is a narrow **wooden table** that winds across the floor in the shape of a river. An opened book is displayed on top of the table.

The curves of the table correlate with the curves of the lengths of material behind.

Suspended above our heads from the ceiling on pulleys are a series of large circular **fishing nets**. The fine mesh nets are attached to circular frames of black steel and arranged down the central area of the gallery in three groups.

In the bottom left corner of the gallery an enclosed space has been built with wooden walls, roughly a 6-meter square cube, to house a **video installation**. The left side, beside the pillars, is open for the installation to be viewed. The surrounding sides are painted white and on each wall piece of work is displayed.

From the gallery entrance, the nearest side of the installation room to us is covered by a huge, **abstract, digital image**, 5 metres high and 6 meters wide.

The work is displayed behind Perspex in a white frame. The image appears like a swirling mass in greys, browns, and pinks.

Beyond and to the right of the walls of the installation is the alcove in the bottom wall and this houses another video work. The three walls inside the alcove glow with shining yellow and gold and pulsate with racing images of water.

On the right, across from the alcove, is a coloured drawing on two long sheets of paper that is hung on the wall.

In the space between the drawing and the patchwork tent there are three banners.

A long white canvas banner hangs on the wall. On either side of it are two colourful square banners. These are attached to a framework of poles and are set on stands between the pillars. They were designed and produced by the Women's Banner Group to be paraded at the Durham miner's Gala.

The white canvas banner is called **My Feminine Lineage of Environmental Struggle** and is covered in portraits.

Black line drawings are printed on the banner as a tribute to the over 150 women environmental defendants, who are portrayed.

Detailed descriptions - travelling in a clockwise direction.

Plomo y Brea

High above the gallery hang the series of large circular fishing nets, Plomo y Brea.

Described as 'Nine artisanal fishing nets', they are the nets used by indigenous people. Caycedo uses them as a symbol of resistance against corporations who seek to privatise bodies of water.

The fine mesh nets are attached to circular frames of black steel. These are of variable sizes.

The fishing nets are arranged in three groups.

Above the entrance are four smaller nets, about 3.7 meters in diameter. They are arranged in an overlapping line as if they have just been dropped and are floating on the river surface.

The net fabric has subtle hints of colour, reds, and blues, where the artist has applied fabric dye.

Halfway down the gallery there are 3 medium sized nets. These overlap in a neat pattern. Two cross over to make a teardrop shape in the centre and the third fits in behind and slots into the gaps.

These nets are tilted and slightly lower than the other nets, as if they are slipping under the water.

At the end of the gallery are the two largest nets, 5.7 meters and 6.6 meters in diameter. They hang just above the installation. One overlaps the other with half its surface area.

The mesh on both nets has been lightly dyed a burnt orange colour. The colour darkens where the nets are overlapped.

With the fishing nets overhead, it is easy to imagine being under the water with the nets floating down from above.

Serpent River Book

On the left, running alongside the pillars, is a beautifully made narrow wooden table. It winds across the floor like a river, the shape of its course curling, like a back to front question mark. The table legs are finely made. Painted a light cream they blend into the background and the table appears to almost hover above the floor, casting a twisting shadow below.

On top of the table lies a book. The paper in the book is all one length but is designed to fold like a concertina to fit inside its covers.

The book has been unfolded and laid across the top of the table. It is precisely refolded to fit every turn of the river's shape. Sometimes the folds meet in sharp peaks like pyramidal mountains, or the pages might take a smooth flat course, pleated to follow a gentle curve.

The 72 pages wend their way down the length of the table and tell the story of a river in pictures and text.

As you approach from the gallery entrance the book's story opens on the right-hand end of the table. The river table curves widely through its beginning course then heads in a straighter line down towards the ocean.

The first image in the book is hand drawn on the inside of the hardback canvas cover.

A side view of a woman, clothed in a bright green tunic. The woman has a pallid face, her long dark eyelashes are closed. Her lip is curled above her top teeth and her mouth is wide open as if in a scream. Her long hair is dark green and streams behind her like waterweed. Her arms and legs bend behind her as her abdomen is arched and a raging flow of water gushes out from her stomach. The folds of her tunic gape open like a mouth as the blue waters rush out and there are streaks of gold in its torrent.

The water flows into the paper pages of the book. A barren landscape of rocks and craters takes over, it's like a moonscape. There is a wedge of green overlayed in the middle of the desert, a photograph of the green scales and snub nose of a snake. The course of the river winds across the rocks in a long, thin line of tiny white words.

Much of the text in the book is in Spanish. Here the text starts with the words; 'Soy Yuma, rio de la tierra de los amigos...' The line of words continues across a peaked fold and around the first sharp bend of the river before disappearing.

The pages of the book reveal the landscape around the river and the people who live there. The river flows on past a night sky flooded with stars, a native person dressed in a reed costume.

There are black and white newspaper clippings. One tells the story of 'claiming the outlaw Missouri River- the yellowish Missouri pours into the clear Mississippi.'

There are turbulent waterfalls and bright rainbows.

On a sharp corner, a man, in shorts, shirt and baseball cap, crouches at the water's edge tilting a large flat pan.

A stretch follows where the river is represented in topographical photographs. The pinks and light browns of the river course stand out against a dark background. Its many tributaries spike outwards like the legs of a Chinese dragon, winding its way up the riverbed. Closer inspection reveals the background to be a forest of thousands of dark green trees.

On one page a child's drawing is laid on top of the river.

Little childish figures stand looking into the river as it flows into a town, The blue river water runs into dirty brown water. At the end of the page the edges of the scribbled brown water are arranged to join the edges of the topographical river and it continues its journey.

As we follow the river it reaches an area where a dam is being built. There is a sign with the words 'Senators! STOP TUTTLE CREEK DAM'.

There's a photograph of a group of young people who lie across a concrete road. Their bodies are arranged to spell out the letters of a political message.

On the next page ink lines ripple outwards from political statements. Tiny arrowheads on the end of the lines point inwards and form a whirlpool of words that float like thought bubbles in the water. For example, 'JUSTICA SOCIAL' and 'REVOLUCION CULTURAL' flow towards the central 'TRANSICION ENERGETICA JUSTA'.

At the end of the table there are photographs of a protest. People are gathered together carrying placards.

Water Portrait Series

The Water Portrait Series is made up of three works. Abstracted photos, in rich earthy colours, are manipulated into patterns and printed on lengths of cotton canvas and cotton silk. The works are each 1.5 meters wide and over 15 meters long. They are displayed in a line and run behind the pillars on the left.

The material is draped over bars set at different heights and suspended on metal wires from the ceiling. The material dips and flows in curves from bar to bar.

In the side view of the Water Portrait Series the edges of the undulating material create a line that sweeps up and down in waves along the wall. The shape of the drapes is emphasised by spotlights from above that throw light onto the top surface of the material and create a luminous, bright energy on the walls.

Underneath the material surface, the light that filters through creates shadows that echo the qualities of a murky underwater world.

The first work is **Wanaawna 2019**, printed on cotton canvas. The material is suspended high up near the ceiling at the start, behind the first pillar. A length of material hangs straight down to the floor on the left. This is covered in large patterns in turgid greens and creams that ripple outwards like watery stains. A touch of purple is carried over the top of the bar to where the material makes a long swoop downwards between the first and second pillars.

Here the kaleidoscope patterns become almost psychedelic with purples and bright greens. Images of bubbles and green algae-stained rocks are multiplied to create repetitive patterns.

The smooth curve of the material dips and then sweeps back up to half its original height, ending behind the second pillar.

The second work in the series is **Wanaawna Meets Salty Water 2019**, printed on cotton silk. This starts just above where the first work ends. The material crosses the wall in three sharp peaked waves of increasing height.

The river seems to flow quickly at first. White water froths up from the brown river in the first wave. The colour deepens to a rusty red-brown in the next wave. A blue line streaks up the middle of the image. The blue intensifies as the river water darkens.

At the peak of the last wave the blue centre widens out as the river water becomes brackish, the brown starts to meld with the blue as the image ends.

The third artwork in the series is **San Gabriel 2019**, printed on cotton canvas. This river seems craggier and more dangerous than the first. White water rushes around rocks. Dark cavernous holes lurk under the water. The patterns have a wild energy.

The material makes a long swoop down, then curves back up. It stops at the final bar, two thirds up from its original height.

The cotton fabric drops straight down on the other side. A white tongue of water crashes down in a waterfall from a deep cave. The wet rock wall shines with a golden tinge.

Yuma or The Land of Friends

Yuma or The Land of Friends is an abstract, digital image, 5 metres high and 6 meters wide. The work is displayed behind Perspex in a white frame.

From afar the image appears like a swirling mass in pale browns and pinks erupting from a purple-grey and black background. The lighter colours sweep across from the top right corner to the left-hand side, in the shape of what look like branches or roots.

There is an energy in the shapes and colours, like an explosion. This is intensified by dashes of white that splash across the picture.

There are rectangular patches of orangey pink dispersed across the picture. At the top, in the middle, is a small cluster of turquoise-blue kidney-shaped patches linked together by narrow turquoise veins.

Closing in on the image it becomes clearer what the picture represents. On the orangey pink rectangles, flecks of white turn out to be buildings from a satellite image. The pale orange colours are from the torn-up earth of a construction site.

The longest meandering brown branch, that winds across the picture like a tentacle, is the course of the river itself. With scrutiny, twisting lines turn out to be roads or dirt tracks. Tiny lorries travel the tracks or are parked at the construction areas. The splashes of white are clouds caught by the satellite image.

The turquoise splash at the top of the picture is water from the flooded area of a dam.

The image is printed on a grid of acrylic squares and depicts the site of the El Quimbo Dam on the Yuma River and the devastation caused in its construction.

It is a digital collage built from satellite imagery and maps. It includes topographic maps, aerial photographs, and satellite images. The abstract shapes created by the process, mask the aerial views when they are seen from across the gallery.

Installation-

Spaniards named her Magdalena but Natives Call Her Yuma, 2013

This is a two-channel HD video installation that has a 26-minute running time.

The installation is set inside a purpose-built room, about 6 meters cubed, with one open side for access. The room is dimly lit. The only light comes from the projected image on the screen.

Just inside the entrance is a long box seat that can be accessed around either side. There is one long screen on the far wall, that's as wide as the room. Two separate video films play side by side simultaneously, filling the screen.

A meter or so further in from the seat is a shallow metal tray of an equal size to the screen. It is set 1.5 meters out from the screen.

The video pictures are reflected in the water in the tray.

Caycedo starts a whispered commentary of the stories of the Yuma and other waterways. As her voice fills the room, scenes from the Yuma and other rivers are relayed on the video. There are comparisons with dams and reservoirs in Germany, and scenes of movement control of protestors by police in Berlin. The flow and containment of water and of societies is a constant theme.

The River Drawings Series

On the installation wall, opposite the bottom wall of the gallery, are five colourful, unframed drawings on paper. Each drawing tells the story of a different river. There are two more drawings from the River Drawing Series on the side walls.

Ume - Vindel 2018

This artwork from the River Drawing Series is drawn on two sheets of paper hung side by side with a narrow gap between. They are unframed. Each is about 60cms wide and 180cms long. The paper quality is thick, and the designs are drawn with coloured marker pens.

The two rivers start their journey in the mountains at the top of the illustration.

They flow as blue lines, parallel to each other, from high on the left-hand sheet and down towards the right, to the southeast.

Both rivers cross over to the right-hand sheet. The rivers wind and twist down towards the bottom right corner where they come together at the head of an estuary and then empty into the sea.

Words are written in paragraphs that fit into spaces around the illustrations and describe what the rivers encounter on their different journeys.

This is the introduction-

'We are the Ume and Vindel two mighty siblings born in the North Scandinavian mountains

Our bodies flow parallel towards the southeast for nearly 450 kilometres.'

Patron Mono 2018

Totally filling the three walls of the large alcove is the three channel HD video, with sound, 'Patron Mono'. This is an immersive experience. You can enter the alcove where you are surrounded by sound and visual stimulus on all three walls.

The video repeats every four and a half minutes. We can pick up at any point and catch the images as they go around. The video mixes pictures

of the river, the surrounding landscape and the people who work the river. Images move from wall to wall and are often isolated and manipulated to create abstract patterns.

(pebbles/snake) Underneath the water strong currents stream quickly over the rocks in the riverbed. The camera homes in on a row of smooth, shiny brown and pale gold pebbles. The pebble image is separated from the riverbed and formed into two long lines, with a lime-green background.

The pebbles at the top of the line are a mirror image of the pebbles at the bottom. Their rough texture is in sharp focus on the outside and blurred in the centre. The thick ropes of pebbles start to resemble the body of a snake as the line of pebbles start to slither across the screen. Getting faster, they shift around the walls from right to left.

Above the river surface, the current creates quick running lines of waves. The waves take on an orange hue and meld together. Their pattern is magnified and repeated. The surface becomes fixed like a rough tree bark.

The river flows yellow across the central screen. The image is doubled up, so the top half is an inverted reflection of the lower. The colour changes to a deep orange.

Under the river, flakes of gold rush through the water, they catch and pile up into clumps.

The river image splits into eight sections that flow into the middle of the screen, creating a kaleidoscope image as the water rushes down into the centre. The patterns from the bright yellow centre ripple out like a flowerhead.

In the dark underwater, gold fragments spin and wink as they rush past, swept up in the current.

We break through the water surface, splashing up and running alongside the white water that flows around dark rocks. There's a view of the bare mountains that surround the river. Their earth has a pink tinge.

Two people stand in a wooden boat. The image is doubled, with an inverted reflection. The curve of the boat and its reflection is manipulated so that they open in and out like a giant mouth. A man stands by the river panning for gold.

A man plunges into the river. He swims underwater, pulling himself around the large rocks that stick up from the riverbed. He holds his breath. Bubbles gather and rise about him.

A close-up of the man's hand fills the screen. On his magnified hand the swirl of his fingerprints is visible. In the palm of his hand gold fragments twinkle.

Memories of the Tyne Catchment 2022

Memories of the Tyne Catchment is a new commission made specially for the Baltic exhibition.

It is a large, colourful pencil drawing on paper, about 2 meters by 3.5 meters.

The drawing captures pictures of life along the River Tyne as it winds around a patchwork of scenes. Each scene reflects places and events in the past and the present.

Out to the west is very green with forests and wild areas and deep blue stretches of water. Kielder Water and forest are in the northwest. The greens turn to browns and greys and orange as the Tyne reaches the more industrialised towns to the east. Groups of people gather at various events through history.

On the righthand side near the edge of the drawing, the Northeast coastline follows a jagged course from the North at the top, heading South to the bottom of the paper.

The coastline breaks where the Tyne meets the sea, passing through the two piers of Tynemouth and South Shields. A fishing boat heads out to sea. Higher up the coast a surfer rides a breaking wave. A person up to their shoulders in sea water holds up a sign proclaiming ACT NOW.

At the top of the drawing the land meets the sky. As the horizon sweeps from east to west, the sky reflects a full day. From the orange light of dawn over the sea in the east, to a full moon in a black night sky, in the west.

As we follow the band of sky from the east, dawn melts into pale blue. A wetland area on the coast meets up with farmland. White fluffy clouds gather over a circular aerodrome carved out of the fields. Tracks of runways crisscross like spokes on a wheel. A handful of war planes fly above. This is RAF Woolsington that was to become Newcastle airport.

The sun sets over Kielder forest. A bird of prey, an osprey, is silhouetted against the fading yellow sky. Birds nest in the trees. Then the Roman Wall at Sycamore Gap is bathed in the pinks and greens of the Northern Lights that glow brightly above. Finally, a full moon rises into the midnight sky.

From the northwest corner Kielder Water with its dam, opens out into the deep blue waters of the river North Tyne. Wildlife flourishes here. There are leaping salmon pushing their way up a cascade of water. Portraits of a barn owl and the rare red squirrel and water vole. There's even a detailed drawing of a giant midge.

Supernatural beings are recorded around the edges of the forest. The devil walks with a man, a line of yellow and pink fairies take off and fly into the woods. Pale spectral figures roam the wild places.

In a green deserted valley where meadow butterflies flutter, St George, dressed in a white suit of armour, raises his sword, and wrestles a dragon.

Further down in the river are an otter, dolphins and sitting on a rock, a large pink crayfish. A fisherman wades into the river, another lays out his large catch of salmon in front of an orange 'Anglers Federation' sign.

In total contrast, in the next scene, dying salmon lie gasping in poisonous puddles of noxious red, blue and green liquids that run from open pipes into the river. A sign close by says 'Pollution in the River Tyne. Salmon with a paraffin flavour. Water starved of oxygen. A Newcastle Conference.'

In a corner of the poisonous river the Lambton Worm has wrapped its green body around a rock, seeming to thrive on the effluent.

Scenes of industry increase as the river travels east. A huge red ship sits in a dry dock surrounded by cranes. Chimneys from many factories discharge trails of black smoke, blown towards the east by a westerly wind.

In a portrait of Stella power station, fat, black, hourglass cooling towers emit clouds of steam.

A farmer is harvesting wheat next to an open cast coal mine. Black ribs of coaly earth stand stark against the golden field of wheat.

Across the river miners exit an underground coal mine. Heading home through black heaps of coal.

There is a depiction of the Durham Miner's Gala. Historical events are drawn in layers up to the recent past. On a stage a suffragette speaks to a vast crowd of sepia faces at an outdoor rally. She wears a purple dress with a green sash. We see the back of her black hair that is shaped in a bun.

In front of the stage a band of miners, drawn in black and white, march through the streets carrying their colourful banners. One of the banners is from the Women's Banner Group and is a drawing of a banner that is in the exhibition.

The next band of people are drawn in colour. Tourists stand watching the miner's march and a line of young people smile and link arms as they head up the road in front of the marchers.

When the Tyne reaches Newcastle there's a flashback to the making of the Tyne Bridge. A black and white image of the unfinished bridge and a portrayal of the finished bridge spanning the river beside the new millennium footbridge.

By the footbridge on the south bank at Gateshead, the Baltic is portrayed, with its warm brick and pale towers standing by the river. The large sign 'Baltic Flour Mill' spans the side of the building.

The river reaches its end. At the mouth of the Tyne a topographical map of South Shields is laid out before us.

To the north a group of fishwives gather to wait for the days catch. They wear long dresses and aprons and have wicker-basket creels to carry the fish.

In the south there are gatherings of migrant communities. Historical families in sepia tints, and families in the colourful present, pose for a photograph.

Communities march together as people have done together through history. Men in turbans march in front of a Mosque in the town's high

street. A ghostly crowd of flat capped working-class men follow behind them.

The picture finishes with these words.

'Memories of the Tyne Catchment as recorded by Carolina Caycedo in 2022. With the assistance of Rose McMurray and Robben Munoz. Commissioned by Baltic Center for Contemporary Art.'