

Somos Hijxs de la Tierra - We are Children of the Earth

This textile piece represents some of the self care I needed during lockdown. It is a personal reflection through planting, spending time alone and stitching. The fabric I used was made with hand dyed fabric from different plant and food based dyes significant to the Americas, such as purple corn, achiote and black beans. This was a continuation of a journey I started last year making natural dyes, weaving and growing corn.

In the centre is a lino print of a Mapuche symbol of a spider, (Llalin) the symbol itself represents knowledge and the woman weaver protector of all things. This central image is surrounded by dyed corn husks and embroidered are the words ' Somos Hijxs de la Tierra, afectó hecho hierba, caricia hecha hilo...) which roughly translates 'We are children of the Earth, affection made herb, caress made thread'. North and South are represented by the embroidered symbols from the Kultrun, the sacred drum used by Machi's (Community Healer) in Mapuche culture. The Kultrun (Drum) represents where the cosmic and earthly beings meet. In my piece the use of Mapuche symbols represents my longing for roots, as I come from a colonised country, Chile. Where the Mapuche are still fighting for autonomy and land rights, facing discrimination and criminalization by the state and it's military forces. The Mapuche (people of the earth) have a deep connection with nature and they are the gatekeepers of ancestral knowledge, and of how to live in harmony with the earth.

From my colonized land I can trace only four generations back, my roots are Andean and Meso American but mixed with the settlers' blood. After a brutal coup in 1973 my family then faced another displacement through exile. This landless state of being - of neither here nor there has always driven me to get closer to Chile (Wall Mapu).

The Corn symbolizes for me this meeting of identities, of food, of family and of longing and I started this journey growing purple corn from seeds planted just before we went into lockdown in March. The seeds were sent via a mexican friend, Cecilia Cruz who created a beautiful community project to grow Maize (Choclo - Corn). Myself and various other friends were all growing simultaneously purple corn. This connection became more special as we entered lockdown as we shared our progress and connected virtually and metaphysically through planting the corn (sembrando maiz). Corn appears in mythology and creation stories and each country has its own regional dishes made from corn. It has been cultivated for over 10, 000 years, and was first domesticated in Mexico.

As part of the piece I made an offering to the earth for all the harvest it has brought me, using the elements of water, earth, fire and air. I placed my textile in my garden where I have spent

most of my time during lockdown, and created an altar space to place all the elements, flowers, candles, Coca leaves, purple corn seeds, water, and copal incense. This fragmented identity, the loss of my birthplace and the isolation of cuarentine has created the backdrop for this idea.

As we all held space through our living rooms, zoom after zoom. I felt I couldn't carry on with my usual workshops that I hold for a longstanding project - Bordando Memoria (embroidering Memory) Each workshop is noisy, tactile, there is laughter, tears, sadness and always some food for sharing. I made this piece for me in the absence of being able to meet up with my community group and have the tactile contact that makes us belong. It was my healing patchwork of ideas, images and my relationship with nature over the lockdown put down into fabric and stitched with patience and hope.

Artist: Jimena Pardo
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BIO

Jimena Pardo is a second-generation Chilean who arrived in England with her mother Cristina in 1976 at the age of two. Jimena studied a degree in Fine Art Painting and Art for Society at Wolverhampton University, her artwork strongly reflects her family's experience, including her parent's imprisonment, and the exiled identity. She currently works as an Art Teacher in East London and since February 2018 has been facilitating workshops for the project 'Bordando por la Memoria' - Embroidering Memory.

A collaborative textile art project with the Chilean exiled community. Remembering events from the dictatorship and creating a physical archive of memory.

Current art practices are working with textiles making large banners, arpilleras, embroideries, working predominantly with recycled materials and using stitching, painting, screen printing, lino printing, and weaving to explore themes of self, memory, community, loss and human connections. During the Cuarentine she also co facilitated the project Stitch for Change with the Refugee Buddy Project in Hastings making a Pandemic Patchwork Quilt.