

# Thinking through Art, Drawing and Performance Ontological Conflicts that are at the Core of Mining Struggles

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## Abstract

*How could art contribute to make sense of the ongoing conflicts over mining and territory from alternative perspectives? Engaging with other modes of producing knowledge beyond the dominant Western tradition, two artists-researchers point connections to other modes of thinking with natural-cultural entities. Grounded in their history growing up in Peru, and thinking through performance and drawing, their writings pay attention to the ontological conflicts that are at the center of the struggles over mining in Peru. Alfredo Ledesma performs his hybrid beings (such as the Mountain self, the Jaguar self, the Sheep self) in order to explore imaginaries that have persisted as alternative horizons to the dominant system. He does this in towns impacted by mining projects to point to the alternative horizons that can be found in the struggles of various communities for “re-existence”. Imayna Caceres approaches an intuitive intersection of ecological, planetary concerns, where drawing works as an alternative method for knowledge production. Recalling their upbringing amid mestizo-indigenous practices that stem from Amazonian and Andean worlds, Caceres speculates about the more than human entities and relationalities that are centrally evoked by those rejecting mining.*

**Keywords:** art, autohistoria, earth-beings, performance, drawing.

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In this text, we give an account of the way in which art makes it possible to rethink various sociopolitical realities and imaginaries that exist around the struggles of mining and territory. Through performance, textile work, drawing and video, we bring attention to ways of producing knowledge that contribute, exceed (De la Cadena, *Earth Beings* 335), and trace interferences with the dominant scientific discourse. These are ways of producing knowledge that are nourished by the family and neighborhood mestizo-indigenous worlds in which we grew up in Lima, the capital of Peru, and which, in turn, have their origin in Andean and Amazonian sociocultural practices.

We write in two voices employing the approach of *Autohistoria-teoría*, which was conceptualized by Gloria Anzaldúa as a form of theorizing in which personal experiences, social protest, poetry, and one’s personal and

collective history – revised and in other ways redrawn – become a lens with which to reread and rewrite existing cultural stories (Anzaldúa 241-42). For Anzaldúa, *autohistoria-teoría* allows us to “expose the limitations in the existing paradigms and create new stories of healing, self-growth, cultural critique, and individual/collective transformation” (Ibid). In this manner, we aim to expand on the speculative knowledge that emerges in our artistic practice, in order to trace and account for alternative ways of “feeling-thinking” (Escobar, *Sentipensar* 184), researching and writing.

Focusing on performance, sculptural methods and textile work, Alfredo Ledesma addresses imaginaries that have persisted as alternative horizons to the dominant system. He does so by performing beings such as the Mountain Self, in territories that are being directly affected by mining. In turn, through drawing and video,

Imayna Caceres approaches an intuitive intersection of ecological, planetary concerns, where drawing works as an alternative method for knowledge production. Drawing on their upbringing amid mestizo-indigenous practices that stem from Amazonian and Andean worlds, Caceres speculates about the more than human entities and relationalities that are centrally evoked by those rejecting mining.

### **When Worlds Collide, Co-exist and Re-exist: Territory as Knowledge**

Alfredo Ledesma

On my father's side, I come from a family of silversmiths originating from a town in the Andes near the city of Huancayo. It is situated in a mining area, from which silver was extracted, along with other minerals. Some of the silver was used to produce artisan silver jewelry – which forms part of a cultural tradition, but most of the metal was used for export. Today that area lies destroyed. As my indigenous grandmother migrated to Lima with her children, I myself was disconnected to this area and territory. Nevertheless, growing up in Peru's capital Lima in the house of my grandmother, who also taught me the craft of silversmithing, I came to understand through her stories and reflections of changes in her life, but also through dealing with this topic in recent years, that territory is a space full of social history and symbolic and spiritual meaning. (Indigenous) knowledge and tradition is incorporated into the territory, as a way to be with the territory, and likewise, territory is incorporated into their knowledge and tradition. This traditional and local knowledge is a practical and reflective knowledge, which is passed on from generation to generation. It is also based on a certain understanding of nature, influencing interactions and relations with the surrounding. As Marisol de la Cadena stresses, it might be based on the understanding that nature is composed of earth-beings, of sentient entities, including human as well as non-human beings such as animals and plants, but also the sun, lagoons, mountains, or the wind, and on the mutual respect and mutual relation of care between those earth-beings (de la Cadena 5). This understanding of nature has inspired me

to expand my understanding of beings within territories and reflect on their agency, questioning the human-centered perspective and dualistic society-nature divide - a central aspect which I want to transmit through my art.

This aim intersects with my interest to address underlying structures of coloniality and diverse social, ethnical, epistemological and ontological hierarchies (Quijano) that are reproduced in the Peruvian society, and which are imposed on various communities impacted by mining, threatening their lifeworlds and local ways of being and knowing. This interest has deepened after visiting towns impacted or threatened to be impacted by mining projects (e.g. San Marcos and Valle del Tambo in Peru) where it was clear that mining leads to or is expected to lead to a profound change or even loss in relations to nature, culture, beliefs, values, knowledge, and perceptions of wellbeing.

Based on those experiences, also closely connected to considerations about the meaning of territory, reflections of underlying ontologies of nature are part of my projects. I contrast modern conceptions of "nature" (as a resource and means towards an end that might involve the destruction of non-human and human life) to Andean and Amazonian conceptions of life. In these conceptions, nature is understood in a more relational way, understanding society and nature not as separate domains, but as relationally constituted, thus understanding human and non-human entities as continually linked, only to be understood in their interconnectedness (Escobar 58). Also, nature is often attributed intrinsic values, understanding ecology or the cosmos as a subject that is an end in itself.

In that context, I further reflect about how knowledge about nature is produced, how it depends on or is related to the existing power structures and the type of knowledge which is considered legitimate. In Peru, knowledge that is able to foster economic growth and profit - such as through mining - is prioritized, even if it has proven to lead to ecological destruction. As indigenous, and also rural, campesino ways of understanding the world and their knowledge are often not oriented towards economic profit in disregard of nature, they often are considered as inefficient and reduced to being based on

superstitious beliefs by modern Western society and governments (Leff 33f, 46). To contrast this, I explore and also want to make visible what forms of values, thoughts, imaginaries, and visual perception have persisted, despite the existent hegemony over non-Western conceptions of “ecology” such as Pachamama.

Having those reflections in mind, in my projects and performances, human beings and modern culture are de-centered. By giving protagonism to other earth-beings beyond human actors - specifically to the wind, and also the mountain-self and the sheep being which I perform as a hybrid - I want to offer other ways to think about relations within a territory, and about the agency and protagonism of diverse actors. It is a proposal to engage in a process of unlearning and relearning through challenging and changing how we perceive beings and aims at broadening our horizons, understandings and connections.

In the following, I will present three artistic projects, which deal with the aforementioned issues. First, I invite you to take your time to see the video, and afterwards, you are welcome to read some reflections and contextualization of the projects.

### Through the Textile

With the project “Through the Textile: A Symbolic Intervention with the Textile in the Andes,” I want to give space to non-human and also human actors to express themselves and articulate their own language. The wind, manifesting itself through its interaction with the textile and its sound, is a central character. Also the textile, with its weaving and represented symbols, is supposed to be understood beyond its objective characteristics. Thinking about its process of coming to life, subjective value is attributed to it. It connects the breeding of sheep, the haptical connection and movements of weaving based on cultural tradition and the representation of symbols based on a certain cosmovision (Espejo). This project also involves voices of human protest actors in the Tambo Valley, resisting against the start of the mining project Tia Maria, to protect their mode of living based on agriculture. While witnessing their protest in 2019, the year in which I elaborated this art project, I have listened and recorded protesters who often remain unheard. Their opinions about the struggle and reasons for rejecting mining evidences the conflictive character of parallel existing perceptions and valorizations of nature and desired ways of being with the territory. The interaction of the wind and the textile was filmed in in the Andes in Ancash,



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXRhZbtZl1A&t=20s>



close by to one of Peru's biggest copper mining projects Antamina, where (partly indigenous) locals have experienced diverse changes since the presence of the mining operation for the last twenty years, one of them being the destruction of the mountain once considered a powerful being with its own character.

Also with this project, I am interested in reflecting and questioning how we know and understand "nature", broadening our perspective of active beings manifesting in territories, and to give space to voices faced by threats to their lifeworlds.

### Introducing the Hybrid Beings

Art poses the possibility of reconstructing myself by extending my body in tandem with other beings to create a conglomerate of differences that otherwise tend to separate us and limit our understanding. Becoming a hybrid seeks to make it possible to understand a world made up of many worlds, embracing a multiplicity of possible worlds. In this pluriverse, we can coexist and connect through traditions and practices, where rivers, mountains, oceans, rocks, clouds, the wind, the sun can be understood as subjects (Blaser and de la Cadena 4-5). In this context, I understand hybridity as the integration and combination of human and non-human perspectives. It is also a reminder that we, especially referring to many urban people in Lima with parents who have migrated to the city, are already a mix of many worlds of the pluriverse, influenced by multiple backgrounds, traditions and worldviews. Thus, we should embrace the different worlds and influences as integrated parts of ourselves, but also to expand this understanding. Performing non-human perspectives by becoming hybrid beings is an attempt to make visible the existence and protagonism of other living beings, offering us a vision of different (non-)human worldviews, thus leaving human-centered perspectives, opening up the path towards a pluriverse.

Seeking to be in "another skin," I performed as a hybrid, that is, a fusion of natural beings who manifest themselves as a unity through corporeality – amongst others with the costume of a sheep and a mountain:

### The Sheep Self



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_inJ5BjTyY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_inJ5BjTyY)

The first hybrid being I performed was the Sheep Self in 2020, which I consider as a representation and symbol of the connection with the territory and of mutual care. The creation of this character was inspired by my family background: The family of my indigenous peasant grandfather bred sheep. When my grandmother migrated to Lima with her children, and also when I was already alive, my grandfather sometimes brought my grandmother a sheep, as a way to remain connected with their rural territory and other beings. For this project, my aunt Loroña, who still lives in my father's birthplace in an Andean town beside the city of Huancayo, breeds sheep and thus has a close connection to those animals, routinely observing their interaction as a flock, agreed to send me the skin of a sheep that was bred in this town. With this skin, sewed to fit a human body, I performed the sheep being in various places in Vienna - where I have been living the past eight years - also inviting other people to become a sheep self and to join for a walk as a flock. This video presented here, as a demonstration of the performance, was filmed in Vienna. In the performance, the physical presence of the hybrid is manifested in an open space, in a place called "Baumkreis am Himmel" which could be translated as "Tree Circle on the Sky," as well as in the action of walking and perceiving different beings present in the surroundings. This performance - through a corporal experience, experiencing it with different senses, feeling the heaviness of the skin, the heat underneath while moving in space, the smell of the sheep skin in combination with the smell and sounds of

the surrounding - invites us to enact other ways of thinking within a body, understanding the body as a bridge to different perceptions, which embrace multiplicity.

### The Mountain Self



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMQ\\_MKa16wo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMQ_MKa16wo)

One important actor in my ritual performances is the Mountain Self. In pre-colonial times, sacred mountains served as platforms for various rituals and they continue to be associated with divinity in some indigenous Andean cosmovisions, especially when they are considered as Apus (mountain spirits). Mountains have a direct influence on the life cycles of the region in which they are located. According to the pre-Incan tradition of the Andean area, some of the mountains protect the inhabitants of the valleys that were irrigated by water from their peaks. As Fabian Li demonstrates in her book *Unearthing Conflict* mountains and lagoons are a protagonist in the socio-territorial struggles that are threatened to be exploited (4). This invites us to think about the deep ecologies of indigenous communities, understanding mountains as protective beings, and the indigenous communities' right to live in harmony

with the mountains.

Based on those observations, as well as my experience in (planned) mining areas in Peru, I created the Mountain Self, giving protagonism to mountains as powerful actors within territories, stressing their active presence, perceiving the mountain as a sentient, living being, and reflecting different perceptions of the meaning and value of a mountain, especially in the context of mining. The mountain Self has traveled from Peru, to Austria and to Mexico. The performance presented here took place in 2021 at the Pacific coast in Mexico. With the movement and the proximity to the sea and the sound of the waves, the mountain's agency as well as interconnections of different earth-beings is emphasized.

## Approaching through Drawing Speculative and Alternative Forms of Knowledge Production

Imayna Caceres

My aim is to examine the ways in which it is possible to address socio-political realities, imaginaries, perspectives and conflicting relationships that exist with respect to mining through drawing. A large literature has shown evidence of the negative impact of mining activities in South America both to their communities and the land. [1]

The severe environmental impacts include soil erosion, deforestation, loss of fauna and flora, loss of biodiversity caused by toxic chemicals, acidic water, dust and gas being released into the air, all which in parallel drastically affects health and deeply alters life forms (Cacciuttolo 1-2). Questioning the reason why mining companies and conglomerates are allowed to impact the planet so severely brings us to the paradigm of progress, and to mining as a proposition on how to use the land in order to achieve said progress.

As an artist-researcher, I am interested in speculative spaces that engage and exceed what is contemplated by the dominant scientific discourses. My way of producing knowledge

happens in a braiding of diverse artistic means, engaging learnings of the organized collectives of which I am a part, engaging learnings from the mestizo-indigenous worlds in which I grew up in Lima, and seeking to connect all this to existing scientific literature. In my work, I draw, paint, and write my account of personal-collective memories, stories, dreams, sound and body knowledge, and learnings made in the encounter with creatures, entities and phenomena. Grounded in the history I come from and the daily relationships I have developed with the more than human neighbors in the place I have come to live in Vienna, my work aims to point out interspecies connections and other ways of thinking with natural-cultural entities beyond the human.

In my experience, the artistic practice of drawing makes us pay attention to what we are able to perceive in the shapes, languages and properties of things and beings, in their livingness, and through this, to come across other forms of knowing. A knowing that takes place through our senses, through the materiality of our body and through the standpoint of our multiple identities. Via drawing, one is able to engage in, and to invoke an aesthetics of living, where life expands between balance and chaos,



*Underworld Journeys Through Bodies of Water, 2019. 50 x 70 cm*



between transformative action and inactivity, persistence and chance, the known and the unknown, and through which we can explore the reflections that arise from it.

In the drawings and series to which I refer in this text, I draw on black paper as a medium to evoke the environment of the underground, the subconscious as an underlying realm of basal fears and desires, the fabric of space-time and the dark matter of the cosmos. A scenario where each drawing connects worlds where past, present and future meet simultaneously. And where the spaces left undrawn keep a record of the parts of reality that may never be studied or researched, areas that resists human understanding, and that may never be known to us.

The use of black also connects me also to a pre-colonial aesthetic history of the Peruvian northern coast, which produced black water vessels with various social and symbolic uses (as it is case of the Chimu culture c. 850-1450 AD). Vessels which have kept a symbolic archive of non-modern ways of relating to non-human others.

My drawings can be understood within an aesthetics of the dark, as a place where our perception through our senses sharpen. Where the dark is a space to explore feelings of anxiety, danger, and mourning, but also room

for subversive and radical knowledge by those who inhabit the margins. An allusion to an underground darkness that is imagined as a worksite for an archeology that digs gaps onto the surface.

In my series *Geographies of Selves / Roots in the Dark* (2019), I referred to the weight of several axes of history and the structural systems of domination and accumulation, but also the passing on of dissident ways of living which included world-making (Escobar 2015) co-laborings (de la Cadena 2015, 12) with the more than human. As part of this series, in “Underworld Journeys Through Bodies of Water,” I drew the body of the South American continent as a floating island from which inland waters run onto a primordial ocean. Surrounded by eroded soil, Andean waters become the Amazon, and the Atlantic, feeding the world above and below – of new and ancestral life. Like an x-ray that in darkness reveals a further reality underlying beneath what can be seen: The blossoming land is the soil that feeds us, that embraces our dead and nourishes the darkness of soil and cosmos.

Drawing thinking about the bodies of water that cross the continent brought me to think about water and its relation to soils and mountains. In *Cosmic Pathways. Water Descending Upon Mountains* 2019, I drew a mountain on which cosmic rivers descend, insinuating the edges



*Cosmic Pathways. Water Descending Upon Mountains. 2019*

of the South American continent and alluding to the water dwellings in the Andes and the Amazon. I drew the constellation of the Southern Cross which can only be seen from the south and a rainbow that evokes the mythological serpent Amaru and with it the various paths and transformations of water.

At the heart of mining conflicts in Peru there is often an ontological conflict about what rivers and mountains mean and what kind of relationships and practices it is possible to establish with them. Environmental defenders in South America speak of rivers as sources of life and ancestral beings, and the scientific ontological turn of recent years has been showing that their perspectives hold ground.

Research shows that water has been present throughout the universe for almost all of its existence, and that it is from outer space that it came to earth. [2]

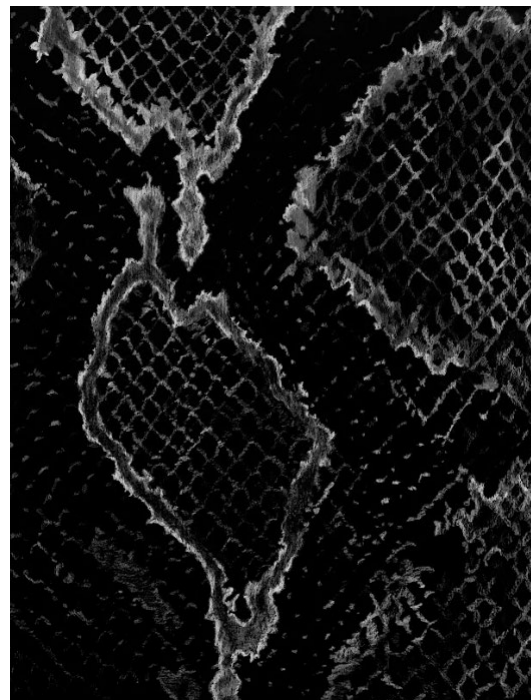
Water on the planet is very old and its presence has contributed to form the planet and its various landscapes. Moreover, some scientists hypothesize that water shaped biodiversity, in that it would be the variations in rainfall in the equatorial zone which has contributed to this area's greater diversity of species. [3]

The mountain in my drawing alludes to the Andes from which water streams descend to return to the sea. Thinking-drawing the Andean mountains allows me to imagine them as antennas that help the water to find its way to the ground. Soil that absorbs water, distributes it throughout its channels and is shaped by it. Forming *puquios*, streams, creeks that meander to the sea, sculpting the land and changing the terrain as they move. Masses of water interconnected as a vibratory energy that in its different states creates paths across the planet. Water transporting memories and carrying messages as a mediator of worlds that come together to become with one another. Rivers of water that sing with a thousand voices and each stream sounds its way, carrying the histories of all they encountered.

The two drawn rivers meandering down from above are placed like arms that embrace the mountain and feed it with cosmic waters. Water that runs through the cosmos crossing and pollinating our planet. Since H and O are

very common elements, they often travel in meteorites that fall to earth, and the water of our planet also evaporates so that it returns to the cosmos. Thus, the circulation of water occurs at the planetary as well as the cosmic level. [4]

A perspective that is somewhat hinted in several indigenous mythological legends, as in the case of the dark constellation of the Llama in the Milky Way which was thought to drink the excess water to prevent the planet from flooding (Urton 188). Being able to visualize this cosmic cycle of water, the discussions concerning the territories affected by mining then appear limited. For there is usually a perception of mining tailings as something that only affects the populations directly adjacent to mining operations, ignoring the flow and recirculation of water that occurs throughout the planet – affecting thus the majority of the world population. Thinking about it in this way would imply for mining companies the need to calculate a mining canon that considers their planetary impact as well.



In "Maps of the Amaru" I drew the skin of a snake with the wish of referencing the *Amaru* as a serpentine entity that inhabits different realms and thus is able to slither across borders. Observing in detail the skin pattern of the snake, I identify a shape resembling the map



of South America. As I draw it and seeking to emulate every scale's shimmer and reflection of lights, the areas of continental land became covered in closely knit scales, resembling a chain of mountains, whereas the mountain-scales on the sea appeared submerged in water. Thinking of South America as imprinted on the skin of the Amaru snake brings me to think of a land in undulating motion and continuously renovating its skin. Something not far from a geological understanding of how the earth is a living organism whose crust is made of moving tectonic plates that cause earthquakes and volcanos both on land and on the oceans floor. In this way, drawing lands and waters brings about a reflection on soil being in constant motion, and through drawing, I come across patterns that remind me how we are made on a quantic level with the skin of other entities.

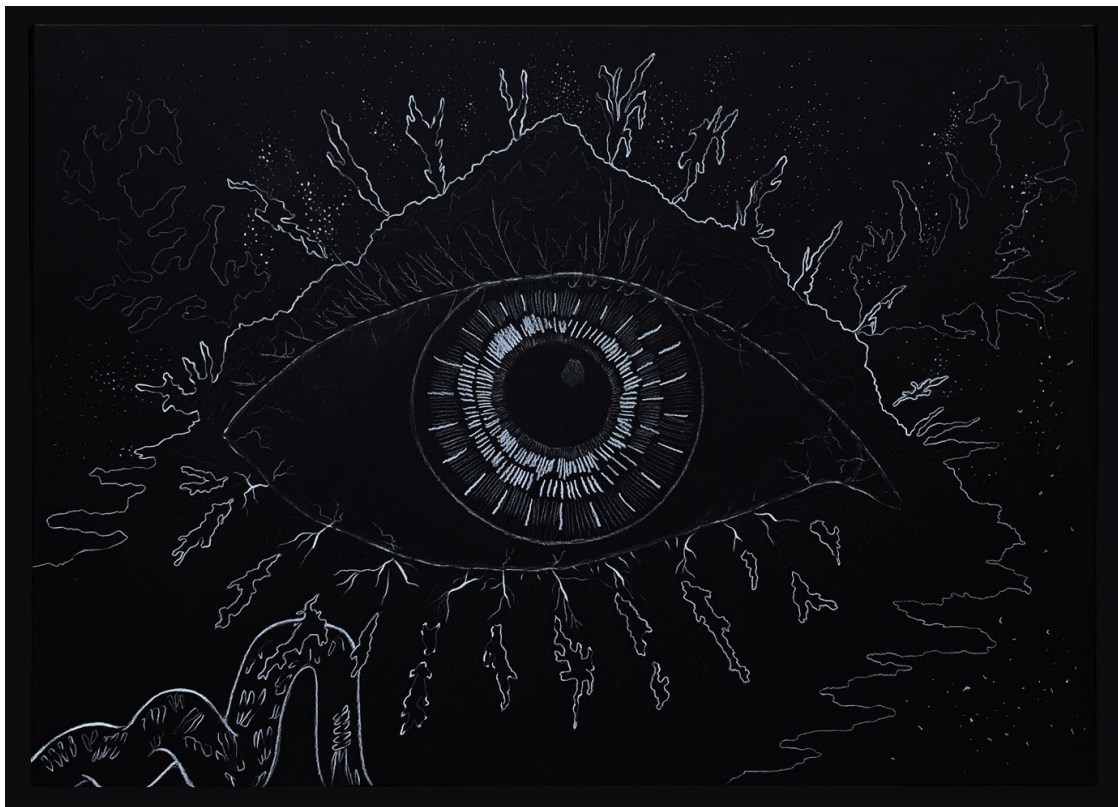
Throughout these series I found that my drawings lived many lives. In one of those lives my drawings worked as theoretical reflections that were able to revise symbols and produce pollinating meaning.

Through drawing one is able to invoke ways of existing that have not been represented in what

was described as modern culture. In this, drawing acts as a ground for relating to our multiple identities and possible readings of history. In the absence of material documentation, it emerges as a weaver of traces of affection, able to connect to that which is cherished or deemed necessary to be remembered. [5]

Drawing offers a ground in which one can move between various fields, circulating through human and extra-human interactions and confluences. A permeable soil in which it is possible to sustain a resonant and intertwined dialogue with diverse traditions of plant teachings, indigenous and feminist knowledge and care, and scientific knowledge (Kimmerer 156-166).

Part of my *Kinship* series (2019), "*Vision*" shows a mountain-eye in reference to a trip through the Amazonian Andes region where my mother stems from, and where I came across a mountain full of life in the San Ignacio province of Cajamarca. Filled with such a diversity of plants and creatures and with several streams flowing down its slopes, the mountain seemed as it could breathe and move. Facing this living entity, it was easy to imagine that this mountain could



*Vision*, 2020. 50 x 70 cm.

have been considered an *Apu*, that is, a sentient mountain entity that is in mutual relationships of care with people, as de la Cadena describes in *EarthBeings: Ecologies of Practices in Andean Worlds* (2015).

This encounter solidified my thinking of mountains as creatures carrying life on their skin and within their guts and constantly changing, growing and shrinking. Researching on the formation of the Andes, as a succession of mountain ranges, cordilleras, plateaus and depressions, I learned that the Andes were made by volcanic activity and subducted plates, in a process which created numerous dikes and veins containing concentrations of valuable minerals. Both this geological research and my drawings brought me to reflect about the heavy elements that are sought out by mining industries: what did these minerals mean for ancient Andean inhabitants? How might this particular relation to minerals and mountains have been passed on and survived? How did they arrive to precolonial groups which employed gold and silver for social and symbolic purposes, as something which was different for the colonizers upon their arrival? The glimmer, luminance, transparence, refraction of minerals could have well been reminders of the outer worlds that inhabit the cosmos, and of the cosmic events that made life in the universe possible. Elements from outer space older than the Milky Way, sinking in, burrowing in the entrails of mountains. Mountains which retrieve water from the atmosphere, receiving and collecting heavy rainfall and creating rivers.

Here stories come to my mind that were passed on in my family as evidence that even for those who migrated from Amazonian and/or Andean mountain environments to Lima, the stories from back home still feature in one way or another the presence of mountains as well as a cautious relation to minerals, particularly to the obtainment of gold and silver. Growing up my mother told me stories in Lima which had been told to her by her grandmother at 3,035 meters in Uchumarca. Stories like the one of the boy-angel with golden curls who appears to people and invites them to play with a golden ball, only for the people to end up appearing *desbarrancados* (falling off a mountain into a ravine). Or the story of how when one has not procured to drink water

during the day, it can happen that your head detaches itself from the body during the night, in its desire to fetch water. Or the story of a man who crossing the highest mountain slopes, comes across a well-dressed man who gifts him a small gold bull. Realizing that something is not right, he wraps the bull with his clothes and buries the gold bull in the mountain. In these stories, one can read a symbolic critique of ways of life that make us pursue devastating destinies, that warns us of the danger of not taking care of our needs for water, or caution us about not being fooled by the appeal of money. Is the impulse behind the passing of these stories a kind of acknowledgement of the lived traumatic colonial memories that so deeply turned around the extraction of minerals? Or is there also even a passing of spiritual practices which once had their place in connection to temples dedicated to the sun and the moon with their respective associated elements of gold and silver?

An early example of how drawing can capture the ontological conflicts surrounding mining activities are the drawings of Guaman Poma de Ayala in his *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* (Peru, c. 1615). An ontological distance captured in this fictional drawing in which the Inca asks Pedro de Candia "Is this the gold you eat?" to which Candia replies, "We eat this gold." The political criticism in this ironical depiction is clear: who is capable of unleashing so much violence and destruction simply to find gold? The only possible explanation for such an absurd urgency is that gold is what they eat, what they need to maintain life and a functioning society. To this day, "*You can't drink gold*" is one of the many slogans that can be read on the walls of the mining towns of Peru and the Water Marches of the continent.

In my experience, drawing works as a tool for the interpretation of different realities, which contributes to my writing. Tracing paths to ancestral connections and symbolisms through drawing and thinking with the vision of the mountain, I find it interesting to think of knowledge as layers of learnings, erasures and reconstructions. A layered sedimentation of experience that has been passed down from the earliest forms of life. Learnings that transformed the RNA and DNA of ancient ancestors and that

in the process multiplied the diversity of the planet.

Through drawing I employ speculative ways of associating information, making unexpected connections. As an extensive web, made of threads, knots and entanglements, which break creating gaps but that also generate structures of interaction and open new questions. Drawing and thinking with the more than human creates a dialogue between intuitive and scientific knowledge that connect aspects that are commonly dismissed such as intuition and connect it to theoretical thinking. A perspective in which the Western traditional scientific method is one of many ways of producing knowledge.

### Political urgencies

We are at a juncture of global pandemic, ecocidal extractivism, racial disaster and capitalism, and catastrophic environmental collapse (Demos 1). This seemed to have highlighted how the way we relate to others might have overwhelming and imposing consequences. An opportunity to reflect about relationalities and perspectives which were previously not accounted for, and to do so from a standpoint that dialogues with threads of dissident worldmaking in order to revise and transform our modes of living, being, thinking with others.

In invoking our inter-existence with other beings, I do not think of earth-beings as having a kind of inherent goodness which allows them to maintain balance, or to connect alienated worlds back to what is called 'nature'. Quite the contrary, as sentient beings, earth-beings should definitely be imagined as having the emotional bandwidth for positive and negative behavior that any other people is able to carry. Of having will, desires and motivations. Of producing collaborations and disassociations and of being able to foster masters and learners. [6]

Instead, what I am interested in is the connection of the spiritual to the political that addresses historical power relations in realities that are human and beyond. With the political-spiritual connection I mean the practical, nurturing relation to a materiality or ecosystem (local and cosmic) that is practiced out of need. A care of the relationships with what keeps us

alive and which is the basic condition for our life to exist. [7]

The collectives I am part of carry a political-spiritual engagement to the struggles of the peoples who are already speaking in behalf of their relations to mountains, rivers and woods. People in Latin America that are criminalized like Máxima Acuña, Alberto Curamil, Leydy Pech, Nemonte Nenquino, or that have been disappeared and murdered for speaking up like Bertha Cáceres, Bety Cariño, Cacique Emyra Wajãpi, Macarena Valdez, Samir Flores, and so many more.

With so many thousand deaths on one side of the several mining conflicts that exist in Abya Yala, the urgency of this situation carries criminal undertones both for the humans and for the destruction of entire ecosystems vital for the survival of our species. [8]

Here it is relevant to make an important notation. When talking of territory, I am aware that an ontological conflict is already at place. The political conversation around mining conflicts in Peru takes place within the conceptual framework of territory and the sovereignty of the nation-state to administer land according to the criteria of the law. This considers, for example, the possibility of consultation processes but also protects private property and the right to free enterprise, even more so after the modifications made to the 1993 Peruvian constitution that liberalized the protective role of the state. Something that structurally clashes with the welfare of the people (human and more than human) in mining extraction zones.

But the limitation of the concept of territory is even greater in that it does not contemplate the cosmopolitics of the more than a thousand indigenous groups in the Americas. Thus, the dialogue on territory already begins at a disadvantage for these groups, which are unable to assert their political-spiritual relationship with the cosmos in their dealing with the state. As we have seen, this does not change when definitions are included in the constitution that consider the *pachamama*. Something that shows the power that exists in hegemonic paradigms and the colonial heritage that survives in the relations between political actors of the center and the periphery. [9]



My proposal is that thinking through drawing allows us to approach the ontological aspects that are part of the struggles around mining and the conflicts and relationships between those who live in the territory and those who live with the territory. In the face of the various socio-ecological crises of our time, we urgently need artistic practices that set-in motion alternative ways of generating knowledge.

In this I bear in mind that I come from a history that does not begin with writing as a way of creating and archiving knowledge, but with the language of other natures-cultures, of colors, of drawing, murals, khipus, knotting, textile weaving, ceramics, stonework and more. In my practice, I have found that a grounded approach to the different arts can contribute to decentering the human and ultimately can contribute to the project of decolonizing the academy.

Art, considered as a cosmopolitical praxis, contemplates multidimensional ways of understanding knowledge, tracing connections and relational perspectives about the worlds in which we interexist. Especially when working with artistic practices that evoke and condense life-sustaining visions about the ways of living and relating to each other to which we aspire.

## Concluding Thoughts

We write in two voices that share resonances, but that also reflect differences. Both proposals show the possibility of how art can help us think about our relationships with human and more than human subjects involved in the mining conflicts in Peru and Abya Yala. We have in common the methodological use of an autoethnographic speculative frame to investigate our readings of particular elements that form part of the territorial conflicts around mining and the surrounding political events. The artistic methods that we explore, use life stories and symbological vocabularies to generate insights and theories. In this manner, we expand our grasp beyond commonly examined factors, channeling artistic perspectives to explore the political social landscape, we aim to expand the narratives in which we think of social justice and transformation.

## Endnotes

[1] This is something I had the opportunity to discuss in Peru directly as part of my sociological fieldwork studies in 2006. Both with residents living in the vicinity of Barrick Gold's Pierina mine in Huaraz, as well as with residents of La Oroya where the Doe Run mine operates.

[2] van Dishoeck, Ewine F., Eric Herbst, and David A. Neufeld. "Interstellar Water Chemistry: From Laboratory to Observations." *Chemical Review* 113.12 (21 Nov 2013): 9043-9085. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/cr4003177>

[3] Greater species diversity at the equator linked to variations in precipitation. 9 Sep. 2019. Oxford University Earth Sciences. <https://www.earth.ox.ac.uk/2019/09/greater-species-diversity-at-the-equator-linked-to-variations-in-precipitation/>

[4] The hydrofeminist researcher, Astrida Neimanis, reflects on ways of thinking about water in terms of an ethics and poetics of hydrocommons. In a recent talk, she stated "All the water that has ever been on this planet is still here, no more, no less." Since water seems to evaporate onto the cosmos and to return in meteorites, perhaps this is not fully true. I highlight this because of the importance of understanding how our interconnectedness does not really end on a planetary level. See: "We Are All at Sea: Practice, Ethics, and Poetics of 'Hydrocommons'". Talk at RIBOCA2—2nd Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art 2020.

[5] A few ideas and considerations around drawing were first developed by the author in "Underground Blossomings: Serpentine thinking with other beings." *Periskop: Forum for Kunsthistorisk Debat* 24 (2020): 32-47.

[6] See for example: <https://www.quantamagazine.org/soils-microbial-market-shows-the-ruthless-side-of-forests-20190827/>

[7] I published this definition of the political-spiritual in a previous article: <https://www.textezurkunst.de/en/articles/imayna-caceres-practices-of-connection-and-care-of-life/>

[8] Abya Yala is the name that indigenous social movements, as well as anticolonial groups and initiatives, give to Latin America.

[9] See also de la Cadena, "Indigenous Cosmopolitics."

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## Authors' biographies

Imayna Caceres is an artist and researcher interested in the makings of communities in more-than-human worlds, futuristic ancestral heritages, and practices of regeneration and kinship. She engages with forms of knowledge that exceed the dichotomies of modernity and Western knowledge. Her work includes relational and ritual practices, projects in public space, video and digital and analogical drawing.

Candidate to the Doctorate in Philosophy by the Akademie der bildenden Künste. MA. in Fine Arts as well as MA in Artistic and Cultural Science, and BA in Sociology and in Communication Sciences. She is part of the collectives Trenza and Anticolonial Interventions in Vienna, with which they organize around feminist ecopolitical matters.

Alfredo Ledesma Quintana is a Peruvian artist based in Vienna for the last seven years. He was born and raised in Lima, and belongs to the third generation of a Peruvian artisan silversmith family. Through his artwork, he tries to close a gap, reconnect with, revalue and reactivate traditional Andean culture and his Andean identity. With his work he tries to critically approach existing "modern" values and rework, decolonize, and de/re-learn through art.

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