

CECILIA BRUNSON PROJECTS

SANDRA MONTERROSO: DYED IN THE WOOL

19 June - 30 August 2020

2G Royal Oak Yard
Bermondsey Street
London
SE1 3GD

Opening times: by appointment only

For full details and larger images, please see the end of this document.



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Meditando el Error, 2008
Video-Performance
Duration 5:48 mins.
(SAM0029)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Colorando las Hebras, 2011
Video-Performance
Diptych

Duration: 7:28 min
(SAM0031)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Decolorando las Hebras, 2011
Video-Performance
Diptych

Duration: 7:28 min
(SAM0038)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Expoliada II, 2016
Dyed and colour-fast thread with wood mount
155 x 143 x 12 cm
(SAM0035)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974

Tejido IIII, 2020

Dyed paper, painted with indigófera and other pigments

138 x 90 cm

(SAM0020)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974

Composiciones Acuáticas II, 2019

Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper

55 x 70 cm

(SAM003)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974

Composiciones Acuáticas III, 2019

Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper

55 x 70 cm

(SAM001)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974

Composiciones Acuáticas IIII, 2019

Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper

55 x 70 cm

(SAM005)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974

Efectos Cruzados V, 2020

Indigofera dyed thread and wood

30 x 25 x 18 cm

(SAM0024)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974

Crossed Effects VII, 2020

Indigofera dyed thread and wood

29 x 30 x 18 cm

(SAM0018)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Efectos Cruzados VI, 2020
Indigofera dyed thread and wood
30 x 25 x 18 cm
(SAM0019)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Volviendo al Punto de Partida, 2012
Textiles, cotton yarn, synthetic yarn gold, two engraved knives
(SAM0032)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
La Otra Línea Histórica, Cara o Cruz, 2017
Achiote, linen, watercolour, feathers and copper coins
15.5 x 844 cm
(SAM0012)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Tu Ashé Yemanya, 2015
Coconut, textile, feathers, and hemp rope
Unique work
120 x 10 cm
(SAM0026)

[View detail](#)



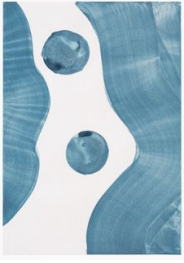
Sandra Monterroso 1974
Puntos en Resistencia I, 2011
Yellow dyed thread, steel wire
120 x 20 x 20 cm approx.
(SAM0033)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974
Patrón en Azul, 2019
Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper
42 cm x 29.5 cm
(SAM007)

[View detail](#)



Sandra Monterroso 1974

Fluido Azul, 2019

Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper

42 cm x 29.5 cm

(SAM008)

[View detail](#)

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Meditando el Error, 2008



Video-Performance
Duration 5:48 mins.
(SAM0029)

Image 1/4

Description

Link to video extract:
<https://vimeo.com/139813787>

Meditando el Error (2008) is one of Monterroso's seminal works. With this performance the artist highlights her concerns with identity and culture, which are key to understanding the driving force behind her work. In *Meditando El Error*, Monterroso reflects on the impossibility of moving forward from the colonial legacy in Guatemala, and questions how the Maya are constantly exoticized and reduced to a mere object of investigation by mainstream society. In the video, two performers, a male and a female, lie next to each other on an elaborate, colonialstyle bed. At first the female attempts to stand up, but is inevitably pulled back by the string attaching one to the other. Similarly, the male partner repeats the action. The performance takes place in a private domestic space first, but later it is moved to a rural outdoor setting. Here, the two individuals, now standing, continue to pull away from each other in order to advance, but evidently cannot move much farther. While performing the artist utters Maya Q'eqchi' phrases that allude to issues confronting the indigenous communities in present-day Guatemala such as: "I can't get a job anywhere," "It's a problem to have children," "You are a coward," and "I'm used to it already." The performance and its accompanying dialogue outline the vestiges of colonization, but also reveal an important relational dynamic. The relation enacted by the couple in the video becomes

evident through the nature of the voices, which sound more like internal thoughts than actual utterances. The effect is intentional as the artist seeks to present the kind of silent and intuitive dialogue that couples develop after cohabitating for an extended period of time.

Taken from Sara Gazon's essay Sandra Monterroso: Cultural Subversions in Hemisphere: Visual Cultures of the Americas Volume 8, Issue 1 (2015)



Image 2/4



Somos una misma cosa

Image 3/4



Nuestros días están menguando

Our days are diminishing

Image 4/4

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Colorando las Hebras, 2011



Video-Performance
Diptych

Duration: 7:28 min
(SAM0031)

Description

Link to video extract:
Colorando las Hebras
<https://vimeo.com/430277901>

In the video *Colorando las Hebras* ("Coloring the Threads"), the artist employs the traditional Maya technique of dyeing textiles, where using two wooden paddles she masters the strands of thread as she submerges them into a hot pot of water where the yellow dyes are concentrated. In this dance of hands it is possible to appreciate Monterroso's agility in the way she handles the paddles to manipulate the threads without ever letting go or touching it with her hands. In contrast, the next video *Decolorando las Hebras* ("Discoloring the Threads") shows the artist by the edge of river. This time, she is holding the threads with her hands as she scrubs them violently against each other and rewashes them with clean water. The artist scrubs and twists in a hopeless effort to wash the yellow color away. The concerted and patient process of coloring suddenly becomes a fierce and desperate act, which consequently reveals a sense of frustration, as the threads never completely revert to their original color. In this two-part performance, Monterroso directly explains what the Polish sociologist Zigmunt Bauman termed "liquid modernity." Bauman's concept refers to the lightness or liquidity of life, love, emotions, and even art, resulting from Modernity and globalized societies. Monterroso dyes the

threads yellow, and then, through the impossible effort of de-coloring them, she emblematically tries to wash away the idea of the static and the permanent that is often associated with indigenous tradition, culture, and identity. As a performance piece, Monterroso comments both on Baumann's conception of the ephemeral quality of contemporary human relations, and invokes Mexican anthropologist Gilberto Gimenez. Gimenez opines, "Identity must not be understood as a homogenous, static, and immutable repertoire of meanings, because although it has certain areas of stability, it is always transforming." Monterroso's references to Gimenez and Baum's theories on culture and identity are fundamental in understanding the changing nature of humans as social agents who are constantly in flux as they consume and create culture.

Taken from Sara Gazon's essay Sandra Monterroso: Cultural Subversions in Hemisphere: Visual Cultures of the Americas Volume 8, Issue 1 (2015)

Exhibitions

2011

"Efectos cruzados", Galería Piegatto (Arte La Fábrica), Guatemala City, Guatemala. Curaduría / Curated by: Ernesto Calvo.

2013

"Efectos cruzados", Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, San Salvador, El Salvador. Curaduría / Curated by: Ernesto Calvo.

2014.

"How much engaged?", Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, Portugal. Curaduría / Curated by: Antonio Pinto Ribeiro.

2017.

"Decolonizing Nature", 516 ARTS, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Curaduría / Curated by: Chloë Courtney & Lara Esther Goldman.

2017.

"La intimidación es política", Centro Cultural Metropolitano, Quito, Ecuador. Curaduría / Curated by: Rosa Martínez

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Decolorando las Hebras, 2011



Video-Performance
Diptych

Duration: 7:28 min
(SAM0038)

Description

Link to video extract:
Decolorando las Hebras
<https://vimeo.com/430280010>

In the video *Colorando las Hebras* ("Coloring the Threads"), the artist employs the traditional Maya technique of dyeing textiles, where using two wooden paddles she masters the strands of thread as she submerges them into a hot pot of water where the yellow dyes are concentrated. In this dance of hands it is possible to appreciate Monterroso's agility in the way she handles the paddles to manipulate the threads without ever letting go or touching it with her hands. In contrast, the next video *Decolorando las Hebras* ("Discoloring the Threads") shows the artist by the edge of river. This time, she is holding the threads with her hands as she scrubs them violently against each other and rewashes them with clean water. The artist scrubs and twists in a hopeless effort to wash the yellow color away. The concerted and patient process of coloring suddenly becomes a fierce and desperate act, which consequently reveals a sense of frustration, as the threads never completely revert to their original color. In this two-part performance, Monterroso directly explains what the Polish sociologist Zigmunt Bauman termed "liquid modernity." Bauman's concept refers to the lightness or liquidity of life, love, emotions, and even art, resulting from Modernity and globalized societies. Monterroso dyes the

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SANDRA MONTERROSO
Expoliada II, 2016



Dyed and colour-fast thread with wood mount
155 x 143 x 12 cm
(SAM0035)

Image 1/7

Description

Expoliada II (2016) - a large installation of three hanging rows of vibrant yellow thread. Throughout her practice, Monterroso uses colour according to Mayan cosmology: black represents West, white is associated with the North, red is the East, and yellow represents the South. By expressing her own identity through Mayan symbolism, Monterroso replaces the erased Mayan cosmology and history in Guatemala. Alongside *Expoliada II*, Monterroso created the video diptych *Colorando y Decolorando las Hebras* (2011). In this two-part performative action, Monterroso is first seen in an art gallery, bent over her steel pot where she is dyeing threads yellow using traditional Mayan techniques. Later, she is on the bank of a river, scrubbing the yellow threads clean with the fresh water. The two scenes – and Monterroso's impossible attempt to wash the yellow dye off the threads in the river - represent the way in which our identity and cultural history are an irreversible parts of ourselves.



Image 2/7



Image 3/7



Image 4/7



Image 5/7



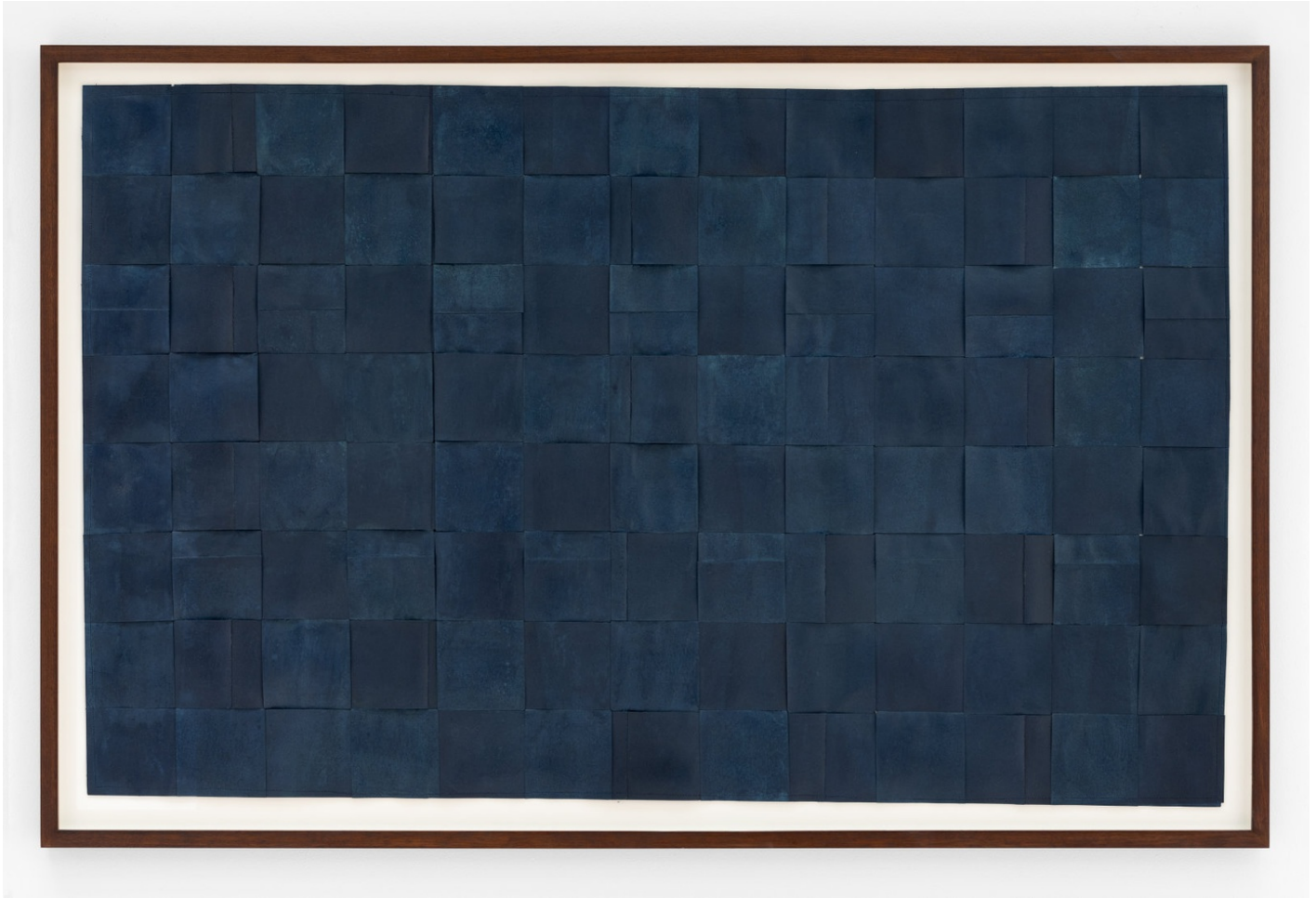
Image 6/7



Image 7/7

SANDRA MONTERROSO

Tejido III, 2020



Dyed paper, painted with indigófera and other pigments

138 x 90 cm

(SAM0020)

Image 1/5

Courtesy of Cecilia Brunson Projects

Description

In the *Tejido* (2020), series, Monterroso uses a blue Mayan plant dye, *indigofera guatemalensis*. This dye is made by combining a clay mineral, palygorskite, with the pigment from the native Central and South American indigo plant, *indigofera suffruticosa*. Since 300AD, Mayans have used the dye to decorate their bodies as part of the ritual to Chaac, the rain deity. Monterroso uses traditional techniques to make her own dye; fermenting the indigo plant and extracting the distilled pigment from its leaves.

The *indigofera suffruticosa* plant was also cultivated and exported by Spanish colonists. Deemed to be sacred because of its colour, the dye became a valuable commodity that played a role in the transatlantic trade routes that violently shaped the 16th century global landscape.



Image 2/5

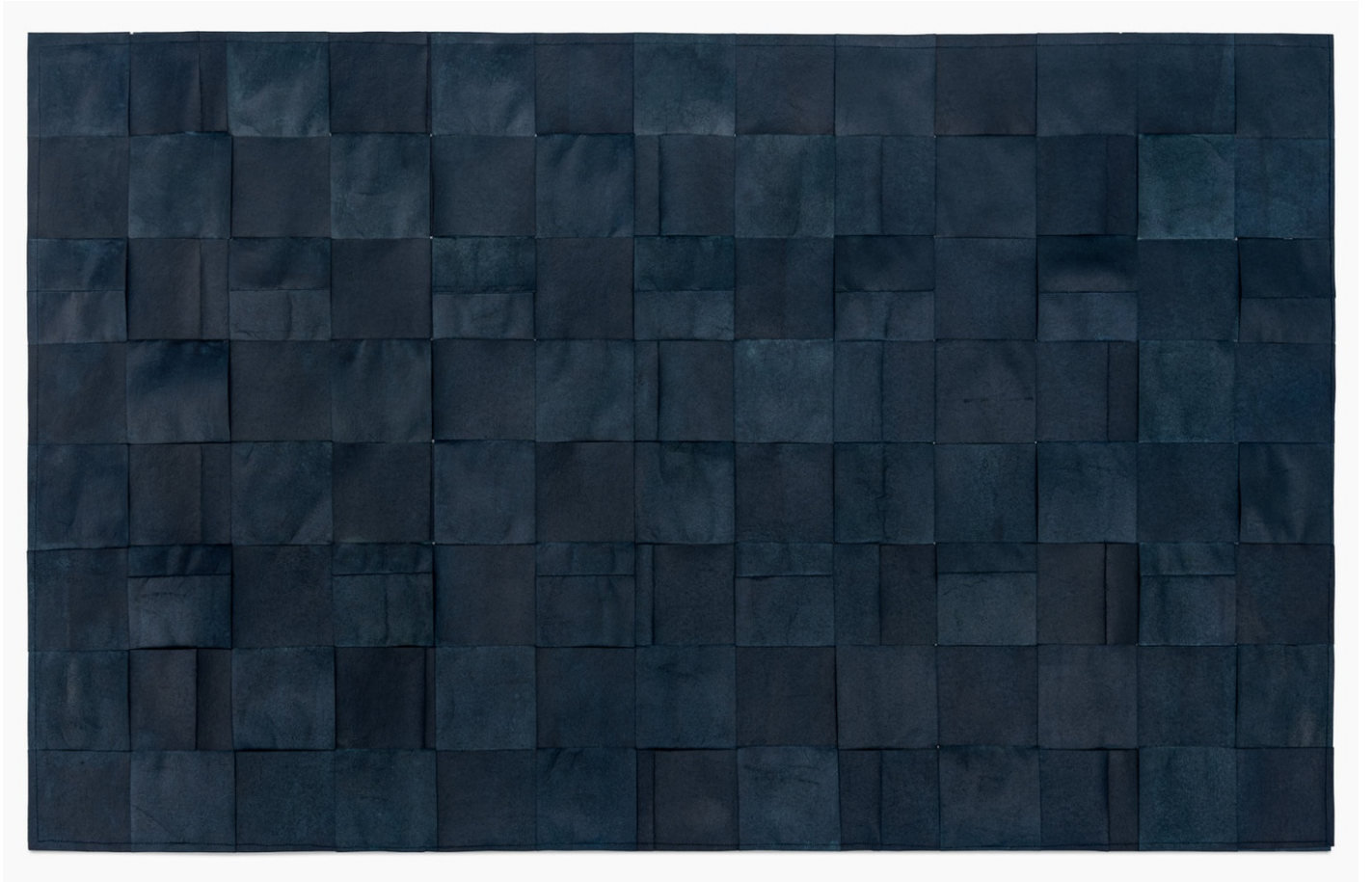


Image 3/5



Image 4/5



Image 5/5

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Composiciones Acuáticas II, 2019



Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper
55 x 70 cm
(SAM003)

Image 1/4

Description

In the *Composiciones Acuáticas* (2019) series, Monterroso uses a blue Mayan plant dye, *indigofera guatemalensis*. This dye is made by combining a clay mineral, palygorskite, with the pigment from the native Central and South American indigo plant, *indigofera suffruticosa*. Since 300AD, Mayans have used the dye to decorate their bodies as part of the ritual to Chaac, the rain deity. Monterroso uses traditional techniques to make her own dye; fermenting the indigo plant and extracting the distilled pigment from its leaves.

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In her *Composiciones acuáticas* series, Monterroso covers the paper with a fabric soaked in *indigofera guatemalensis*. This technique allows the pigment to stain the paper naturally, creating geometric and marbled forms that are unique to each work.

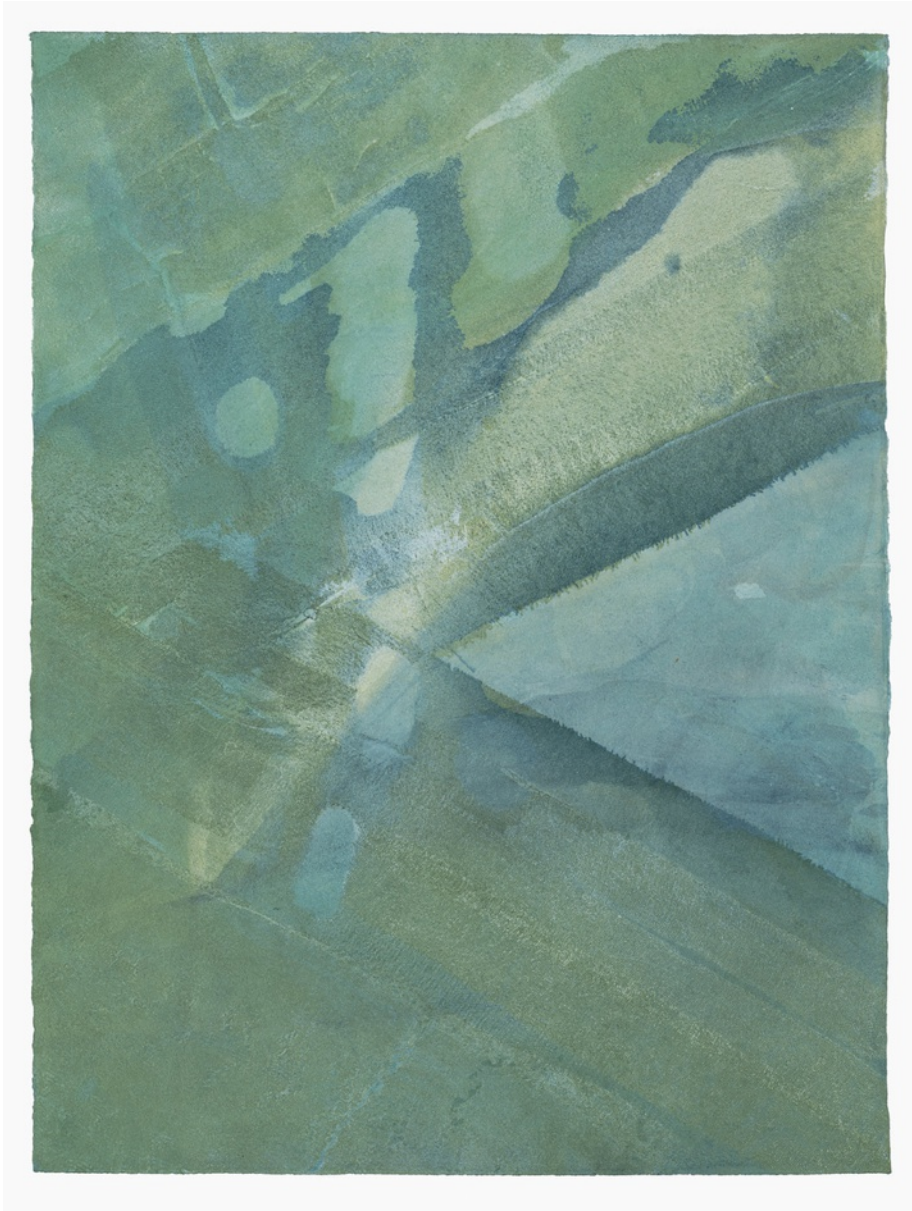


Image 2/4



Image 3/4



Image 4/4

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Composiciones Acuáticas III, 2019



Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper
55 x 70 cm
(SAM001)

Description

In the *Composiciones Acuáticas* (2019) series, Monterroso uses a blue Mayan plant dye, *indigofera guatemalensis*. This dye is made by combining a clay mineral, palygorskite, with the pigment from the native Central and South American indigo plant, *indigofera suffruticosa*. Since 300AD, Mayans have used the dye to decorate their bodies as part of the ritual to Chaac, the rain deity. Monterroso uses traditional techniques to make her own dye; fermenting the indigo plant and extracting the distilled pigment from its leaves.

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SANDRA MONTERROSO
Composiciones Acuáticas III, 2019



Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper
55 x 70 cm
(SAM005)

Description

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SANDRA MONTERROSO
Efectos Cruzados V, 2020



Indigofera dyed thread and wood
30 x 25 x 18 cm
(SAM0024)

Image 1/2

Description

In the *Efectos Cruzados* (2020) series, Monterroso uses a blue Mayan plant dye, *indigofera guatemalensis*. This dye is made by combining a clay mineral, palygorskite, with the pigment from the native Central and South American indigo plant, *indigofera suffruticosa*. Since 300AD, Mayans have used the dye to decorate their bodies as part of the ritual to Chaac, the rain deity. Monterroso uses traditional techniques to make her own dye; fermenting the indigo plant and extracting the distilled pigment from its leaves.

The *indigofera suffruticosa* plant was also cultivated and exported by Spanish colonists. Deemed to be sacred because of its colour, the dye became a valuable commodity that played a role in the transatlantic trade routes that violently shaped the 16th century global landscape.

For *Efectos Cruzados*, she contorts strands of thread around two wooden paddles, before submerging them into a pot of hot water mixed with indigo dye.



Image 2/2

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Crossed Effects VII, 2020



Indigofera dyed thread and wood
29 x 30 x 18 cm
(SAM0018)



Indigofera dyed thread and wood
30 x 25 x 18 cm
(SAM0019)

Image 1/2

Description

In the *Efectos Cruzados* (2020) series, Monterroso uses a blue Mayan plant dye, *indigofera guatemalensis*. This dye is made by combining a clay mineral, palygorskite, with the pigment from the native Central and South American indigo plant, *indigofera suffruticosa*. Since 300AD, Mayans have used the dye to decorate their bodies as part of the ritual to Chaac, the rain deity. Monterroso uses traditional techniques to make her own dye; fermenting the indigo plant and extracting the distilled pigment from its leaves.

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For *Efectos Cruzados*, she contorts strands of thread around two wooden paddles, before submerging them into a pot of hot water mixed with indigo dye.



Image 2/2

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Volviendo al Punto de Partida, 2012



Textiles, cotton yarn, synthetic yarn gold, two engraved knives
(SAM0032)

Image 1/8

Courtesy of Cecilia Brunson Projects

Description

In *Volviendo al Punto de Partida* (2012), Monterroso twists and stains tocoyals – traditional female Mayan hair wraps – into two knotted packages. Accompanied by two knives engraved with “Tra(d)iciones [tra(d)itions]” and “Es mas fácil cortarlo que desatarlo [It is easier to cut it than to untie it]”, this work symbolises the tocoyals found in the mass graves of the Guatemalan genocide (1981–1983) and criticizes violence as a way to solve historical or political relationships.



Image 2/8



Image 3/8



Image 4/8



Image 5/8



Image 6/8



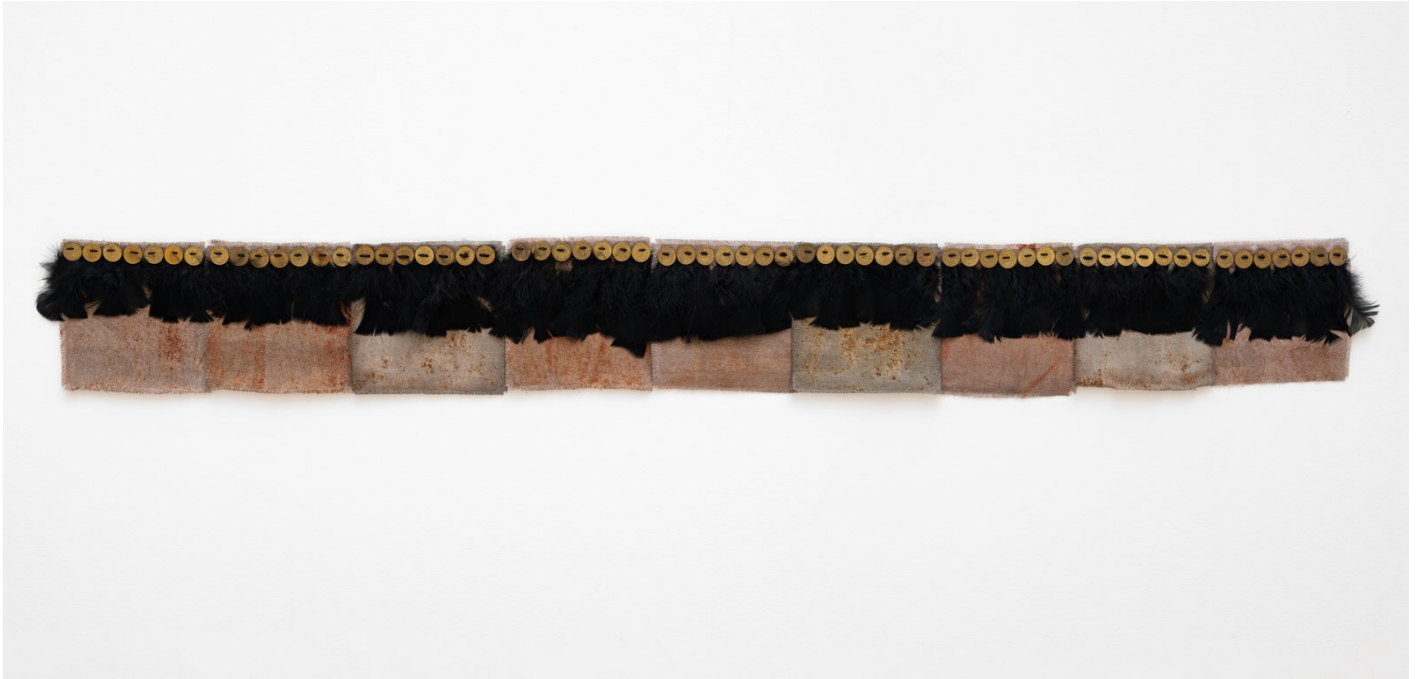
Image 7/8



Image 8/8

SANDRA MONTERROSO

La Otra Línea Histórica, Cara o Cruz, 2017



Achiote, linen, watercolour, feathers and copper coins

15.5 x 844 cm

(SAM0012)

Image 1/4

Description

La otra línea histórica, cara o cruz (2017) is made from small tufts of black feathers, achiote-stained blankets and pennies showing the face of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish Crown cleric, and Guatemala's national coat of arms. Using the same feathers from her 2014 performance, *La Devolución del Penacho de Vucub Caquix*, that references Moctezuma's headdress, *La otra línea histórica, cara o cruz* addresses the long-standing pan-indigenous concerns about independence, cultural appropriation and sovereignty.



Image 2/4



Image 3/4



Image 4/4

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Tu Ashé Yemanya, 2015



Coconut, textile, feathers, and hemp rope

Unique work

120 x 10 cm

(SAM0026)

Image 1/4

Description

Created by the same process, *Tu Ashé Yemanya* was made in parallel to the larger work Monterroso produced for the 2015 Havana Biennial, *Pulsera para Yemanya* [Bracelet for Yemanya].

For the Havana Biennial, Monterroso - whose intention was to work with the theme of water - worked alongside a *Guía Santero* (a spiritual guide)

and the local Cuban community to produce Pulsera para Yemanya.

Pulsera para Yemanya comprises of three hundred and thirty six polished coconuts, dyed feathers and marine snails which were blessed and tied together to create a ritual bracelet to Yemanya, the mother-goddess of the ocean in the Yorùbá religion.

Brought to Cuba from Africa by the slave trade, the ancient Yorùbá religion is a unique blend of indigenous beliefs, myths and legends, proverbs, and songs, all influenced by the cultural and social contexts of Western Africa. In the Yorùbá religion, Ashé is the divine force, energy, and power incarnate in the world. It is the power behind all things in the universe and enables people to find balance in life. Santeros (Santería priests) use Ashé to provide blessing and healing to devotees. "Ashe is a current or flow, a groove that initiates can channel so that it carries them along their road in life. The prayers, rhythms, offerings, taboos of Santería tune initiates into this flow" (Murphy, 1993, p. 131).

Following the Yorùbá traditional ritual sequence, Pulsera para Yemaya was hung from a tree for the duration of the Biennial before being cast into the sea by Monterroso and members of the Havana community.

In reconsidering these indigenous religious rituals through her art practice, Monterroso brings deep-rooted indigenous culture and belief out of the margins and into the contemporary canon.



Image 2/4



Image 3/4



Image 4/4

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Puntos en Resistencia I, 2011



Yellow dyed thread, steel wire
120 x 20 x 20 cm approx.
(SAM0033)

Image 1/4



Image 2/4

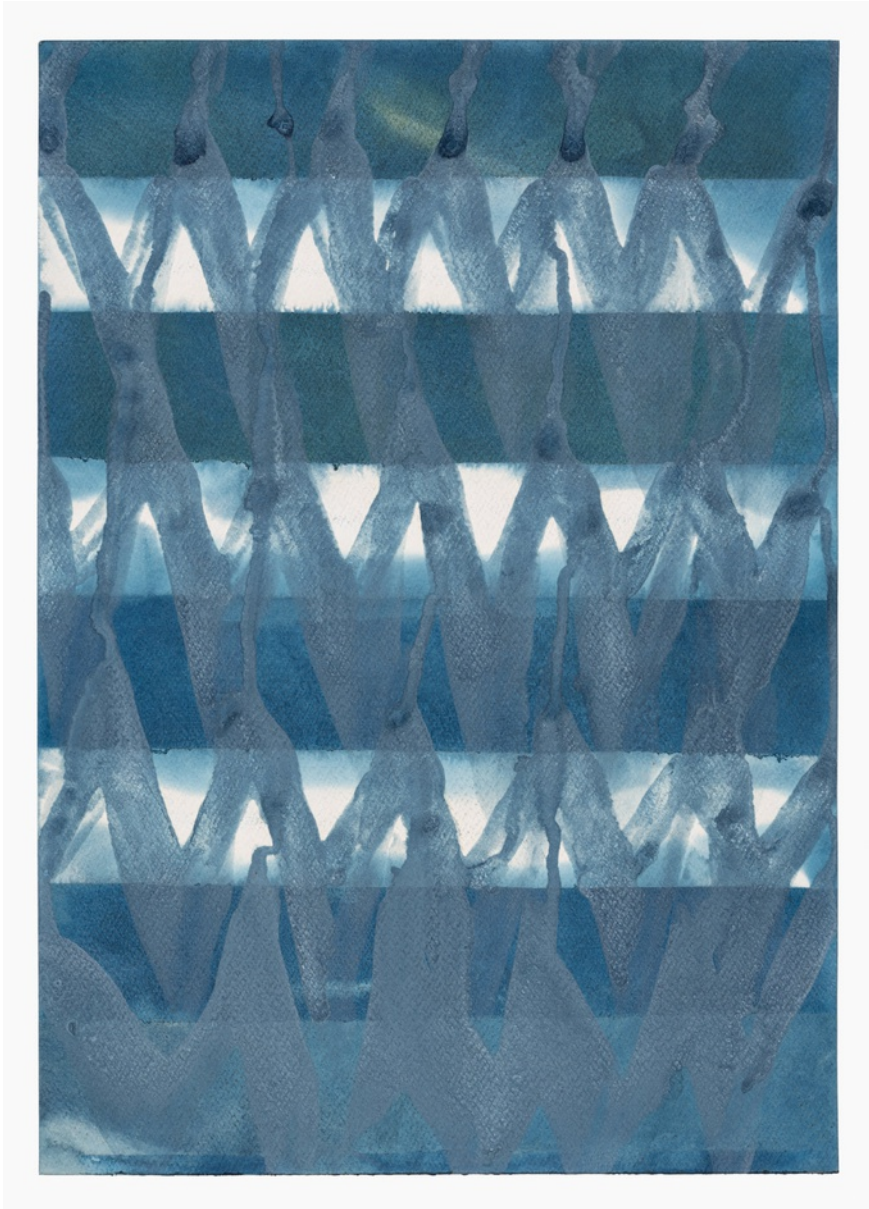


Image 3/4



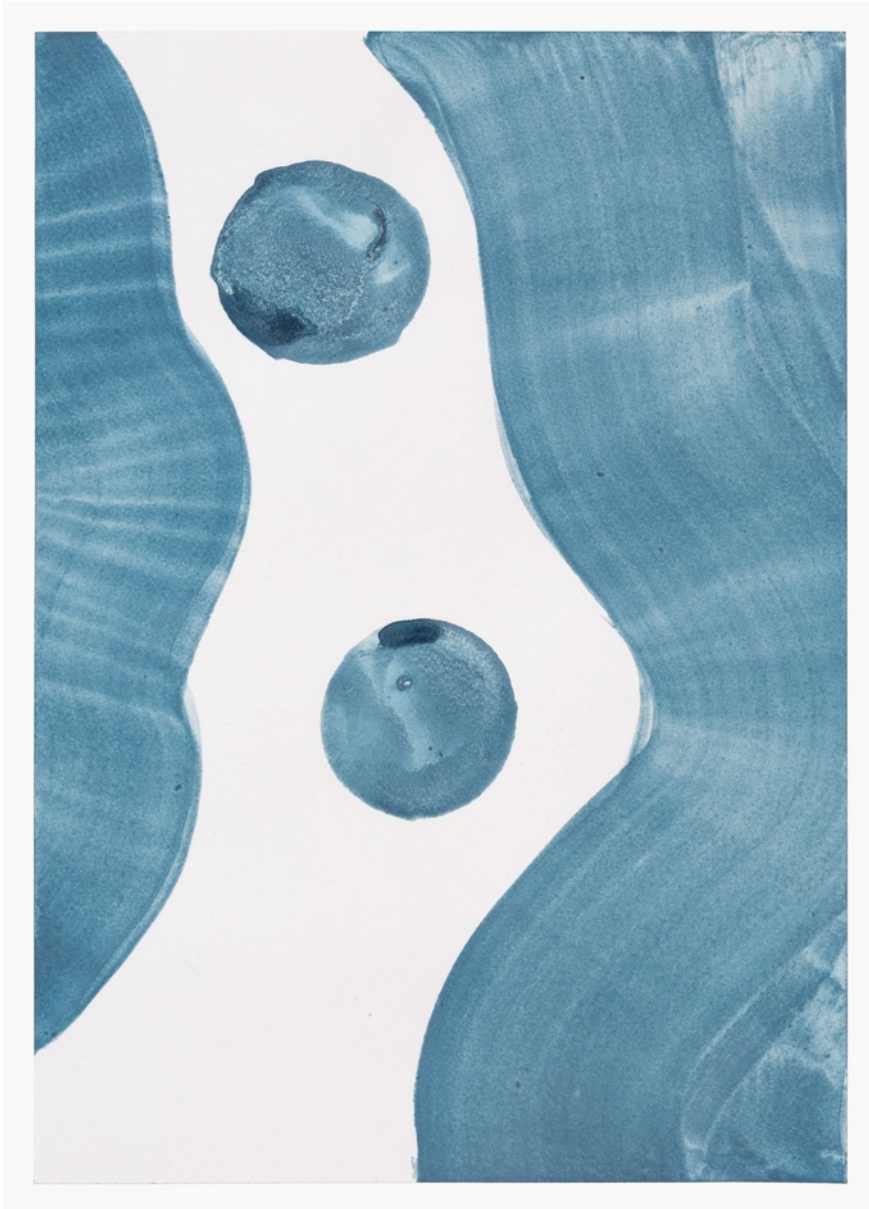
Image 4/4

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Patrón en Azul, 2019



Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper
42 cm x 29.5 cm
(SAM007)

SANDRA MONTERROSO
Fluido Azul, 2019



Indigofera guatemalensis and acrylic on paper
42 cm x 29.5 cm
(SAM008)