

Press Release



Image: Cecilia Vicuña (born 1948, Santiago, Chile), *Skyscraper Quipu* (Incan *quipu* performance, New York, 2006. Rephotographed 2018. Cotton, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. © Cecilia Vicuña. Courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong. (Photo: Matthew Hermann)

Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum Presents *Cecilia Vicuña: Disappeared Quipu*

On view at the Brooklyn Museum, May 18–November 25, 2018

The Brooklyn Museum is thrilled to announce ***Cecilia Vicuña: Disappeared Quipu***, a major immersive installation that combines enormous strands of knotted wool with video to honor an ancient Andean tradition. Cecilia Vicuña's monumental work—measuring more than 24 feet high—offers a contemporary activation and reimagining of *quipus*, complex record-keeping devices created by the ancient peoples of the Andes for millennia. The exhibition is presented by the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist art and located in the Museum's Great Hall.

In a career spanning five decades, the artist, poet, and filmmaker Cecilia Vicuña has transformed the rich cultural legacies of the Andean region, reimagining the historical within her contemporary practice. With feminism as a unifying theme she explores the shifting nature of language and memory; the resilience of native people in the face of repression; and her own experiences, living in exile from her native Chile, following the military coup of 1973.

A collaboration between the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), *Cecilia Vicuña: Disappeared Quipu* encompasses two site-specific installations—one in Brooklyn, the second in Boston. These raw-wool sculptures with video projections will each be exhibited with historical *quipus*. *Quipus* served as an essential medium for reading and writing, registering and remembering, through a system of knot-making, and were banned by the Spanish during their colonization of South America. *Disappeared Quipu* is part of Vicuña's decades-long exploration of

the *quipu*, which has often included ritual activations by the artist, in which she moves, alone or with others, among the fibers and knotted strands of the work, linking movement, sound, and material to enact a physical relationship with the cultural legacy embodied by the *quipu*. Vicuña's radical transformation of the *quipu* through both her poetry and visual art places it within a newly imagined social context of female empowerment and calls attention to the disappearance of knowledge through the loss of a complex, ancient textile tradition.

As Cecilia Vicuña poetically says: "The *quipu* is a metaphor for the union of all. A cosmic umbilical cord connecting us to each other and the galaxies where life is born."

Vicuña's piece for the Brooklyn Museum and four *quipus* from the Brooklyn Museum collection will be on view from May 18 through November 25, 2018, while a corresponding installation will be on view at the MFA from October 20, 2018, through January 21, 2019. As conceived by the artist, this dual presentation reflects the Andean worldview that pairs of complementary opposites—night and day, death and life—keep the universe in balance.

The Brooklyn Museum presentation of related textiles will provide a reference point for Vicuña's contemporary reimagining of the *quipu* and highlight the Museum's exceptional Andean collection. These textiles include a Nasca poncho (34.1579) that illustrates the discontinuous warp and weft technique (one of the most complicated weaving techniques in the world); Wari tunics; and various Inca garments, both full-size and miniature. Images of twelve of these textiles will be featured in the four-channel video component of *Disappeared Quipu*, which Vicuña is creating for projection onto her *quipu* sculpture.

Over the course of the exhibition in both venues, Vicuña will participate in programs, including a participatory public performance that will incorporate poetry and song, creating a living, visual, and spatial poem. Additional works by Cecilia Vicuña are currently on view in the Brooklyn Museum's exhibition *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985* on the 4th Floor through July 22, 2018.

Cecilia Vicuña: Disappeared Quipu is organized by the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Brooklyn presentation is initiated by the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, and is organized by Catherine Morris, Sackler Senior Curator, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, and Nancy Rosoff, Andrew W. Mellon Senior Curator, Arts of the Americas, with Serda Yalkin, Curatorial Assistant, Arts of the Americas and Europe. The MFA presentation is organized by Liz Munsell, Lorraine and Alan Bressler Curator of Contemporary Art, and Dennis Carr, Carolyn and Peter Lynch Curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture. Gary Urton, Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian Studies at Harvard University, is a collaborative consultant to the project. Robert Kolodny and Ricardo Gallo respectively, created the video projection and sound design of the work.

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About Cecilia Vicuña

Cecilia Vicuña (born Chile, 1948) is a visual artist, poet, filmmaker, and activist who lives in New York. After receiving her Master of Fine Arts degree from the National School of Fine Arts, University of Chile, in 1972, she moved to London to continue her studies. Following the violent military coup in Chile against President Salvador Allende in 1973, she co-founded the activist movement Artists for Democracy. During the ensuing repressive dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–90), Vicuña remained in exile, leaving London for Bogotá, Colombia, in 1975 before settling in New York City in 1980. While living in Chile during the mid-1960s, Vicuña began an ongoing series of small sculptures called *Precarios*, tiny, fragile sculptures (composed of feathers, stone, plastic, wood, wire, shells, cloth, and other detritus), initially created at the seashore, to disappear

with the high tide. She also began to study the history of ancient *quipus*, and in the early 1970s began to craft her own *quipus* from unspun wool. Her ephemeral, site-specific installations combine the tactile ritual of weaving and spinning with the arts of assemblage, poetry, and performance.