

Latinx artists explore modern architecture space at the Whitney

By Susan Morris



Installation view with Tossin's work, left, and Quevedo's work, right. (Courtes Whitney Museum of American Art)

The Whitney Museum exhibition *Pacha, Llaqta, Wasichay: Indigenous Space, Modern Architecture, New Art* displays seven Latinx artists' responses to the built environment through construction, land, and space. Curator Marcela Guerrero has brought together 80 recent works and site-specific installations by William Cordova, Livia Corona Benjamín, Jorge González, Guadalupe Maravilla, Claudia Peña Salinas, Ronny Quevedo, and Clarissa Tossin. The works display a wide range of references, from adaptations of pre-Columbian temples to migration routes.

The title includes three words in Quechua, the most common indigenous language spoken today in the Americas. Each has multiple meanings: *Pacha* is the universe, time, space, nature, world; *llaqta*, place, country, community, town; and *wasichay*, to build or construct a house.

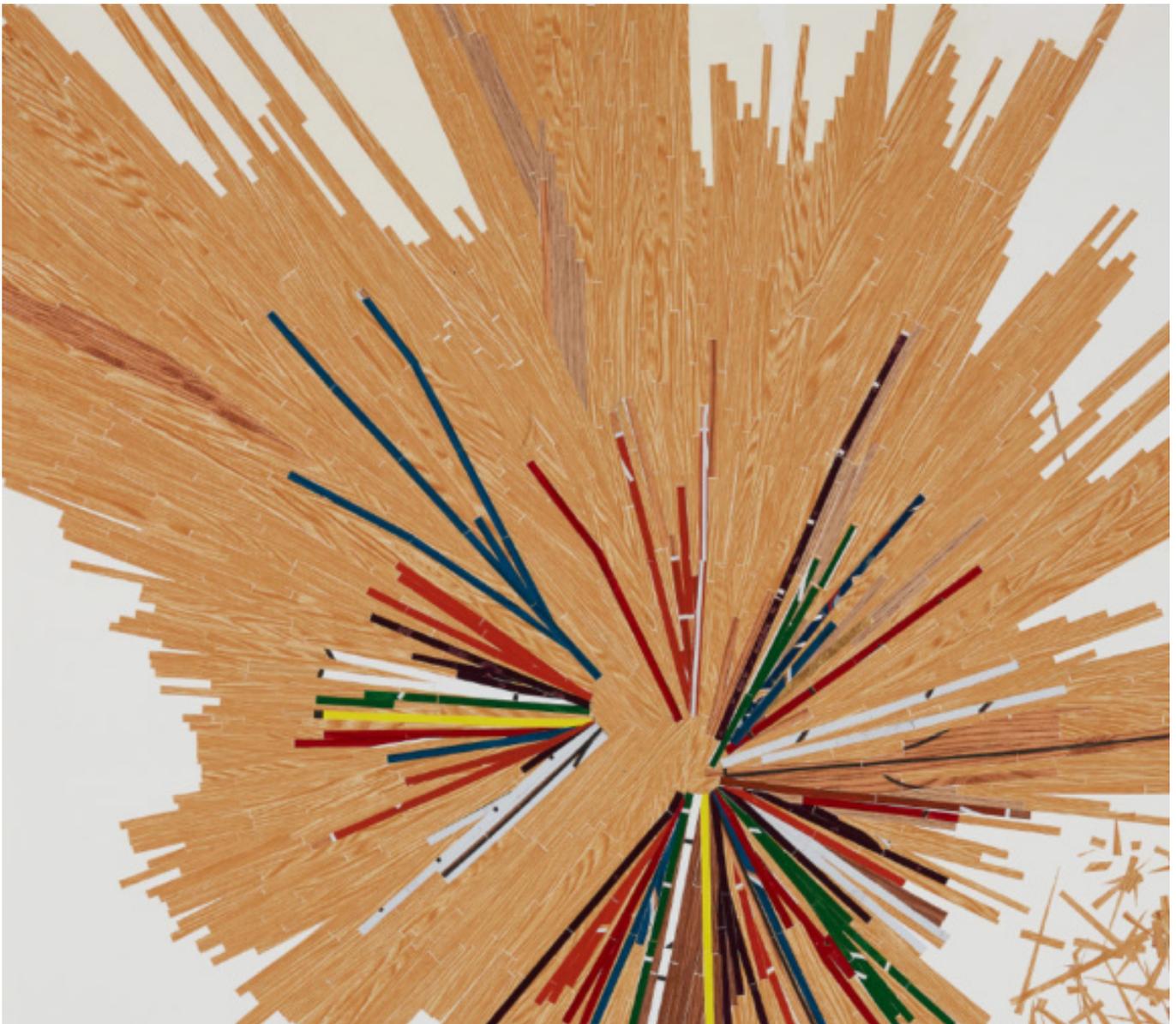
Clarissa Tossin's video, *Ch'u Mayaa (Maya Blue)* (2017), was shot at Frank Lloyd W House in Los Angeles. Tossin moves figures around the temple-like forms to a sound and pre-Columbian flutes while demonstrating the performative, ceremonial nature (or revival) architecture. Tossin's sculptures that surround the video are inspired by relief Theater by Mexican artist Francisco Cornejo that referenced both Central America a productions.

Ronny Quevedo's father was a professional soccer player in Ecuador, and his *Orders Qoricancha* (2018), *Errant Globe* (2015), and *Ulama, Ule, Olé* (2012) use sports th game) with imagery of a gym floor, ball courts, and constellations arranged in "maps Spanish colonial invaders and is used to render migratory patterns visible, including family relocated from Ecuador to New York.

In her photogram series, *Infinite Rewrite* (2018), Livia Corona Benjamín features *Me or graneros del pueblo* (silos for the people) built during the *Compañía Nacional de* initiative from 1965-1999. A prototype design by architect Pedro Ramirez Vázquez with local materials. However, the 4,000 silos that were built were abandoned, and the failure. These photos, made with multiple exposures that fracture the image almost as if the structures have since been adapted for other purposes: schools, churches, motels installation uses 12-foot-tall walls and a floor plan that echoes both the silos' conical plazas.

Ayacabo Guarocoel (2018) by Jorge Gonzalez combined Modernism and Puerto Rican Taino (indigenous Caribbean) vernacular in this site-specific installation of a full-height windowed gallery looking eastward. The accordion roof is the mid-century element while the walls are enea (cattail) and dried clay, used in *bohíos* (huts) and in furniture. He has also made benches specifically for the exhibition.

Another site-specific installation sits on the outdoor fifth-floor terrace called *huaca* (geometries) (2018), by William Cordova, and uses wood with a stainless-steel gate. In *Huantille*, a temple from the Ichma culture (1100–1400 AD) in Peru that predates the official heritage site in 2001, the temple was claimed by squatters who improvised scaffolding (the artist grew up nearby). Seen from the balconies above, you can see with “non-monument.”



Ronny Quevedo, *quipu* (2017). Screen print, contact paper, and enamel on paper. (Argenis Apolinario/Whitney Museum of American Art)

Claudia Peña Salinas's installation—composed of *Cueyatl* (2017), *Tlaloc MNA* (2017), and more—refers to and reinterprets archeological objects at the Nation Museum in Mexico City. The layout is based on the mythical Aztec paradise of *Tlacocan*. Together, these artworks form provocative insights and interpretations of the architectural cultural heritage across Mesoamerica and offer tantalizing insights into the contemporary indigenous work.