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## Encounters and Translations Across Local-Global Divides

Un-weaving the Republic [Post]Colonial Pasts, Presents and Futures

Organizado por Plymouth College of Art



### Un-weaving the Republic *[Post]Colonial Pasts, Presents and Futures*

The paper will critically discuss the processes of collaborative creation between a contemporary visual artist and artisan collectives, problematising the integration of both languages and the making of meaning across their contextual spaces. I will draw from two collaborative experiences to metaphorically address the local vision around peripheral aesthetics, the artistic negotiations that result from internal migration, and the possibilities of an egalitarian incorporation of “minor” and “native” hand crafted techniques into mainstream visual arts circuits.

The first case study focuses on the co-creation and re-appropriation of a 19<sup>th</sup> century military uniform worn by the Libertadores (José de San Martín or Simón Bolívar). My idea was to re-elaborate the military uniform through the visual languages and creative possibilities of native handcrafted techniques such as: weaving, embroidery, spinning and natural dyeing, and “retablos” figurines; all of which are considered minor because they are on the periphery of formal “aesthetic” and “ideological” values. The incorporation of traditional

techniques and elements aimed to represent communities, migration histories, and other non-hegemonic narratives of everyday life. It is not only a question of re-signifying symbols of great historical value, but also of generating messages that directly respond to current racial problems, social inequalities, and discriminatory practices in Peru. In this project I worked with different traditional artists who were also politically engaged community leaders like Maxima Acuña, an environmental activist from the northern Peruvian highlands of Cajamarca who has been fighting against Yanacocha mining company for over a decade and won the 2016 Goldman Environmental Prize; Olinda Silvano, leader of the first Shipibo urban migrant community in Lima; and, Teodoro Ramírez, an artist from Ayacucho who uses the “retablo” to represent the Peruvian internal armed conflict. I worked with them in a co-authorship and co-learning basis, residing in their native communities.

The second case study focuses on a relational project called Sensitive Cartographies where I worked with the Awaq Warmikuna Association—a group of migrant settlers located in San Juan de Lurigancho district in Lima—to create a textile map depicting an informal and self-managed highway uniting two peripheral districts in Lima.

The waist loom—a native technique from Latin-America—was influenced by the colonial textile wheels, which combine it with pulley dynamics. Such influence transformed the domestic practice of the waist loom into a 4-wheel craftsmanship that allowed for generation of woven warps of up to a 100 meters, making it an ideal device for a collective work along with the settlers from San Juan de Lurigancho. At a contextual level, the 4-wheel machines, which juxtapose South American and European influences, figuratively addresses some of the migration issues that echoed through the project.



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