

CECILIA VICUÑA
In London, 1972 and Today

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London



Cecilia Vicuña, *La Planta del Pie*, 2022 (detail). Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 x 1.25 inches (101.6 x 76.2 x 3.17 cm). Photo by Matthew Herrmann

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Lehmann Maupin presents *Cecilia Vicuña in London, 1972 and Today*, an exhibition of new and historical work by the artist following her 2022–2023 Turbine Hall commission at Tate Modern. Revisiting a pivotal moment in Vicuña’s career, *Cecilia Vicuña in London, 1972 and Today* presents new and recent paintings, mixed-media works, historical ephemera, and recreations of lost work from the artist’s London years (1972–1975). Born and raised in Santiago, Chile, Vicuña relocated to London in 1972 to study at the Slade School of Fine Art; following dictator Augusto Pinochet’s violent military coup in Chile the next year, she sought asylum in the United Kingdom during immense violence, political turmoil, and cultural suppression in Chile. This presentation marks the fiftieth anniversary of both the violent 1973 military coup in Chile and the beginning of the artist’s exile from her home country.

Vicuña’s time in London represents a crucial development in her expansive, multidisciplinary practice. During this period, she engaged with an international group of artistic peers and furthered her intensive interests in fusing art with activism. Responding to catastrophe and loss in Chile, Vicuña expanded her earlier precarious work in nature in Chile around issues of disappearance and impermanence as both political and aesthetic concerns. Vicuña studied at the Slade School of Fine Art and exhibited her work in a solo presentation at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1973. That same year, the artist published her groundbreaking first book, *Saborami*, with Beau Geste Press in Devon, where she encountered a number of fellow international artists such as Carolee Schneeman and Ulises Carrión. Shortly after its release, *Saborami* became the subject of a BBC documentary, which was among the first widely broadcast pieces to introduce British audiences to the gravity of the Chilean political climate and the powerful activist and artistic resistance efforts that arose in response. A new edition of *Saborami*, among the first pieces of literature to address Salvador Allende’s death, will be released this fall with Book Works Publishing to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the coup.

Vicuña remained firmly committed to ending the Chilean dictatorship and advocating for political and social change. In London, she co-founded Artists for Democracy with John Dugger, Guy Brett, and David Medalla—a group that fused art and activism to raise support for the Chilean resistance, as well as for other democratic liberation movements worldwide. In 1974, on the one-year anniversary of the violent military coup in Chile, Artists for Democracy joined with British trade unions to stage a 10,000-person protest in Trafalgar Square. Later that year, the collective organized the Arts Festival for Democracy in Chile at Royal College of Art.

Cecilia Vicuña, *Ofrenda de polvo (Precarios)*, ca. 2000.
Wood, plastic, shell, thread, 1.5 x 4.5 x 2 inches (3.8 x 11.4 x 5.1 cm)

For Vicuña, art offers possibilities for reimagining modes of collaboration and participation. Throughout her practice, art and social movements are revealed to be inextricably linked, and as Vicuña’s works invite forms of active engagement, so too do they envision new, emancipatory forms of participation in civic life.

Much of Vicuña’s work from this tumultuous period in history established her enduring interests in impermanence and its artistic and social inflections. The exhibition features a selection of the artist’s *precarios*—an ongoing body of small and intricate installation works that incorporate natural and found materials—as well as a never-before-exhibited video work documenting the making of her work *Precarios: A Journal of Objects for the Chilean Resistance (1973–1974)*. This original work was composed of approximately 400 found objects, including detritus culled from London streets, fragments of the artist’s mementos from Chile, and cutouts of magazines she gathered from the Chilean embassy in London. The expansive mixed-media installation is now part of Tate Modern’s collection.

With her *Journals*, Vicuña records a particular moment in history while reckoning with the fragility of humanity in the face of authoritarian regimes. “I felt that our world was about to disappear,” she stated. “Each fragment, every scrap of cloth, spoke of a life...which was now under threat.” Creating an unconventional archive, the artist registers her existence while also suggesting loss. As she turns to the fragile and the fragmentary, Vicuña offers a novel mode of representation that boldly contends with the threat of disappearance, asserting the resilience of art in the wake of oppression—even half a century later.



Cecilia Vicuña (b. 1948 in Santiago, Chile; lives and works in New York, NY and Santiago, Chile) received her M.F.A. from the National School of Fine Arts, University of Chile in 1971 and continued with postgraduate studies at Slade School of Fine Art, University College London from 1972-1973. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at a number of major institutions, including the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile (2023); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tucson, AZ (2023); Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2022); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2022); Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia (MAMU), Bogotá, Colombia (2022); Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M), Madrid, Spain (2021); CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA (2020); Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City, Mexico (2020); Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Miami, FL (2019); Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2019); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA (2019); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA (2019); Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2019); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2018); Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY (2018); the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA (2018); Neubauer Collegium, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2018); Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA (2017); Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Santiago, Chile (2014); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile (2014); Institute for Women and Art, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ (2009); The Drawing Center, New York, NY (2002); and the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Boulder, CO (2002).

Group exhibitions and biennials featuring her work include *Life Between Buildings*, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY (2022); *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2022); *Bodies of Water*, The 13th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai, China (2021); *Minds Rising, Spirits Tuning*, The 13th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea (2021); *Artistic License: Six Takes on the Guggenheim Collection*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2019); *Radical Women: Latin American Art 1960-1985*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2017), Brooklyn Museum, NY and Pinoteca de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (2018); Documenta 14, Athens, Greece, and Kassel, Germany (2017); 18th Sydney Biennale, Australia (2012); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (1997); and *Inside the VISIBLE*, Institute of Contemporary Art / Boston, Boston, MA, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, the Whitechapel Gallery, London, United Kingdom, and the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia (1996).

Her work is in numerous international private and public collections, including the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA; Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX; Cisneros Fontanals

Art Foundation, Miami, FL; Cranford Collection, London, United Kingdom; EMDASH Foundation, Berlin, Germany; Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain de Lorraine, Metz, France; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; IVAM - Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia, Spain; KADIST, Paris, France; San Francisco, CA; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile; Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (MALBA), Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI), Lima, Peru; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), San Diego, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile; National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami, FL; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom.

Vicuña is the author of 27 volumes of art and poetry published in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Her filmography includes documentaries, animation, and visual poems. Vicuña has received several awards, including the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2022); Premio Velázquez de Artes Plásticas, Madrid, Spain (2019); Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, Santa Monica, CA (2019); Anonymous Was a Woman Award, New York, NY (1999); and The Andy Warhol Foundation Award, New York, NY (1997), and in 2015 was appointed the messenger lecturer at Cornell University.



Portrait of Cecilia Vicuña at the Tate Modern, 2022. Photo by Sonal Bakrania

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.



Lehmann Maupin London at Cromwell Place. Photo by Alex Delfanne