

# EL SUR: Narratives of Extraction

13 April — 16 June 2024

## Curator

Victoria McCarthy (Argentina)

In collaboration with  
Färgfabriken's curator Emilia Rosenqvist  
and process leader Daniel Urey

## Participating Artists

Ana Alenso (Venezuela)

Alejandra Prieto (Chile)

Marcela Magno (Argentina)

Maxi Mamani a.k.a. Bartolina Xixa (Argentina)

Naomi Rincón-Gallardo (Mexico)

Seba Calfuqueo (Chile)

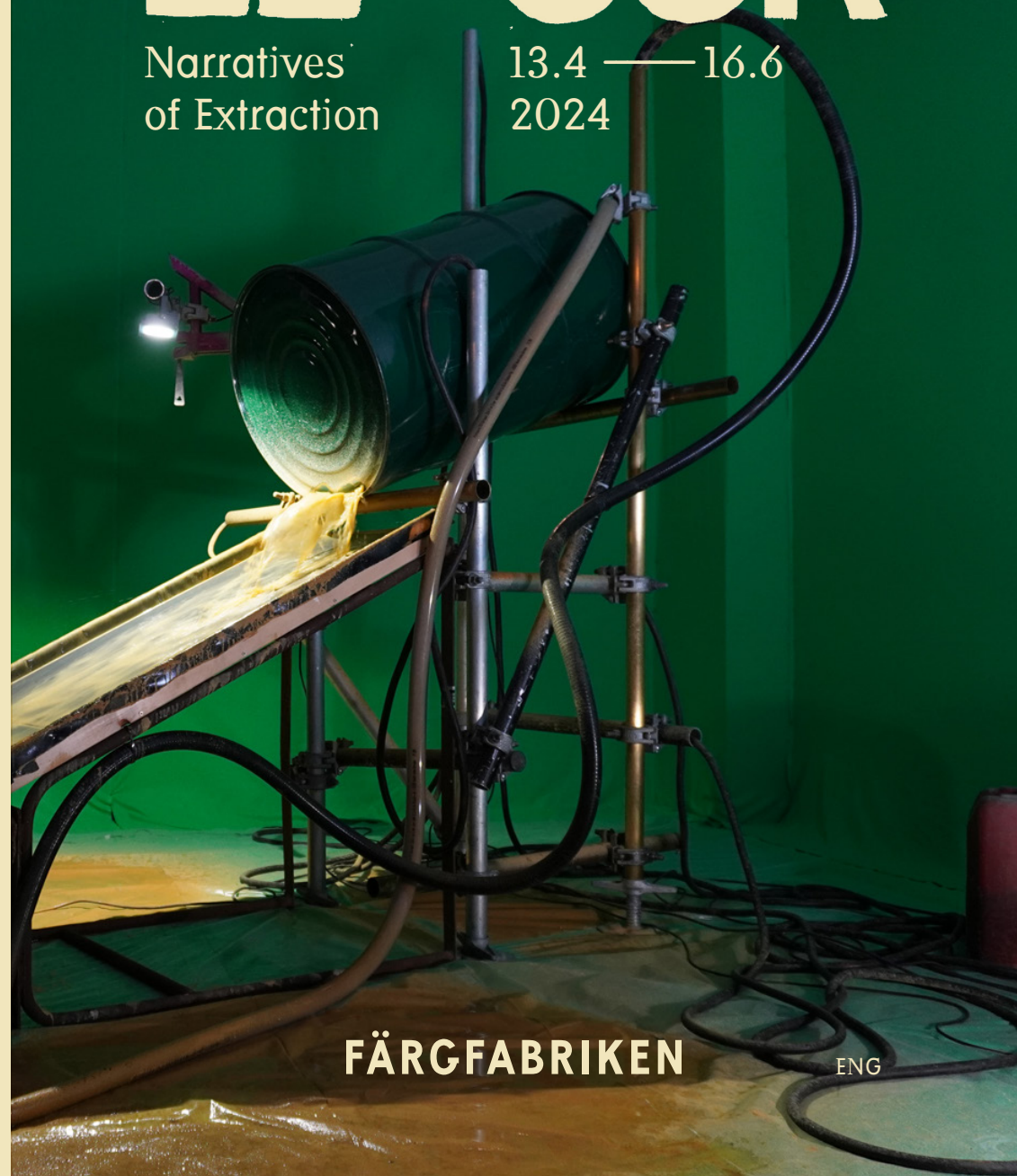
Artwork  
Ana Alenso

Graphic Design  
Evelina Mohei

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13.4 — 16.6  
2024



FÄRGFABRIKEN

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*El Sur* is about the South. About being from the South. About resisting within the South. Extractivism is a global system, yet most of the time its direct effects are seen in the southern part of the world. The artists gathered in this exhibition provide different narratives on extractivism, and through their practices they visibilise the system of large-scale and globalised extraction that reduces the planet to one big mine.

By exploring topics such as supply chains, Mesoamerican myths and creatures, extraction sites, gold rush, post-extractivism, and the 'green' transition, the artists in *El Sur* offer testimonies of our imbalanced world. This group of Latin American artists – who have rarely or never shown their works in Sweden – create artworks that constitute strong acts of resistance to a world that conceals the consequences of extractivism.

For several years, Färgfabriken has been engaging in and visualising the consequences of climate change from a planetary to a local scale. We do this together with artists, researchers, Färgfabriken's Youth Council and sister institutions in Sweden and from other countries. For this exhibition, Färgfabriken is collaborating with Argentinian curator Victoria McCarthy, who is based in Buenos Aires. The collaboration with Victoria McCarthy has been crucial in linking the topic of extraction to the Latin American context, and how the artistic scene in the subcontinent reflects and manifests the acts of extractivism.

Welcome to *El Sur*.

*El Sur* explores the intersection of contemporary art and extractivism. The artworks chosen for this exhibition critically engage with various aspects of extractivism as a planetary system, and examine the boundaries, possibilities, and effects of this intersection.

Our way of inhabiting the world as contemporary industrial societies needs the extraction of common goods to sustain it. In many regards, we are completely blind to the sheer scale and volume of the natural resources we extract every day to consume and exist. This exploitation sets off a chain reaction of harmful effects on the environment and the communities of extraction sites where the materials are sourced from.

Contemporary concepts such as the Anthropocene – defined as the geological era in which we are living in, marked by human activity on the planet – often portray all of humanity as equally responsible for the changes inflicted on the planet, overlooking the predominant role played by countries and companies of the Global North. Behind a veil of universality, these concepts serve as geological justifications for the perpetration of colonial patterns and modes of production.

It is due to these modes of production that today we find ourselves in the midst of a climate breakdown. Even though some countries are signing deals and pledges to reduce their carbon footprint, the fundamental structures of production and colonial legacies remain largely unchanged. In 'green' transition times, fossil fuels are being replaced by renewable energies. While these are virtually inexhaustible, their storage requires many non-renewable resources such as lithium, and the industries that extract them perpetuate unjust practices over land and people.

*El Sur* does not merely paint a dire picture of the current planetary state; it expresses a sense of urgency, while at the same time offers refuge. It is by shedding light into the shadows cast by extractivism that these artworks provide resistance and enable a deeper understanding of the geopolitics surrounding ecology.

The artworks presented here invite us to reflect upon traditional ways of understanding the world, moving forward from a North-centered society, and instead, pointing our compasses from the South.

## Ana Alenso

(Venezuela)

is a visual artist based in Berlin, Germany. Through sculpture, photography, video, sound, and installations, she reflects on the ecological, social, and economic conflicts and risks associated with natural resource extraction. She has exhibited her work in Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (Germany), and Brücke-Museum (Germany), among others.

Alenso's work *Lo que la mina te da, la mina te quita* (What the mine gives, the mine takes, 2020) focuses on mining of precious metals in Venezuela, especially gold. The installation, made in collaboration with the environmentalist group SOSOrinoco, pictures an image of humanity's self-erosion caused by the golden rush, the inexhaustible thirst for raw materials and its curse. By showcasing materials and mechanisms that are normally behind the scenes and in extraction sites, Alenso brings forward a local issue to reflect on a global problem. Her second work at the exhibition, the sound piece *Blood of the Earth* (2019), examines the power structures behind oil production in South America, a region with one of the largest proven oil reserves in the world. She investigates the socio-political-economic issue of oil extraction through news, Indigenous testimonies, and the industry's consequences on the territory.

## Alejandra Prieto

(Chile)

is an artist who uses paintings, videos, sculptures, and installations as her media. In her practice, she investigates the material constitution of things, with a special focus on minerals and how they interact with humans on a physical and conceptual level. Prieto has exhibited her works in many art spaces in Chile, and in several international venues and events, such as the Bienal de La Habana (Cuba), Saatchi Gallery (UK), SIART Bienal (Bolivia), Palais de Tokyo (France), and Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros (Mexico).

In Prieto's video *Sólo Tendrás Piedras* (2020), the artist juxtaposes images of Andean salt flats with fragments of the poem *Testimonio de Circunstancias* by Chilean author Rodrigo Lira. In his poem, Lira describes transitions from euphoric to depressive states, which Prieto connects with lithium's use as a psychiatric medication to treat bipolar disorders, and with the direct site where lithium is extracted from. Her other piece in the exhibition, *Los Alquimistas* (2018) was originally conceived as a mural especially created for the façade of the Siqueiros Public Art Hall in Mexico City. It depicts a periodic table of elements in which the artist juxtaposes each element with the logo of the company that extracts it the most on a global scale.

## Marcela Magno

(Argentina)

is a visual artist that investigates and expands the photographic media. Her main interest lies in the power of the photographic image to produce and construct knowledge, and to structure individual and collective memory. She has exhibited her works both in Argentina and abroad, in events and institutions such as Photo Beijing (China), Casa Azul del Arte (Chile), Tokyo Institute of Photography (Japan), La Habana Biennale (Cuba), Photo Speaks (South Korea), and Art Museum of the Americas (USA).

As part of the overarching project *Land* (2012-), *Land [2] Lito* (2022-) is a series of assembled maps constructed with images from Google Earth of 'green' sacrifice zones. She assembles these photographs with satellite images of the Lithium Triangle, an area in South America where approximately 58 percent of all worldwide lithium reserves exist. This labyrinth of black and white constructed images displays different lithium evaporation pools located in 'green' sacrifice zones. By showcasing these areas, she visualizes the toll that the 'green' transition has on lands, animals, and people, and questions the imperial gaze that characterizes cartographic images.

## Maxi Mamani a.k.a. Bartolina Xixa

(Argentina)

is a Coya artist and drag queen from Jujuy who works with photography, performance and video. Through her pieces she seeks to fight against discrimination and addresses social issues such as anti-colonialism, identity struggle, sexual dissidence, inequality of Indigenous communities, ecological, environmental, and territorial concerns. In 2017, Mamani conceived the alter ego Bartolina Xixa, driven by an urge to challenge the colonial roots of subaltern identities within Southern cultures and the accompanying imposition of racial and gender categorisations. She has shown her works in many institutions and events, such as Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand (Brazil), Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof (Germany), Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende (Chile), and 11 Berlin Biennale (Germany).

The video *Ramita Seca, La colonialidad permanente* (2019) shows the artist in her alter ego Bartolina Xixa dancing to a self-created choreography in the middle of a dumping ground. This backdrop here is used by the artist to compare the disposable objects of the dumping ground—plastic bottles, papers, etc.—with the disposability of peripheral bodies. In this piece, Xixa expresses herself in ancestral movements that attempt to alleviate colonial extractivist violence.

## Naomi Rincón-Gallardo

(Mexico)

is a visual artist and researcher who approaches her practice from a decolonial-*cuir* perspective. Her work delves into critical-mythical dreamscapes, aiming to create alternative realities within neo-colonial contexts. Drawing inspiration from theatre games, popular music, Mesoamerican cosmologies, speculative fiction, vernacular festivities, crafts, decolonial feminisms, and queer of color critique, she integrates diverse influences into her artistic vision. She has exhibited her works in La Casa Encendida (Spain), 59th Biennale di Venezia (Italy), 34th Bienal de São Paulo (Brazil), MOMENTA 2023 (Canada), and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Oaxaca (Mexico), among others.

The video *Soneto de Alimañas* (Sonnet of Vermin, 2022) epitomises Rincón-Gallardo's surrealist exploration. This piece is a fusion of mythical-political horror, where a collection of characters, assemblages, animals, and debris emerge as harbingers within the aftermath of an extractivist society. The artist creates a wide range of characters that sing and move in a curious manner. Going against the tide of extinction in a post-extractivist environment, the creatures assert their right to re-exist through symbiotic mutualism.

## Seba Calfuqueo

(Chile)

is a Mapuche artist and curator based in Santiago, Chile. Through installation, video, ceramics, and performance, she proposes a critical reflection on the cultural, political, and social status of the Mapuche subject in contemporary Chilean society. Calfuqueo focuses her practice in exploring queer theories as well as the differences and similarities of Indigenous and Western ways of thinking. Her works are part of numerous collections, such as Denver Art Museum (USA), Museo MALBA (Argentina), Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum (Spain), and Centre Pompidou (France).

In her video *Kowkülen* (Liquid Being, 2020), Calfuqueo concentrates on lakes, oceans, rivers, and many water bodies from a personal, poetic, and bodily experience. She explores the historical and political relationship between water and life in the Chilean and Mapuche context, where different visions of this common good exist. For Mapuche culture, water is the source of all life, sacred. In Chile, a country constituted by more than 9 percent of Mapuche population, water has been privatised since Pinochet's military dictatorship, and is now sold to the highest bidder. The artist explores the potential of water as a living space, and the necessity of water to the relationship of all environments and territories.



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