

CON
OJOS
Y
DIENTES
WITH EYES AND TEETH
PAULA QUINTELA

19 MARCH - 4 JUNE





For Quintela, the forest, represents multiple dualities, as a link between the earth and the sky, connecting the spiritual world with the physical.

Born in Chile, raised and educated under the Pinochet regime, she attended art school under the shadow of an overbearing malevolence, before eventually relocating to Queensland.

This exhibition brings to life the multiple inhabitants of the forests of her memory, the forensic traces of the disappeared, the magical rituals of her indigenous ancestors and the wonder of new growth.

Cassandra Lehman, curator

Acknowledgments

Artisan acknowledges the Turrabul and Yaggera People as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the unique role they play in the life of this region.




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*The works in this exhibition tell a story,
part fiction, part fact.*

*(Never let the truth get in the way of a good story)
- Mark Twain.*

The process

... of engraving on aluminium is aggressive, and physically demanding. It gives the artist time to restrain and condense the spontaneity and emotional charge generated in the act of drawing. Quintela considers her printmaking to be a impulsive and reactive process rather than a method of precise control. As an act of rebellion against the strict academic approach to printmaking she was taught at art school, the process of making each of her images is unique and undergoes 3 separate stages, 3 different techniques, to which she has introduced elements of surprise.

The hand-engraved plate is submerged in acid repeatedly. Each time it is taken out, the levels of tonality, from white through multiple grey to black emerges and are selectively covered and preserved before being submerged again. Sometimes the artist allows a blend of water and oil to float randomly on the acid, to settle wherever they settle. Once the plate is finished, it is inked in black, and printed on a base of traditional printmaking paper. Quintela then applies old, faded paper dressmaking patterns; golden hued tissue she finds in op shops and markets. By layering whole sheets and collaged pieces of this transparent material, she is fully in control of where and how the subtle markings align with the printed image. Glue is sprayed in layers on the surface of the tissue before laying it over the printing plate, with the glued side up. The printing process then creates a bond between the layers of paper. Once a bond is achieved, Quintela applies inks, pencils and watercolour. The inconsistency of the glue results in the tissue responding differently to the ink and watercolour. Where the bond has been secure, the paints float on the surface. Where the tissue may not have fully bonded, the pigments may bleed into the paper itself. This dictates where and how the final image is coloured. Therefore she prefers not to call herself a printmaker or a painter as she considers herself to be both, and neither.

Quintela's grandparents ran from the Spanish civil war to Chile, while her grandmother was pregnant with her father. He was born onboard ship. They landed on the edge of a desert, where the baby contracted tuberculosis. This affected and deformed his bone structure. Quintela's grandfather eventually abandoned his wife and child, leaving them to fend for themselves in a specialist hospital in the mountains. Previously a seamstress for haute couture clothing, Quintela's grandmother supported herself and her child as a dressmaker. She made her son beautifully cut suits, coats, shirts, and other clothing, to disguise the disfigurement he suffered as a result of his illness. Quintela remembers her grandmother fondly, as she lived with them during her childhood. Her room was full of religious figures, dress making chalk, pins, scissors and a huge old wardrobe overstuffed with hanging patterns and paper, like the tissue she uses in her work.

The tissue patterns represent her heritage as a Latin American woman, where the expectation was to conform to the domestic sphere, as a woman, a mother and wife, and to take second place to the men in her life. Quintela believed that, to be successful was to be a man. Quintela went to art school where she strived initially to reject the feminine practices and symbols in order to compete with the men she studied alongside.

Dressmaking patterns are like a map. They contain a set of instructions, a topographic plan for a journey. Quintela only began to use them in her work when she came to Australia. They represent a way home, a method of return and connecting to her history, her family and the feminine.

The Storm II 2021/22

Etching with hand colouring and chine collé
paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on Hahnemüle ,
147 cm x 106 cm



You, the viewer lie prone, on your back, in the forest. You are looking through the trees to an illuminated sky.

The forest feels both dangerous and nurturing, where you are hidden while hunted. The aggressor hides, as does the victim. You seek each other out. This is the duality to which Quintela repeatedly refers, in her works.

The trees have the quality of skin. They, like an old, wrinkled being, bear the marks of wear and of age. There is a vibrancy in the silence. You are part of the soil, part of the fungus, part of the process of decomposition and regrowth.

Above you the universe sprawls in its entirety, as it does in the microcosm below. The constellations in the sky mirror the micro-organisms beneath the soil.

As the storm rages overhead, the trees remain still and tall. Little penetrates below the canopy. Warmth, not heat, reaches the forest floor. In the depth of the undergrowth, invisible creatures blink with glowing eyes. A magical reptile clings to the tree, hidden in plain sight.

Quintela grew up in a dangerous environment, hidden in plain sight. Born in Chile and educated during the Pinochet regime, her parents friends included artists, intellectuals, and some communists. During the Coup d'état, many fled or were killed.

Her father sent his children to catholic school alongside the children of his enemies, to hide their liberal, artistic and free thinking natures. The nuns told her that God could see inside her mind; that there was nowhere to hide. For Quintela, eyes and ears were everywhere.

The Storm refers to the ferocity of the emotional state of fear, and impending threat. Quintela remembers lying on the lawn looking up at a sky filled with military planes. The bombs dropped as a punctuation in her. Darkness fell and life was never the same.

The Storm III. 2021/22

Etching with hand colouring and chine collé
paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on Hahnemüle
147cm x 106cm





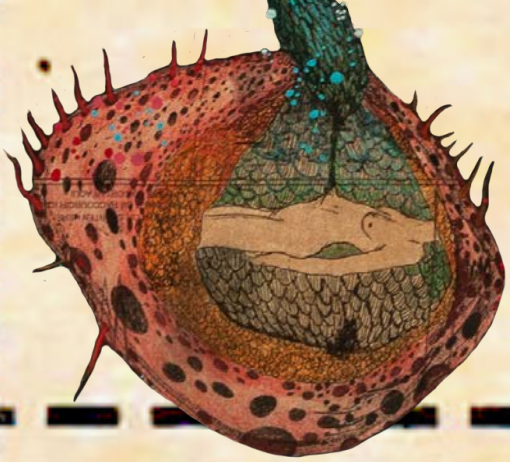
The nuns asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up, she answered that she wanted to be invisible.

A girl child has entered the forest and is embraced by the fantastical world of the trees. The trees have eyes, staring in every direction. There is no place to hide. The trees bear witness, holding the souls of the lost, of the hidden and the disappeared. There is light in the darkness, self-generated by the organisms, the creatures of the forest.

The child is herself generating this same energy, she is learning to self-nurture. She has four arms, in one she holds a smaller child, controlling her and calming her tantrums. A pair of scissors in another hand are simultaneously threatening, protective and creative. A second child is held and nurtured protectively. In her fourth arm she holds an oversized cockroach, a symbol for survival, resilience, revulsion, and perfection of design.

La Noche en el Bosque (The Night in the Forest) 2021/22
Etching with hand colouring and chine collé
paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on Hahnemüle
144 cm x 104 cm





The sky is no longer visible. In the darkness, tendrils tickle the air in and amongst the undergrowth. Fungi spawn into glowing nodules, cross-fertilising and continuing to expand and emanate light. Sea creatures float in between the tree trunks, denoting the depth and quiet of an inaccessible world.

Separated from the land, between the ground and the sky is a place of precarious safety, where somehow there is air to breathe and water in which to gently float.

The references here point to a hybridity of faith and hope, of practices and rituals from one world, modified to fit in another.



The Floating Forest 2021/22
Etching with hand colouring and chine collé
paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on hahnemüle
152cm x 107cm



“The roots I have left behind cry out to me” 2021/22

Etching with hand colouring and chine collé
paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on Hahnemüle
147 cm x 106 cm



The title of The work is a quote from *Sonnet I*, a poem by the celebrated Chilean Diplomat and Poet, Pablo Neruda. As a communist, Neruda was forced into exile.

Birds tap along the forest floor on a multitude of legs, in tiny red high-heeled shoes. Although the birds are winged, they dare not fly. The landscape is illuminated in the night, by the phosphorescence of the dwellers of the forest.

This work speaks again of adaptation, to and the new restrictions and expectations Quintela experienced, upon leaving her country of birth.



Suspiro (Whisper) 2021/22

Etching with hand colouring and chine collé paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on Hahnemüle

133 cm x 104 cm

Suspiro (whisper) and *The Whisperer* began as identical printed images.

Only once they were coloured did they differ. For the artist, they represent an enduring duality.

The forest has, in numerous cultures, come to represent the 'space between', a symbolic link between the dead and the living, and an intangible connection between two worlds.





The Whisperer 2021/22

Etching with hand colouring and chine collé
paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured
pencil on Hahnemüle,
133 cm x 104 cm

In this work, the use of gold is representative of the artists memory of the ceremonial use of gold in the Catholic churches of Latin America. Quintela recalls the buildings being covered in multiple, thick layers of gold, painted and repainted each year as a symbol for the renewal of spirituality and faith.

The forest, for Quintela, is a church, constantly regenerating itself.

Two indigenous figures stand in the autumnal forest, accompanied by a zebra. The zebra is an anomaly, he does not belong. He represents the stranger and a feeling of displacement. Far in the distance, a fire approaches on the first of two horizons. The trees have mouths as well as eyes, from which wet tongues protrude, trying to catch the gold particulates and ash that float in the air.

The faraway land is always there, if not always seen.

This work is the last in the series. Having lived through great change, since moving in 2007, for Quintela, Australia has slowly become a safe-haven and a new home as the distance between the present and the past increases.

However nothing is ever permanent.

As Australia's bush fires tore across the country, the security of this new horizon has been destabilised by smoke filled skies, closely followed by a global pandemic.



Yaganes II 2022

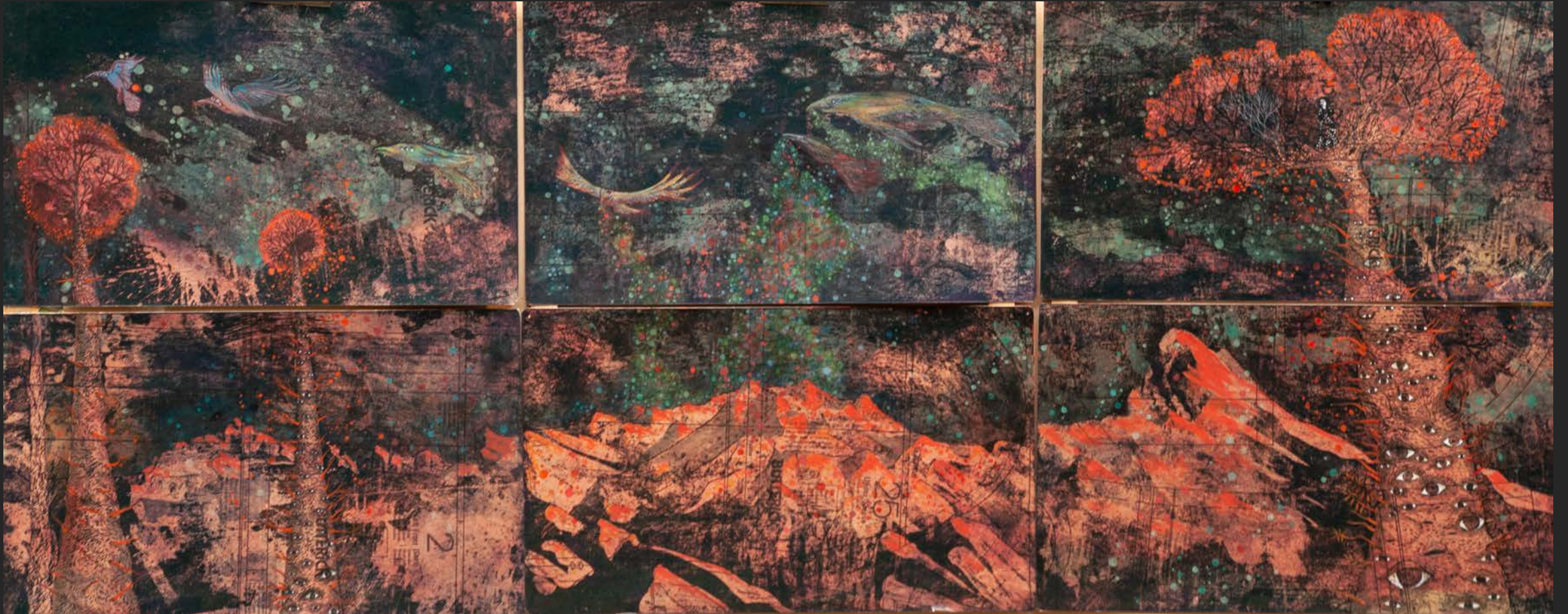
Etching with hand colouring and chine collé
paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on Hahnemüle
133 cm x 104 cm

El Viaje (The Journey) 2021/22

Etching with hand colouring and chine collé

paper dressmaking patterns, ink, watercolour, coloured pencil on Hahnemüle

170 cm x 90 cm



The artist has patched together the vista of the mountains, remembering the last time she saw them, as she flew over them and away towards her new life.

The mapping of memory is never perfect, the images are fragmented, the seams between the images never quite meet.

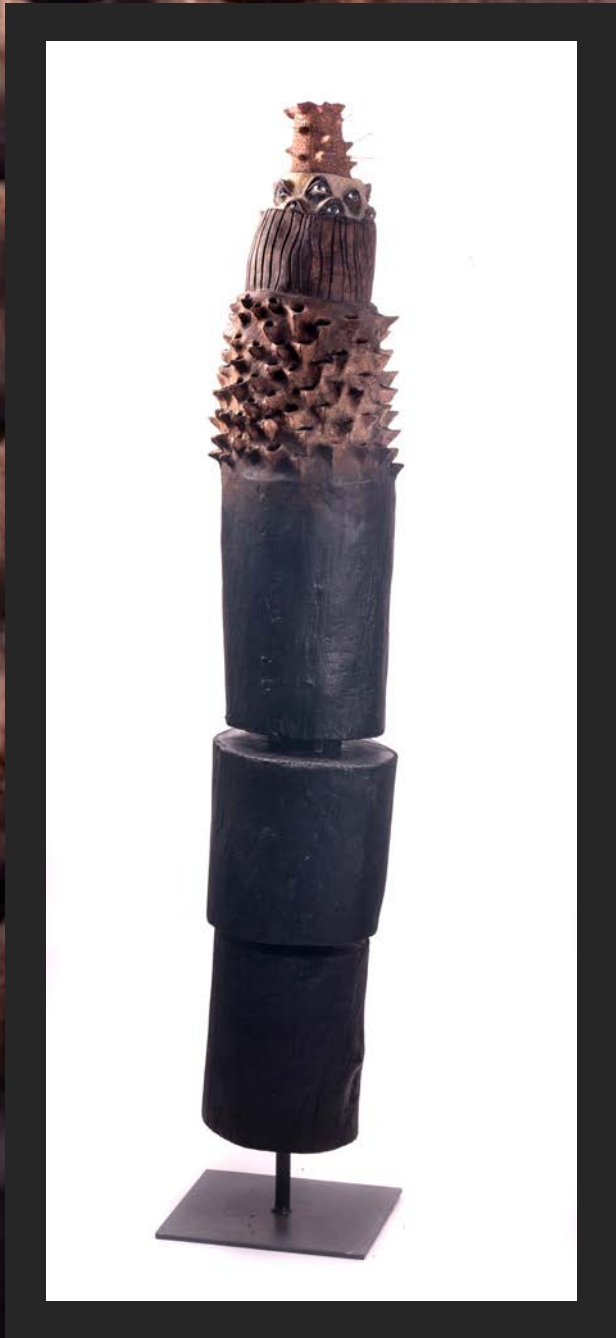
The sculptures

Initially inspired by the forms of branches and fallen trees in the vicinity of the creek that runs behind her house, Quintela has given a 3-dimensional form to the creatures that inhabit the forests of her imagination. They stand comfortably at a human scale, to look you directly in the eye.

The artist remembers how, for the families of the missing, forensic remains such as teeth and hair were the only remaining traces of the many people who disappeared during the Pinochet regime. As an immigrant, these symbols have now come to represent a universal sense of loss and a yearning for connection with an unrecoverable past.

Onto the clay and timber, she has added glass eyes, human hair and plastic teeth, in homage to the multitudes who were lost and never found or found and never identified.

Los Secretos (The Secrets) 2021/22
ceramic, timber, plastic, acrylic paint
160 cm x 35 cm x 35 cm

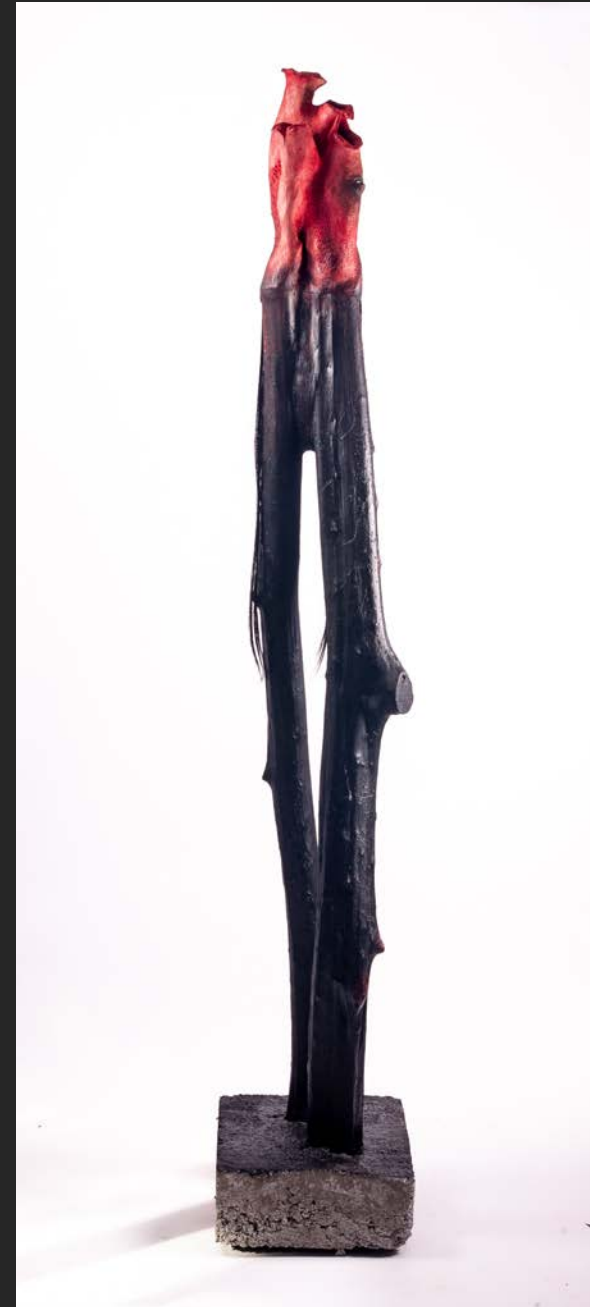


Corazon (Heart)

2021/22

ceramic, timber, plastic, acrylic paint

160cm x 28cm x 40cm



La Oruga (The Caterpillar)

2021/ 22

ceramic, timber, plastic, human hair acrylic paint

150cm x 30cm x 30cm

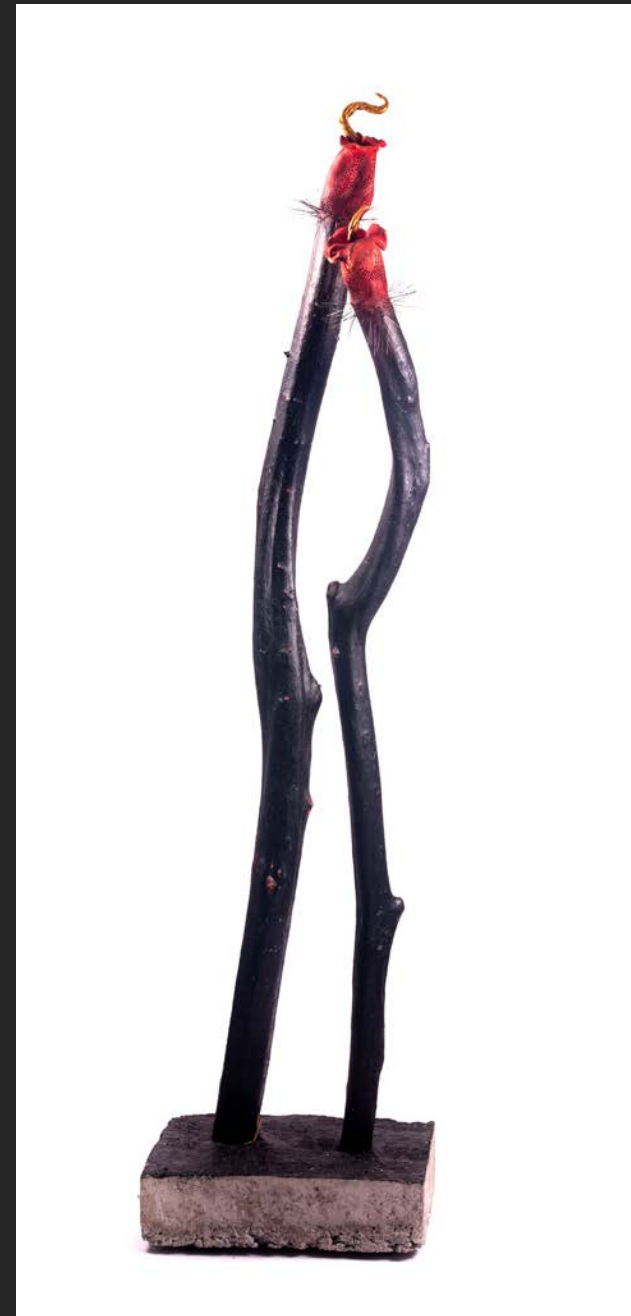


Flores Negras (Black Flowers)

2021 / 22

ceramic, timber, plastic, acrylic paint

150cm x 38cm x 27cm

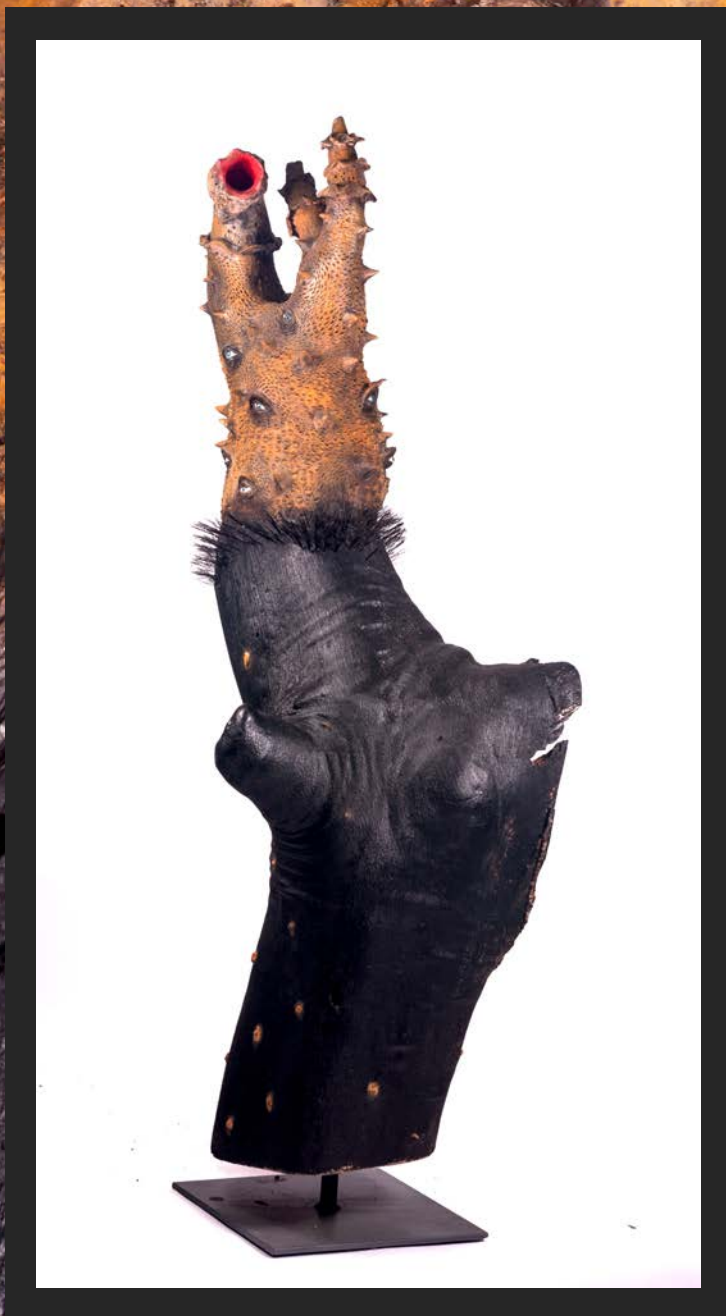


Escondida (Hidden)

2021 /22

ceramic, timber, plastic, acrylic paint

136cm x 60cm x 60cm





Flores Negras II (Black Flowers II)
2021/22
ceramic, timber, plastic, acrylic paint
120cm x 28cm x 30cm

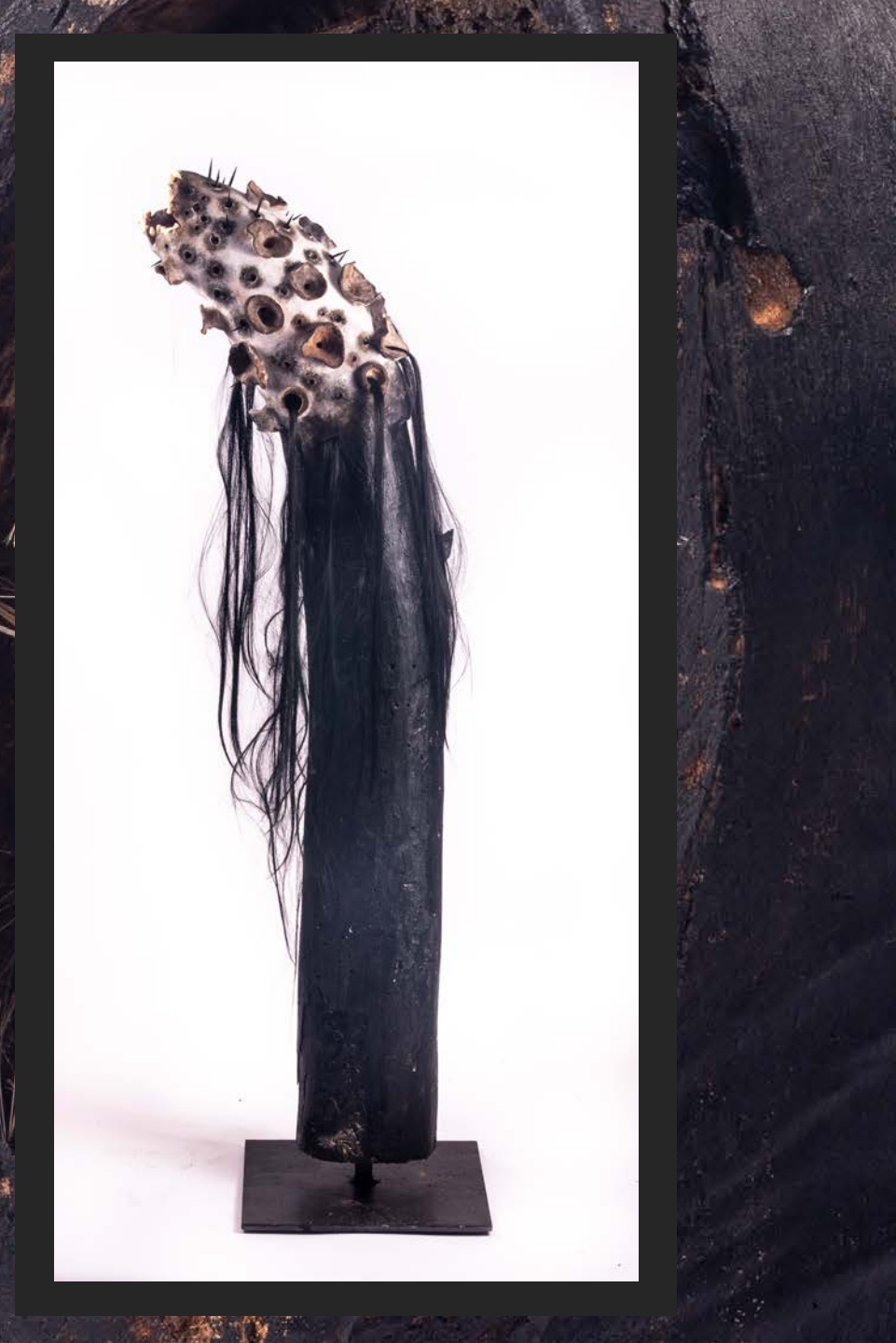


EL Grito (The Scream)

2021/22

ceramic, timber, plastic, human hair, acrylic paint

126cm x 40cm x 40cm





Flores Negras III (Black Flowers III)

2021/22

ceramic, timber, plastic, human hair, acrylic paint

144cm x 25cm x 25cm

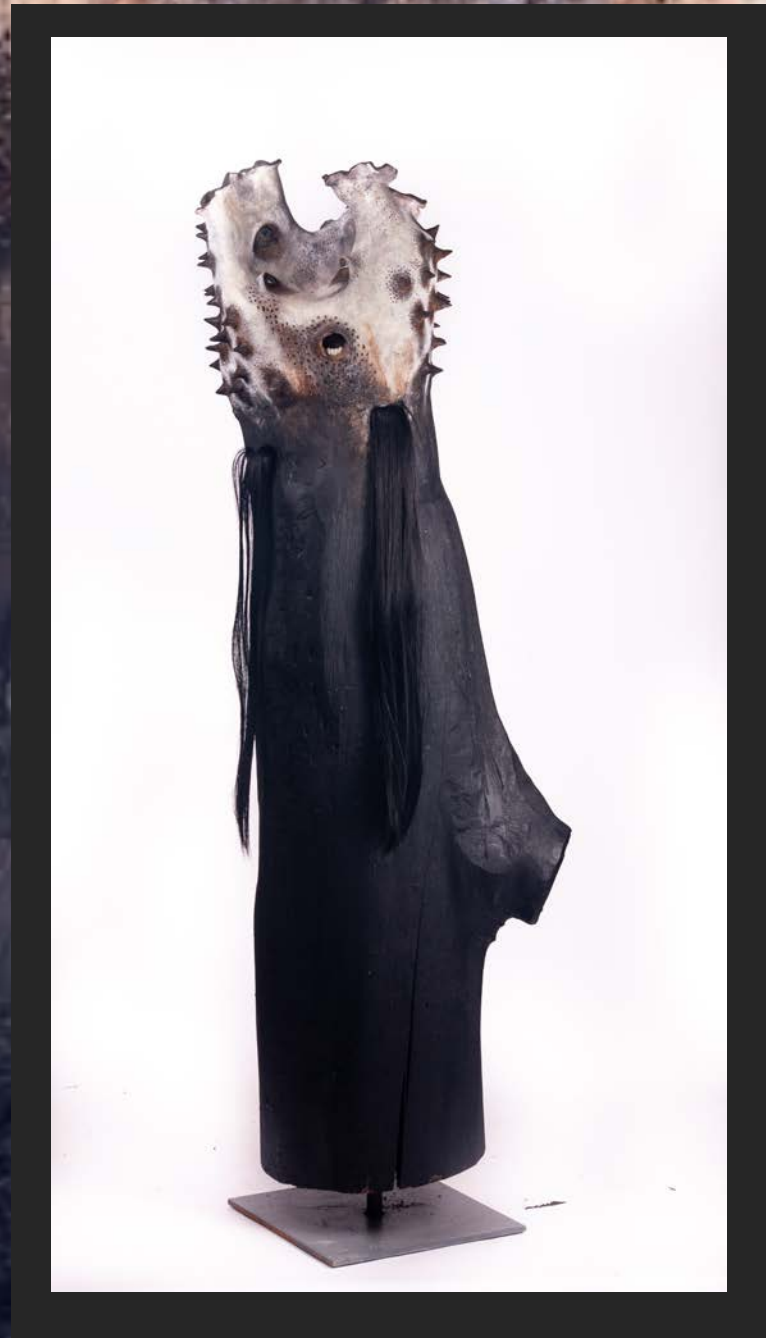


El Liamado (The Calling)

2021/22

ceramic, timber, plastic, human hair, acrylic paint

145cm x 45cm x 45cm





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Published by artisan, Craft Queensland 2022.
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