MELI NEWEN – FOUR FORCES

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Cultural practices tend to preserve certain aspects of the social configurations that originated them. The exhibition “Meli Newen” (four forces) expands the knowledge contained in the Mapuche weaving practices, giving them a space to join 200 weavers in a collective artwork that embodies a form of community. Here, curators, weavers and institutions show how care and fraternity can take on concrete dimensions and form support networks in the face of crisis.

Keywords

Exhibition
Weavers
Mapuche
Portfolio
Care

1 Asociación Indígena
Wallontu Witrál /
*Indigenous Association
Wallontu Witrál*. Hotel
Mapuche, Nueva Imperial,
Chile, 2020-06.
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2 Artesana María
Coña. / *Artisan María
Coña*. Agosto de 2020.
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Beginning in May 2020, the Faculty of Architecture, Arts, and Design of the Universidad Católica de Temuco along with the Tierra del Encuentro foundation, kept company to a group of over 200 weavers – mostly Mapuche women – from several districts in the Araucanía and Biobío regions. These communities had suffered the economic impact due to the social outbreak of 2019, which was followed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, they were invited to weave by handloom a series of textile pieces, which, after a rigorous indexing process, would be woven together to create three large circular mantles of 25 m in length, a great collective work jointly accomplished by all the weavers involved. This collection makes up “Meli Newen – Four Forces,” an exhibition held at the hall of the Centro Cultural La Moneda.

The exhibition is constituted by four cylinders of 4.5 m in height and 7 m in diameter. Three of them hang from the hall’s ceiling, and the fourth is marked at floor level, symbolizing the persistence of a fabric that continues to be woven beyond the walls of the cultural center. Each cylinder is made up of approximately three hundred pieces woven with lamb’s wool and tinted with dyes harvested from the weavers’ local environment.

According to Mapuche cosmology, the circle has always been present in the space-time relationship, as seen, for example, in the attendants’ arrangement in ritualistic ceremonies, the daily cycles, and in the graphic representation of the universe. In this sense, this work reflects also on the relationship between the four primordial forces of Mapuche lore, expressed

through a system within which all the cosmic elements relate to each other while maintaining a universal balance: air, water, fire, and earth. The artwork contains various bodies of knowledge, also present in the textile craftsmanship through its process, imaginary, and landscape. Thus, these cylinders seek to emulate the *trariwe's* encircling movement and turning gesture, connecting us with their ancestral culture.

Thus, we enter a territory that speaks of the becoming and the infinite, which configures spaces that house silence. From its interior we hear what its women, their craftsmanship, and their knowledge want to communicate to us. **ARQ**

3 Witrál, Patricia
Quilaquir, 2020-06.
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4 Pabellón Araucanía,
Temuco, 2021-01.
© Paula Vergara

5 Pabellón Araucanía,
Temuco, Chile, 2021-01.
© Claudia Jiménez

6 Pabellón Araucanía,
Temuco, 2021-01.
N/A

7 Meli Newen – Cuatro
Fuerzas / Meli Newen –
Four Forces. Centro
Cultural La Moneda.
Santiago, 2021-07.
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7-9 Meli Newen – Cuatro
Fuerzas / *Meli Newen –
Four Forces*. Centro
Cultural La Moneda.
Santiago, 2021-07.
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MELI NEWEN

Directores / Directors: Marés Sandor, Ana Paillamil, Pedro Arellano
Tejedoras Newen Ngürekafe / Newen Ngürekafe Weavers: Asociación
Indígena Relmu Witrál, Cooperativa de Trabajo Witraltu Mapu,
Asociación Indígena Wallontu Witrál, Mesa de la Mujer Rural, Taller
Millaray, Agrupación Peumayen
Exhibición Meli Newen / Meli Newen Exhibition: arquitectura /
architecture: Domingo Arancibia, Leonardo Suárez, Miguel Eyquem,
Andrés Peña; diseño / *design:* Fernanda Pérez; iluminación / *lighting*
design: Mauricio Lacrampette; iluminación / *structural engineering:*
Tomas Yañez

Equipo FAAD UCT / FAAD UCT Team: Leslye Palacios, Claudia Jiménez,
Lía Aliaga, Renzo Vaccaro, Javiera Moncada, Gonzalo Cueto, Carolina
Nicoletti, Geraldine Peralta, Daniela Gaete, Jaime Inostroza, Martín
Puppe, Luis García, Luis Osses, Sofía Arias, Simón Gómez, Angélica
Cofré, Elizabeth Gainza, Gabriel Saldías, Zandra Matamala, Paula
Simian, Pablo Flores, Carola Fuentes, Rafael Valdeavellano, Daniela
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Graduate in Architecture, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Her topics of interest include the historical, landscape, material and programmatic dimensions of the territory. She was part of the open research network sAP-The South American Project of the GSD Graduate School of Design, Harvard University. She is dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Arts and Design of the Universidad Católica de Temuco.