

Press Release

Fátima Rodrigo

Piedra de sol, serpiente de humos

6 November - 13 December 2024



Detail: Fátima Rodrigo, *Contradanza*, 2024, quilted fabric, appliqué embroidery, metallic rope, beads, sequins, glass and plastic gems

Cecilia Brunson Projects is pleased to present the gallery's first solo exhibition by Fátima Rodrigo (b. 1987, Lima, Peru). Working predominantly with hand-embroidered textiles and installation, Rodrigo produces exuberant and theatrical imagery, celebrating Latin American popular culture and folk traditions by upturning the conventional hierarchies of 'high' and 'low' culture. Rodrigo foregrounds the contribution of Andean art and culture in the history and present-day understanding of post-colonial society in Peru. Her work serves as a critique of ongoing forms of colonial extraction, which simplify and synthesise complex traditions and cultures into decorative settings.

This is the artist's first solo exhibition in London, following her commission for the Liverpool Biennial in 2023, and her participation in the group show *Hecho a Mano* at Cecilia Brunson Projects in February 2024. The exhibition takes its title from *Piedra de Sol*, a monumental poem deeply rooted in Mesoamerican culture, written by Mexican poet and diplomat Octavio Paz in 1957. The poem blends mythology, history, and personal reflection, using symbols like the sun, water, and serpents to depict the cyclical nature of life and the search for meaning.

Throughout her practice, Rodrigo examines the myth of modernity as an antithesis to 'non-Western' cultures, and the hierarchical binaries that

cast South American creative developments as separate and subordinate to the Western aesthetic tradition. For this exhibition, Rodrigo presents new textile works from her ongoing *Contradanza* series. Named after a traditional form of court music and dance brought to Latin America by Spanish colonisers, it took on folkloric forms when adopted by indigenous populations in Peru, becoming a symbol of joyful opposition and mockery against colonial oppression. Resplendent with jewels, beads, sequins and glittering metallic fabrics, Rodrigo's textiles share their materials and colours with Peruvian costumes of traditional celebrations. Rodrigo enacts a carnivalesque subversion of power structures, creating space in the gallery for the syncretic visual language of modern-day celebrations in Peru and the 'low culture' materials of carnival parades, an example of a fluid evolution from indigenous and colonial practices.

Rodrigo also presents a site-specific installation at Cecilia Brunson Projects, creating a monumental image in glitter on the floor of the gallery. The pool of glitter spreads beneath the gallery's glass roof, adorned with suns, stars and serpents, as if reflecting the cosmos above. Produced by hand in the gallery, this ephemeral artwork may shift and blur over the course of the exhibition as visitors move through the space.

Both the installation and textiles borrow from popular, traditional and contemporary iconography, to reclaim symbols routinely stripped of meaning for commercial uses, particularly by the fashion industry. For this exhibition, Rodrigo focuses on the symbol of the snake, its sinuous forms woven through each piece. A principal image in pre-Columbian art and ritual, the snake carried a multitude of meanings, including wisdom, luck, protection, fertility and death. Significantly, it represented a connector between worlds; pre-Hispanic Andean rituals and celebrations frequently incorporated ropes and charms evoking snakes, used to channel the life forces of ancestors from the underworld to the living.

Throughout the exhibition, Rodrigo calls on the symbolic power of the serpent, observing crossings between worlds and forging a passage between Andean ancestors and the modern world, as she reinstates meaning to symbols that have permuted over time.

Fátima Rodrigo lives and works in Lima, Peru. Recent exhibitions include *12th Liverpool Biennial*, UK in 2023, *Imaginarios contemporáneos* at Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) in 2021 and *22nd Sydney Biennial*, Australia in 2020. Rodrigo's work is held in the Museo de Arte de Lima collection and included in the publications, *77 Peruvian Contemporary Artists* (2017) and *Remains - Tomorrow: Themes in Contemporary Latin American Abstraction* (2022). Rodrigo will participate in the 2025 Mercosul Biennial, curated by Raphael Fonseca.

Event:

Private view & Fátima Rodrigo in conversation with Diego Chocano
6 November, 2024, 6-8pm

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