



**Crafts Council** T +44 (0)20 7806 2500  
44a Pentonville Road media@craftscouncil.org.uk  
London N1 9BY

28 March 2022

## **GAINING GROUND: LEARNING FROM GLOBAL CRAFT PRACTICES AT THE CRAFTS COUNCIL GALLERY, 13 APRIL TO 25 JUNE 2022**

A Crafts Council exhibition, curated by Ligaya Salazar, in partnership with the British Council's Crafting Futures initiative.

**Press Preview: Wednesday 13 April, 9-11am**

A new exhibition at the Crafts Council Gallery explores global craft practices that work in symbiosis with the natural world. It questions how craft can inform climate action and help build a more sustainable future. It foregrounds knowledge held in global craft practices that carry an understanding of, and value for, soil, biodiversity, local materials, and production systems.

*Gaining Ground* is developed in partnership with the British Council's Crafting Futures programme, a global initiative supporting research for a sustainable future through making and collaboration.

The exhibition features nine collaborative projects from the Crafting Futures programme – explored through objects, films, photographs, books, and material experiments. *Gaining Ground* will transform the gallery into an informal space for learning, through reading, discussion, and exchange.

These nine projects were collaboratively developed by makers, designers and researchers in Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Philippines, and the United Kingdom.

The projects are:

**Artisan Voices: Dialogues for Sustainable Practices** - a collaboration between British Council Argentina and the Craft Revival Trust, India.

**Building a library for the future** - a collaboration between Chief Domingos Munduruku (Belterra, Pará, Brazil) and Teal Triggs, Matt Lewis and Tai Cossich (Royal College of Art, London), Celia Matsunaga and Matheus Almeida (University of Brasília, Brazil).

**Cultivating an earth-based practice** - a collaboration between artist Ione Maria Rojas, ceramicist Gustavo Bernal and founding director of art and ecology centre Guapamacátaro in Mexico, Alicia Marván.

**Karighor archive** - a collaboration between design collective Peut-Porter, architecture studio Paraa, the National Crafts Council of Bangladesh and textile artisans in Bangladesh and the UK.

**Kilubukila** - a collaboration between designer Jess Kibulu, artisan weavers and linguists in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



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**Making nature** - a collaboration between design educators Prananda Luffiansyah Malasan (Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia) and Nicholas Gant (University of Brighton).

**Promoting Indigenous identity through pottery, Guyana** - a collaboration between activist, ceramic artist and researcher Jay Mistry, Indigenous potters, and artisan social enterprise Wabbani (Yupukari, Guyana).

**Relocating the loom: Handweaving in the Cordillera** - A collaboration between Rachel Kelly, Michelle Stephens of Manchester School of Art with Analyn Salvador-Amores and the CordiTex project (University of the Philippines, Baguio).

**Women's earth-building revival and 'magic mud' in Nicaragua** - A collaboration between the women's organisation Asociación Mujeres Constructoras de Condega (AMCC), Nicaragua, carpenter and earth-builder trainer Helen Shears and lime-stabilised soil consultant Bee Rowan (Strawbuild).

Each project advocates craft as a form of 'living knowledge' that shapes cultures and our relationship to nature. Although they are each informed by specific geographic and socio-historical contexts, collectively these projects question how craft can inform climate action and help build a more sustainable future.

*Gaining Ground* draws attention to territories where colonialism and extractive capitalist processes have disrupted craft knowledge being passed onto future generations.

Several projects featured in the exhibition address this through proposing self-managed, open access platforms and handbooks that map and uphold heritage craft practices in these regions. Developed in dialogue with the artisans practising and safeguarding these crafts, they have been designed to ensure ethical visibility of their material cultures and craft knowledge.

These themes will be explored in a talk - *Gaining Ground: how ancient craft knowledge can shape our future* - hosted by Crafts magazine on **10 May, from 6.30-8.30pm**, in the Crafts Council Gallery and online. Free press tickets are available on request.

Graphic design for *Gaining Ground* is by Studio Rejane Dal Bello

## Quotes

"Crafting Futures is a global programme conceived and developed by the British Council which aims to help bring about a sustainable future through making and collaboration and to support a future for craft by understanding its value in our history, culture and world today. The programme brings together craft practitioners, designers, and organisations from around the world to explore possibilities for this future together. The Gaining Ground exhibition draws on the wide range of work of the Crafting Futures programme, demonstrating how craft addresses sustainable use of resources, indigenous materials, climate action, and social and economic inclusion."

Sevra Davis, Director of Architecture Design and Fashion at the British Council

“Gaining Ground showcases nine projects from different parts of the world that foreground craft knowledge that works in close connection with their natural environment. Whilst the context of each differs, what the projects share is an understanding that safeguarding and supporting those craft practices is a crucial part of building a more sustainable future.”

Ligaya Salazar, curator of Gaining Ground

“This timely exhibition reminds us that craft can be a tool in helping form more meaningful connections with nature. The Crafts Council Gallery has been transformed into a space for research, discussion and exchange with books, films, photographs, objects and material experiments that surface the knowledge of global craft traditions and the stories of the people and places that carry them.”

Sumitra Upham, head of public programmes, Crafts Council

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### [Gaining Ground images on Dropbox](#)

For more information on Gaining Ground please contact Jill Read, Head of Marketing and Communications at [j\\_read@craftscouncil.org.uk](mailto:j_read@craftscouncil.org.uk) or phone +00 44 (0) 20 7806 2500

For more information on the Crafts Council visit [www.craftscouncil.org.uk](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk) and follow @craftscouncil on Instagram and @CraftsCouncilUK on Twitter and Facebook

## Notes to Editor

### Visiting

*Gaining Ground: Learning from global craft practices*

13 June – 25 June 2022

Crafts Council Gallery

44a Pentonville Road

London

N1 9BY

Wednesdays to Saturdays

11.00 – 17.00

### Featured projects

#### Artisan Voices: Dialogues for Sustainable Practices, 2020

A collaboration between British Council Argentina and the Craft Revival Trust, India

This project between the Craft Revival Trust, India and the British Council Argentina explores the development of research into ethical and equitable practices in the design and crafts sector.

Building on the research carried out in 2020 by the British Council Argentina, this project produced a simple guidebook, or code of conduct, outlining seven principles for fairer working conditions and practices for artisans and designers.

### **Building a library for the future, pilot 2021- ongoing**

A collaboration between Chief Domingos Munduruku (Belterra, Pará, Brazil) and Teal Triggs, Matt Lewis and Tai Cossich (Royal College of Art, London), Celia Matsunaga and Matheus Almeida (University of Brasília, Brazil).

This project brings together 60 Munduruku inhabitants of a village in Bragança, along the lower Tapajós river, Pará – a tributary of the Amazon – with design educators at the University of Brasília and the Royal College of Art to build a virtual library for the future.

### **Cultivating an earth-based practice, 2019-ongoing**

A collaboration between artist Ione Maria Rojas, ceramicist Gustavo Bernal and founding director of art and ecology centre Guapamacátaro in Mexico, Alicia Marván.

Through a series of hands-on workshops, this research investigated how working with wild clay can catalyse a reconnection with soil, earth, and the local environment. Working with children from the local school at Guapamacátaro, the workshops explored sourcing, processing, making, and firing wild clay, and served as a pilot module for future ecological arts and crafts school CREA (Cooperativa Regional de Ecología Aplicada).

### **Karighor archive, 2021-ongoing**

A collaboration between design collective Peut-Porter, architecture studio Paraa, the National Crafts Council of Bangladesh and textile artisans in Bangladesh and the UK.

Bangladesh-based architecture studio Paraa and London-based design collective Peut-Porter are collaborating with the Crafts Council of Bangladesh and textile artisans in Bangladesh and the UK to build an online archive that celebrates the rich history of textile crafts in Bangladesh.

### **Kilubukila, 2019-ongoing**

A collaboration between designer Jess Kibulu, artisan weavers and linguists in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

For his project, Kinshasa-based designer Jess Kibulu developed an atelier to revitalise traditional Kuba cloth textiles - a raffia fabric woven with fibres from the leaves of the raffia palm and unique to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The atelier supports female weavers and linguists to apply Mandombé - a pan-African language - as a new pattern on traditional Kuba textiles in Kinshasa.

### **Making nature, 2021-22**

A collaboration between design educators Prananda Luffiansyah Malasan (Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia) and Nicholas Gant (University of Brighton).

Led by educators Prananda Luffiansyah Malasan of Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia, and Nicholas Gant, University of Brighton, this project uses open access digital technology to highlight and map craft practices and maker enterprises in Indonesia and the UK that consciously support nature and biodiversity and propose more symbiotic relationships with natural systems.

### **Promoting Indigenous identity through pottery, Guyana, 2019- ongoing**

A collaboration between activist, ceramic artist and researcher Jay Mistry, Indigenous potters, and artisan social enterprise Wabbani (Yupukari, Guyana).

Led by UK-based ceramic artist and researcher Jay Mistry with Indigenous potters and the artisan social enterprise Wabbani in Yupukari, Guyana, this project explores how strengthening ceramic practices of Indigenous potters in the village of Fly Hill, Yupukari, Rupununi, Guyana, can promote collective identity, self-worth, and economic development.

### **Relocating the loom: Handweaving in the Cordillera, 2019**

A collaboration between Rachel Kelly, Michelle Stephens of Manchester School of Art with Analyn Salvador-Amores and the CordiTex project (University of the Philippines, Baguio) to explore the loss of weaving traditions within Itneg ethnolinguistic communities who live in three villages (Manabo, Abra and Mindoro and Santiago in Ilocos Sur) near to the low-lying delta of the Abra river in Northern Luzon, Philippines.

The collaborators in this project developed a Learning Tool Kit to document traditional weaving information from textiles held in the archive of the Museo Kordilyera at the University of the Philippines, Baguio.

### **Women's earth-building revival and 'magic mud' in Nicaragua, 2019- ongoing**

A collaboration between the women's organisation Asociación Mujeres Constructoras de Condega (AMCC), Nicaragua, carpenter and earth-builder trainer Helen Shears and lime-stabilised soil consultant Bee Rowan (Strawbuild). Their collaboration was built upon an early 1998 womens' building brigade from the UK, supporting the AMCC's reconstruction work in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

This participatory action research project took place at AMCC's training centre in Condega, Northern Nicaragua, with the aim to reinforce the value of a supportive environment and training centre for young women, heritage craft and the relationship between them.

## **About Ligaya Salazar**

Ligaya Salazar is a curator focused on contemporary interdisciplinary practice at the intersection of design, fashion, art, and graphics. Her approach is shaped by an interest in how audiences can be positioned at the heart of curatorial practice, enabling a human-centred take on storytelling.

She is one of the 2021 Stanley Picker Fellows and is currently working on an exhibition on the subjectivity of seeing at the Wellcome Collection (2022), futures of craft at the Crafts Council (2022) and the cultural and design history of sneakers at the Design Museum London (2021 and its international tour 2022-23).

She has devised creative cultural programmes across the cultural and museum sectors for 15 years. As Director of Fashion Space Gallery and Arcade East, at the University of the Arts' London College of Fashion campus, she developed the strategic direction for the two spaces from 2013-2020. As curator of Contemporary Programmes at the V&A from 2005–13, she commissioned and curated exhibitions, events, and projects within a ground-breaking and critically acclaimed cross-disciplinary programme.

Working as an independent curator and advisor, Ligaya was Curator and Artistic Director of the East London Comics and Arts Festival from 2013–19, which she developed from a one-day festival into a month-long programme that has included international partnerships with Festa, São Paulo (2019) and Illustration Arts Festival, Singapore (2018).

## About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education, and the English language. In 2019-2020 we reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive a 14.5 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

## About Crafting Futures

Crafting Futures is a global programme conceived and run by the British Council. Crafting Futures aims to support a more sustainable future for crafts around the world and ensure that craft is appreciated for economic, social, and environmental development. The global programme provides education and training opportunities, connects artisans from rural communities with international designers, creates international partnerships and increases access to new markets and audiences. It enables designers and artisans to develop their practices, empowers them to create their own businesses, and improve their abilities to shape local craft markets and sell their products locally and internationally

