



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**The Javelin Project**

by

Maria Veronica San Martin  
Curated by Ignacio Szmulewicz

August 6 - September 24, 2022  
Opening: Saturday, August 6 at 5:00 p.m.  
NAC Gallery, Américo Vespucio Norte 2878, Vitacura



The Javelin project by the multidisciplinary Chilean artist specialized in artist books and New York based, María Verónica San Martín, explores the concepts of migration, resistance and freedom from the history of the ancestral spear to the contemporary professional javelin. Through the interaction of different media such as performance, video, and artist books the project seeks to reflect on power and patriarchy through a choreography directed by the choreographer Jose Vidal, developing images that recall rituals and movements that go from *pueblos precolombinos* to the current capitalist system.

The performance was made and documented in the commune of Cerrillos in March 2021, coinciding with the first anniversary of the pandemic arrival in a Chile convulsed by the social upheaval. Through three simultaneous projections, the video installation shows the dancers and the artist crossing the screen, inhabiting the space of the gallery and leaving the spears buried as tribal signs of their last trace. In addition to the projections, the installation contains three artist books that include a resin javelin and metal prints on felt, fabric, and paper. The engravings show drawings of spectral bodies that erase the limits between figuration and abstraction, emerging to the rhythm of intuitive gestures and floating in an ether of darkness.

To date, different versions of the project have been exhibited at the Queens Museum in New York; the LA Art Fair in Los Angeles through the participation of the Museum of the Americas (AMA), and remotely in an event organized by One Moment Art in Chile. This is the first time that the project will be shown in person in Chile.

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### **The broken spear**

Ignacio Szmulewicz R.  
Curator

During the dawn of an autumn morning, five bodies dance in a wasteland. Each carries a javelin. They walk slowly, raise their arms, shrink, squat, drag, stretch, circle and swing the artifact of Greco-Roman sport. They are dominated by a concentration on the brink of transcendence. When the Andean cold still seeps into the bones, the five bodies begin to communicate, becoming a chorus. The dancers interact leaving their contemplative attitudes and produce diagonal encounters with centripetal tendencies. The spear acts as a lingua franca. The sun has risen and the light floods everything with its multiple gradients and shadows and the five bodies are still there like an indivisible knot. The grayish cyan gives way to an intense and fierce yellow, and the bodies conclude their ritual sport by drawing lines on the ground and looking at each other, even aware of those of us who are observing the scene from the outside.

These paintings correspond to the performance of the Jabalina project by the Chilean artist residing in New York, María Verónica San Martín (1981). It was held in Santiago, on the grounds of Ciudad Parque Bicentenario in the commune of Cerrillos, during March 2021, just one year after the arrival of the COVID 19 pandemic in a Chile convulsed by the social outbreak. What is the engine of this sublime action in the landscape? Where does it take the viewer, still intoxicated by social changes and troubled by the trails of death, loneliness, and abandonment that are felt in the post-pandemic world?

The actions that are executed are directed at everyone and nobody. Outside, the spectators in a present, are excluded and silenced, although in turn the performers threaten to break that

border with possible blows, with gestures that assault their security. At other times, the observing eye witnesses the beautiful action of drawing with a brush on the skin of the earth. The group of five performers, choreographed by Jose Vidal, is in an open field with a background of buildings in the distance, in what could be a city in Africa, Asia or North America. But it is the so-called city of the wind, the last urban project with airs of modernity in the postmodern megalopolis of Santiago de Chile. Located on the grounds of the old Los Cerrillos airport, which was the gateway to the international world until 1967 for provincial Chile.



The video-performance presents all the action with electronic music that goes from metallic to evanescent and astral, at times falling into the repetitiveness of percussion. In this way, she crosses the barriers of dance and movement, to the point of rubbing shoulders with the sculptural and pictorial. Like the scenic bodies, glorious and joyful of their musculature and majesty that posed for the reproductions of yesteryear. They even feature as the models for academic drawing exercises in the 30-second sketches delving into history painting.

At no time do the dancers release the object of their desire to the about to become a part of his body. Each of the lances is made of thin, fine and rustic wood, a long structure with a stone, steel or copper tip, and a headdress on the handle made of hemp, Chilota wool, vegetable fiber, skin or leather. This reaches erotic, sensual and pulsating points when you enter a trance and intoxication of movement. But all this solemnity is also the humorous façade of a group pretending to play chopsticks to scale. The care they give to their movements, the attentiveness in the look and the desire to win is the same as the competitors of that peculiar winter entertainment. From the childish game of cunning, it is separated from a sports performance that never arrives, that is infinitely delayed, without winners, medals, pulpits or honors.



At NAC Gallery, the Jabalina project is presented as a video flush installation. The videos from a continuity with the art space and, furthermore, a counterpoint with the same spears arranged as tribal signs in a natural, ethnographic or historical exhibition. The scale of the installation generates an intense and dramatic continuity with life itself, as if the performers decided to drop the representation and enter life itself (an issue that is proposed in the performance during the opening).

The action and the videos are transmuted into three artist books, with signs of micro museums of archeology. Inside, you can find hundreds of fine small-format felt fabrics with drawings of spectral bodies made with the metal engraving technique. In a semi-abstract, thick, dark and almost ominous style, the bodies show their musculature, twist and tension. They may be part of a series, of a mantra perhaps, an unconscious apparition, some images that stick to the mind and encourage it to wander through what is blocked like spots in a Rorschach test.

They are modules of overwhelming simplicity, quick sketches and sketches that emerge to the rhythm of intuitive gestures. But they come from nowhere and settle in no recognizable landscape; what's more, they float in an ether of darkness. One of the books keeps a pinkish resin reproduction of a broken spear. The copy lacks stone, metal, steel, hemp, Chilota wool, vegetable fiber, fur or leather. It's just the broken shape. What does this abrupt end symbolize? Is the action irreproducible (the video itself becomes a vestige of that contradiction) or its character as an object? of worship inevitably entails a limit, a loss or an insurmountable frontier?

The time of art is elliptical and intertwined, in constant fluctuations and you come, towards the modern and the anti-modern. At times he expresses faith that Ariadne's thread will save him from his labyrinth even though this attracts blind enthusiasm for breaking barriers, whatever the cost. The performance pushes the body to an extreme that goes from abandonment on the plain to the promise of the community. The remnants that it leaves in the viewer are part of the discomfort typical of the contemporary world, one that allows us to look at cultural expansion of humanity as part of a complex dating cycle process, appropriations and incorporations of both the prehistoric past and the promise of a hazy tomorrow. The future can arise at dawn or at

sunset, but it always comes with a break in the continuity of the dream. The broken spear is a sign, an emblem, a key, even a monument, which as a gesture of the unconscious brings to light the disturbing emotions and questions raised by the Javelin project by María Verónica San Martín.

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### **About the artist**

María Verónica San Martín (1981, Santiago, Chile) is a multidisciplinary artist and educator based in New York. Her work explores the impacts of history, memory, and trauma through printmaking, artist books, sculpture, the archive, and performance. Her work addresses memory as a factor fundamental for understanding the neoliberal and globalized present, returning to the issue of the violence of the Chilean dictatorship against the United States and the involvement of Nazism in that violence.

San Martín was a fellow of the Whitney Museum of the Studies Program Independientes ISP (2018), a scholar at the Center for Book Arts in New York (2017) and she has a Master's in Artist's Books and Engraving from the Corcoran School of Art and Design, Washington DC (2013) and has done numerous international residencies. She has obtained two New York Foundation for the Arts grants, NYFA, three FONDART, National Fund for Culture and the Arts of Chile, and a Chile Scholarship. Her work is part of more than 60 collections, including the Center Pompidou (Paris), the MET (New York), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), the Museum of Memory and Human Rights and the Cerrillos National Center for Contemporary Art (Santiago) and The Library of Congress (Washington DC).

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