

Ángel Poyón

The hand, the foot of our brooms, The hand, the foot of our hoe / our hoes, 2026

coconut leaf fibre, carved wood, steel, paint

Courtesy of the artist

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Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain

Education Resource (K-6)



Ruq'a' raqān qazadón, 2021

22nd Paiz Art Biennial, Guatemala, 2021.

Photo: Byron Mármol.

Courtesy: Fundación de Arte Paiz.

Overview



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Have you ever thought that the objects in your house might be asleep and waiting for you to wake them up? Maya Kaqchikel artist Ángel Poyón asks us to imagine exactly that. Ángel's work shows us that the tools we use to clean and work are not just lifeless objects, but have their own life and energy.

In this artwork, you will see a large collection of 80 handmade objects arranged in the room. Specifically, there are 40 shovels and 40 brooms, beautifully carved handles as fists. Ángel created this installation based on a memory of his grandfather and the grandmothers in his village, who would say phrases like *"awaken your spade and go to sow"*. In his culture, these tools are considered helpers that work together with people to care for the land. The sowing period is a special time for tools to 'wake up,' treating shovels and brooms as living helpers that work with the family to care for the land.

Ángel uses the number 40 because it is a special way his people measure land. By bringing these tools into the gallery, he is sharing a story about nature and farming. He wants to show us that cleaning and working the soil are important acts of healing. The brooms and shovels are placed together to show that everyone can use these tools to help their community.



Ruq'a' raqän qazadón, 2021
22nd Paiz Art Biennial, Guatemala, 2021.



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Discussion Questions

We are looking at an artwork that invites us to wake up the tools in our own lives and think about how they help us care for the world around us.

How many brooms and shovels can you **count**? Does the room **feel** crowded or organised?

Look closely at the top of the wooden handles. What **shapes** are they **carved** into?

Does this room **feel** like a quiet **place** for the tools to rest, or does it feel like they are about to start working?

In many cultures, tools are not just objects, they are seen as living helpers with their own energy.

When you **look** at these tools, if they could wake up and speak, what **stories** would they tell?

Ángel's grandfather used to say, "Awaken your spade." How do you **think** we "wake up" a tool?

Think of a tool you use at home (like a pencil or a toothbrush). If that **object** had its own life and energy, how would you treat it **differently** today?

Practical Activities

Activity 1:

Find a safe space on the floor where you look closely at the carved handles of the tools. Choose one that stands out to you.

Draw this tool in the center of your page.

What you think its spirit or energy looks like inside. Is it glowing? Is it vibrating?

Draw what this energy looks like around the tool. Use coloured pencils if you have them.

Imagine the tool is asleep. What is it dreaming about? Is it dreaming of the soil, the garden, or the person who made it?

Add speech bubbles around the tool with sketches on what it's dreaming about.

Finally, write a short "Wake Up" song (2–3 lines) under your drawing that you would sing to get this tool ready for work.

Share your work with the person sitting next to you.

Activity 2:

Look at how the 80 objects are scattered around the room. They aren't in straight lines; they look like a growing garden.

Imagine you are a farmer and this gallery floor is your patch of land.

On your paper, draw a quick map of where the shovels and brooms are touching the floor.



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In the empty spaces between the tools, draw what you would plant there. Would you plant flowers, corn, or maybe even memories?

Draw vines or roots connecting the brooms to the shovels, showing that they are working together as a team.

Label your map: *The Garden of [Your Name]*



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