

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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Education Resource (7-12)



Ruq'a' raqān qazadón, 2021

22nd Paiz Art Biennial, Guatemala, 2021.

Photo: Byron Mármol.

Courtesy: Fundación de Arte Paiz.

Overview



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Ángel Poyón's practice operates as a site of resistance, investigating how traditional Indigenous knowledge can assert autonomy within contemporary spaces. By recontextualising utilitarian tools, Poyón challenges Western perceptions of inanimate objects, drawing instead on a Maya K'aqchikel worldview where materials possess a living essence and a collective history.

The installation consists of 80 handmade objects - 40 brooms and 40 shovels - each featuring a handle carved into a clenched fist. This specific quantity is a direct reference to the cuerda, a traditional Maya K'aqchikel land measurement of 40 by 40 arms. This numerical choice effectively maps Indigenous agricultural rhythms and territory onto the gallery floor, transforming the site into a reclaimed parcel of land.

By presenting the broom and shovel as equal instruments, Poyón dissolves the gendered divisions of labor often imposed on these tools. He draws on the traditional phrase, "*Wake up your instrument, work the land*," using it as a metaphor for activating ancestral memory. In this space, the act of cleaning or sowing is reframed as an essential act of cultural healing and self-determination.



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Discussion Questions

Ángel Poyón's practice explores how traditional knowledge asserts autonomy in contemporary spaces.

Does the **presence** of 80 clenched fists create a **sense** of **communal** strength, or does it **feel** like a **silent** protest? Why?

How does the **handmade** quality of these tools **differ** from the **mass-produced** objects we usually see?

Poyón notes that despite traditional associations, these tools are used by everyone.

How does this installation **dissolve** the lines between what is considered **women's work** and **men's work**?

Poyón challenges Western perceptions of inanimate objects, drawing instead on a Maya Kaqchikel worldview where tools possess a living essence and a collective history.

How does your physical **presence** in the room change when you view the tools as living **entities** waiting to be **awakened**?

Consider an object you use daily. If you were to acknowledge it as having its own essence and memory, how would that **shift** your **feeling** of responsibility toward the **material** world?

Practical Activities

Activity 1:

Step close to the installation and find a handle that looks the most alive to you.

Notice the wood's texture and the way the carved fist holds its position.

On your paper, create a gestural sketch of that fist.

Instead of focusing on perfect anatomy, use quick, expressive lines to capture the energy or strength of the grip.

Imagine a nervous system growing out from the fist and traveling down the handle.

Draw these as thin, pulsing lines or veins that change colour or thickness as they reach the broom or shovel head.

Around your drawing, write a stream of consciousness list of words.

What is this tool thinking while it waits in the gallery?

Does it remember the forest it came from, or is it dreaming of the soil it wants to dig?

Activity 2:

You are going to treat your piece of paper as that square parcel of land.

Draw a large square that fills most of your page.



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Look at a section of the gallery floor and imagine a grid over it.

Your job is to plant the tools you see into your own square.

Draw a simple top-down symbol for every tool you see in that section.

Use a small X for every shovel and a small O for every broom.

Place them in your square exactly where they are sitting on the gallery floor to show the rhythm of the work.

Once your square is filled with Xs and Os, draw a single continuous line that connects every symbol, starting from the first tool and ending at the last.

This line represents the path of the person working the land.

Notice how the line has to weave and turn to reach every helper.



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