

MATERIAL OF MEMORY

OPENING RECEPTION:
Thursday, January 30, 2025,
6 to 8.30 PM

GALLERY HOURS:
Wednesday–Sunday,
11:00 AM to 6:00 PM

DATES:
January 30 – March 2, 2025

ADDRESS:
13 Tereshchenkivska St, Kyiv, 01004

Voloshyn Gallery is pleased to present *Material of Memory*, a group show featuring work by Manuel Chavajay, Cheen, Christian Lagata, and Jonathan Sánchez Noa, on view at the gallery's Kyiv location. Curated by Max and Julia Voloshyn.

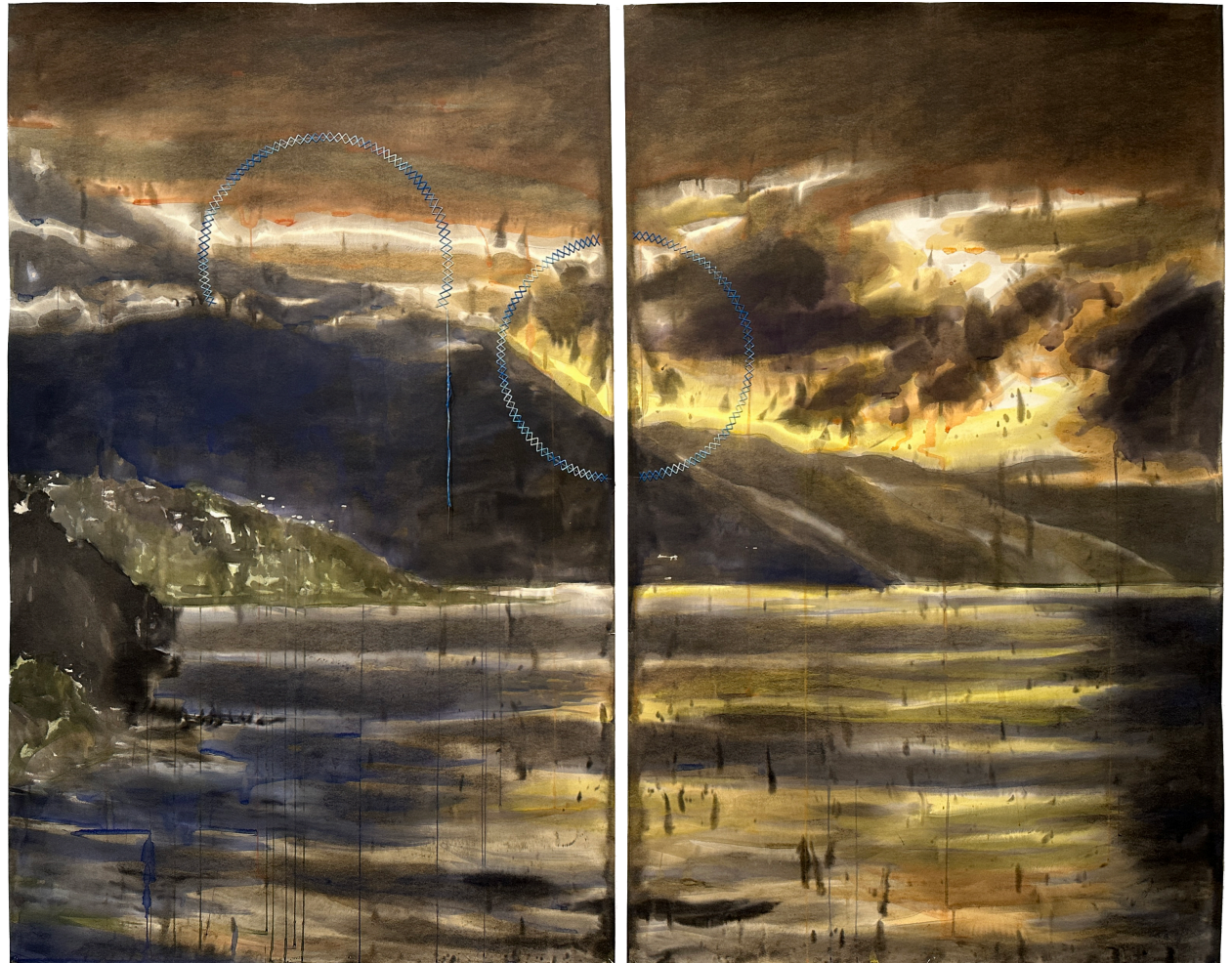
ON IMAGE:

Cloudy, 2024
Manuel Chavajay

Burnt marine and land motor oil,
watercolor, charcoal, and
embroidery on cotton paper.

170 x 107 cm.
66 7/8 x 42 1/8 in.

KYIV, UKRAINE
01.30 - 03.02 2025



The exhibition delves into themes of cultural heritage restoration, destruction, and renewal by interacting with the environment, and shaping an understanding of the fluidity of time, history, and one's place in the modern world. By utilizing natural elements—earth, water, heat, plants, and tobacco—the artists construct new visual narratives that intertwine traditional crafts, industrial materials, and rituals with pressing ecological and social challenges.

By presenting the vision and practice of international artists to Ukrainian audiences, the exhibition highlights Voloshyn Gallery's commitment toward a global cultural exchange and a continued dialogue about diverse experiences. The conversation between global and local perspectives, bridges geographies and histories while encouraging mutual understanding and appreciation of shared challenges and unique artistic visions.

Manuel Chavajay's series of paintings present contemplative views of coastal mountainous landscapes with great attention to natural earth elements such as water, land, and sun through the use of industrial materials, specifically burnt marine and land motor oil. Incorporating these materials functions in a subversive manner; the oil is initially drawn from the soil, then instead of utilizing the oil in a productive manner, the material is used to depict the source of its origin. This fusion of material and content creates a remarkable unity of form, as the oil's application on the landscape bleeds and seeps in ways one typically sees in forms of nature in motion. Working as a Maya-Tz'utujil artist, Chavajay seeks to form images through actions in a poetic manner which is simultaneously a denunciation and vindication of his culture. This effort is ultimately a form of healing, addressing the connection between man and nature and the implications of this precarious relationship.

Maya Tz'utujil poet and visual artist, Cheen utilizes hand embroidery and natural pigments in her textile work *Ruk'uux ya'* from 2024, which situates a figure amidst a rhythmic arrangement of vibrant patterns. The work drapes from above and confronts the viewer with Mayan Attire and ancestral food preparation processes, reviving ancient notions and situating them within our current-day contexts. As a part of her practice, Cheen has been recording her dreams since 2008, and since 2010 she has taken part in the cultivation and revival of medicinal plant medicine. Cheen's use of natural materials and a broader holistic connection with nature manage to bind her work to a theme of interconnectedness between human inhabitation and our natural habitat. The scale of the work and the near accurate size of the figure presented within it speak to the viewer in a practical and relatable manner, aligned with concerns of unity within the personal and the surrounding physical environment.

VOLOSHYN
GALLERY

MATERIAL OF MEMORY

Christian Lagata's installation *Sol de fuego III* seeks to illustrate distinctive scenarios of late capitalism such as disused lots, urban wastelands and the ruins of rural industrialization. These places that Lagata presents through his use of dry thistle and salt rocks present relics one may find as a result of the interruption of real estate operations or the limits of urbanization and agricultural modernization processes. Those relics coexist under the sign of the same condition: heat and its visual manifestations. The global increase in temperature over recent years and the increasing desertification of the planet are now being seen and felt in a more provincial manner. Historically linked to a geographical and cultural south, these conditions are now less of a local and a more universal phenomenon. Using heat as a starting point, salt rocks, the crystallization of which is usually produced by aggressive evaporation occurring due to an increase in environmental heat, are incorporated in the work. The dry thistles sprout from the rocks as totemic figures that strive to build from the devastation into the possibility of new mythologies.

Jonathan Sánchez Noa utilizes Cuban tobacco as a medium to reform narratives of displacement as they relate to cultural and religious importance. His approach to papermaking techniques involves imprinting tobacco stain patterns directly into raw pulp slabs. Working on fragments of handmade paper, Sánchez Noa forms scattered marks of personal significance that mimic handwriting, drifting thoughts, or statements left as a signifier of importance in time and space. With much emphasis on texture and force, the works locate meaning and significance in the degree to which marks imprint within the space. Often rhythmic yet drifting around a related notion or tone, these marks leave the viewer with a fleeting impression, or one that is still in the process of actualization. These gestures vary in intensity but ultimately form a cohesive whole, expressing a personal viewpoint and ritual practice rooted in a distinct interpretation of the world.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Manuel Chavajay

(b. 1982, San Pedro La Laguna, Guatemala), is a Tz'utujil Maya artist, working across a wide range of media, including sculpture, painting, and video. His work bears strong ties to the artist's indigenous origins. Primarily inhabiting the Lake Atitlán region in the highlands of Guatemala, the Tz'utujil have their own unique language, culture, and traditions that distinguish them from within the broader Mayan cultural spectrum. Making Tz'utujil language and land a frequent reference in his work, the practice of Manuel Chavajay explores, through the construction of small narratives, themes connected to the complex history of Guatemala, its indigenous heritage, struggle for independence, and more recent efforts towards stability and development. Land in this context is not merely seen as a resource but as a core aspect of indigenous identity, tracing historical connections and cultural practices and pointing at the multifaceted relationship between indigenous cultures and nature, which encompass complex spiritual, cultural, environmental, and socio-economic dimensions.

Cheen

(b. 1983, Guatemala) is a Maya Tz'utujil poet and visual artist from San Pedro la Laguna, Guatemala, located on the shores of Lake Atitlán. Her artistic practice is deeply rooted in her heritage and the experiences of her community. Cheen often collaborates with Manuel Chavajay (Guatemalan, b. 1982), to create works that address their shared experiences as members of an indigenous cultural group that has profoundly shaped Guatemala's identity.

Their collaborative works explore themes of Mayan cosmology, nature, and healing, serving as a means to process the collective trauma endured by hundreds of families, including their own, during Guatemala's violent armed conflict. Cheen's solo practice is equally tied to cultural preservation, as she has been documenting her dreams since 2008 and reviving ancestral knowledge, such as the use of medicinal plants, since 2010.

Her works, informed by the stories, landscapes, and spirituality of the Maya Tz'utujil, are a poignant testament to the resilience and vitality of her cultural heritage. Cheen has recently debuted at the 23rd Paiz Art Biennial in Guatemala.

Christian Lagata

(b. 1986, Jerez de la Frontera, Spain) is a multidisciplinary artist, living and working in Madrid. He has taken advanced studies in Image and Sound and a Master in Contemporary Photography and since 2015 he has been actively involved in artistic practice, specifically in sculpture and installation. His work explores the tensions that arise between the materiality and morphology of productive environments such as industrial zones or urban concentrations, and the different relations of 'familiarity' (mnemonic, functional, aesthetic) that we establish with them. Beyond the logic of the *objet trouvé*, Lagata investigates in certain elements from these environments the traces of their interactions (past, present or future) with humans, rethinking their economic-social consideration of "remainder" or "residue."

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VOLOSHYN
GALLERY

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Jonathan Sánchez Noa

b. 1994, Havana, Cuba) is a multidisciplinary artist working with installation, papermaking, and sculpture. He creates artworks that examine how histories of colonial extractivism have impacted notions of race, identity, and climate. He utilizes Cuban tobacco as a medium to reconstruct narratives of displacement in relation to cultural and religious significance. Through papermaking techniques, he imprints tobacco stain patterns directly into raw pulp slabs. A process informed and influenced by personal ritual, spiritual and vision interpretation of the world. Lives and works in NYC, USA.

ABOUT VOLOSHYN GALLERY

In 2016, Max and Julia Voloshyn established Voloshyn Gallery in the heart of Kyiv, Ukraine. Situated in a historic 1913 building, Voloshyn Gallery's space provides an unconventional setting for contemporary art. It exhibits a broad range of works in a variety of media, representing both emerging and established artists. Voloshyn Gallery hosts solo and group exhibitions, works with accomplished curators and museums, and takes part in leading contemporary art fairs.

In 2022, Voloshyn Gallery made the difficult decision to close temporarily due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In 2023 the gallery reopened its doors in Kyiv, Ukraine and also expanded with a space in Miami, Florida.

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