



***FUTURE COSMOLOGIES:  
THE REGENERATION OF MAYA  
MYTHOLOGIES***

**PRISCILLA DOBLER DZUL**

**SEPTEMBER 26 - NOVEMBER 22, 2023**





INSTALLATION VIEW:  
*CHAAC RAIN RITUAL* WITH  
CERAMIC VESSELS CREATED  
DURING AN ARTIST LED  
WORKSHOP

# FORWARD

In *Future Cosmologies: A Regeneration of Maya Mythologies*, artist Priscilla Dobler Dzul combines ceramics, textiles, living plants, and sound to engage viewers in a colorful and evolving narrative installation. With ancestral roots in Mérida, Yucatán and Glasgow, Scotland, the artist's mixed heritage provides a unique lens on layered identities and histories. Her material choice and sculptural forms ask us to consider Maya practices that counter our consumerist relationship with the natural world.

Ask Dobler Dzul who *Future Cosmologies* is for and she will speak of the in-between places, of having one foot in the old ways and the other squarely in the now, challenging singular ways of knowing. Anchored in Maya worldviews, this exhibition's vibrantly rendered ceramic creatures are displayed alongside unglazed earth-toned deities and futuristic seed pods. These pods serve as incubators, holding unfired clay sculptures that are covered with soil and wildflower seeds, sprouting and growing over the life of the exhibition. The powerful ceramic jaguar sculpture, *La Madre Jaguar*, represents the origins of the world, light and darkness, and the creation of life. From within the *Chaac Rain Ritual* come recorded sounds of thunder and birdsong. Suspended huipil dresses, originally owned and worn by the artist's grandmother, are activated by clinking clay tiles and henequen rope adornments carefully added by Dobler Dzul. These embroidered textiles reference the ancestors who passed on their knowledge through the work of their hands.

*Future Cosmologies* reimagines mythological narratives and ritual through form and material, revealing the interconnectedness among our collective former, current, and future selves. Through this, Dobler Dzul collapses time to consider human actions and their negative impact on past and future generations. In remediation she offers a counter to this, inviting the audience to join in an act of care and growth by watering the living seeded sculptures and contributing to the ever-evolving nature of the exhibition.



DETAIL VIEW: *LOS DIOS SIN NOMBRE*



INSTALLATION VIEW:  
*SOMOS ESTRELLAS, GUIA DE LOS ANCESTORS*



INSTALLATION VIEW:  
*UN SOL DISPARA A QUETZAL DESDE LA CEIBA Y ATERRIZA EN EL LOMO DEL COCODRILO*

# IN CONVERSATION WITH THE ARTIST

*The following are excerpts from an audio interview with Priscilla Dobler Dzul. This text has been edited for readability.*

## TELL US ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

*Future Cosmologies* is based around the oral stories my elders have shared with me, but also the research of cosmology and the impact it has had on our histories of travel, culture, and civilization. The processes that I mostly work in depend on the seasons and the process of cultivation for each season's materials. I'm really interested in experiencing art as a living material

and experience, to be able to talk about the histories of each fabric, each thread, each cloth, as well as clay, both how it's produced and the pigments that are used as dyes.

Part of that process is also creating new sculptures and looking at seed pods as methods of deconstructing and constructing, exploring the process of germination, and what that does in these cycles. By incorporating different elements of weaving, wood, and light, I create live breathing sculptures, embedded with native flower seeds from the Northwest, and invite the community

**DETAIL VIEW:  
LIVING SEED POD SCULPTURE**



to come partake in the care and the nurture of these living sculptures.

## **CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF YOUR FAMILY LINEAGE AND THE ROLE OF YOUR ANCESTOR WITHIN FUTURE COSMOLOGIES?**

My family's history is present in the materials and the huipil dresses currently displayed. These were worn by my grandmother. They are a representation of the everyday Mayan woman, of the working class, but also of the original people of the region who have been basically erased from history and from the stories that are told of Mexico. It's critical to be able to represent my ancestors through this work, through the oral stories that are told through mythology, and through the creation of ceramic sculptures and textiles that represent maps and talk about the cosmologies and the relationship with the ecosystems that we live in.

## **CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE SPECIFIC MATERIALS IN THE SHOW, INCLUDING THE LIVE SCULPTURES?**

The materials that are used in the exhibition have been gathered and cultivated in the Yucatán, and in Tacoma, Washington. A lot of the materials, the threads in particular, are coming from the plantations my grandparents lived on. A lot of the ceramic work comes from different regions of Mexico, which I have been producing just based around the histories of cultural exchanges

that occurred among different tribes. I've always been interested in that dialogue and relationship.

The flowers that are used and the soil are all native. I've done a lot of research in trying to figure out which are native to this region, and I wanted to be able to create sculptures that were alive. So it's like, how do we experience art as a living form? And through that living form, there are also cycles: sprouting, blooming, and then decay. I think that's really important because all of the materials that are used at one point were alive, and the relationship that we have to the planet and our environment is a representation of living sources, living materials, living beings. I wanted to have that cycle represented in the work.

## **HOW DOES ACTIVE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FIT INTO YOUR PRACTICE?**

As a contemporary artist, I think this is something that always gets ignored. In Mexico, among the artisans that I work with, there's always this element of community and inclusion, and an opening up their spaces. I think it's one of the most important components that I'm trying to develop and expand. I want to be true to my ancestors and continue sharing the knowledge and histories being taught by my elders, as well as by artisan textilers, weavers, embroiderers, and ceramicists that have been

doing it generation after generation within families. The only way I can continue to push the importance of that relationship is by involving the community and allowing others to have a hand in my work. It's how we involve and talk about our communities that actually helps us develop these ideas and help us push forward these thoughts and processes. I can't be the artist that I am today without my elders or without the community of artisans that I work with.

**BELOW:**  
DETAIL VIEW OF *TAHOMA,*  
*PROTECTORA Y DESTRUCTORA DE*  
*TODAS LAS ALMAS*

**RIGHT:**  
INSTALLATION VIEW OF HUPIIL  
DRESSES AND *SOMOS ESTRELLAS,*  
*GUIA DE LOS ANCESTORS*





DETAIL VIEW:  
EMBROIDERED HUIPIL DRESS





## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Priscilla Dobler Dzul is a Tacoma-based artist from Yucatan, Mexico. She is an interdisciplinary storyteller, focused on reframing the context of America's prideful nationalism and colonization of indigenous cultures while critiquing identity and examining the structures of power in our domestic lives through multiple craft mediums.

Dobler Dzul received her MFA in Sculpture from the State University of New York at New Paltz. She has received grants from Artist Trust, Neddy Behnke Foundation, Tacoma Artist Initiative, and Puffin Foundation, and has been awarded the T. Bailey Award, Edwin T. Pratt Scholarship, and Robert B. McMillen Fellowship. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and she is represented by Nome Gallery in Berlin, Germany

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