



External Space



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Samay Arcentales Cajas
Mindalae in Quarantine
February 16th - March 27th, 2021

"We need something like this that's full of beauty, that's handmade, that has a bit of spirit, that explains many stories and legends; and it is through that that people get a sense of belonging, and it sort of reminds people that we are part of mother earth in that way" (Marcos Arcentales, Mindalae in Quarantine).

Indigenous traditions are cyclical. They move in all directions and experience time in all dimensions. They constantly re-learn, but never forget. They morph and shape— through prosperity and hardship— into forms seemingly unrecognizable, but very much the same. They are the balance between constant change and all that remains the same. They are rooted in land and based on its intricate relationships. They migrate and travel, but always come back. They learn to build a home away from home, and extend it to those found throughout the web of relationships they weave on their path. They are ingenious, creative, and inventive for survival. Because ingenuity and creativity are gifts of resilience and resistance.

Throughout this past year, the places that allowed us to feel connected to the community that helped us feel at home in Tkaronto had to be cut off from our daily lives. We could no longer frequent places like Pacha Arts, a family-run Indigenous storefront that offered artwork, craft, and medicine from North and South America. The store, run by a Kichwa family from Peguche, Ecuador, materialized the condor-eagle story that teaches good relations based on respect and reciprocity. In an act of reunion, adaptability, and reconnection, Samay Arcentales Cajas opens the door to the Pacha Arts family's home. They allow us to sit around their living room to listen, to giggle, to learn. In *Mindalae in Quarantine*, Cajas documents the way their lives had to

suddenly change due to the worldwide pandemic and their efforts to care for themselves and the community. In seemingly unprecedented times of sickness, fear, isolation, and uncertainty Patricia, Marcos, Kinoo, and Samay show us that even though it feels like we've never been here or done this before, it takes remembering the things we do know, and the places we have been in order to survive.

According to Samay, Mindalae is a relatively new term that describes a Kichwa person who travels with their culture. They are diplomatic in their conflict resolution because they are travelling merchants. They practice putting in place verbal and ceremonial protocols and respecting those of the nations they visit. This has allowed them to build homes away from their homelands in Otavalo, Ecuador. Even though they call other lands home, they always try to come back. They find strength and resilience in their homelands, their work, their relations, and their historic ability to adapt. Samay beautifully captures this feeling by showing the way the Arcentales Cajas family live out their tradition in times of the global pandemic. They carried out their traditions when they first came to Canada following extensive pow-wow trails, continued practicing them through the running of the storefront, and now continue to live them through times of quarantine. Although they look quite different due to the restrictions for travelling and gathering, they still hold the teachings of family, community, and resilience at their core. Samay says “leaving the store was hard, but work has always come from home. We just grew up that way”.

Mindalae in Quarantine is a gift. It is archival work for future generations *from* Indigenous folk *for* Indigenous folk, done in the unfolding and continuation of the Kichwa mindalae tradition. The subject and production of the film contribute in their own way to the values set by the family's traditions. Ingeniously filmed and edited with the tools available to Samay during quarantine, it holds so many teachings in a simple, quotidian, and intimate way. In an elegant extension of their father's words, Samay makes a piece full of beauty and spirit. It holds stories and legends through which people get a sense of belonging and that reminds us we are part of mother earth.

- Michaela Coyoli