

PRESS RELEASE

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## Santiago Yahuarcani: The Beginning of Knowledge

4 July 2025 – 4 January 2026



*Santiago Yahuarcani, Lugar caliente (Hot place) 2023, natural dyes and acrylic on llanchama, 270 x 510 cm*  
© Santiago Yahuarcani. Photo courtesy CRISIS Gallery Lima-Madrid.

The Whitworth is proud to present *Santiago Yahuarcani: The Beginning of Knowledge*, the first international solo exhibition dedicated to the artist and Indigenous leader of the Uitoto people. The exhibition brings together almost 30 works from 2010 to the present day, showcasing Yahuarcani's narrative-rich artistic practice and profound cultural resistance over the last fifteen years. Organised thematically, the exhibition presents new paintings as well as loans from major international collections.

Working from Pebas, a remote town in northern Peru, Yahuarcani creates paintings using natural dyes on *llanchama*, a bark cloth derived from the *ojé* tree native to the Amazon. From origin stories to the sounds of the jungle and memories of the enslavement of the Uitoto people during the Putumayo genocide (1879-1912), his paintings capture the life and history of the Uitoto people past and present. Details of trees, plants, animals and scenes found in everyday life are elevated as treasured memories in Yahuarcani's work, highlighting the importance of the preservation of Indigenous knowledge. Yahuarcani's paintings are urgent acts of education and resistance, honouring intergenerational legacies and inviting us to consider how Indigenous knowledge can shape a more just and interconnected future.

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The exhibition also presents sequences from Núria Frigola Torrent's poetic film 'The Song of the Butterflies' (2020) which documents how ancestral knowledge and familial ties inform Yahuarcani's artistic vision.

*The Beginning of Knowledge* is presented as part of the 2025 Manchester International Festival and supported by The Ampersand Foundation. The exhibition is organised by the Whitworth in collaboration with Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo and Museo Universitario del Chopo, UNAM, Mexico City. After the premiere at the Whitworth, the exhibition will tour to the partner venues in 2026 and 2027.

Curated by Professor Sook-Kyung Lee (Director, the Whitworth), Darren Pih (Head of Exhibitions & Collections, the Whitworth), Hannah Vollam (Assistant Curator, the Whitworth), Amanda Carneiro (Curator, Museu de Arte de São Paulo) and Miguel A. López (Chief Curator, Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City).

The exhibition will be accompanied by a new and extensively illustrated publication with texts on Yahuarcani's practice by Amanda Carneiro, Miguel A. López, Darren Pih, and Pablo José Ramírez, as well as an intergenerational conversation between Santiago Yahuarcani and his artist son Rember Yahuarcani. This is the first major monographic publication on the artist's work.

**Santiago Yahuarcani, artist** said: "My work is rooted in the legacy of my ancestors, those who saw the universe not as something to conquer, but to revere. To them, the land was more than soil and stone. So much so they called it our mother, who is indeed sacred and alive."

**Sook-Kyung Lee, Director, the Whitworth** said: "We are delighted to present Santiago Yahuarcani's poignant yet powerful work as part of the 2025 Manchester International Festival. The artist brings intimate stories of Indigenous cultures of the Amazons to Manchester, highlighting our shared values. Supportive communities, intergenerational learning, and sustainable ecology are among the important pillars of Yahuarcani's life and art, which resonate beyond his environment."

**Low Kee Hong, Creative Director, Factory International and Manchester International Festival** said: "This year's Manchester International Festival champions indigenous artists and creators from the Global South, to inspire fresh perspectives and invite us all to dream differently. We are so excited to present Santiago Yahuarcani's *The Beginning of Knowledge* as part of the festival. From the climate catastrophe to colonial dispossession, we all have so much to learn from his works utilising the wisdom of the ancient Uitoto people."

## About Santiago Yahuarcani

Santiago Yahuarcani (b. 1960, Pebas, Peru) is a self-taught artist and Indigenous leader of the Uitoto people. His mother, Martha López Pinedo, was a descendant of Gregorio López, the only member of the Aimeni (White Heron) clan who migrated from La Chorrera, today part of the Colombian Amazon, to the Ampiyacu River region, now the Peruvian Amazon, as part of the relocation of enslaved Indigenous populations to work in the rubber industry. His work addresses issues of the documentation of Indigenous knowledge, Amazonian ontologies, and the politics of genocide against their ancestors.

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Yahuarcani's work was presented in *Stranieri Ovunque – Foreigners Everywhere*, as part of the Venice Biennale (2024), as well as the Toronto Biennial of Art (2024), the Mercosur Biennale (2025) and the Gwangju Biennale (2023). His works are held by KADIST, Museo de Arte de Lima, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Tate, London, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, and the Whitworth, The University of Manchester, among others.

-ENDS-

## NOTES TO EDITORS

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## Listings information

Santiago Yahuarcani: The Beginning of Knowledge

4 July 2025 - 4 January 2026

The Whitworth, The University of Manchester

Free entry

<https://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/santiagoyahuarcani/>

## About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is proudly part of The University of Manchester, operating as a convening space between the University and the people of the city. Founded in 1889 for "the perpetual gratification of the people of Manchester" it continues this mission today in new contexts. The gallery, its park and gardens are home to the collection of over 60,000 works of art, textiles, sculptures and wallpapers and provides a platform for artists from around the world. The Whitworth is driven by a vision to actively seek and manifest connections between art, creativity, and their role in developing a more resilient and caring society through its exhibitions and award-winning civic engagement programme.

Gallery opening times: Tuesday to Sunday 10am-5pm, Thursday late opening until 9pm

[www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth)

## About Factory International

Factory International is the organisation behind Manchester International Festival and the city's landmark cultural space, Aviva Studios. Factory International commissions, produces and presents a year-round programme of original creative work and special events at Aviva Studios, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It also stages the city-wide Manchester International Festival (MIF) every other year.

MIF is one of the world's leading arts festivals, and the first to be entirely focused on the commissioning and producing of ambitious new work. Staged every two years in Manchester since 2007, the festival invites world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds to create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work in venues and spaces across Greater Manchester. Previous artists include, Björk, Jeremy Deller, Akram Khan, Yayoi Kusama,

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David Lynch, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Yoko Ono, Maxine Peake, Skepta, and The xx. Factory International plays an important role in the lives of Greater Manchester residents, bringing jobs, skills, training and creative opportunities. Through the Factory Academy, Factory International is training the creative workforce of the future, while its pioneering creative engagement and artist development programmes create year-round opportunities for local people to get involved, from participating in flagship commissions to shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums.

Aviva Studios was designed by the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), with Ellen van Loon as lead architect – their first major public building in the UK. Its development was led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and National Lottery funding from Arts Council England. Factory International is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation [factoryinternational.org](https://factoryinternational.org)