



(Un)Known Artists of the Amazon

24 April 2024 to 21 April 2025
Weltmuseum Wien

No Indigenous Amazonian language has a word for art, yet it connects people's everyday lives, rituals, and environments. *(Un)Known Artists of the Amazon* at the Weltmuseum Wien presents Indigenous art from Brazil – from traditional feather art to contemporary works. The museum showcases art produced by Indigenous artists and groups who are not presented as victims of colonialism but how they see themselves: as strong, creative survivors with vibrant traditions.

Towards the individual artist

Unlike in the West, here art is able to see life as a continuous whole – it connects people's everyday lives, rituals, and environment. For a long time, the creators of this art were not recognized as individuals. They were seen merely as representatives of their communities and traditions. The Weltmuseum Wien holds around 4,000 objects from the Brazilian Amazon region. They are linked to ethnic designations but rarely to the names of their creators. Things are very different at the Museu de Arte Indígena in Curitiba, Brazil, with whom we are collaborating for this exhibition: in their collections almost all the artists are identified by name, and the museum remains in contact with them.

The exhibition is conceived as a dialogue between the two collections. Bringing together over 120 objects, the show's curators examine how autonomous artworks evolved out of functional and ritual objects, opening up new perspectives on the (un)known artists of the Amazon.



From functional and ritual objects to autonomous works of art

The Amazon region is both a diverse, man-made cultural landscape and one of the world's most important ecosystems. Over 200 Indigenous societies live in the Brazilian Amazon region alone. They differ, amongst other things, in their language and culture. What they have in common is that they shape their world with art forms that connect them with their ecological and spiritual environment.

The exhibition begins with artworks made of feathers, an art form much admired in the West. Works from the Ka'apor, Yanomami and Tapirapé document the outstanding craftsmanship of their otherwise largely anonymous makers. The same is true for the Rikbaktsa artefacts that feather artist Messias Rikbaktsa selected from the collection of the Weltmuseum Wien. The hammocks by Tainá Kamayurá hovering above the visitors illustrate how environmental impressions are reflected in the design of artistic everyday objects. This also applies to the wooden benches that recall animal shapes: artists recognize them in a tree and, after the tree has been felled, carve them from a single block of wood. Ceramics, too, shown together with artefacts used for processing manioc, illustrate the remarkable progression from domestic, everyday objects to works of sculpture.

Indigenous Amazonian art is, however, also performative art: masked dances are part of many rituals and facilitate interaction with spiritual beings. In the context of contemporary art, masks have now become artworks that no longer serve any practical function; this establishes clear boundaries between ritually used objects and similar objects for the art trade.

Body painting and ornaments continue to play a central role. Jewellery fashioned from glass beads was introduced with the arrival of missionaries and explorers. In the work of present-day artists, most of whom produce necklaces and bracelets, this art has evolved into an expression of self-empowerment and independence.

In the 1970s, artists like Feliciano Lana discovered Western drawing and painting techniques. Today, Lana's illustrations of the Desana mythology are collected by, for instance, the MoMA in New York. Macuxi Jaider Esbell, who died in 2021, was shown at the São Paulo and Venice Biennales, and is also represented in the exhibition.

The show was curated by Claudia Augustat, curator of the South America Collection of the Weltmuseum Wien, and Julianna Podolan Martins, director of the Museu de Arte Indígena in Curitiba.



Artists represented in the exhibition

Unknown artists of the Ka'apor, Kamayurá, Mehinako, Rikbaktsa, Tapirapé, Tukano, Wai-Wai, Wapischana, Waurá, Yanomami

Also included in the exhibition:

MAHKU Collective, Jaider Esbell, Tainá Kamayurá, Konto Kuikuru, Feliciano Lana, Luiz Gomez Lana, Kawakanamu Mehinaku, Messias Rikbaktsa, Kayulu Trumai, Amutu Waurá, Apahu Waurá, Apaiupi Waurá, Autu Waurá, Ayu Waurá, Erica Waurá, Itsautake Waurá, Kulai Waurá, Mapapalu Waurá, Mauka Waurá, Mayak Waurá, Pakairu Waurá, Talcana Waurá, Turuza Waurá, Watapa Waurá, Yamanuwá Waurá, Yaminalu Waurá, Itsaw Yawalapiti, Dawa Ye'kwana

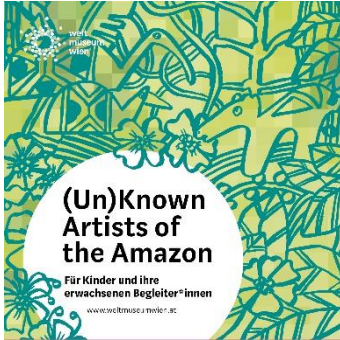
The Museu de Arte Indígena in Curitiba

The privately run Museu de Arte Indígena in Curitiba celebrates its fifteenth birthday in 2024. Since its foundation, it has focused on the appreciation and recognition of the cultures and artistic work of Indigenous groups in Brazil.

In Brazil, Indigenous art is gaining increased visibility and Indigenous artists are being recognized as individuals and authors. Their art is showcased in museums, institutions, national and international Biennales and art galleries. Artist collectives are emerging and producing contemporary works whose cultural references are clearly recognizable. Authorship is emphasized and Indigenous groups are emerging as the creators of their works.

An exhibition at the *zam* of the Weltmuseum Wien

(Un)Known Artists of the Amazon is shown in the *zam* gallery of the Weltmuseum Wien. This participatory area of the museum, which is open to the public free of charge, is dedicated to developing, exploring, and presenting relevant contemporary issues in various formats in partnership with communities of remembrance, communities of origin, and visitors. The show is also part of the [Klima Biennale Wien 2024](#) and gives visitors the opportunity to address, work on, and shape current and future-relevant topics together.



Visiting the exhibition with children

For our youngest visitors, there is a folder (in German) available on site to playfully guide them through the exhibition. Check out our programme for families on our [website](#).

Tours and events

Our comprehensive educational programme will be regularly supplemented and expanded during the course of the exhibition. For detailed information check our [calendar](#).

For **more information** about the exhibition click [HERE](#).

PRESS PHOTOS

Go to the press section on our website to download free press releases and photos if you want to write about special exhibitions and projects at the Weltmuseum Wien:

<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/press>

Preparation for body painting (detail)

2018

Photo: Manoel Martins Neto

© Museu de Arte Indígena, Curitiba



Turuza Waurá

Photo: Manoel Martins Neto

© Museu de Arte Indígena, Curitiba



Fritz Trupp

Yanomami men adorn themselves for a festival

Photograph

c.1980

Weltmuseum Wien

© KHM-Museumsverband



Yamunuwa Waurá

© Museu de Arte Indígena, Curitiba



Ayu Waurá

© Museu de Arte Indígena, Curitiba



Yahati Mehinaku

Film still from *Indigenous benches from Brazil*

© Coleção BEI 2018



Feliciano Lana

No Title

Tempera and gouache on paper

2016

Weltmuseum Wien

© KHM-Museumsverband



MAHKU Collective

Yube Nava Ainbu

Serigraphy

2023

Private loan: Sofia Guimarães Ridder

Photo © KHM-Museumsverband



Exhibition view

(Un)Known Artists of the Amazon

© KHM-Museumsverband



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Turuza Waurá

Stool in the shape of a ray

Stool with patterns

Painted Wood

2018, n. a.

Museu de Arte Indígena

© KHM-Museumsverband



Ayu Waurá

Bracelets, 2022

Glass beads, nylon cord

Museu de Arte Indígena

Photo © KHM-Museumsverband



Unknown Artist of the Rikbaktsa

Feather headdress

Feathers, leaf strips, cotton

before 1974

Weltmuseum Wien

© KHM-Museumsverband



Mayak Waurá

***Stools in the shape of a caiman, a tapir
and a coati***

Painted wood

2021, n. a., 2018

Private loan: Sofia Guimarães Ridder

Photo © KHM-Museumsverband





Opening times, tickets, entrance fees

www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/information

Additional information regarding your visit

Guided tours, bookings and reservations for events

+43 1 534 30 - 5150

kulturvermittlung@weltmuseumwien.at

Information, questions and suggestions

+43 1 534 30 - 5052

info@weltmuseumwien.at

Exhibition programme and events

All events are listed online in the [event calendar](#) of the Weltmuseum Wien.

Social Media

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#WeltmuseumWien #UnKnownArtistsWMW

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Press Office

Nina Auinger-Sutterlüty, MAS (head)

Sofie Wünsch, MA

KHM-Museumsverband

T +43 1 525 24 - 4021 / - 4045

presse@weltmuseumwien.at