



**EDGAR CALEL**

***RU RAXAL QA RAYB'ÁL (THE GREEN OF OUR DESIRE)***

**June 1 – October 27, 2024**

Opening: Saturday, June 1 from 2pm to 8pm. Artist-led tour at 3pm.

La Nueva Fábrica

Callejón Contreras, Antigua, Guatemala

[www.lanuevafabrica.org](http://www.lanuevafabrica.org)

La Nueva Fábrica is pleased to announce *Ru Raxal qa Rayb'äl* (The Green of Our Desire), Edgar Calel's first institutional solo exhibition in Guatemala. The project is curated by Edgar Calel and Ilaria Conti, La Nueva Fábrica's Executive Director, in close collaboration with the Calel family and La Nueva Fábrica's (LNF) team.

### **On Edgar Calel's Work**

Edgar Calel anchors his work in the Mayan Kaqchikel worldviews that stem from family and community life in his hometown of Chi Xot (San Juan Comalapa). His practice honors and upholds the spiritual, physical, and emotional nourishment and communal knowledge that his land, family, and ancestors bestow upon him. His subtle and at times humorous practice works through strategies that are conceptual and sensorial at once.

### **The Exhibition**

*Ru Raxal qa Rayb'äl* (The Green of Our Desire) responds to La Nueva Fábrica's 2024-2025 exhibition cycle through a series of living and ever-changing installations that bring into proximity diverse notions and practices of healing. The resulting project stands as an offering created by Calel to welcome LNF's publics into a space of contemplation and *sentipensar* (sensing-thinking) that activates multiple forms of sense-making.

The artworks and installations presented stem from, in the artist's words, "Practices that were never forgotten by the communities in our territories. These practices never ceased to exist and continue to be at the center of life." The resulting artworks are invitations to pursue forms of intimate, communal, and societal healing.

The title of the exhibition refers to the desire to “return” to a natural environment that is a source of knowledge, spirituality, nourishment, and protection, despite the plundering of land, water, and landscape that has been constitutive of 500 years of colonial dynamics in Guatemala and beyond.

*Ru Raxal qa Rayb'äl* offers a path of interconnected moments of contemplation and intimacy that are relational in nature. The exhibition does not seek to create a mere representation of spirituality to be consumed through the act of looking, but rather invites publics to come into proximity with forms of communal care based on reciprocity.

## The Artworks

The exhibition presents a series of newly developed installations alongside pre-existing artworks.

Visitors are welcomed by the installation *Rute' q'aaq / Madre del fuego* (Mother of the Fire) (2024), in which the artist draws in clay and charcoal his grandmother's kitchen—where the family gathers, the fire is ignited, and food is prepared. This gesture of warmth and reciprocity sets the intentionality of the exhibition as a whole. Here, Calel conceptually seeks to deconstruct some of the barriers that characterize art spaces. In his words: “In the art world nobody invites you to their home, to be near the fire.” The opening installation of *Ru Raxal qa Rayb'äl* seeks to change that. In this same spirit, audiences are invited to take fruits and flowers as an offering. Each visitor also receives a small stone to carry in their hands during the visit. At the end of the exhibition path, they are asked to put the stone back and contribute to the creation of a repository of the energies that have crossed the exhibition. Through this small gesture, Calel focuses the attention on the stone as a companion and a source of knowledge.

This notion is expanded in the second gallery of the exhibition through *Qa K'obomanik Roma ri qa K'aslem / Nuestras ofrendas por nuestras vidas* (Our Offerings for Our Lives) (2024), part of an ongoing series of installations in which the artist gives thanks to his ancestors through offerings of fruits, vegetables, and medicinal plants laid on stones that have belonged to the Calel family for generations. This act of gratitude is also a form of spiritual and material awareness that testifies to the resilience with which ancestral knowledge has been perpetuated by Indigenous communities. A series of painted and drawn works complements the artist's reflection on the knowledge and spirituality stemming from nature and family. Among them, *Ru Raxal qa Rayb'äl / El verdor de nuestro deseo* (The Green of Our Desire) (2024) pays homage to the forest as a safe space of nourishment and communion with nature, while *Como luciérnagas son cada uno de mis pasos* (Like Fireflies Are Each One of My Steps) (2024) materializes the wisdom emerging from the land and family relationships through the footsteps of Calel's family members shining in the darkness of the woods. Similarly, *E qa rik'ik'en ri cholaj richin ni qi k'ul ri nab'ey taj Job' / Estiramos los surcos para que reciban las primeras lluvias* (We Plow the Furrows So That They Receive the First Rains) (2024), is a charcoal drawing that invites the public to look at the land, which has been prepared

to sow foods that sustain life—such as corn and beans. As Edgar mentions: “I like that with a few strokes I can share the desire to give continuity to life by securing food.”

The exhibition path concludes in the third gallery space with *Ru naq' Q'aq' / Semillas de fuego* (Seeds of Fire) (2024), an installation that invites publics to sit with fire and contemplate through the act of drawing a constellation of 13 candles. Upon leaving, visitors are asked to take a candle and hang their drawings on the gallery walls, thus contributing to a choral “self-portrait” centered on the spiritually transformative power of fire.

An ongoing series of public programs curated by Edgar Calel in collaboration with La Nueva Fábrica, soon to be announced, will unfold throughout the exhibition to expand on the notions and concerns at the heart of the project and reinforce its reciprocal and participatory nature.

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### **About La Nueva Fábrica’s 2024-2025 exhibition cycle**

2024 marks five-hundred years since the arrival of the Spaniards to the area we now call Guatemala. In 1524, Pedro Alvarado reached the Guatemalan Highlands and the Pacific Plain, initiating the colonial process in the region. To address such historical occurrence and the centuries of coloniality that have shaped and continue to shape Guatemalan society in multiple and transversal ways, La Nueva Fábrica (LNF) inaugurates a focused year-long exhibition and programming cycle (June 2024 – May 2025).

During this time, we seek to move beyond the mere discourse on coloniality and the presentation of exhibitions that address colonial issues just as content. This choice stems from the awareness that most of LNF publics are already familiar with colonial processes, given how colonial dynamics still haunt Guatemalan life. Rather than “illustrating” through exhibitions what our publics already know and experience in their daily lives, we strive to move beyond the simple acknowledgment of coloniality and imagine forms of re-existence that offer opportunities for communal encounters and the healing of colonial wounds.

We strongly believe that art spaces are unique settings in which things that find no other place in society can happen. In light of this, La Nueva Fábrica’s 2024-2025 exhibition program focuses on projects that foster notions and practices of healing. These exhibitions serve as offerings and shared spaces in which to take care of ourselves and others, reflect on what affects us as individuals and as societies, and experiment communally with diverse forms of healing—be they spiritual, corporeal, affective, epistemic, and more.

Each exhibition is commissioned and conceived as a context in which senses beyond sight and diverse forms of sense-making are involved. The practices and concerns at the heart of each project are developed through a series of public programs presented throughout each exhibition.

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**Edgar Calel** (Chi Xot - San Juan Comalapa, Guatemala, 1987) studied at the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas Rafael Rodríguez Padilla. He works in a variety of media, exploring the complexities of the Indigenous experience, as seen through the Mayan Kaqchikel cosmovision, spirituality, rituals, community practices, and beliefs, in juxtaposition with the systematic racism and exclusion that the Indigenous peoples of Guatemala endure on a daily basis.

In 2023 he had his first institutional solo show *B'alab'äj (Jaguar Stone)* at SculptureCenter, New York. In 2021 he had his first solo *Pa Ru Tun Che´ (From a Tree Top)* at Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City. Additionally, he has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including *Radical Playgrounds: From Competition to Collaboration*, Berliner Festspiele, Berlin, Germany (2024); *Choreographies of the Impossible*, 35<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial, São Paulo, Brazil (2023); *uMoya: The Sacred Return of Lost Things*, 12<sup>th</sup> Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool (2023); *Soft and Weak Like Water*, 14<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennial, Gwangju (2023); *Is It Morning for You Yet?*, 58<sup>th</sup> Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (2022); *The Crack Begins Within*, 11<sup>th</sup> Berlin Biennial, Berlin (2020); *Los Jardineros (The Gardeners)*, Proyectos Ultravioleta, Guatemala City (2020); *Continuous Fire / Feu continuel*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario (2019); *Virginia Pérez Rattón. Centroamérica: Deseo de lugar*, MUAC Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2019).

His works are part of the permanent collections of Rijkscollectie - National Collection of the Netherlands; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA; Tate, UK; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; the National Gallery of Canada, Ontario; Fundación TEOR/ética, San José, Costa Rica; MADC Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, San José, Costa Rica; and Kadist, San Francisco. Additionally, he has participated in artistic residencies including Tropical Papers (2021); Residencia Rua do Sol, Portugal (2019), and at Lastro research platform, Brazil, 2015), among others.

**La Nueva Fábrica** is a non-profit contemporary art space committed to empowering communities through art. We do so through exhibitions, public programs, educational projects, residencies, and multidisciplinary activities in our space in Antigua, Guatemala, and through international partnerships. Recent exhibitions include *Margarita Azurdia: A Universe, Documented*, curated by Rossina Cazali (2023-2024); the XXIII Bienal de Arte Paiz (2023); *Hellen Ascoli: Cien Tierras*, curated by Amara Antilla and traveling from the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati (2022-2023); and Regina José Galindo's first institutional survey in the Americas, *Grito*, curated by Maya Juracán (2022).

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Wednesday to Sunday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm; Saturdays 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

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