

To Move Across a Window

Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together!,
from Aotearoa to Chile

by Francisco González Castro

Published on 31.01.2023



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos!, installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón Tillería.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos!, installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón Tillería.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail), Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Marcel Ibaceta.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (catalogue detail), Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Marcel Ibaceta.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail), Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Marcel Ibaceta.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos!, virtual exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Alys Longley and Jeffery Holdaway.

Growing from artists alys longley (Aotearoa New Zealand) and Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira's (Chile) correspondence around porous borders, the multi-modal project Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! / Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together! became an exercise in what might be possible between artists when states turn inwards. Writer Francisco González Castro considers what was achieved when the artists involved took to cartography, mail-art, videos, and digital gatherings to connect, communicate, and create in the fertile space of new relationships, languages, and media. Featuring artists from across the map, the project includes work by Aotearoa artists Maryam Bagheri-Nesami, Franca Bertani, Matthew Cowan, Sean Curham,

Rosalind Gould, Jeffrey Holdaway, Kristian Larsen, Robbie McEwan, Kerryn McMurdo, Adam Naughton, Richard Orjis, val smith, Kate Stevenson, Josephine Tillon, Chris White, Alexa Wilson, and Caroline Yoon.

“And I saw Carcosa through the planes ...
and from there, He saw me.”

From the fictional *Book of the Yellow Sign*

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Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! / Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together! was a project organised by alys longley (Aotearoa New Zealand) and Máximo Corvalán-Pincheira (Chile), which included the work of more than 60 international artists, working in various media. This complex, multi-modal project, which began in March 2020, consisted of: a series of envelopes that travelled through at least 26 countries, each manipulated by the artists it met travelling from one place to another; a series of maps that 21 different artists intervened into and sent back to the organisers; a series of virtual exhibitions in collaboration with the collective DOTDOT, and the project Mapeo De Bordes Porosos; an exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santiago, Chile (MAC), which collected these artefacts; and a catalogue and website where all the documentation of the project can be found.

The first time I read the phrase *Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together!* was when I received an email from Corvalán-Pincheira. He told me about a project he was organising with longley and invited me, as well as other artists, to contribute by intervening into a world map. The idea seemed very interesting to me, but I felt that intervening into a map was intimidating, as I was insecure doing two-dimensional work. Fears aside, I was encouraged and said yes. Still, in my internal forum, I struggled to understand the relationship between the envelopes, the movements across the globe, the maps, and the virtual exhibitions within the phrase “drinking the new wine.”

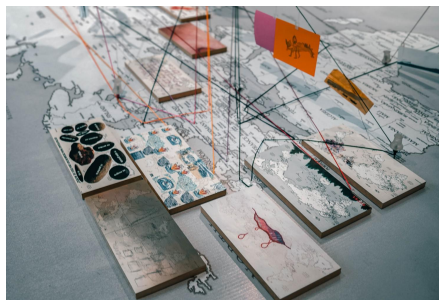
When I think about it, the title *Let Us Drink* implies a suspension of the separation we commonly have between the individual and the collective. It implies the simultaneity of individuals drinking, while at the same time it is a collective action: it is not “I will drink,” it is “we will drink.” On the other hand, leaving aside the possible references to the new wine of the Bible, I was wondering what this new wine referred to. If it is new, does this mean that we have not drunk it before, or is it perhaps a wine that is made new by drinking it again? Or, maybe, it is a metaphor for a new future, where sharing a drink, as a community, makes an experience new every time. This variety of readings appealed to me and made me even more interested in the project.

The title concludes with “together!” Isn’t this implicit in the collective “let us drink?” Why is it necessary to reaffirm the idea of community? It seems to me now that this “together!” does not refer only to the collective that will drink together, but also to the envelopes, maps, countries, cities, spaces and times; all together in a future banquet.

This makes me wonder how the title and the project were received by others. I think that, to a large extent, this has to do with how each person perceives and interacts with the world and the impact of the pandemic. It is possible that, for many, the relationship between the project and the pandemic was evident, given the desire to socialise and to recover something that the pandemic had damaged. For me the project was more related to discovering relationships than to recovering them, to creating rather than finding them again. Thus, for me, the significance of *Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together!* as a title and as a phrase, has to do with the declaration of a desire, which is open enough to include and project the desires of each one of us. To me, this is the ideal of politics: a collective creation from individuals.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail),
Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago,
2022. Image: Marcel Ibaceta.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail),
Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago,
2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón Tillería.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos!,
installation view, Museum of Contemporary
Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón
Tillería.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail),
Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago,
2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón Tillería.

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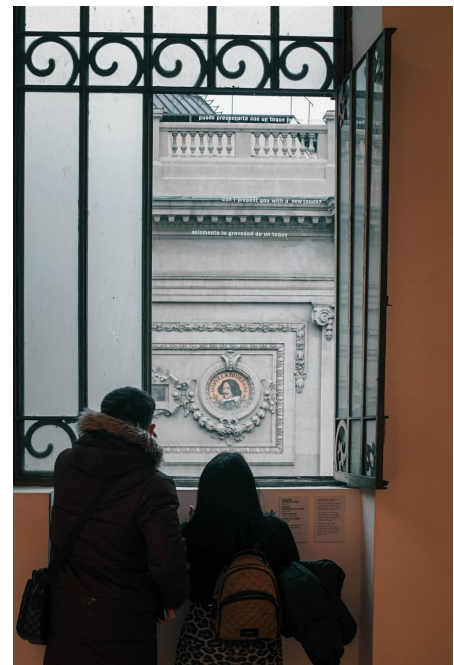
As I had only arrived in Chile a couple of days before the opening at the MAC, I had not had time to meet with close friends who were waiting, so on the day of the opening I met with two friends in a café near the museum. We talked about various things—in

particular about my impressions of Chile after all the time that had passed. My previous visit had been in 2021 and, at that time, there was still a curfew and I had to do mandatory quarantine in a hotel for five days upon arrival. My judgments were that the work of the military—that of controlling people and instilling fear—was now being done by the citizens, or at least some of them. We talked and smoked. Then we headed to the MAC. There was a long line to get in, as one had to take one's temperature to enter the museum. It was the 75th anniversary for the museum and ten different exhibitions were opening at the same time, so there were over 1000 people filling the museum's spaces. Inside, it was crowded and it took me a while to find the room where *Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together!* was installed.

When I entered the room, I was quite surprised by what I witnessed. Although I had seen part of the installation process, seeing everything finished generated a different impact on me, another impression, and probably because there were people here; the work felt alive. Upon entering the long room, I saw the main installation rising diagonally to the right ahead of me. It was a low plinth, maybe three by five metres; extending upwards from this were coloured threads, creating a web from which the envelopes were hung, connecting at different points in their journeys. It seemed that everything had been in order at some point, but a wind had blown it all away, lifting it, and filling the room. The moment I approached the installation, I was able to better identify everything: a world map—like the ones we had interfered with—lay on the plinth and distributed across it were images of the artists' interventions raised on wooden tiles. A number of threads ran along the surface of the map in different directions, meeting and tensing in various territories. The envelopes were suspended at different heights in the air; my gaze followed them like chasing leaves fluttering in the wind. The installation generated a precarious and fragile equilibrium. But like any tempest that one wishes to go through—and therefore, to know—it required time. In my contemplation and constant movement around the perimeter of the work, I was getting deeper and deeper into it, seeing more details, more layers, and more leaves flying.



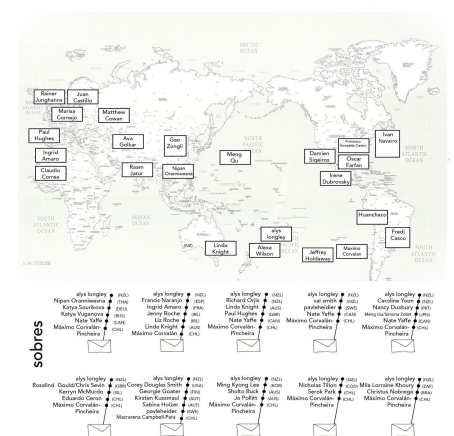
Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail),
Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago,
2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón Tillería.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail),
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Map Intervention by alys longley, *Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos!*. Image: alys longley.



Artist Map for *Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos!*. Image: alys longley and Jeffery Holdaway.

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Each envelope itself was a world—and each had travelled one—holding different works and ideas, as well as the memories of the disappearances of those who got lost in their journeys. Shown in one of the rooms within the virtual exhibition, the video that Nipán Oranniwesna (Thailand) shot of his envelope travelling from his home to the post office deserves a special mention. The envelope is the protagonist, movement and time pass through it; it becomes, constituting itself as a bicycle in movement. It is funny, delightful, and strangely intimate to see an envelope crossing a city from the

point of view of a basket attached to bicycle handlebars. We see the streetscape of a city in Thailand passing by at bicycle speed, the local temples, then the local post box. This takes us close to the physical reality of this project, and the human journeys crossing cities to transport artworks through the border-spaces of postal systems.

This video documents some of the contents of the first envelope, which began its journey with Jeffrey Holdaway's (Aotearoa New Zealand) contribution. This includes images of power poles, wires and the sky. Neither a horizon nor the ground is present, perhaps a foreshadowing of the envelope's travels across the sky.

Accompanying these images are a letter and poetic drawings. The envelope arrived with Nipan Oranniwesna in Thailand, who added a subtle work: rectangles of folded and perforated papers, as if they needed air to breathe, just like the rest of the world at that moment. Then the envelope went to Katya Sourikova, in Berlin, who added two images in which landscapes and musical notations converge. Next the envelope moved to Nate Yaffe, in Montreal, who added a folded piece of paper with the word "INSERT" split in half. Finally, after a year, the envelope arrived in Chile. Twenty envelopes followed similar, and even more complicated, passages around the globe for the project.

The maps in the exhibition are also worlds in themselves, but they are different from the envelopes. They are more particular: made by one artist each, they are not configured collectively, but are personal expressions of how each artist faced a map and, in that sense, they are extremely different from each other. Within these personal visions, I find it interesting to recall the map made by alyslongley, as it evidences a concern that is at the core of the project: borders. longley fills the map with yellow, putting everyone under the bath of a distant but present sun, doubly marking the general edges of the land with a different yellow and with a text that runs along the created border, reading:

What is distance? There is a time of recovery. There is time that cannot ever be [...] to talk about a time of suspension. A time of waiting to be returned to the people you need. There is the time of how much life is left to you

in the world and the time of the virus and the deprivation
of touch. We enter into the game of evading the border. We
evade the border by connecting across it. What is touch?
What is distance?
This is an island created by rupture. Is that how all islands
are created?
there is this bitter futility
there is this suspension
these acts of care
all over the world

In this inscription we find the main problems that the project
sought to address: distance and time, the pandemic and the
impossibility of touch, connecting even when borders were closed,
questioning all this and looking at the acts of care.

A wonderful detail of the room was a barely noticeable
intervention, created by longley, Eduardo Cerón-Tillería, María
Paz Godoy, and Valeria González. It was an open window with a
translucent text, which shifted between Spanish and English
to read:

¿Puedo presentarles un toque recién hecho? [Can I present
you with a touch just made?]
Can I present you with a new touch?
Sólo la gravedad de un toque [Just the gravity of a touch]
Just the gravity
Solo [Just]
Now

The opening of the window, which at the same time was closed by a
second pane of glass beyond it, seemed a kind of scream or an
attempt to escape. It felt like the work wanted to go out and it was
in the transit where it became what it could be, it was in the
movement, in the open space. The open window and its text made
me wonder why I was there and why I was not outside. Although the
exhibition couldn't be seen from the outside, this open window
reminded me how the invisible part of this project inhabited
several public spaces, with several people being part of it; the

artists and the postal workers who carried the envelopes in each country, the routes they took through the streets, the post office installations, the mailboxes. Everything that was invisible became part of the project. That made me look again at the directions of the envelopes, the papers, the drawings, and what floated on the map: they did not have one direction, but were all directions. For other parts of the world we are upside down, in another place it is tomorrow, and in another, yesterday: the becoming I had at that moment made everything converge.



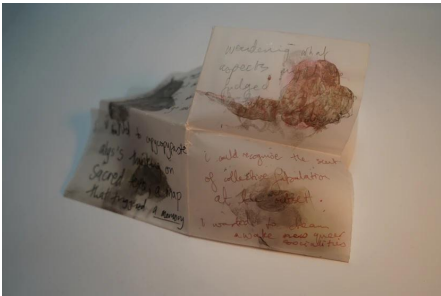
Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos!, installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón Tillería.



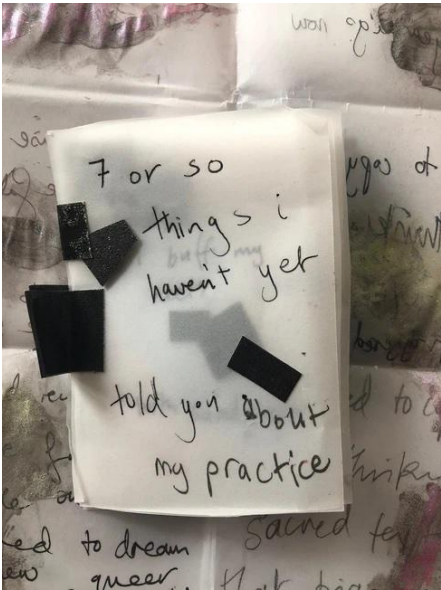
Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail), Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Marcel Ibaceta.



Contents of Envelope seven. Image: val smith.



Contribution to Envelope seven by val smith. Image: alys longley.



Contribution to Envelope seven by val smith. Image: val smith.



Beberemos El Vino Nuevo, Juntos! (detail), Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2022. Image: Eduardo Cerón Tillería.

In one way or another, *Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together!* involved a constant movement. In this sense, it could be said that the project was always a becoming and was never something closed: it was never, in fact, only one project. As an initial engine there was the bond created between longley and Corvalán-Pincheira, which moved from one continent to another, from one language to another; a movement that spread, giving way to the movement of the envelopes and the maps, to the movement of the virtual exhibitions, to the movement in the MAC.

And what could be the importance of movement? Why do I emphasise that aspect over another? It seems that, today, much of the way our world is understood and articulated is framed by configurations that tend towards the static and the closed: the cultural categories that structure the ways we think, categories that are closed and immobile, centred around the idea of Being. If we think in structural terms, states are sustained by their borders and their closure, there is typically no free movement from one territory to another. If we think in terms of relationships, these are sustained by the fiction of their permanence and immutability. A disarticulation of this system entails changing our thought processes and our relationality to a mobile one; to a system in constant movement. The limit is movement, moving towards the limits implies losing certainties, which, in turn, opens up possibilities. Moving through territories and times challenges the imposition of borders, while the movement of friendships and relationships implies assuming their fluid times and states; assuming their becoming, not their Being.^[01] To stop thinking in fixed categories implies the freedom of each one in how we become and, collectively, how we articulate ourselves in specific moments and places. By overcoming the categories that limit us, we open ourselves to becoming in constant movement.

In this sense, val smith's envelope contribution—a series of writings with makeup interventions—is notable. Here, on the one hand, they poetically refer to other collective possibilities of society, but on the other hand, they desire to create something that dismantles; for example, the idea of originality in creative practice. On a page smothered in dramatic eyeshadow, smith

writes: “I could recognise the scent of collective fabulation at the outset. I wanted to dream awake new queer socialities,” and, “i wanted to copy paste alys’s thinking on sacred texts, a map that triggered a memory,” generating, in the distance, a connection with another artist and her work, a common language and a common memory.

Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together! is a project that simultaneously opens and connects. This is achieved, in part, by the movement of desires and energies that crossed times, territories, borders and people. In a time of global upheaval due to the pandemic—and times of uncertainty in Chile specifically—this project reaffirmed the desire to meet and create collectively: if we cannot meet, it does not imply that we cannot collaborate and create together. In anarchist theory there is the concept of prefiguration, which appeals to the fact that it is not necessary to wait for the perfect world for everything to be solved, but that we can live today what is projected for the future. In this sense, *Let Us Drink the New Wine, Together!* projects a future, and at the same time, practises it: even though oppressive categories and structures still exist (such as nations, states and time), and these interfered with the development of the project, they were not an impediment. First of all, the project’s desire to meet and collaborate was achieved and instilled a joint direction towards the future. Second, even with all the difficulties and differences, the connections were made, the encounters took place, led by example from the beginning when longley and Corvalán-Pincheira communicated without first knowing each other’s language. All of this makes it possible to live out a future where borders do not silence us, where different languages, time zones and nationalities cease to matter, and no longer stop us from creating and becoming together.

Footnotes

01. I understand Being as a notion of Western philosophy, claiming there is some essential thing that makes us what we are and that is maintained in time. Meanwhile, I understand becoming as the constant process of becoming oneself; an insistence that navigates change rather than permanence.

Biographies



An interdisciplinary artist, writer and teacher, alys longley's work exists as live performance, artist-book, installation, film, education curriculum, poetry, performance writing and lecture-demonstration. Over the last decade, alys has been exploring mistranslation studies, working across languages and disciplines to explore the spill of ideas beyond conventional systems of meaning, through a series of international artistic-research projects in Berlin (Germany), Santiago (Chile), Coimbra (Portugal), NYC (US), Chicago (US), Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland (NZ), Poneke/Wellington (NZ), Vienna (Austria) and Stockholm (Sweden). alys has been based in the Department of Dance Studies, University of Auckland, since 2006, where she is currently an Associate Professor.



Francisco González Castro is an artist, researcher and writer. He has exhibited his work in numerous countries and has presented his research in various conferences and journals. He is the author of the book *Puntos en el Borde: crónica de un viaje por la frontera México-Estados Unidos* (Almacén Editorial, 2022), editor of the book *Otro lugar. Perspectivas sobre la empatía y sus potencias* (Editorial Milhojas, 2022) and co-author of the books *Performance Art en Chile: historias, procesos y actualidad* (Metales Pesados, 2016), *Mario Pedrosa y el CISAC: Configuraciones afectivas, artísticas y políticas* (Metales Pesados, 2019) and *El Arte como Revolución: Debates, redes y actualidad del Instituto de Arte Latinoamericano* (Metales Pesados, 2022).

