

Exhibition: *Grounded*

Dates: September 14, 2025–July 21, 2026

Location: BCAM, Level 2



(Image captions on page 4)

(Los Angeles, CA—August 26, 2025) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Grounded*, a multi-media exhibition that invites visitors to contemplate land not just as terrain, but as a foundation for exploring history, ecology, sovereignty, memory, and home. Through 40 works by 35 artists based across the Americas and the Pacific, the exhibition illuminates how human experience is embedded in the land. Artists consider the lasting effects of colonialism and imperialism; share stories of forced migration and displacement; engage with Indigenous mythologies and motifs; and retell ancestral histories by forging new aesthetic languages.

Grounded highlights the museum's deep holdings of works by local artists as well as Latine and Chicanx artists, and its burgeoning collection of works by Indigenous artists, spanning from the late 1970s to today. Nearly half of the featured artworks are major recent acquisitions. This includes pieces never-before seen by the public, as well as examples from the Mohn Art Collective: Hammer, LACMA, MOCA (MAC3), a collection of works by Los Angeles–based artists jointly owned and managed by the three institutions.

Grounded is co-curated by Rita Gonzalez, Terri and Michael Smooke Curator and Department Head of Contemporary Art; Dhyandra Lawson, Andy Song Associate Curator of Contemporary Art; and Nancy Thomas, Senior Deputy Director for Art Administration and Collections at LACMA.

"The works on view in *Grounded* emphasize the deep interdependence between land and culture, challenging the assumption that nature is home only to wildlife," said the

curators. “We invite visitors to consider how land records human experience, holding history in the ground.”

“*Grounded* speaks to the pivotal opportunities that become possible through collaboration—be it between colleagues and departments or entire institutions and disciplines,” said LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director Michael Govan. “We are thrilled to introduce more than 20 new acquisitions to visitors, including works from our shared MAC3 collection, thanks to the generosity of Jarl and Pamela Mohn.”

Exhibition Highlights

Grounded is loosely organized into sections that encourage visitors to discover overlapping ideas, strategies, and histories. The exhibition brings works together by artistic approach, such as performance or engagement with spiritual or political action; by material, where artists integrate technology with ancient craft; or through theme. One dominant throughline among many works in *Grounded* is the upcycling of materials. Artists transform organic matter, everyday objects, and urban detritus to comment on overconsumption while exploring the potential for such materials to take on new life.

Tania Candiani’s *Nombrar el agua (Name the Water)* (2019–22) was inspired by an Indigenous community in Sierra Huasteca, in Eastern Mexico, that annually names all existing things to ensure that they flourish. Voices heard in the mixed-media piece belong to participants in the Congress of Indigenous Languages, whom Candiani asked to share their respective words for water. Each of their responses is embroidered on mounted linen, to visualize the spoken words. While editing the work’s video component, Candiani found that its sound waves resembled topographical maps, which she then transformed into sculptures. The work highlights the threats facing Indigenous languages and, as the artist has described, the “act of naming as a form of resistance and preservation.”

Silät is a collective of women weavers from Indigenous Wichí communities in Salta, Argentina, led by Claudia Alarcón. Through textiles such as *The Shell of Memory (El caparazón de la memoria)* (2024), woven with hand-spun fibers from the chaguar plant, the women of Silät—meaning “alert” or “message”—preserve their ancestral traditions, support their families, and create beautiful works with rich symbolism that have captivated the contemporary art world. For centuries, weaving from the chaguar plant has been crucial to the Wichí people’s worldview, visual culture, and survival. Girls spin fibers and weave bags and fishing nets starting at age 12. The first pattern they learn is the caparazón de tortuga (turtle shell), the checkerboard design seen at the top and bottom of *The Shell of Memory*.

Iranian artist Siah Armajani marked a decade of living in the United States in 1970 by purchasing one square inch of land in each of the 50 states, spending less than \$100 on each parcel. The deeds arrived in a red, white, and blue envelope stamped

“Discover America.” By acquiring land too small to inhabit, *Land Deeds* (1970) both enacts and critiques the American Dream, probing the correlation between property ownership and power.

While visiting his native Chile, Guillermo Bert noticed that geometric textiles made by Mapuche weavers resembled QR codes. Since 2010, he has collaborated with Mapuche, Navajo, Maya, Mixtec, and Zapotec communities to create fabrics that tell the stories of Indigenous migrants. In *La Bestia* (2017), Bert centers “the Beast,” the dangerous network of trains used by migrants from Mexico and Central America on their way to the United States. Riders often take the journey on top of train cars, sometimes at great and even deadly risk. The QR code embedded in this textile links visitors to the testimony of Manuel Balux, a Guatemalan immigrant who settled in Los Angeles following a 3,000-mile journey from his hometown of Santa Catarina Ixtlahuaca.

Artist Courtney M. Leonard describes *BREACH #2* (2016) as “an exploration of historical ties to water and whales, imposed law, and a current relationship of material sustainability.” The work consists of 38 ceramic teeth, representing the lower jaw of a sperm whale, arranged on a pallet as if ready for shipment. Historically, Shinnecock Nation members have harvested stranded whales along eastern Long Island, a practice now prohibited by state and federal laws. The artwork’s title evokes the legal definition of breach—that is, a failure to observe an agreement—to highlight the conflict between environmental policies and sustainable Shinnecock cultural practices. *BREACH #2* is co-owned by LACMA and the Autry Museum of the American West.

Beatriz Cortez’s practice explores time as a progression of non-linear events, echoing her experiences as an immigrant from El Salvador in the United States, existing between different cultures. In *Ilopongo, Stela A* (2022), part of the MAC3 collection, Cortez examines one of the largest volcanic eruptions on Earth in present-day El Salvador, in 431 CE. She probes the significance of the eruption happening contemporaneously with the collapse of the Roman Empire, the subsequent cooling of the Earth, and the movement of the Maya who were displaced by the eruption, echoing the artist’s own migration centuries later amid the violence of the Salvadoran Civil War in 1989. Cortez made the work of steel by hand in the form of a Maya stela. Her hammering and welding marks create fissures that evoke a geologic formation. The work questions what it means for a work of sculpture to be time-based and how natural events have altered the course of history.

Set against a tropical background inspired by the early 19th-century Dufour wallpaper “Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique,” Lisa Reihana’s *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (2015–17) reimagines the history of “discovery” between Pacific Islanders and European explorers. Epic in scope, scale, and duration, the immersive video recasts these moments of contact, connection, and conflict—or, as the artist terms it, the

“originary infection”—from a Polynesian perspective. Painstakingly researched and staged, the work re-creates rituals and ceremonies as well as scenes of trade in which objects are exchanged for sex and violence born out of cultural misunderstandings. The film plays in a continuous loop, evoking Tā-Vā, a Pacific concept of cyclical time and space largely unfamiliar in the West. This work is co-owned by LACMA and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Artist Interview Series

The exhibition is accompanied by a series of interviews, exploring connections between the works on view in *Grounded* and objects from LACMA’s Mesoamerican and Pacific collections that will be unveiled with the grand opening of the new David Geffen Galleries in April 2026. In their conversations, featured artists reflect on how motifs, rituals, and artistic traditions from other cultures across time and space have inspired their practice, and critically examine what it means for museums to present Indigenous ritual objects. Watch the series in the Bloomberg Connects app and on [YouTube](#).

Credit: *Grounded* was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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About LACMA: Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 150,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region’s rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA’s spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: (Left) Claudia Alarcón & Silät, *The Shell of Memory (El caparazón de la memoria)*, 2024, © Claudia Alarcón & Silät, courtesy of the artist and Cecilia Brunson Projects, photo by Phoebe dHeurle; (center) Courtney M. Leonard, *BREACH #2*, 2016, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Autry Museum of the American West, in honor of Dr. Loren G. Lipson and purchased jointly with funds provided by the Horiuchi Ancient Art Fund, © Courtney M. Leonard, photo courtesy of the artist; (right) Leslie Martinez, *Fertile Valley of Grief*, 2023, Los Angeles

County Museum of Art, promised gift of Allison Berg and Laurence Berg, © Leslie Martinez,
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