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Fibra is a research-based artist residency and nomadic curatorial platform investigating the qualities of materials and the structures being created, from understanding material properties and their social implications to the processes of making.

For our first instalment, FiBRA provided 8 international artists with the opportunity to observe and participate in the textile-centred practices of Colombia's urban and rural communities. Artists were invited to reflect on the questions at the core of our project and to integrate this into their work:

What role does artisanal textile work have at the heart of a community?
How do globalisation and freedom of movement change our perceptions in relation to traditions? Does globalisation affect the preservation of crafts and the sustainability of these practices?

The paramount aspect of our project was the collaboration with The Kogi and Wayuu communities, for whom the preservation of ancient skills in the working of fibres have been passed from generation to generation. The very structure and process of textiles have an intrinsic relationship to cultural customs and the social fabric of these communities.

During our journey, FiBRA's artists had the opportunity to embark on a once in a lifetime opportunity to live the Kogis and Wayuus during a transitional time in Colombian history and the future of Indigenous Cultures. We were faced with the realities of globalisation and the impact on the ecosystem and society due to bad management of the natural resources, plastic pollution and the increase of tourism in indigenous territories and sacred areas.

Tourism to Colombia has grown more than 300% since 2006 when 1 million foreigners visited the country. Indigenous communities isolated for hundreds of years, are now confronted with new economic models, new materials and new ways of interacting with other cultures. Their home and natural environment are perceived as a source of income for national interests, especially after the peace treaty with illegal armed forces was signed. Due to these communities' geographical location, an organised touristic program is not yet put into place leaving them on their own to confront the challenges imposed by new visitors.

Fibra is a project created and directed by Mia Pfeifer.

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