

Artist Statement 2018  
Flight of Spirits

Metamorphosis is most often associated with biological or geological transformations of matter, processes that mirror metaphysical change. In passing humans long to dissolve, but instinctively we also hope that death itself is a transmutation and a means to somehow extend our own mortal existence. Traces of this spiritual longing are expressed in our material remains. Objects we make and leave behind reflect our normalcy as well as our aspirations, and some of them outlast our corporeal presence. These objects manage to become an extension of our physicality, like a shed exoskeleton that retains an essential part of our material existence and is an imprint of our spiritual self.

For instance, Tulato people disappeared long ago in the region where I was born<sup>1</sup>. The little knowledge that I have of them is based on the remnants of their bodies and the objects they left behind from 500 BCE to 500 CE. Because many of the objects and bodies that survive have been disinterred from burial grounds, it is often believed that these artifacts were important elements in a rite of passage that consisted of sending the deceased in a long journey into another clime, another dimension. Bodies and sustenance goods, as well as works of craft remained untouched for centuries until they finally saw the light of day again to become part of a collective perception of peoples from other eras and other geographies.

What is the meaning of these objects today? Do they evidence that Tulato people have reached that new reality that they embarked upon? Are they tools that allow them to transcend the mortal limits of time and space? When we see these bones, these ancient artifacts, are we looking at mere remnants of a once-lived life, or are we looking at life itself gazing back at us with a smile?

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<sup>1</sup> Author Andrea Brezzi first coined the term Tulato in his 2003 book *Tulato: Ventana a la prehistoria de América*, where he collectively analyzes archaeological pieces from these two regions as one coherent distinct culture of the Northern Andes.