

# Timothy Taylor

## Jorge Eielson, 1924 — 2006

Jorge Eielson was born in 1924 in Lima, Peru. He participated in four Venice Biennales in his lifetime (1964, 1966, 1972, and 1988), with works from his Quipus series first exhibited at the Biennale in 1964, and was included in Documenta V (1972). While best known as a painter, his body of work included poetry, performance, sculpture, and conceptual projects—including a proposal to NASA to bring one of his sculptures to the moon. In 1978, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship for literature. He was an active member of avant-garde communities in his native Peru, Paris, Rome, and New York.

Eielson initially rose to prominence as part of the Peruvian movement known as “Generation 1950,” before relocating to Europe, first traveling to Paris in 1948 and then to Italy in the 1950s. In Europe, Eielson came into contact with artists including Lucio Fontana, Salvatore Scarpitta, Cy Twombly, Mimmo Rotella, and Alberto Burri. These encounters provided crucial stimuli for the development of his highly personal visual language, which further evolved with his move to Rome in 1970.

Eielson is best known for his Quipus series, an exploration of material, form, and communication that he began in 1963 and continued for four decades. The works are conceptual reinterpretations of ancient quipus—a record-keeping system devised by the pre-Columbian Incas of Peru, translated as “talking knots”—and use shape and color to convey meaning. Eielson presented his first quipus at the 1964 Venice Biennale.

Eielson died in his adopted home of Milan, Italy in 2006. His work has been exhibited internationally and is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museo de Arte de Lima; the Rockefeller Collection; and the Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas, among others. A major retrospective of Eielson’s work was presented in 2017 and 2018 at the Museo de Arte de Lima in Peru. His work was included in *The Shape of Shape* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2020, curated by artist Amy Sillman.