

**GODS OF AMERICA.
A NATURAL PANTHEON**
Antonio Briceño

Several thousands of years have gone by since humans came to the American continent. Innumerable cultures have lived here, adapting the primordial gods to their particular environments, creating cosmogonies where the origins of human beings, animals, plants and gods are bound together in a knot that time has tightened. In the cosmogony and mythology of every people, the essential facts of human existence are repeated, taking local forces as protagonists and witnesses.

Jung says that *the soul contains all the images from which myths have arisen and our unconscious mind is an active and passive subject whose drama man (...) finds repeated in all big and small natural processes*. These are the primordial images called *archetypes*, because of the universal coincidence of mythological themes. The interpretation of these themes in images is the object of this study; the representations take as their setting the extraordinary landscapes of America, and as their inspiration the ancestral spirits of peoples who still keep them alive. This work is, then, a personal iconographical proposal based on aboriginal American cultures. Is a homage to them, to their wisdom, dignity and survival.

My father's grandmother descended from the extinct Timoto culture, from Venezuelan Andean mountains. Like many other aboriginal peoples, they were erased and deprived not only from their lands, but also their traditions, language and beliefs. Their descendants -and in fact all humanity- have lost an important part of our history. Like in most places of America, the original sacred condition of every element in nature has been lost, and with it, the equilibrium and respect on the use of resources.

Besides the loss of the human-nature balanced relationship, the aboriginal cultures knowledge and mythologies have also been ignored on the educational texts and activities. Most of the mestizo population ignores its origins, its heritages and the wonders of the aboriginal cultures patrimony regarding the knowledge of the nature around. It is because of that lack of information in our schools and formal education that I decided to start this project eighteen years ago.

In the process of defining the images of gods and higher beings I have had the support and guidance of the wise men and shamans of the communities I have visited. The researches from anthropologist have also been important before fieldworks. With all that information I build, through digital manipulation, images of different characters. Normally I select the best models for each character, trying to fit to their personalities, and then I make the photos of landscapes and elements to conform the icon context.

To the moment I have worked with eleven cultures from six countries, within the tropical belt of the Americas (see attached map). For the next step, I am planning to include the northernmost and southernmost cultures: Inuit, in Canada, and Mapuche, in Chile.

HUICHOL, 2001
PIAROA, 2002
KOGUI AND WIWA, 2003
WAYUU, 2005
KUNA, 2005
QUERO, 2005
KAYAPO, 2006
PEMON, 2007
YE'KUANA, 2007
PUMÉ, 2012

INUIT, 2017
MAPUCHE, 2017



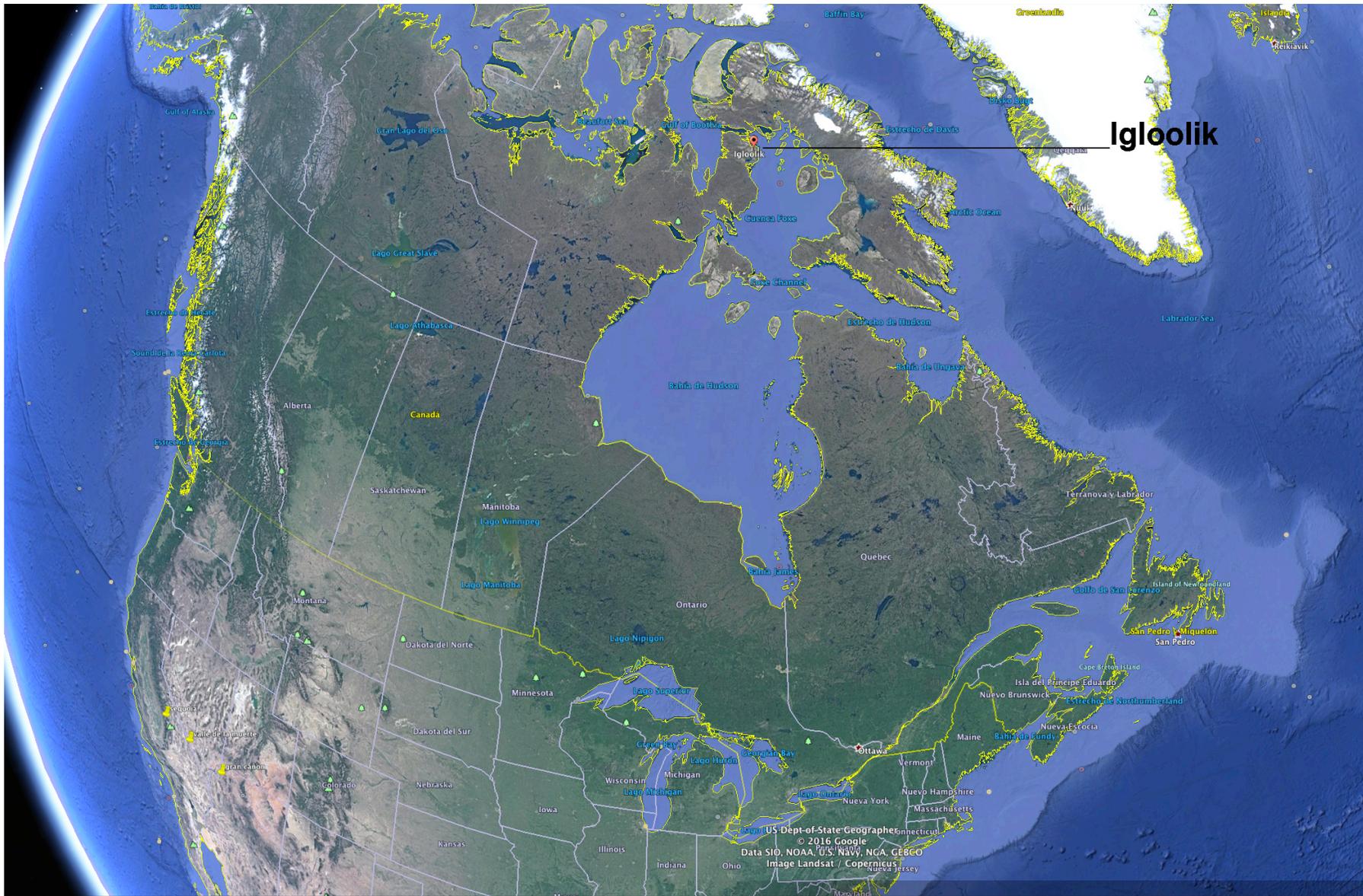
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Gods of America
A natural pantheon

For the realization of this project I must count on the collaboration of institutions that maintain contact with the indigenous communities in which I will carry out the work. These institutions will act as intermediaries during fieldwork and in the subsequent distribution of printed material. I expect to produce a minimum of ten images for each culture. These images will relate to mythological characters, based on the stories and myths of these cultures, for which I will need the support of teachers, wise men and local shamans. I will also strengthen this information with texts from anthropologists and researchers who have written about the characters they illustrate.

Each time I have worked with an indigenous community the wise men and teachers have shared their concerns with me about the lack of interest and proper knowledge of their myths and traditions among the young generations, and the insufficient reference to their own culture made in the educational materials available to teachers in schools, since these are produced by national ministries of education, that often ignore the indigenous cultures.

Therefore, as a contribution to the indigenous communities in which I will work, I will produce a small publication, of about 30-40 pages, containing the images, accompanied by a bilingual (English/Inuktitut and Spanish/Mapudungun) text of the stories that describe them and its mythological function. I will print at least 100 copies for each community, which will be delivered to their leaders and teachers for distribution in schools, community centers or wherever they consider it to be most profitable.





GODS OF AMERICA
a natural pantheon

P O R T F O L I O
2001-2018

HUICHOL

Mexico

2001



Tatevarí (2001)
The Fire Grandfather

He is considered Grandfather Fire, the most ancient of the gods, the first. On him the whole culture depends, because it is he who provides heat against the cold, light in darkness, the ability to cook foods.



Tatei Urianaka (2004)
Mother Earth

All cultures have a mother goddess who personifies the Earth, both fertility and creation. For the Huichol people, there is a goddess who fully embodies this idea: **Tatei Urianaka**, Mother Earth. She represents the Earth in all its extension, but also the mother who sustains everything, produces everything and creates us all, constantly waiting to be fertilized by the voluptuous heaven.



Tatei Wexica Wimari (2018)
Eagle Mother

Eagle Mother Goddess, she is the wife of the Sun, daughter of Tatevarí -the Fire Grandfather- and mother of Tamatz Kallaumari, the blue deer, our brother.



Jikuri (2001)
Peyote God

Peyote is a powerful "entheogenic" plant (i.e. it provides an experience of the God inside). In the trinity of Huichol culture, maize-deer-peyote, it represents the base of the spiritual world. It is wisdom, transcendence, the connection with the sacred, with the timeless, with a world before and beyond the material world of appearances.



Tatei Nivétzica (2001)
Niña-diosa del Maíz

In the Huichol culture many varieties of maize are cultivated and consumed, used in very different ways. Therefore there are also many goddesses associated with the different types of maize. Tatei Nivétzica is a child goddess of maize, one of the most important because among the first, representing the young maize and thus the innocence and purity of youth.



Tamatz Kallaumari (2001)

The blue deer

The Huichol mythology is based on a trilogy [*trimurti*] whose central deities are the Maize, the Peyote and the Deer. It is a trinity through which God becomes corporeal. However, the representation of the god Deer may take many forms. Indeed, there are many types of deer, and all those deer are of a different nature. The closest one to humans is the Tamatz Kallaumari, called the blue deer, *our brother*.



Wirikuta (2001)

Dios del desierto sagrado

The Huichol culture inhabits the Sierra Madre Occidental, about 500 kilometers from Mexico's central desert. However, it is in the desert that for them creation began, where the sun first rose. And it is the place where the sacred peyote grows and therefore a place of compulsory pilgrimage, which all Huichol must visit at some time in their lives to reaffirm their cultural bonds.



Ma´arakame (2018)

The singer

"We have no holy books", told me the shaman Emitterio Torres. "Nor we have images or figures. We have the songs. They contain everything." The singer, like any shaman, fulfils a series of functions for their communities, from healers to psychologists, including judges, counsellors, leaders and masters. The songs remember the mythical facts, peoples and sacred places, bringing them back to the present, renewing their power and depth.



Tatei Aramara (2001)
Goddess of waters

Tatei Aramara is the divine ruler of the waters and their power to fertilize. She is the ruler of rains, lakes, rivers. She is one of the primordial mothers.



Tzipushawe (2001)

The wisest deer

Among all the incarnation the deer gods embrace, Tzipushawe, the wisest, the all-knowing, is the one that stands out, by his serenity. He remains on the summits of the world, away from the worldly noise.

PIA ROA

Venezuela

2002



Buoka (2003)

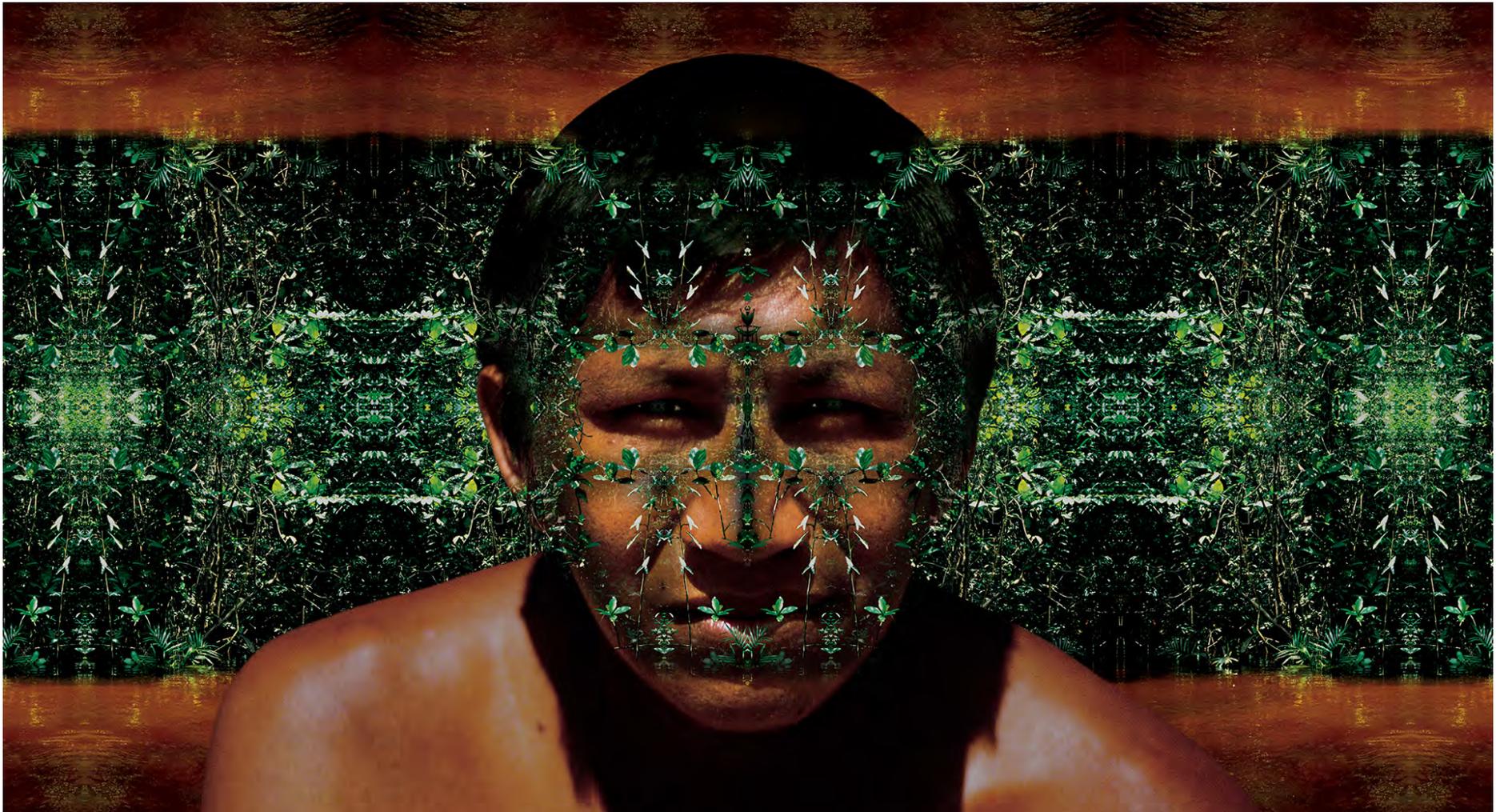
The first

In the beginning there was nothing, neither waters nor animals nor mountains nor lands. Then the sky appeared, the creation of the world began. They say that Buoka was born with words, with the words of song. And that he was created by the thoughts and visions carried by the wind. Since then we also have the ability to imagine.



Chejeru (2003)
Goddess of fertility

In the Piaroa cosmogony, **Chejeru** is the first female deity, the goddess of fertility and the creator of all cultivated plants, over which she rules. She is particularly associated with the cultivation of cassava, which is the basis of many Amazon cultures diet and the main ingredient of the 'yucata', their traditional communal fermented drink.



Reyó (2003)

Owner of the jungle and its animals and plants

For the Piaroa, forest dwellers, Reyó - the orphan - is the forest's lord and master. At the same time he is the ruler of animals, of illnesses and remedies, of everything that comes from the tangled jungle.



Anemey (2003)

God of waters and purification

The Piaroa people are settled in a region of the Amazon rainforest characterized by high rainfall and, thus, by its innumerable rivers, waterfalls, lagoons and flooded areas. The god Anemey is the owner of all those bodies of water, and he is also associated with cleaning and purification.

KOGUI Y WIWA

Colombia

2003



Aluna Jaba (2018)
The primal mother

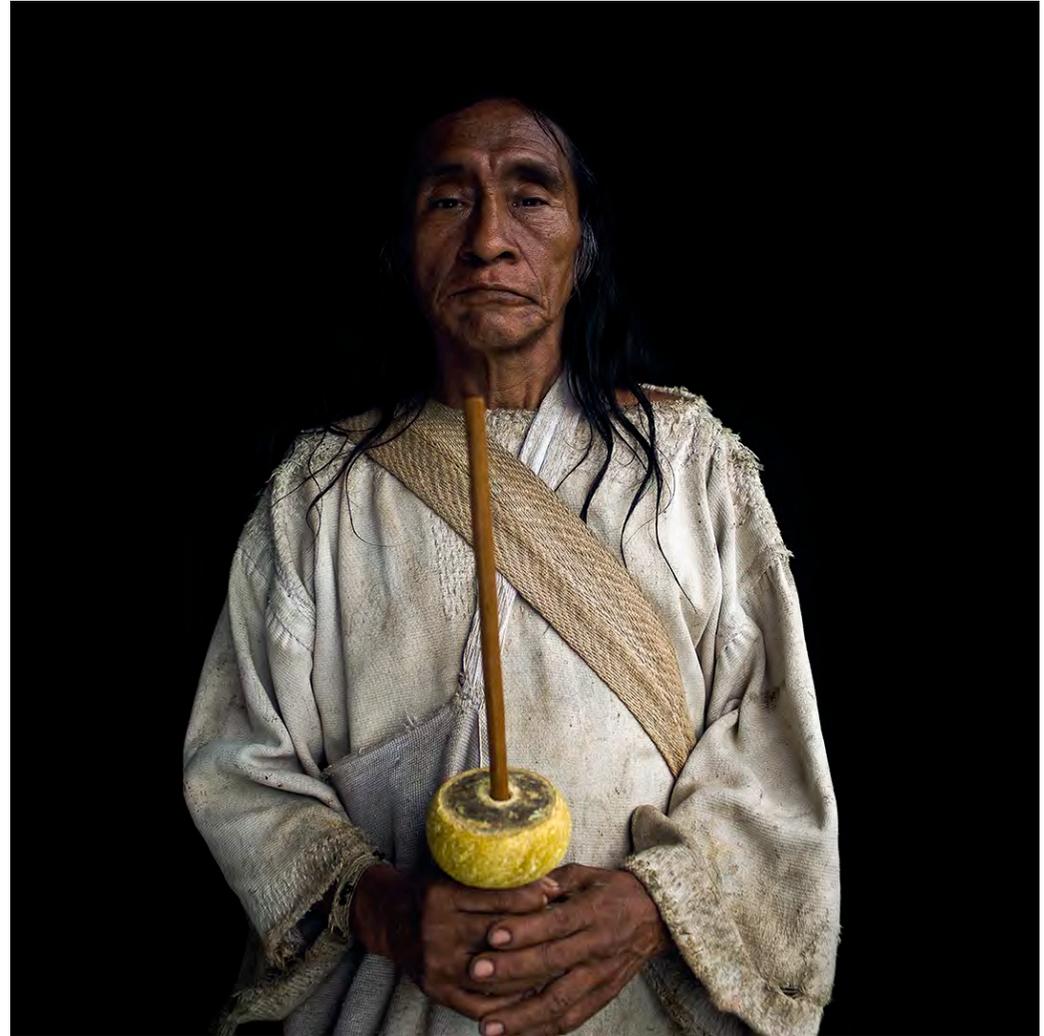
At the very beginning there was only the Sea. Everything was dark. There was no Sun, no Moon, no people, no animals, no plants. Only the Sea was all around. The Sea was The Mother. She was water, river, lake spring and sea. Thereby, at first there was only The Mother. She was Aluna. She was spirit of what it was to come, and she was thought and memory. Thus the mother existed just in Aluna, in the world below the world, alone.



Sintana (2018)

The first man

The first man was born on the sea. There was a small house, in the middle of the sea, called *Nyídulúma* "water foam". Sintana was born in that house, on the waters, in the darkness. He was afraid to be born. There was not yet land, nor people, animals, plants, food. There was no sun, no moon. Everything was dark.



El mamo (2017)

The shaman

The ancestral knowledge of the Kogui is stored in the *mamos*. These extraordinary figures are selected from before birth - through revelations - and receive a strict education under the guidance of the sages. It is said that their childhood is spent in the dark, where they come to know the world in "*aluna*" (in the spirit, that is, in concepts), in order to compare it later with the material world.



Monsaui (2003)
Owner of ice and snow

Monsaui is one of the lords of the great heights, since he is the ruler of snow and ice. The peaks of the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta are his home, and from him descend all the waters that fecundate the mountain range as they pass, melting and forming rivers and streams.



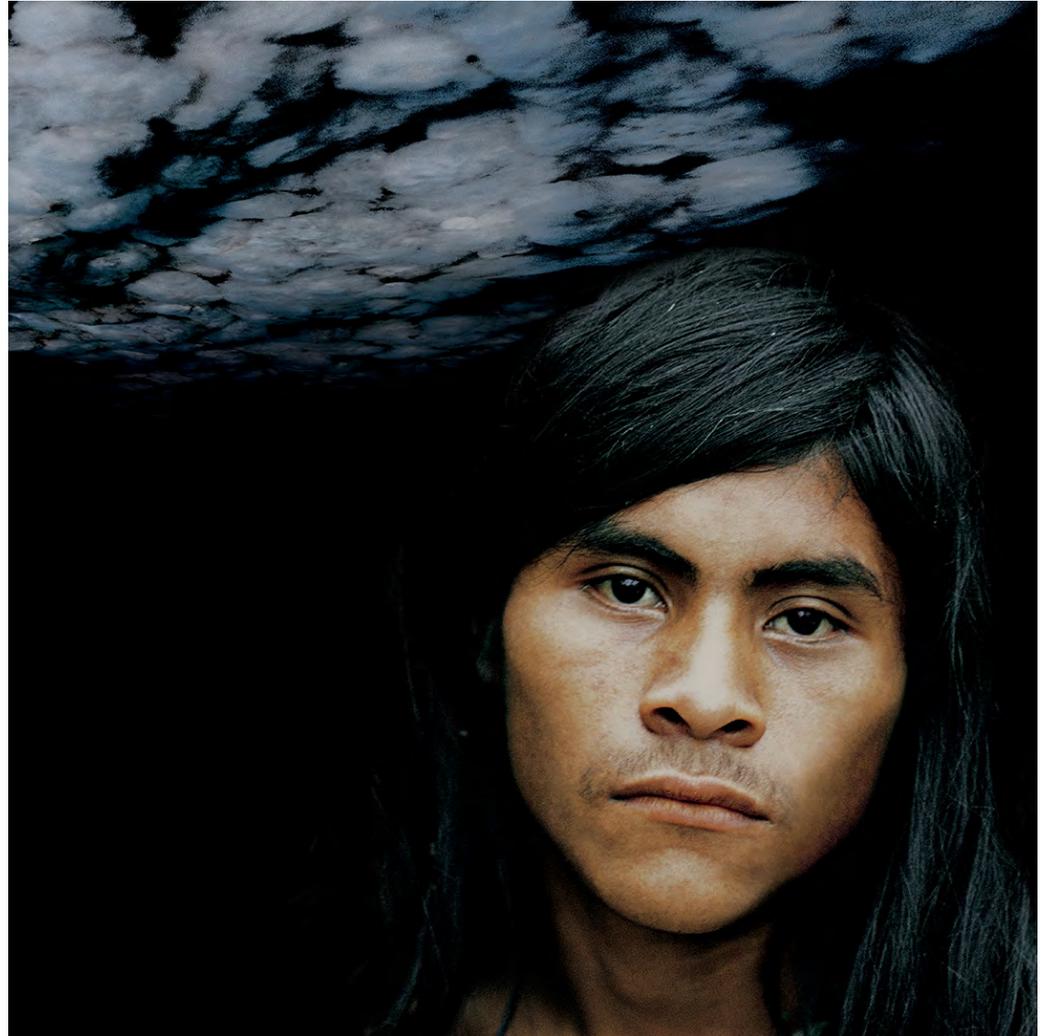
Tewimako (2003)
Owner of stones

It was Tewimako who taught the Kogui the power of divination with stones. He was the first to decipher the oracular language of gems, and he established the rules, uses and meanings connected with them. Gem stones are of particular importance in this culture, which uses them not only for divination, but also for burials or "payments" to the different gods and rulers of places.



Kualekn (2003)
Owner of cotton

For the Kogui, weaving is a metaphor for life. They produce their woven goods, from sowing and processing the cotton to spinning and weaving the cloth; the men weave the clothes for everyone and the women the bags. Cotton, therefore, is a plant of great cultural importance, and Kualekn, as its female ruler, is represented as a symbol of purity, spotlessness and innocence.



Mamaugui (2003)
Owner of cotton

Mamaugui is the ruler of cultivated plants, plants that grow according to the order and plans of humans. He is incarnated especially in the cotton plant, which he created in his dreams. Cotton is essential for this culture; weaving is synonymous with living and the loom is a representation of the universe. Men weave the clothes and women the bags.



Kalakshé (2003)
Owner of the forest

The Kogi people consider that not only the great forces of Nature have their owners –fathers and mothers- but each and every natural resource has theirs as well. It is mandatory to pay tribute to these owners, both before using the resources and once they have been used. The immense cloud forest where the Kogi live is ruled by **Kalakshé**, the owner of all vegetation that grows in the wild –as opposed to Mamaogui, the owner of cultivated plants-. He owns the mountains and the impenetrable mountain jungle, which provides the Kogi with endless vital resources.



Kalavia (2003)
Owner of wild plants

As partner of Kalakshé, Kalavia owns the plants that grow wildly on the exuberant mountain jungle.



Kualáyuma (2003)
Owner of cultivated plants

As previously stated, in the Kogui culture, all the resources and phenomena of nature have both a male and a female ruler to whom petitions and payments are made for their use. Kalavia and Kaláyuma are the women rulers of vegetation; the former is the ruler of wild plants - the forest - while the latter is the ruler of plants that grow in an orderly fashion, cultivated plants.



Hiyuxa (2003)
Owner of fishes

The Wiwa culture occupies the lowest parts of the Sierra Nevada, as far down as the Caribbean coast. Among the rulers of their resources Hiyuxa stands out as the ruler of fishes, an important resource and supplier of proteins.



Awishama (2003)
Dueña de la coca

The coca plant is sacred for many cultures, because it provides them with the necessary energy and clarity for understanding their own cultural foundations and traditional activities, but it is also the source of numerous minerals and vitamins that could not be acquired by other means. For the Wiwa culture the original owner of the coca was Awishama, a teenage girl from whose hair sprouted the sacred leaves like butterflies. It was only after the hummingbird stole the coca seeds from the goddess that it became accessible to men.

WAYUÚ

Venezuela

2005



Juyá (2017)
Father Sky

Juyá represents the masculine force, mobile and temporal. He is the father, he who fecundates, the active principle. He is the creator and associated with the cycles of fertility. He is incarnated in the sky, especially in rain. He is the counterpart of Mma, the earth, and together they form the archetypal couple, the balance, the complements space-time, fixed-mobile, below-above.



Mma (2005)
Mother Earth

The Wayúú have in their mythology several female deities, Mma being the first, since she is mother earth, the consort of Juyá, the sky, who brings the water to fecundate her. Mma represents fixity, spatial expanse, the receptive.



Pulowi (2005)
Siren of the desert

Pulowi is a goddess who represents the dark face of the feminine nature. Her presence is associated with taboo sites, forbidden places that are dangerous to the body or the soul. The Wayuu people say that she lives in the mirages, where she lures the unwary that, fascinated by her overwhelming beauty, succumb to her deadly gaze and are devoured by its abysses. Pulowi is the illusion, and those who impulsively yield to the blinding lights of an illusion are swallowed by a world so unreal that leaves no trace.



Outshi (2017)
The shaman

For the Wayuú the *piaches* (shamans) or *outshi* are the ones who preserve the ancestral knowledge for healing illnesses and solving problems, especially through the interpretation of dreams and spiritual signs they detect in the nature surrounding them.

KUNA

Panama

2005



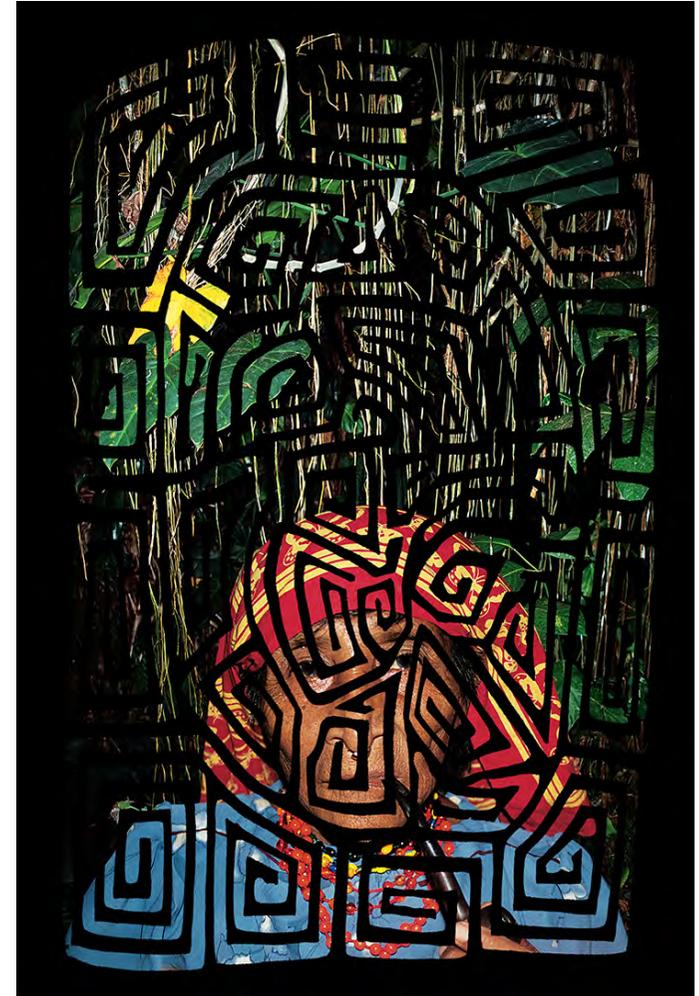
Muu Demar (2005)
The Sea Grandmother

For the Kuna Muu Demar is the grandmother, the most ancient deity, from whom everything derives.



Nele Wagibler (2005)
The wise of the birds

Nele Wagibler is the sage of the birds, the one who taught shamans the meaning of birdsong, the symbolism of flight and everything that can be interpreted from the observation and knowledge of birds.



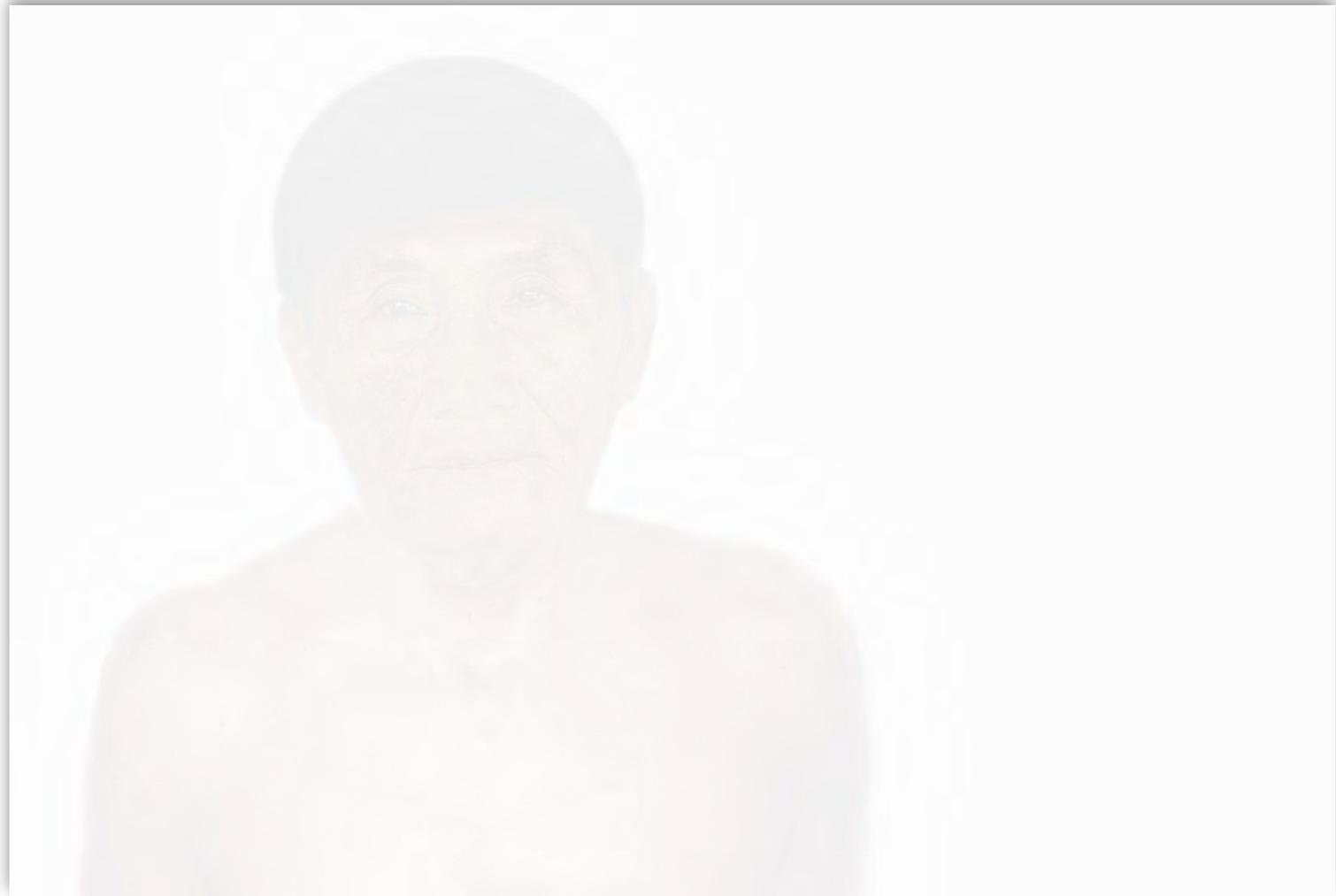
Olonagegiryai (2005)
The wise of the mola designs

For the Kuna there is a symbolic language in "*molas*", the embroidered cloth panels the women sew into their clothes. In each *mola* there is a quantity of information that can be read by the Kuna. It was Olonagegiryai who first designed the *molas* and set the norms and meanings connected with them.



Nana (2005)
God Mother

The Kuna people have a dual conception of the world. When referring to God they speak of Paba and Nana: God the Father and God the Mother. They are not two gods, but two manifestations of the same God, an idea that reunites masculine and feminine, heaven and earth, time and space, energy and matter, etc. I asked a shaman about the representation of Paba and Nana, and he replied: "Nana is incarnated in the jungle, the forest, because from there comes food, medicine, firewood, in short, everything necessary."



Paba (2005)
God Father

But he confessed that he did not know how to represent Paba. He consulted other sages and chiefs and then said: "in fact, the face of Paba is still an enigma, although we suppose that he looks like a man. For Nana we see it in everything that is the forest and its goods, but Paba is more of a spiritual force, an energy, whose existence we know because the world exists, and because all the manifestations of power come from Paba: sun, moon, thunder, fire, plants, animals, etc. And all those forces and manifestations of Him are concentrated in us. "

QUERO

Peru
2005



Pachamama (2018)
Mother Earth

She represents The Earth, but not just the soil or the geologic earth, nor only the nature; she is it all. Is a daily and immediate goddess of fertility, who acts directly, because of her presence, and with whom one permanently dialogue by asking her for livelihood, apologizing for our faults or thanking her for everything she provides to us.



Apu (2018)
The Mountain Spirit

The apus are mountains considered living since pre-incan times, to which direct influence over vital cycles of the regions they dominate is attributed. They are continuously revered and in some places they guard the inhabitants of the valleys watered by the melting of their summits. To consult the oracles, shamans must pay tribute first to the apus of the consultant.



Inti (2018)
The Sun

Inti is the strongest and most powerful divinity, because from its energy derives everything we have, and his movements across the sky determine the seasons and the fertility periods, as well as many other cycles.



Viracocha (2005)
The Creator

Viracocha is the creator god in the Quechua culture. It is said that he created both world and men from the heights of the sacred Andean mountains and that, for this reason, he is venerated as one of their main gods and his very name is a sign of respect and admiration.



Mamacocha (2005)
Mother of the waters

For the Quero people, in the Peruvian highlands, the mountains are sacred, not only because they are closer to the divine Inti –the Sun- but also because they gather the clouds and collect the snows, sources of water. The mother goddess of the waters is Mamacocha, whose kingdom descends from the Andean peaks.



Pachacamac (2005)
God of earthquakes

The Andes region is one of the youngest on the planet, and still rising. It is therefore a region of strong seismic activity, and this power of the earth is incarnated in one of the most important gods, Pachacamac, the god of earthquakes, much feared and respected in the Quechua culture.



Apacheta (2005)
Guard of the paths

The heights of the Andes form an imposing landscape crossed by the paths the Quero use to go from one village or valley to another. It is a region of extremes, subject to sudden changes in the weather, where mist, lightning, rain, snow and wind can turn a journey into a tragedy. Walkers constantly pray and make offerings to Apacheta, the guardian of paths, for him to protect them on their journey.



Apacheta II (2018)
Guard of the paths



Waira (2018)

The wind

Andean heights are an open corridor to the sky, where the most powerful forces manifest and fight against each other. Next to the thunderbolt, the fog and the earthquakes, the wind is a feared lord of the heights.



Wallatani (2018)
The mountain pass

The summits are a kind of labyrinth where the walls are the giant apus. Vision is always limited to the valley one is crossing. To go from valley to valley, one should cross the lowest points between them: the mountain passes. They are so sacred and symbolic that the traveller stops there and offers his coca quid to the apachetas. They make a pause and contemplate the world from that entrance, before diving into a new valley which will delimit his vision again.

KAYAPÓ

Brazil

2006



Tonó (2006)
Brother of the forest

At the beginning of times, during the era of innocence, two brothers dwelled at the jungle. They used resources as their were available. Everything was easy and simple, everything was by hand. They did not need anything else.



Bemotí (2006)
Brother of the forest



Bepkororotí (2006)
Owner of storms

For Amazonian cultures hunting is a sacred act, and the prey is evenly distributed among the whole community. The Kayapó mythology tells us that at the beginning of time a tapir was hunted and its flesh distributed among the community prematurely, leaving behind Bepkororotí -one of its members- that arrived a little late. Bepkororotí complained to all instances but no one paid attention and so he was left without his due portion. Then he went up a hill and invited all members of the community, offering them fruit, and they all came. Then Bepkororotí summoned a mighty storm that swept them all away. Since then, he is the owner of the storms, and it is said that when there is a storm in the sky is because some selfish men are not sharing with others.



Botoqué (2006)

Thief of the fire

In most mythologies, fire was stolen from the gods. For the Kayapó people the owner of the fire was the jaguar. He ate cooked food, warmed himself and lit up a fire at night. He was the owner of culture. Meanwhile, men lived in the total darkness, suffering cold, always eating raw, cold food. But one day the jaguar met Botoque, a lost boy, and adopted him. He and his wife raised him as their son and lived with him in the comfort of the fire. But when Botoqué grew old he felt nostalgic and wanted to return to his people. The jaguar allowed it, but made him promise never to reveal his secret: the fire. Botoque went back to his village, and everyone celebrated his return. But when he was quite drunk they made him confess his secret. The whole community urged him to take them to the house of the jaguar and steal the fire. And so they did, mocking the jaguar and conquering, in this way, knowledge. But the price to pay for this robbery, for this betrayal, was very high: the jaguar, condemned to cold and darkness, is the most feared enemy of men.



The first human was the humble Oirob, founder of humanity from the deep heart of the forest.



Mry-Kaak (2006)
Electric-eel man

Mry-kaak is an electric eel man that inhabits deep wells, protecting the spawning grounds and nursery areas for freshwater fish, making them taboo for the Kayapó people. Therefore, it is forbidden to fish in these areas, which guarantees the survival of so many fish species that happen to be the base of the Kayapó diet to a great extent.



Arará I (2006)
Macaw

The Kayapó are great lovers of beauty and the body ornamentation. Any resource or raw material is susceptible of being used in the manufacture of their jewels and beauty accessories. Settled in such exuberant scenery –the Amazon jungle- they live among the most magnificent jungle creatures, especially the birds, the macaws being its maximum expression. In fact, in August takes place the "dance of the macaws", in which the participants, dressed like these showy birds, dance throughout the night, imitating their appearance, songs and deployments.



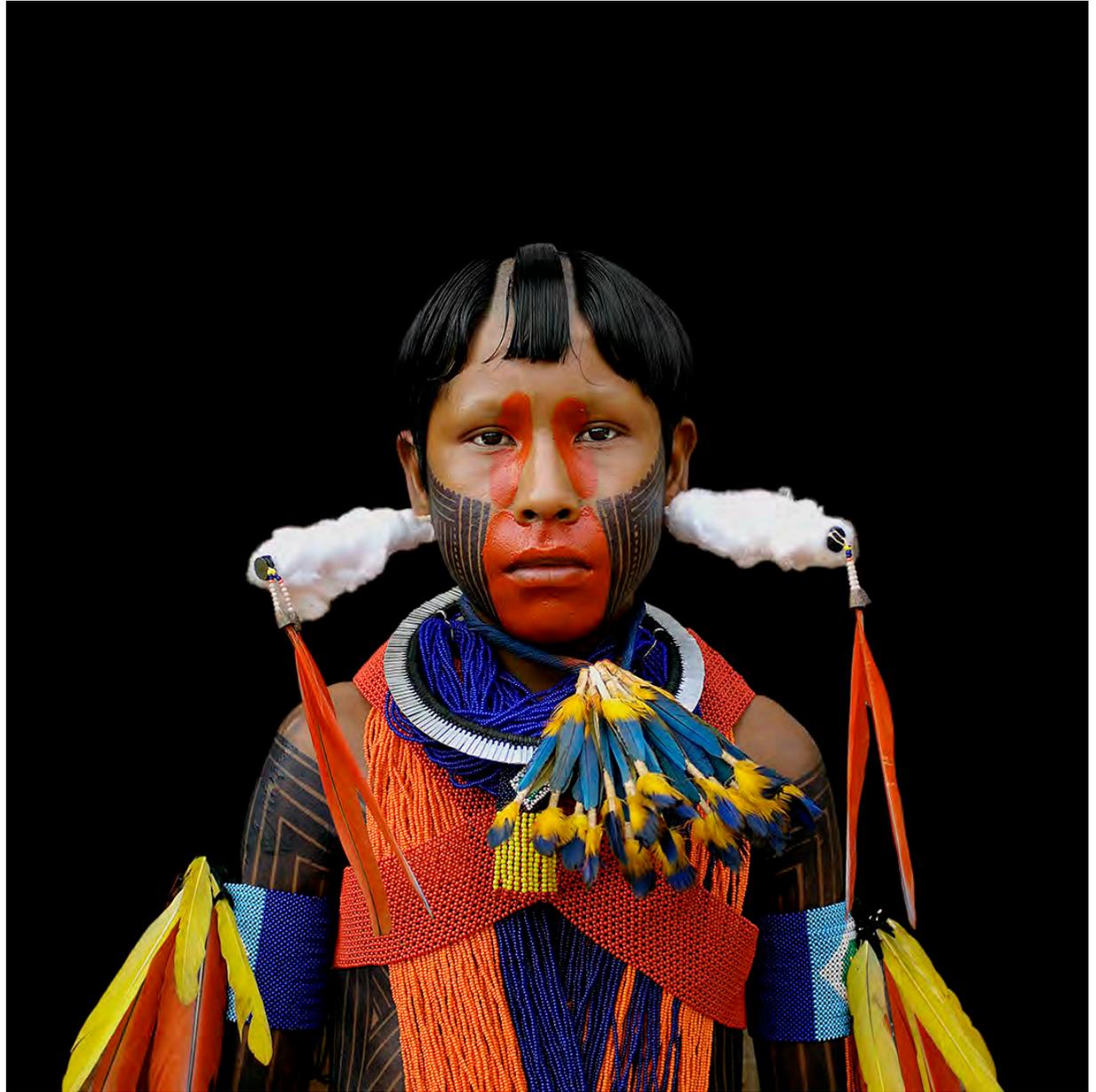
Arará II (2006)
Macaw



Arará III (2006)
Macaw



Arará IV (2006)
Macaw



Arará V (2006)
Macaw

PEMÓN

Venezuela

2001-2007



Makunaima (2002)
Shaman apprentice

The myth of Makunaima describes every step that a young apprentice must take for his shamanic initiation. Not every man can become a shaman: he must be clever, strong and resilient. One of the main tests he must endure is to be bitten in the chest by some bullet ants, also called '24-hour ants' due to the 24-hour fever produced by their painful bite. A young man born to be a powerful shaman will nevertheless withstand such bites, unscathed.



Puemüey Pachí (2002)
Daughter of the chili

For the Pemón, the consumption of *ají* (chili) is constant and essential to their lives, to the extent that they always have it planted around their houses. They have at least seven varieties of *ajíes*, all inherited from Puemuey Pachí, the Daughter of Ají, who at the beginning of time also had a human shape.



Iboribó (2002)
God of fishes

Iboribó was a very spoiled child. His father, a great fisherman, always took him the best fishes, but he was always dissatisfied. One day Iboribó was sitting in a canoe when, suddenly, a shoal of catfish surrounded the craft and kidnapped the child, taking him canoe and all to the bottom of the river. Since then, he is said to be the god of fishes, and fishermen always pray to him for a good catch.



Waranapí (2017)
Owner of thunderbolts

For the Pemón, the *waranapí* are the rulers of thunder and lightning. The story is that their hair stands on end and their faces are reddish, and they have a sudden fatal power that they exercise from the heights, from the clouds.



Rató (2004)

Spirit of turbulent waters and waterfalls

The Pemon people live in a region famous for its great abysses and its lavish rivers, that in these rugged lands give rise to enormous cataracts -in fact, Angel Falls [*Kerapakupai Meru*], the world's highest waterfall, lies in the heart of the Pemon lands-. The waterfalls and swirls they generate represent very powerful forces, often lethal. Every year there are victims of these waters, unwary people that succumb to their power, dazzled by the magnificence and beauty of waterfalls and their wells. Those turbulent waters are the refuge of Rató and, therefore, taboo.



Rató II (2017)
Spirit of turbulent waters and waterfalls



Rató III (2017)
Spirit of turbulent waters and waterfalls



Rató IV (2017)
Spirit of turbulent waters and waterfalls



Piaimá (2007)

Spirit of the forests

For the Pemon people, the *piaimá* are anthropomorphic beings of great size that always live deep in the Amazon jungle. Traditionally, their world is thought to be a parallel universe in reverse: mice and rats become their deer and tapirs, and mushrooms, their bread; their arrows are made of wax; and they climb trees with their feet up and their heads down. It is very important to consider them the first guides of the shamans and to invoke their assistance in cases of poisoning, for they are the ones who know all the secrets of the plants.



Mawarí (2007)

Spirit of mountain summits

For the Pemón people, the summits of tepuis -high table-top mountains that rise abruptly from the jungle in the Guiana highlands- are taboo sites, because they are home to the *mawarí*. These mythological beings are associated with the ravines, mountain summits and fantastic landscapes of these regions and are often guilty of the disappearance and death of the unwary that come to their territories, since they are generally enemies of men. The summits of the tepuis are often covered with haze and rain, reducing visibility to near zero, and furrowed by deep crevices, caves and cliffs, turning them into very dangerous places which the Pemón avoid at all costs in order not to disturb the *mawarí*.



Canaimö (2007)
Evils spirit of the jungle

For the Pemón, the *canaimö* are imaginary beings that live in the thick of the forest. They have exactly the same appearance as humans - it is impossible to tell them apart - but they attack humans when they go alone into the forest, which is a taboo for this culture.

YE'KUANA

Venezuela

2007



Hadewa (2017)
Father of all fishes

He is the Great Fish or Father of Fishes. The Ye'Kuana live in a region crossed by great rivers, which forms part of the Orinoco Basin. The abundance and diversity of the fish in these waters is exceptional and there are many very large species, which are an important source of protein. They say that the stars also feed on fishes, on the children of Hadewa.



Ocama (2007)

Thief of manioc seed

Ocama is a mythological hero of the highest importance, since it was his cunning that succeeded in giving humans the basis of their nourishment. Mischievous Ocama stole, hidden in a finger nail, the first seed of the cassava, the Ye'Kuana's staple food.



Kuamashi (2007)

The evening star

The Ye'kuana myth of Kuamashi tells that he was the grandson of a powerful shaman, whose mother was killed and eaten by the Yanomami, a neighbouring and historically rival indigenous group. This murder leads to a war in which the shaman succeeds in expelling the enemies, who ascended to the sky using ladders made with lianas and becoming the stars we see today. But once they were upstairs, Kuamashi was dazzled by the beauty of the heavenly spectacle and decided to climb too, so that he could live with his former enemies. But, he stays with them for a short time, for it is Venus, the evening star, which hides shortly after nightfall. This, however, is a sign of reconciliation and forgiveness of enemies.



Wanadi (2007)
The Creator

Wanadi is the god of creation, the author of all the wonders of nature. Like in Hindu mythology, Wanadi has had three avatars, as he has come three times to earth in different forms. He is always young, beautiful and solar.



Odosha (2007)

The evil one

Odosha is one of the aspects of Kahú, the master of the demons, incarnation of the negative forces of the universe and the worst of creatures. Odosha declared war between men and pursued Wanadi in order to become the owner of the land, the dark forest, the storms and daydreams; night thief of human spirits; tornado; and chief of demons and evil spirits. He always tries to follow and imitate Wanadi, but his evilness makes him a sombre creature.

PUMÉ
Venezuela
2012



Kumañi

The Great Mother

Kumañi is the great mother. She is the first deity and the creator of all things; everything emanated from her and she rules over everything. She created all traditions at the beginning of time, and before time even existed, and everything was darkness, she dreamed of a rising sun, Amariva. Kumañi lives beyond the horizon and ensures that the sun rises every morning.



Kumaleina

Mother of the flooding waters

At the beginning of time, the first men did not know Kumaleina, the creator goddess of the Pume people, and for that reason she decided to flood the earth, except for the canopy of some trees. Therefore, she is the owner of the great flood and its waters; she rules over them.



Poana
The Great Anaconda

At the beginning of time, together with the primordial mother Kumañi, Poaná and Iticiai, the Great Anaconda and the Jaguar, created themselves from "nothing". It was Poaná who molded the world and its physical features. He defined the courses of the rivers, great and small, and is the ruler of animals and the creatures of the deep.



Itciaí

The Jaguar

The jaguar, as the main predator of the continent, usually has a leading role in the mythologies of the regions where it inhabits. Such is the case of Itciaí, creator of the waters of the rivers, one of the first beings and brother of Puaná, the great serpent. Legend has it that there were only four humans after the great flood so, in order to increase their offspring's chances to survive, they decided to marry the children of Itciaí and Puaná. That is the reason why the Pume people believe to be the descendants of those two imposing animals –who at the beginning of time had a human form-, and also why they fear that if two siblings marry each other they will become snakes or jaguars, and no force will be able to turn them back into humans. This is the origin of the forbidden character of the incestuous love between brothers and sisters.



Kiberohoñi
Owner of fire

Kiberohoñi, the frog, was the original owner of fire. She had it inside her and from there, with the help of the mythological hero Hachava, it was shared out to humans.



Ianambó

The person

For the Pume people every person [*ianambó*] is made of one *ikhará* –the physical body or shell- and one or several *pumethó* –the vital essence or spirit-, since everyone has a *pumethó* for each social role, facet of their personality or traits of character they may have.



Töheoame
The singer

For the Pume there is a parallel world, a place where everything has already happened and everything is known, where the ancestors go: the world of the gods. It is possible for the Pume to make a spiritual journey to their lands. The pumethó can travel in dreams, during an illness, or guided by the ritual songs of the shamans: the Tohé, through which the sick are cured and all conflicts, problems and questions of daily life, reach a solution.



Tió Hidañi

The female singer

For the Pume, as for many other indigenous peoples, there is a parallel world. It is the world of the mythical *oté*, a place where everything has already happened and everything is known, where the ancestors go: the world of the gods. It is possible for the Pume to get in touch with the *oté* and to make a spiritual journey to their lands. The *pumethó* –the essential essence- can travel in dreams, during an illness, or guided by the ritual songs of the shamans: the *Tohé*. Through the *Tohé*, not only the sick are cured but all conflicts, problems and questions of daily life, reach a solution. Although for a long time the *Tohé* was in the hands of male singers [*Tohehoamé*], powerful female singers, the Tió Hidañi, have joined the *Tohé*.