

El Tiempo 'We were pushed into realising it is the only home we have'

By Carlos Jacanamijoy, July 4, 2020



Jaca, as he is known in the art world, is a tremendous example in visual art at national level.

Photo: Sebastián Jaramillo

Master painter Carlos Jacanamijoy reflects on his work of art - Tierra en flor - and about the need to reconnect with nature that we experienced during the pandemic.

Lockdown meant that I could enjoy a bunch of fresh flowers in my home. Some green buds started sprouting in a forgotten jar holding a dry orchid. I was amazed to see that with just a little water and love it flowered all on its own and grew nice and strong. To my surprise, this coincided with other inceptions at around the same time. I was very aware of the lockdown and I had sowed a few organic vegetable seeds in my garden and I began to see how lentil, pea and chickpea shoots, and grain were poking out from trays of soil.

I got that excited feeling you would get when you studied earth sciences in school and felt the magical enthusiasm of the world being covered with vegetation once again, like an explosion of colours and aromas.

In my work as a painter, even without being aware of it, I have been inspired by the close relationship between human beings and nature. I have also, in this sense, made a tribute to the guardians of ancestral wisdom in my culture and around the world. In the pandemic, we were pushed into realising that it is the only home we have and we have nowhere to run. We urgently need to recuperate that close and loving relationship with the Earth that is venerated by indigenous people. The time has come to make the most of that wisdom. Something is happening because we are seeing how the time has come to not only topple monuments to racism, slavery and colonial violence, but also the ones to that retrograde mentality that tells us there are superior and inferior beings. One of the advantages of lockdown is that it seems that the Earth has forced us to take a journey inside ourselves and to a place of silence so that, from there, we can observe and listen to the horrors of the external noise we had unleashed.

El Tiempo
'We were pushed into
realising it is the only
home we have'

By Carlos Jacanamijoy,
July 4, 2020.

That painting of a simple jar of flowering soil for the Mambo citation and EL TIEMPO with works about COVID-19 is a reminder that it is so volatile. We easily forget about that close relationship with nature as more of an actual practice than just a theory. Flowers were the inspiration for an innumerable number of artists, poets and spiritual people. That abandoned orchid jar reminded me of myself as a child in my grandparents' smallholding and their lessons about being careful not to step on food or medicines, simply because you don't have the right knowledge or you are not being careful, and the lessons about asking for forgiveness if we offend the Earth and germinating plants. In the middle and bottom of a starlit sky, under some orchids, I drew the jar with soil on top of a shamanic bench like a tribute to the guardians of ancestral wisdom. In this painting, like in my early paintings, I use strong colours straight from the tube and, although it may seem surprising, I do it to grab the spectator's attention and dialogue with him/her. To me, painting is an act of love and, in these times of pandemic crisis, this painting is an act of love for Colombia.

Like yet another lesson learnt from the pandemic, that fistful of land with blossoms makes me realise that, because we are intent on setting the tone with a fashionable cliché from the global discourse on the huge responsibility of addressing care for the planet with its oceans, rivers and mountains, we forget to start with the little things, with our context and the things within our grasp, even with a simple vital gesture such as putting some love into our first conscious breath of the morning.

About the artist and his work

'Nature is always dominant, absolute and ancestral in Carlos Jacanamijoy's work. His exuberant landscapes, lit up by bright colours, remind us of the artist's roots in his homeland in Putumayo and, at the same time, they fiercely reaffirm his political commitment in support of indigenous communities. We must support this commitment, particularly given recent unacceptable news,' says Eugenio Viola, lead curator at Mambo.