

## Vértigo

# Bicultural art by Carlos Jacanamijoy

By Héctor González, 2017

Carlos Jacanamijoy (Santiago, Putumayo, 1964) defines himself as a hybrid and mixed-race painter. Within the framework of the Mexico-Columbia Dual Year, the artist was in our capital city to present 'Jacanamijoy', a Cangrejo Editores book written by art critic Luis-Martín Lozano. The book takes us on a journey along the trajectory of one of his country's leading international visual artists. 'This is the sixth book written about me and it is an honour that it has been written by Luis-Martín Lozano, former director of the Museum of Art in Mexico and biographer for Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.'

Jacanamijoy has indigenous and Western blood running through his veins. He is part of the Inca community and speaks Quechua, in addition to Spanish. In an interview with Vértigo, he said 'My painting is a tribute to the carriers of ancestral wisdom; how they see the world, how they think, how they feel, their relationships with nature... Today's world urgently needs that knowledge and the lessons they left for us and which, at some point, were silenced, hated, stigmatised, hidden and made invisible.' However, his proposal goes beyond reflecting on pre-Hispanic cosmogony. He lived in New York for four years, during which time he repeatedly returned to his country to participate in ceremonies and rituals run by his father, one of the healers or spiritual guides in his village. 'I studied Western art. I use oil paints and canvas. It doesn't get much more Western than that.' He goes on to say that we have 'the myths and legends that preceded us, that go beyond our family tree. There are other very abstract thoughts in the book. They come from that past, from the landscapes where I spent time as a child or where my ancestors spent time. With this work, I am inviting people to look with enhanced perception, to notice that there is more to a flower than just its appearance, its colour; there can be a metaphor, poetry, history, politics. I try to make it possible for people to delve into the painting, that two-dimensional space, to start feeling and to invite them to live more consciously. We must not forget our relationship with the planet. We are destructive, we are dehumanised and we are travelling at full speed with consumerism,' the painter affirms.

### A bicultural artist

Carlos Jacanamijoy sees himself as a bicultural artist who is always progressing. 'One is always looking to paint 'the picture'. Critics and historians have to understand a work of art to be the bridge between the viewer and the artist. We all emerge triumphant from that trance and learn a lot.'

He began drawing aged 13 and quickly mastered the technique. 'When I got to university I was already doing landscapes, still life, figure drawing...' With his understanding of history of art, he thought about becoming a renaissance artist and bringing architecture, visual art and poetry together.

In Jacanamijoy's opinion, in art there are no learning methods or teaching. He recalls having drunk from classic periods and from isms. 'I would ask myself where, in all of that, I could find my niche. I found an opening in surrealism and in the spirituality of Kandinsky; in Chagall and Miró; Wilfredo Lam; Roberto Matta; Rufino Tamayo. Without realising it, subconsciously or intuitively, there was a huge link to the surrealists and Latin American literature. I do not feel exclusively a part of the indigenous, ancestral and magical presence. I think I contribute towards biculturalism and have a lot to say. I want to be an intermediary between the pre-Colombian past and the contemporary world.' After mastering style, he found his discourse, his content. 'When I graduated from university, I realised I did not know what to say. That was when the internal questions about where

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I was born, the land I grew up in and my life itself emerged. That was how I found out I am a bicultural person.

It is why I studied philosophy. As an artist, I try to find answers to my questions through language and I try to make that language bring us together as humans and make us more tolerant and conscious of who we are.' The shamanic tradition and contact with nature that he got from his father is a kind of tattoo within Carlos Jacanamijoy's art. His objective as an artist is to make whoever is looking at his works of art to internalise. 'When I paint a picture, I do an exercise of introspection. I would like to be the carrier of a specific vision. That is why I use colour, nature, landscapes. I am keen to generate a sensory expression in spectators.'