

8 LOUPTROMPETA DE ANGEL

ABSTRACT

My work is a result of my quest to find a sense of belonging. I am exploring my culture through the relationship I have experienced with flora and fauna. Planting seeds, touching the earth with my hands –a hope for something to land, for something to grow, seeking for roots. Intuitively: my practice, hard work, meditation, and rituals are a homage to my lineage. The research leading up to this project began as a creative engagement with embroidery practices carried by my family members in Oaxaca, Mexico. I then decided to explore the tensions and limits of the materials evoked by those traditions, through processes of creative mediation alluding to destruction/creation of matter, color, and form. Ultimately, I arrived at the final configuration of the project, materialized in a polyptych that brings together the main findings of the previous stages, without attempting to resolve them. I seek to follow a spiritual journey towards self-recognition. My connection to spirituality and how it is heavily influenced by my culture, involvements with psilocybin, and nature shape the forms of my creations. The importance of the material and its essence and cognitive function allows for an ambiguous representation of the themes within my work: the multiple entanglements between spirituality, process, materiality and culture. The material aids in carrying meaning through the innate process of how I approach the transitions of meaning and mediums within each piece.

THEEZY

(Thesus)

Jaguars, Canine, Plants, Crystals

Mystic, Mixtec

Flora, Fauna

Warrior. Worrier

Guerrero, Guerrera, Guerrerx

8 Venado Garra de Jaguar, 8 Deer Jaguar Claw

8 Loup Campana de Angel, 8 Wolf Angel Trumpet

4 Juin Ojos de Jaguar, 4 June Jaguar Eyes

Codices/Codex

Rituals/Ceremony

Spirituality

Sacred

Animism

Metaphysics

Gardens, Garden as Protection, Garden as Shield

Poder, Pouvoir, Power

Love, Loss of Love

Cosmos

Transcendence, Warp

San Diego, Oaxaca, Paris

Bad Kid, Good Kid, Spirit Kid, Plant Kid

Jardinero de día y hechicero por la noche. Así es como identifico mi filosofía de ser un artista, un esteta de flora y fauna, un espiritualista, mi filosofía de ser. Need I translate? Okay, fine: day gardener and wizard by night. This is how I identify according to my philosophy as an artist, a flora and fauna aesthete, a spiritual guru, and a philosophy of being. I learned Spanish as a toddler, quickly neglecting my mother tongue and replacing it with English (assimilation). I am a Pocho (Spanish slang term used to describe a first generation born Mexican American in the United States, like Chicano.) born to migrant parents from Oaxaca, Mexico. Unlike my parents who migrated to San Diego, California in the 80's, I attempt to build a bridge between my family's relationships to flora and fauna. I have the privilege to immerse myself in those themes in a non-heavy laborious manner or means of survival. My parents and other family members from Oaxaca were migrant agricultural workers. They suffered horrible working conditions, unfair pay, homelessness, racism, humiliation, loss of culture etc. in a country that pledges liberty and justice for all. The only thing linking our interactions with crops, plants, and other varying degrees of flora is the art and practice of cultivating the soil in ways that aid us and benefits our work, whether if it is performed by a migrant worker or an artist., it is all about modifying the environment.

As a Pocho, I cannot help but to return to the soil just like my family has for generations. It comes natural for me to grow plants and flowers and surround myself with them along with others who feel a similar appreciation for all things flora. Tending to my indoor and outdoor garden helps me draw a parallel to tending to my artwork. Germinating seeds or propagating a trimming is like the germination/propagation of a concept. The water and sunlight allow for the fruition of the gardens, just like the materials and process of my work and their important components of the production. As the flora and the artwork flourish, I begin to question

gardening, being a gardener, landscaper, exterior decorator, agricultural worker, etc. How do we define the labor of mowing a lawn or trimming bushes? How does that differ from my family's agricultural working past? How is that related to my hobbies and the ability to tend to plants as a leisure activity? How does this translate into art and how do I incorporate my culture into it? What are the characteristics of Pocho art? What does it mean to be a contemporary Oaxacan artist? How deep into my family's history do I dig into and incorporate into my work? Is the family influence passed on or not? What does contemporary Mixtec art look like? Who are my collaborators and are they necessary? How do I represent my personal spiritual practices and relationship to nature in my work? Am I an artist? The answers to all those questions are still developing, they need more water and sunlight.

O A X A C A N P A R E N T S

Aside from my family's beginnings in Southern California as migrant workers, their origins in Oaxaca, Mexico remain a mystery. Mi madre nació en un pueblo que se llama San Agustín Atenango que pertenece al Distrito de Silocayoapan, dentro de la región Mixteca. Mi padre es de un pueblo cercano que se llama San Francisco Paxtlahuaca. I choose not to translate the information of my parents' hometowns in order to emphasize what gets lost in translation and the lack of accessibility experienced when attempting to trace their cultural lineage. From what I have gathered, my mother's lineage tends to lean more towards a Mestizo(a) upbringing. Her mother's side of the family are known for their exceptional Spanish vocabulary and shepherd culture. They were translators to the Mixtec people mostly through Catholicism (assimilation) in the mountains of Oaxaca while herding sheep. Her father's side of the family speak more Mixtec than Spanish and practice Mixtec traditions to this day. My father on the other hand, both of his

parents' lineage are primarily assimilated Mixtecas. They speak enough Spanish to get by but are not fluent at all. This is where the Mestizo(a) identity comes to play. My mother does not speak Mixteco and my father speaks very little as he learned Spanish in grade school. I reach a point of similarities between what little cultural exchange was passed down to my parents and how nearly nothing was passed on to me. They both had to endure an additional phase of assimilation by living in the United States of America.

SPIRITUALITY

A challenging word, concept, belief, practice, and art form I have had to elucidate over the years. At eight years young, I was a “bad kid”, so my parents decided to send me to live with my Tía Mari in Oaxaca for three long summer months. During that time, my Tía Mari who I absolutely love and am currently collaborating with, enrolled me in a fast-paced catholic course which resulted in my first communion and confirmation. I struggled a lot. Mostly because I was not fluent in Spanish and could barely read. Also, my parents never really introduced me to Catholicism in the way that I was thrown into in Oaxaca. For some reason, I feel as Catholicism meant more to me in Oaxaca than it did in San Diego, California. Maybe it was the nature, the power of the surrounding mountains and flowing river near the church. Perhaps it was the separation of a city or an overpopulated place that made the feeling more intimate. Regardless, I was able to manifest a sense of faith in something that is nearly invisible besides the religious figures at the church and the religious literature.

Still the “bad kid” as twenty-one years ago, I lost faith in the catholic church based on certain things I witnessed and experienced in my immediate home and just throughout life. Daily

sinning and rule breaking by adults who claim to be great Catholics tainted the faith for me. Like a holy spirit that cannot be seen and only felt, I believe a spiritual essence derives from my personal relationship to spiritual practices of several indigenous cultures/communities and their relationships with worship and respect to the land and cosmos. At the age of seventeen I experimented with fungi that produce psilocybin and as a result, I immediately felt connected to the land. I felt as if I could feel the Earth rotating. Nearby plants were living instead of just standing still like they normally appear without the help of hallucinogens. What I mean by living, I mean I swore I could see the plants breathing and moving almost as if I could see the chemical process of photosynthesis happening. I also felt as if my Siberian Husky, Loup (2012-2021) could see into my soul, and I could see into hers and we became one. This experience reminded me of shamanism and how there are special rituals held in several indigenous communities that allow for a shaman to travel to the spirit realm in search of guidance and knowledge from ancestors and the cosmos via entering a state of trance. I relate mushrooms to flora and use them as imagery to depict transcendence in part of my work.

Spirituality in my work has been represented by using hummingbirds, Brugmansia leaves/flowers, vibrant colors, crystals, natural pigments, and other nature/ flora and fauna inspired imagery and textures. Hummingbirds in my work represent spirit realm travelers. I am fascinated by their ability to flap their wings up to eighty times per second while hovering. Their unique species variations and colorful markings influence my color palette. I am also very fascinated by their ability to migrate South during the cold months of the year in order to survive. I think about my migrant families that must migrate similarly in order to live a better life. The Brugmansia leaves and flowers in my work represent the beauty in flora that I am attracted to. A Brugmansia tree was given to me when I felt my spirit was at its lowest and to care for the tree

was like caring for my spirit. The more I cared for the tree, the more in tune and balanced my spirit felt. Another name for the Brugmansia is Angel's Trumpet which adds a whole celestial layer to the beloved tree. Crystals, minerals, and stones have been a part of my spiritual practice since 2013. Like most indigenous communities that believe in animism, I also believe that all things in nature have spirits. Crystals to me are vessels that have special healing properties, amplification abilities, and vibrations that emit positivity, calmness, they uplift, and energize those in need. By no means am I claiming to be completely healed or a spiritual expert, but I like to think that I am in tune with my spirit, nature, and the cosmos. Which lead me to writing a poem as an ode to all flora on Earth inspired by Mort Garson and his album Plantasia. Plantasia was created for plants and the people who love them. The music is supposed to help plants grow faster and larger. I keep thinking about this album as magic spells. My psychedelic experience and how it made me more aware of nature and plants is represented in the poem.

I CAN SEE PHOTOSYNTHESIS

Poem I wrote in Paris, France 3/29/2022

I Can See Photosynthesis

I hear you

I feel you

I see you

I see you breathing, I hear you breathing, I feel you breathing

I see you living, I hear you living, I feel you living

So still in the soil, absorbing nutrients, absorbing

light, absorbing my breath

I absorb you

Reciprocity, exchange

We can be friends

Others use you, abuse you, neglect you

I hear you

I feel you

I see you

I need you

I can see photosynthesis

You're ignored, you're forgotten,

Only to be stared at for a moment

Only to be held for a moment

Only to be heard for a moment

I hear your cry

I feel your energy

I see you live

I see you breathing

I see you taking in light

I can see photosynthesis

MIXTEC – SPANISH – ENGLISH – FRENCH

Choxini – Estrella – Star – Étoile

Andivi – Cielo, Cosmos – Sky, Cosmos, – Ciel, Cosmos

Añu – Alma/Espíritu, Sentimiento – Spirit/Soul, Sentiment/Feeling – Âme/Esprit, Sentiment

Chata'an – Unir, Conectar – Unite, Connect – Joindre, Connecter, Brancher, Relier

Chi'I – Plantar, Sembrar, Untar – To Plant, To Seed, To Propagate – Planter, Semer, Propagér

Chindee, Kanchia'vi – Saludar – Greet – Saluer

Chitasi – Embrujar – Bewitch – Ensorceler

Chunsava – Compartir – Share – Partagèr

Ichi Ninu – Por Arriba – Above – Par En Haut

I, Yi – Él – He/Him – Il/Lui

Idu – Venado – Deer – Cerf

Isu – Venadito – Fawn – Bébé Cerf

Ita Ndyi – Flor De Muerto – Flower of Death – Fleur de Morte

Ñuu – Vida – Life – Vie

Ncho'o – Colibri – Hummingbird - Colibri

Una - Ocho – Eight – Huit

Tiñu - Uña – Nail – Ongle

Kuiñi – Jaguar – Jaguar – Jaguar

Kuikonuu - Viaje, Viajar – Voyage, Voyager - Voyage, Voyager

Yutata - Espejo – Mirror – Miroir

Kaa - Campana – Bell – Cloche

Ñuu- Media Noche – Midnight - Minuit

Niñu- Noche – Night – Nuit

Ini- Adentro – Inside/Whithin – Dedans

Tixin – Abajo De – Beneath – Sous De

Ichi Ninu I Andivi – Por Arriba De El Cielo – Above The Sky – Par En Haut De Le Ciel

Ña – Ella – Her – Elle

Ñuyivi - Mundo – World - Monde

Koo Kuxi - Arco Iris – Rainbow – Arc En Ciel

Ni'in - Encontrar – To Find – Encontrer

Xani – Soñar – Dream – Rêver

Iya Nacuaa Teyusi Ñaña – Ocho Venado Garra De Jaguar –

Eight Deer Jaguar Claw – Huit Cerf Griffes De Jaguar

Ñuu Ini I Yutata Ñuyivi, – Media Noche Adentro Del Mundo De Espejos – Midnight In The

Mirror World – Minuit Dans Le Monde Des Mirroirs

IYA NACUAA TEYUSI ÑAÑA

OCHO VENADO GARRA DE JAGUAR

I have been researching Nutall, Vindobonensis, Colombine and Becker, Bodley, and Selden Codices that examine the Mixtec indigenous culture in Oaxaca and neighboring southern parts of Guerrero and Puebla. I am fascinated by the Mixtec ruler Ocho Venado Garra de Jaguar. This individual is memorialized in several Mixtec códices as a powerful warrior who ruled between 1062-1115 A.D. He is recognized throughout the códices by the tiny illustrations of a deer guide that looks more like a dog, followed by eight circles that symbolize the age of his commemoration as the great governing figure of the Mixtec ruler Eight Deer Jaguar Claw. I am

moved by the pictorial nature of the códices that narrate the important milestones and voyages that Ocho Venado Garra de Jaguar accomplished. For example, in a Columbine códice, the mighty warrior is depicted in an inauguration of warrior status by having his nose pierced and receiving his turquoise nose ring. Treasures such as jade, turquoise, jaguar skins, and other warrior regalia also assist in validating his power. Iya Nacuaa Teyusi Ñaña accomplished more than Moctezuma I, the second Aztec emperor and fifth king of Tenochtitlan. According to the Columbine Códice, unlike Moctezuma I, Eight Deer Jaguar Claw made it to the temple of the new sun which qualified him as a new successor after he completed the lighting of the new fire ritual. I like to imagine that I also inhabit a warrior's spirit and am just as powerful and mighty as the Mixtec ruler.

This inspires me to be a myth-maker. To insert myself into Mixtec folklore if you will as a god or ruler of Flora and Fauna. So far, I have only learned about gods of corn, rain, water, and fire in the Mixtec region. As I research Mixtec history according to translated códices, I feel distress, it becomes difficult to get answers to questions that arise as I investigate relationships between spirituality, flora and fauna and how they are addressed in my work and what needs to be addressed further. Is there a god or deity that is known for his work with themes I am interested in and how can I incorporate that being into my work? This reiterates the whole notion of what in my cultural lineage is present and what is not. I immediately get transported to the location where I am in the process of achieving an attribution which is Providence, Rhode Island. In this temporary location, where I will complete my Master of Fine Arts degree, Mexican culture is nearly not present. I begin to question how am I supposed to represent my cultural identity in a location where I am so far removed. I quickly relate my experience to 8 Venado Garra de

Jaguar's journey and how he had to overcome several obstacles that led to his status and control of power.

A loss of a brother, a loss of a child, a loss of a relationship... time lost. Losing

mourning

loneliness

friendships

love

envy

racism

disease

poverty

blooming

recovering

travel

love - again

//Things that I have overcome and conquered//

Guerrero/guerrera/guerrrx refers to being a warrior. Like 8 Venado Garra de Jaguar, I feel a sense of overcoming obstacles on my path of existence that make me stronger. From planting seeds in the ground to watching them grow and flourish into greatness, I draw parallels between my personal battles, those I still face, and those I will face.

PROCESS

How do we think about processes while working and in other forms of work and non-work activities? I began my art journey as a painter. I love the freedom of no restrictions besides not getting paint on nice clothing or furniture. Within my current practice, a precise technical process routine realized through printmaking has flourished within my work. Several steps of preparation upon arriving at the end result of a print vary. Important planning of matrix preparation, ink color mixing, paper taring, setting the press, etc. Not one step can be skipped. How does a free-spirited rule breaker who prefers to take shortcuts and has a bad tendency to do things last minute adopt this sort of artmaking? The “bad kid” in me grew tired of a lacking structure and practice not just with creating artwork but with life in general. As I pay attention to my spiritual practices/interests and compare what it is I want from both spirituality and artmaking, I link connections by thinking of all processes and preparations necessary to achieve a desired positive outcome, artwork that I am content with and a healthy spirit. Rituals come into mind and the second I accepted the process of printmaking as a necessary ritual, it became possible to practice the craft along with other quotidian rituals. Rituals to me are as simple as brushing my teeth every morning and night to lighting palo santo in order to clear negative energy in my workspaces or home.

Meditation acts as the main conduit for all my rituals. I consider the inking of a plexiglass plate, carving linoleum, sponging a lithography stone, pulling a squeegee, as forms of meditation; like breathing exercises, sound baths, watering my plants and propagating new ones. The repetition that occurs through printmaking opens a space of meditation. Taking the time to count the number of times a brayer runs across a matrix reminds me of counting breaths –taking time. A peaceful moment of awareness, realizing what you are doing and decide if you are doing it

correct or need to adjust –taking time. Although I have accepted the printmaking process as ritualistic, this does not mean I stick to traditional forms of printmaking nor the only medium within one piece.

MATERIALITY AND COLLABORATION

My practice involves a high usage of color. My cultural background and I, experiments with psychedelics, and my relationship with nature have influenced color harmonies that are repeated within my work. While looking at other Mesoamerican communities, I was influenced by the Nahuatl's way of incorporating natural pigments derived from flowers, rocks, soils, etc. Nahuatls represent the importance of nature to their culture and depict a spiritual presence. The Mixtec way of coloring also employs the use of natural pigments especially grana cochinilla (cochineal) which made its way throughout the world as a means of producing red dye. When making work, I typically begin by preparing a substrate, following with the first layers onto the work just like placing dirt over a freshly planted seed –everything else follows. Water, nutrients, sunrays, love, love - again. I have been working with pellow as a substrate since 2012. Pellow's fusible properties allow for me to use it in a non-interfacing manner but as the stabilizer of the work I produce. It is very inexpensive; I have carried a two-hundred-yard roll from California to Rhode Island and back three times already with plans for a fourth journey. I make it a priority to use natural pigments just like the indigenous communities I am receiving inspiration from my ancestors.

I use stones and crystals like selenite, lapis lazuli, jade, turquoise, malachite, and more to represent my spiritual practice of utilizing them as energy amplifiers and for spiritual healing. I use flowers as objects for mark-making, when creating monotypes. I ink the plate and place the flowers directly onto the inked plate, following the treated substrate and run it under the press. Experimentation with natural pigments and objects results in the creation of a spiritually charged work. I have recently incorporated the use of glass as a medium to represent my spiritual interests and relationship to nature in a three-dimensional form. I think about the intense heat needed for the glass to melt in order to be able to cast into the desired crystalline form. I relate to that process in the same way, I sense the energy within the crystals I collect. I am amused by the calcination process that occurs when I mix natural pigments with glass when casting. The use of natural pigments has directed my work towards a route of spiritual representation. How do I represent my culture with my materials? (what/which/where is my culture?)

Aside from using natural pigments, I work with synthetic ones to invoke a psychedelic effect within my work. The synthetic materials allow me to bridge the absence and inaccessibility of my cultural presence in my work. Being removed from the land and given the restrictions to create my work, have forced me into a positive state of collaboration. I have been researching how to incorporate my culture within my work. My recent excursion to Oaxaca, México in 2021 has given a new direction to my work. Fifteen years have passed since my last visit to that land. I lost contact with my family and culture. Now, I am collaborating with my aunt Maria Esther Avila, whose hand embroidery and crochet work have deeply influenced my current work. My tía Mari sends me embroidered and crocheted servilletas from Oaxaca, I respond to them with my personal imprint. The servilletas are used for keeping tortillas warm, they often get passed around when giving tortillas to neighbors, family, and friends during times of celebration,

mourning, or simply just for the act of care and sharing. I am unable to successfully embroider and crochet, therefore I have been working with machine embroidery. I am to creating imagery that is not traditionally seen on Mexican servilletas, by using color schemes and through the machine embroidery that I am working on. The transition of mediums in my work respond wonderfully to one another; creating works that result from a collaboration not only my family, but also with nature, community, friends, my pet-children, and the cosmos.

OCHO LOUP TROMPETA DE ANGEL

I am integrating myself into my culture – process of- myth making. I am contemplating methods of representing the combination of my culture and myth making into my work. I have been imitating the recognizable iconography/symbolism from the Mixtec códices where Ocho Venado Garra de Jaguar appears in. El gran personaje is depicted in códices along with an illustration of a deer, followed by eight dots and a claw that resembles a jaguar claw. The number eight represents the year that Ocho Venado Garra de Jaguar was recognized as a ruler. The deer symbolizes an animal guide which depicts the year Ocho Venado Garra de Jaguar was born. His warrior status and fierceness are represented by the jaguar claw icon. I have yet to find a Mixtec god or an important figure relating to flora and fauna.

I decided to create Ocho Loup Trompeta de Angel, making a reference to the eight-year-old “bad boy” that was introduced to spirituality. The number eight is significant for the manifestation of Loup, my Siberian husky daughter, that sadly passed away at the age of eight when I was in Oaxaca for the first time in fifteen years - returns. The tragedy of losing my daughter while conducting research remains, I still feel the pain. I am turning that pain into

positivity by connecting our bond and journeys together not only as my animal guide but as my spiritual guide. Trompeta de Angel translates to Angel's Trumpet which is another name of a Brugmansia flower. I'm playing around the notion of angels and how they function as interstitial beings that travel from the spiritual realm and earth in a similar manner to how I use hummingbirds in other works. Loup and the Brugmansia flower symbolize my relationship to flora and fauna, nature, spirituality, and cosmology; this is why I have conceived this name for the mythological Mixtec being I created.

Ocho Loup Trompeta de Angel (Olta for short) links human and celestial beings to one another and to the spiritual realm. Olta provided several other indigenous communities the ability to scry. He created crystals and other reflective materials that can be used for scrying. He rules all things flora and fauna and even sends the spiritual energy between the cosmos to vessels that allow for the reception of all great things. Olta is brother to the Mixtec god of corn, Cohuy and the god of rain, Dzahui. Olta taught Cohuy how to garden and to use Dzahui's rain to grow corn for the beings on Earth. Cohuy and Olta had a falling out when Cohuy took credit for the magic of flora fruition and its sacredness that resulted in a new ability for Olta to transform into any animal or plant. Olta attempts to resurrect extinct species of flora and fauna so he sought help from the Aztec god Xolotl who is a soul guide to the dead. Xolotl promised to help in exchange of knowledge to transform into animals. Xolotl found himself in a clash with his siblings that resulted in him transforming himself into an axolotl, the Mexican walking salamander. Before learning how to transform himself back, Xolotl was cursed by his siblings to remain an axolotl forever. Only Olta had the knowledge to retransform back into a god form from an animal but refused to help Xolotl since his end of the bargain was not met. Olta only exists in the realm of

aesthetics, with the hope that he could one day be recognized as the Mixtec god of flora and fauna who assists those in need of spiritual healing or guidance.

My personal relationship to spirituality is heavily influenced by my culture and involvements with psilocybin. Nature shapes the forms of my work. The importance of the material, its essence and cognitive function, allows for an ambiguous representation of the themes within my work.

The material carries meaning through the process and the context in which I identify my art as Oaxacan, contemporary Mixtec, and spiritual. My work is the result of collaborations with family, nature, cosmology, and communities.