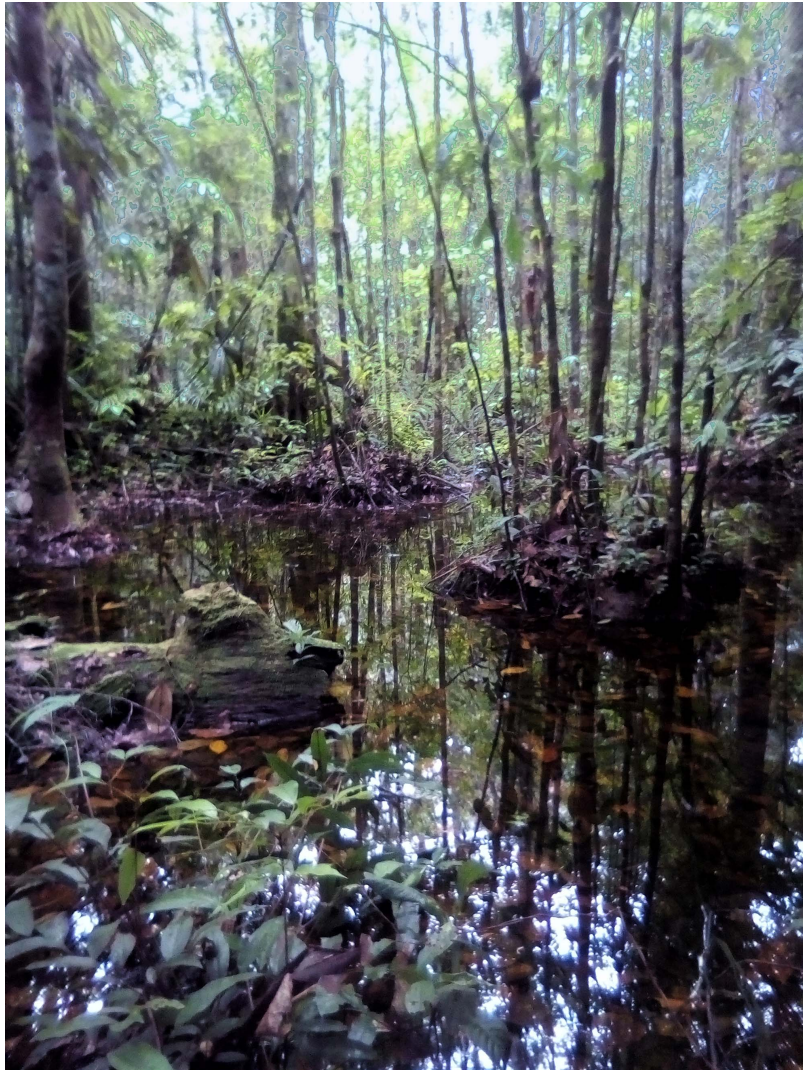


Galería Elba Benítez



SHEROANAWÉ HAKIHIWE

Thororo nasipe re u no wawe wawe

May – June 2022

"I am walking through the lagoon, this is a quiet place, full of life, where there is always water, here we come as a family to catch small fish, I stop to listen to the birds, there is much peace, no noise of people working or talking is heard. I sit down to watch a herd of chacharos¹ come to drink water, or the anaconda slip slowly into the water and disappear. The sunlight filters through the large trees of the jungle and reveals a different world: that of the insects, small larvae, caterpillars, butterflies, ants and worms that are everywhere.

"The lord of this place is *Thororo nasipe*, the giant toad that inflates his neck like a balloon while singing, we all listen to him and respect him, this toad is never eaten. And he is always happy singing in this place."

Sheroanawe Hakihiiwe

The work of Sheroanawe Hakihiwe draws on a close observation of his surroundings and a constant revision of the traditions of his people. His particular interpretation of the flora and fauna of the upper Orinoco River basin blends with cultural and personal elements, creating different layers of reading and possible ways of approaching a body of work that ranges from his daily life to the complex magical-religious, cosmogonic frameworks and cultural characteristics of the Yanomami people.

Through his work, the artist speaks from a sense of pride and, simultaneously, from the fear of losing the memory of his people, the space they inhabit and their beliefs. It becomes a tool of resistance against the devastating process of destruction of everything he knows.

In his drawings and paintings on paper there is a display of delicate lines and synthetic forms, with repetition of a single symbol generally covering most of the surface. This compositional strategy that Sheroanawe has developed — that of filling the space or surface with symbols — finds a referent in the way the Yanomami use paint on their natural support surfaces: baskets and bodies. However, his work has its own character, strangely distant from and yet at the same time still close to the group to which he belongs. Rarely does his palette exceed two or three colors, employed carefully in an elegant and very simple way.

This great living archive, which is still in-progress, aims to preserve a memory through pulsating concerns that are artistic, aesthetic and rational; the drawings and paintings are conceived as a bond of understanding and closeness between us, the Nape (foreigners), and the Yanomami.

Luis Romero, ABRA Caracas gallery
Madrid, 2022

Sheroanawe Hakihiwe (Sheroana, Venezuela, 1971) — a self-taught artist from the indigenous Yanomami community of the Amazonian region that lies between Venezuela and Brazil — creates works on paper that combine the techniques of drawing, painting and printmaking with more performative actions derived from ceremonial body painting rituals. Fabricating his own paper from local plants in the Upper Orinoco River basin and using fat-based inks and natural pigments, the artist develops repetitive patterns of abstracted forms that reference the natural environment, the daily life and the symbolic cosmogonies of the Yanomami. For Hakihiwe, these drawings, in addition to their presence as autonomous art works, are a way to preserve the endangered visual, natural and symbolic culture of his people.

Hakihiwe has had solo exhibitions at the Lissabon Kunsthalle (Lisbon, 2021); the Museo del Diseño y la Estampa Carlos Cruz-Diez (Caracas, 2016); the Museo de Bellas Artes (Caracas, 2004) and elsewhere. He has been included in group exhibitions at the Fondation Cartier (Paris, 2022); the Denver Art Museum (2021); Pivô (São Paulo, 2021); the Kunsthalle Wien (Vienna, 2021); Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Andaluz (Sevilla, 2021); Para Site & Soho House (Hong Kong, 2020); Matadero Madrid (2019); CentroCentro (Madrid, 2019); the Centre Rhénan d'art contemporain – CRAC (Alsace, 2019); the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Bogotá, 2018); the Center for Book and Paper Arts (Chicago, 2010) and elsewhere.

Hakihiwe is currently featured in the main section of the 59th Venice Biennial in the exhibition *The Milk of Dreams*, curated Cecilia Alemani. In addition, the artist has participated in numerous biennials and international group exhibitions, such as the Kathmandu Triennale (Nepal, 2022); the 23rd Sydney Biennial (Australia, 2022); the 11th Berlin Biennale (Germany, 2020); the Shanghai Biennial (China, 2018); the Bienal de Arte de Curitiba (Brazil, 2013) and the Bienal Internacional de Artes Indígenas Contemporáneas (Mexico, 2012; awarded First Prize).

Thororo nasipe re u no wawe wawe [The lagoon where the toads sing] is the first solo exhibition by Sheroanawe Hakihiwe at Galería Elba Benítez.

Organized in collaboration with 