



Abel Rodriguez (Mogaje Guihu)
is an elder from the Nonuya ethnic group from the Cahuinarí river in the Colombian Amazon

The Indigenous Colombian Elder Paints Ancestral Knowledge From Memory

<http://balticplus.uk/abel-rodriguez-e785/>

Rodriguez has an extensive ancestral knowledge of the indigenous plants of the region, passed to him by his uncle and shared with western botanists whom he guided through the jungle for Tropenbos, an NGO concerned with tropical rainforests. Now in his 70s, he has resettled on the outskirts of Bogotá having been displaced by the FARC guerrilla occupation and the exploitation of natural resources in the rainforest.

His drawings have been made from memory since he moved from the region over twenty years ago and he now conveys his knowledge of the flora and fauna of the Nonuya region in detailed images that depict the intricately intertwined ecosystem of the rainforest as it shifts through the seasons. Abel Rodriguez's work has gained international recognition since its presentation at Documenta 14 in 2017.



Abel Rodríguez, El árbol de la vida y la abundancia, 2019. Courtesy the artist and Instituto de Visión

Abel Rodríguez
Terraza Alta VI

22 x 40 cm
Acrylic on paper



Abel Rodríguez, Terraza Alta VI, 2019. Courtesy the artist and Instituto de Visión



Abel Rodríguez, Tierra Firme III, 2019. Courtesy the artist and Instituto de Visión

Mogjequihu
All Rodriguez

20/05/2018



Territorio de la Sabana



Abel Rodríguez, Terraza Alta II, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Instituto de Visión



Abel Rodríguez, Terraza Alta V, 2018. Courtesy the artist and Instituto de Visión

Mogaje Guihu who took the Western name Abel Rodríguez in the 1990s, grew up in the Muinane community who live near the headwaters of the Cahuinarí River in the Colombian Amazon. His uncle, a *sabedor* (man of knowledge) taught him the knowledge of plants and he became known as *el nombrador de plantas* (the namer of plants).

Rodríguez's precise, botanical illustrations are drawn from memory of knowledge acquired by oral transmission. His knowledge grasps a large inventory of plants that grow in the Colombian Amazon and their relations within the ecosystem, but also their uses for food, healing and other needs. Traditionally, he would have used his knowledge every day as a *sabedor* within his community. Drawing and sharing his knowledge with non-indigenous people became his livelihood in the foreign context of Bogotá.

Since 2008, Rodríguez's works started to be acknowledged for their artistic value. Rodríguez does not consider himself to be making contemporary art as defined by the West:

We don't really have that concept, but the closest one I can think of is iimitya, which in Muinane means 'word of power'—all paths lead to the same knowledge, which is the beginning of all paths.