

Is a Maloca Art?

For the Uitotos, one of the ancient cultures of the Amazon, life and art are not two separate entities. Moreover life and myth and production of food, control of the environment, knowledge of education and of marital relations are not separate cubicles as in our culture. The Uitotos are a Holistic people. For them everything is interconnected and everything is one. Like the poetic affirmation that describes the effect of the flapping of the wings of a butterfly here will result in a tornado in the South Seas. Everything is ritualized and has a reason for being. The way of sitting, chanting, weaving, planting ..... living. The Uitotos are organized in communal unities, of extended families. They live in Malocas. New Malocas are offshoots of older ones. The head of the household is called Cacique; usually a man but not necessarily so.

The Maloca houses everyday living, cooking, festivities, etc.. During the day it is the central co-ordinating point of all activities, and at night a form or ritualized "psychoanalytical-group session occurs" called the mambeadero. People then ingest the sacred plants that are the gateway to knowledge. They are the tobacco, as in all American indigenous peoples, in the form of a paste resulting from mixing the tobacco paste and vegetable salt. It is called Ambill (you all tasted it,) and the ground coca leaves. The Ambill is the feminine element and Coca the masculine. Usually the Mambeadero is held by men, but any woman or youngster can assist and pose her questions, difficulties or sickness, to be healed there. The women that are around and can interject. It is there where the cultural life is generated from the integral formation of the members of the community, to the control of the environment, to the organization of any social activity and the living again of the ritual-mythical life.

Their Spiritual life is based in what they call the "sweet word". Transforming creatively all evil, ( fear, envy, resentment, jealousy, which are the cause of all infirmity) into to positive word and action. It is the central headquarters where through a refined art of communication all is planned, healed and all future actions are evaluated. The root of all thought is the creation of harmonious relationships in the community and the environment. The Uitotos believe profoundly that there is a natural sequence between thought, words and action. It is an art of life and action, articulated through language. Its a form of poetry that develops into action. Every thought should be followed by the right way of presenting it to the world, and then to action.

The sacredness of life is all-pervasive and transcendent. So the Mambeadero with its form of communication is the most inclusive form, the most excitingly real form of art. It is the canvass where the art of living is depicted through the actors who are the members of the community. It is a constant impetus towards the renovation and collective thrive for betterment in which the material to be modeled is the individual; his mind is a collective creation. The emphasis in creating a clear state of mind is the precondition of all action which is not attached to the result but to the purity of intent. In this context, the mind reaches an elevated state of plenitfulness that is the ideal state of mind for artistic creativity, where the mind is generating positively and it is the individual who is the work of art. With this inspired mind, the work of creating ritual objects (most objects are ritual

and have several layers of meaning), exert control of the territory and plant their crops. Life is a constant reinterpretation of ancestral views. Time, as for the creative artist is present time.

Regarding the creation of objects in this cultural context, all objects are made in a context of mind that makes them as carriers of power and spiritual meaning. The Maloca, baskets, etc. The object in itself is irrelevant, it is the ritual load that it carries as method of the formation of being, therefore the creation of objects are an educational method that perpetuates the culture. Since the culture is holistic, the objects are a reflection of the state of growth of the artist (member of the community), therefore if the work is defective it reflects the state of mind of the artist. It is an inseparable relationship between the individual and its work of art, a bond of a spiritual nature. Material objects imitate the alliance between self and the principles that rule the territory, the ancestral order and such are containers of meaning as well as vehicles of transmission of meaning. All object are perishable and all members are able to constantly recreate and renew them. A new basket, Maloca, or ritual object can be created anew. Everything has a function and is totally interwoven with cultural and spiritual processes which are manifested in every day life. For example: the feather crowns symbolize the: "thought process that communicates" ( it is worn in ritual activities by the Cacique). In the Maloca's construction in every one of the carvings, paintings, beams and structure, there are several layers of meaning that are revealed as the child growth and more of the encyclopedic knowledge of the culture becomes evident. The artist that made weavings, paintings and carvings in its construction can be recognized as well as the particular system of thought associated to each Maloca. ( The Uitotos have four different lines of thought- or levels, also associated to different dances. Each dance is the compendium of a particular level of thought, and the dances obviously are performed in the Malocas). Dances are forms of knowledge that bring collective healing, harmony and thankfulness for all abundance and all gift of life and nature.

If you ask yourselves why are we supporting the Uitotos the answer is that they are expert navigators into the unknown. There is a profound knowledge in them about living and caring for that earth-boat (Whaka) in which we all are. The "puente"(people like us who can translate one culture into another are the necessary buffer to covey the ancestral knowledge into the world. Finally the view of the elders of the Amazon is that humanity has to feminize its nature since we already know the results of a masculine world view. We need to bring into our daily lives and into the consciousness of our leaders the nurturing life bringing qualities of the 'mother'.

Please forward to other people with awakening natures...

More to come...

Hana Bibliowicz, Taller Es-Cultura, Yuak,

Bogota, Colombia

