

Christian Salablanca

A quien llama la semilla

By CLAUDIA FONTES

A drizzle of seeds floats in a fertilized atmosphere, a placenta made of air. They leave their pods at the top of their lungs in a big-bang and let themselves fall. The fall is slow, the air embraces them before allowing them to pass through. The explosion of seeds and the air they move as they fall create a melodic commotion that the birds listen to attentively, to eventually translate it into song. If we were able to access the canvas, we might decipher the underlying dialog in the chorus of root-heads, bird tail-hands and hand-wings. However, no explanation is needed for us to realize that we are in the presence of a concert in a drawn magnetic field. What it shows is not an illustration, but a translation of inductive learning. The *Puricos* can be seen as reminders of the teachings Christian received from his grandfather, a cholo gentleman from Jilgueral in Costa Rica's Puriscal district, while he was learning how to plant and harvest beans, achote and corn, to heal the feet of his elders using succulent prickly pear leaves, and to find bird-branch and ear-sprout hybrids in his imagination. These are instruction-musical scores that now, in turn, float in W, so that we might learn to touch and to hear, more than seeing; so that we might train our imaginations to listen to the interspecies polyphonies that are always available to anyone who is willing to appreciate them. It is to enable us to understand not only who the seed calls, but to what purpose.

Not far from these, the *Esculturas para sonido* [Sculptures for Sound] invite us to enact the drawings. Flutes and carved rattles made of wood and chonta palm are hybrids between musical instruments and sculpture, simultaneously fictional birds and aerophones. The memory of vegetal sap and of bird saliva and of human breath circulates through them, becoming a sound landscape when they enter into dialog. Their voices come to agreement in a third sound, a sonorous fabric that inundates the exhibition space, emphasizing the potential that is latent in the presence of these instruments, and in ours, the presence of visitors.

Finally, a screen tells us the whole story. *Un pájaro le canta a otro y el otro le canta a él y a sí mismo también* [One Bird Sings to Another and the Other Sings to Him and Also to Himself] is a tale of mutations, an unstoppable flow in which the material nature of life and its power to transform circulate.

It is a story that is brought to life not only by the technique that makes it possible, but above all, by ancestors' anima, the souls of birds and plants and also ours, by contemplating it.

Christian shares an extinction-bound world of sound with us, where the sounds of human survival activities join in alliance with the non-human voices that surround them. Together, they create a concert in memory of the labor and the days that plants, humans, seeds, and no less than the earth itself all shared. Days and work of reciprocal benefit, of intimacy and respect for the life cycle of others, which is never alien, it is always one's own, and as such it is cared for. In spite of the colonial structure that is designed to control everything, this land's legacy from the Huetar people filters into the everyday practices of caretaking and healing that have been handed down to Christian by way of grandparents' memory. This is a personal journey and at the same time a political one, in its aspiration to remedy colonial offenses and to restore ways of being in the world that are under threat. It is an 'intercovery', as Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite would say: an art practice that, as opposed to 'discovery', entails a personal voyage into one's ancestral legacy in order to rescue a collective identity. It's clear that the collective identity Christian encounters in his voyage is more-than-human: the seed calls us, its call is urgent, and it says that it wants to look after us.



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