

wildpalms

KIMA

KAREN PAULINA BISWELL
& MARIA AMILBIA SIAGAMA SIAGAMA

2022

NAMA BU
VOL. I

KIMA
VOL. II

KIMA

A project by and exhibition with
Karen Paulina Biswell
& Maria Amilbia Siagama Siagama

Curated and exhibited by Alexandra Meffert
& Jorge Sanguino

May 13th - June 19th 2022
for  **düsseldorf photo⁺** 2022

supported by



wildpalms

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ORIGINS

NAMA BU

WE EXIST

LOOKING BACK AT VOL. I

Since 2010, Karen Paulina Biswell (COL/FR) has been developing her work with the women of a Embera Chami community from Risaralda, Colombia.

"I have been working on an artistic project called Nama Bu, from a hotel suite in the old city center of Bogota, which brought me to explore notions of voyeurism, vulnerability and the temptations of exoticism. Having been raised between Paris and Colombia, I have always been in transit from one world to the other, my identity always being questioned and reality being fought out between European urban existence and the idea of a lost paradise. I explore this schism and the logic of sense through the dramatic questions of who, where and why. Finally, there was the subject of art itself, the object transcending time through photography. It is a personal journey by way of projection and fabulation, transcending meaning, not interested in revealing per se, but in exploring what is hidden."

- Karen Paulina Biswell



NAMA BU, in native Embera means, We Exist. This series was initiated in 2010 with an Embera Family who fleeing from violence were displaced to Bogotá. The series goes beyond the documentary. Photography was a means to establish a respectful relation with the family. The portraits are direct, honest as to show the beauty and sadness of the Embera. In 2016, as the Embera came back to their territory, the landscape photography honors the vibrant colombian landscape.



Kima. 2014. Series Nama Bu. Karen Paulina Biswell.

KIMA

UNITY/LOVE

Kima (Embera: Unity/Love) is a project of photography, drawing and video installation between Karen Paulina Biswell, one of the most reknown young artist from Colombia, and Maria Amilbia Siagama Siagama, the eldest woman of a family of the indigenous Embera community in the Colombian Andes. Since 2010, Karen has been working with this family, retrieving their territory and giving the community a voice through their own artistic practice of drawings celebrating nature's offerings and representing the Embera healing myths.



Jepa/La Boa Mitica. 2014-2022. Karen Paulina Biswell



This exhibition tells a story created on the richness of the Embera rituals to invite us to revisit our contemporary narratives in regard to nature, otherness & femininity.



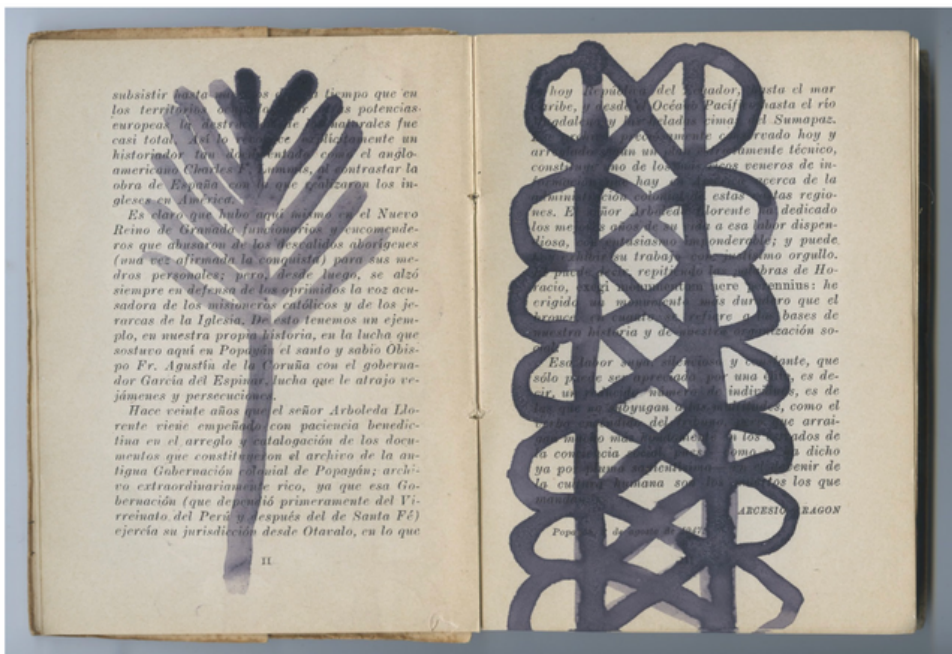
IGUAKA



Iguaka. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.

For the Embera Chami community of the Colombian Andes conversations are rituals. They have particularly elevated this practice into an art form, especially during healing ceremonies (the benacua). These rituals, which connect human thought to the pluralism of nature, revolve around the chanting of the Jaibaná (shaman, man of knowledge) and the ingestion of a drink made from the flower of *Brugmansia Insignis*, also known as *Datura Arborea*; "iguaka" in Embera. The Jaibaná constitutes in this sense a sacred interlocution, the beating heart of a collective body through which the most pressing issues of the community are collectively discussed: the return of paramilitary militias, forced displacement, ecological problems, but also issues of family and intimate life. The ingestion of the iguaka opens up a space of thought and vision that enriches dreams and allows one to see better, as the Emberas say. The Jaibaná locates what has been lost, through its encounter with new spirits, plants and animals. Here, the flower of *Brugmansia Insignis* is neither a product, nor an object, but a being, Iguaka, true otherness with which the Jaibaná dialogues.





drawing rituals. Rewriting history. 2022.
Maria Amilbia Siagama Siagama.



Brugmansia Insignis is considered one of the most powerful sources of energy in the traditional medicine of the native peoples of South America. The Emberas cultivate it as a remedy and to prepare for the coming of Jaibana. But it is also a plant of resistance. It is reported for example that at the time of the Spanish conquest, the brugmansia trees were a protective force against the colonists who, drinking corn beer mixed with its leaves, ended up victims of delirium and irreversible brain damage. Today, in the patios of Embera houses, there is still sometimes an iguaka tree, despite the intense campaign by Christian missionaries to cut them down.

The Brugmansia Insignis is now a plant that both in native cultures and in contemporary urban imaginations is respected and feared. Respected as a remedy or as a shamanic vehicle for vision expansion; feared, for its toxicological effects and its use for criminal purposes. Its most popular name in Colombia is "borrachero" which can be translated as drunkenness, or as the one who allows drunkenness-in the image of that entity with which the Jaibana dialogues. In our urban environment, drunkenness means losing consciousness and memory, while in the Embera cultural context it means looking, seeing and healing. A healing that occurs through a state of amnesia that leads to revelation.



San Juan
Reserve
in Risaralda,
Colombia
2021.
Video still.







Untitled. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.





Jaibana's Flowers. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.



"To experience the sacred flight that the brugmansias offer us, allows us to live to experience the oblivion of being rooted in any identity, to feel ourselves become a bird and to enjoy the wonderful virtues of mystery. The woman will give birth to the seeds of the tree, which, like Mother Earth, will give healing virtues to this child. Healing is its mystery. A gift from Mother Earth, delivered by the Eagle, Messenger of the Worlds."
- Kajuyali Tsamani. Colombian Shaman / Ethnologist



Jaibana's Flowers. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.





Jaibana's Flowers. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.





drawing by Maria Amilbia Siagama Siagama.
2021. Jagua on paper.





drawing by Maria Amilbia Siagama Siagama.
2021. Jagua on paper.





Untitled. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.



untitled. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.





"I am large, I contain multitudes"
- Walt Whitman



2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.





drawing by Maria Amilbia Siagama Siagama.
2021. Jagua on paper.





drawing by Maria Amilbia Siagama Siagama.
2021. Jagua on paper.





Signos in Rotacion. 2022. Karen Paulina Biswell.



All photographs by Karen Paulina Biswell are analog
photographies and C-Type hand printed by Diamantino
Laboratory in Paris.

Karen emphasizes the technical aspect of photography as well as
the "craft" of the photographer, who works not only as a producer
of images, but also as a technician of images in collaboration with
specialists.

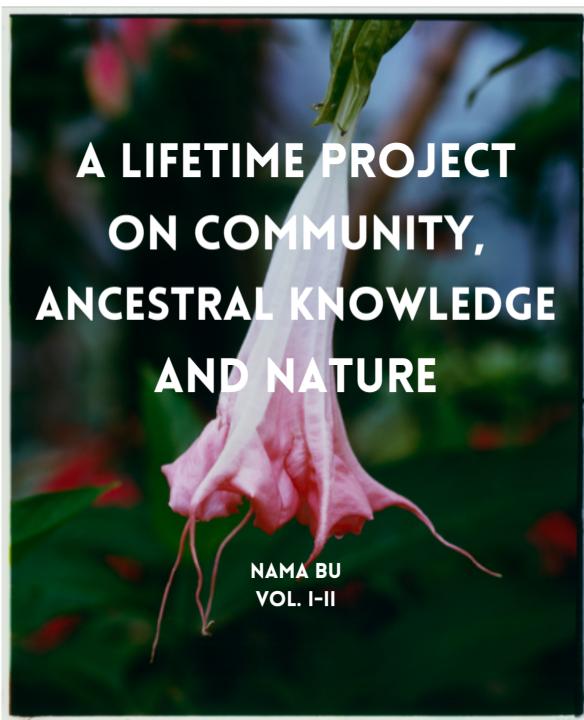
Working analog, she also honores and responds to the conditions
of the communities and environments where she works.

Text: Karen Paulina Biswell, Alexandra Meffert & Jorge Sanguino
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**A LIFETIME PROJECT
ON COMMUNITY,
ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE
AND NATURE**

**NAMA BU
VOL. I-II**