

## **Life, passion and adventures of Ernesto Apomayta Chambi**

### **Collection: Hugho Kutipa**

Engineer, Writer and Aymara Philosopher

### **Indigenous painter, globetrotter, polyglot, passionate man**

Ernesto Apomayta Chambi is a full-time painter, he discovered his vocation early and since then with the stubbornness that characterizes artists of his race, and overcoming the adversities of fate, since he was born in the Juruhuanani community, in the District of Acora, in the Peruvian Andes, has dedicated himself with exclusive passion to being a painter. No obstacle could dissuade him from practicing painting, not poverty, not the thousand and one difficulties that crossed his path.

The law of divine causality and, furthermore, his ardent dedication and fervor for painting opened the rough path towards his artistic consecration. After opening his art center-atelier in Utah, United States, he cannot forget seeing the Pachamama in dreams, which he manages to transmute in his painting into images of fishermen who, aboard their fragile totora rafts, cross the fresh waters of Lake Titicaca; His paintings are also populated by country people, eternalized doing their daily work in the fields, dedicated to growing potatoes, grazing their sheep and alpacas or taking care of their cows.

Because, despite having traveled tirelessly across four continents, he has not been able to forget those routes, but endearing beginnings in Puno, the cradle of the Inca civilization from whose hills the founders of the Inca Empire appeared, according to popular imagery. In that wild province a group of rebellious artists arose that at the beginning of the last century met in the Orkopata group. In Puno, in addition, the photographer Martín Chambi, an indigenous relative who managed to portray the human and telluric landscape with incredible delicacy, and Carlos Oquendo de Amat, a poet of exquisite sensibility and adventurous spirit who died of tuberculosis while the Spanish Civil War broke out with all its homicidal rumble.

Ernesto Apomayta was born in the midst of this rich tradition, which is why his career combines rebelliousness against destiny, fine sensibility, almost infinite patience, as well as his essential roots in pre-Columbian culture. There is not in his artistic philosophy, however, a closed and provincial vision; On the contrary, in his works he has sought to feed on the essential traditions: pre-Hispanic art, the ancient Chinese, the Mayan and Aztec culture, lately, the North American Indians.

He has known how to assimilate all these influences throughout his hectic career of 35 years dedicated to painting and traveling through landscapes of Asia, Europe and America. Now, based in the city of Bountiful, Utah, where he has managed to build a home for his works that is a center of universal art, for all those possessed by artistic passion, he remembers his first pictorial exhibition in his hometown that he already left in 1974.

"Whenever I immerse myself in painting, my memories come back to life and I can't stop, because nostalgia is imprinted in my works" - says Ernesto, while going through his memories: he sees himself, with essential sharpness, preparing his own materials with burnt pine soot inks and natural colors that he extracted from alum, cochineal, airampo, among others, which he stirred with spring water to create replicas of the real and dreamlike universe.

He also remembers, with appeased nostalgia, the harsh conditions in which he was involved after the death of his father Gaspar Apomayta, whom he hardly remembers because he died when he was very young. What left fire marks in his life and work was the extreme poverty that he had to face with his mother and his older sister, wandering from one place to another to barely survive by selling art and craft objects.

Little Ernesto must have sensed from a very early age that education could get him out of poverty, which is why he fondly remembers his years as a student in schools between 1962 and 1968 in the peasant communities of Juruahuanani and Ccaritamaya in Acora, and in the period from 1969 to 1973 his time at the Glorioso Colegio Nacional de San Carlos in Puno. At the age of nineteen, he entered the Regional School of Artistic training in Puno, and continued his preparation in Cusco and finished at the Escuela Regional de Bellas Artes Carlos Baca Flor in Arequipa.

The first few years of graduation were difficult, discouraging, and arduous. In Peru, there is almost no place for artists, everyone has to earn it by hand, by dint of an almost insane stubbornness, willing to sacrifice and lead a double life exercising a survival trade, while in the free hours practice the authentic vocation. Ernesto Apomayta worked those early years as an art education teacher at the "Juana Cervantes de Bolognesi" a secondary school in Arequipa, an educational center full of deficiencies, like any other ones in the Peruvian highlands, where he spent five years.

But, patience pays off. Ernesto did not despair, and armed with his brushes and his rustic materials, he continued to paint relentlessly, until a series of scholarships took him out of that fateful gear that has buried so many artists in Peru. Before crossing the fence towards Italy in 1983, and China in 1984, he worked until he was 28 years old as an art promoter in the Community Educational Núcleo Educativo Comunal N° 9 de Chorrillos and in the Supervision of Education No. 6 of San Juan de Miraflores in Lima.

The painter also remembers the overwhelming impact he felt when he visited the Art Museum in Lima in 1980. It was a true revelation to contemplate for the first time the collection of paintings in that museum, two things were clear from that first visit: it was worth dedicating a lifetime to art and that only through it a man could survive in time.

These two convictions would never abandon him, they would guide his whole life and drive him to rebel against the limitations of his environment and undertake long journeys to pursue specialization, master's and doctorate studies in fine arts. The multiple studies he has followed in various parts of the world have not made him lose sight of the fact that art consists, above all, in revealing sincere emotions and ideas capable of shaking, moving and inspiring viewers. He is not, however, a naive painter, because he values the importance of the techniques used. The scope of his search is not, therefore, the closed preserve of his workshop; from the open book of nature, he extracts the pictorial motifs of his work.

His searches know no spatial or temporal limits. The universe is the scene of his artistic and existential inquiry. Various influences converge in his pictorial work, which he has been experimenting over the years, until he reached a worldview that integrates the concern for ecology with the philosophies of the West and Asia.

Nor has he stopped in time, although his imagination continues to be loyal to the epic years of Puno and his native landscapes, he does not rule out the inspiration that comes from modern

technology. He not only frequently visits museums and cultural centers to appreciate and understand the works of the great masters - many of these visits are a kind of pilgrimage, as he examines the works in a trance state for several hours, he also finds inspiration in reading, movies, and television. In all these cases, what he is looking for is elusive, they are not specific images, but rather something more ubiquitous: concepts, ideas, sensations that catapult him into the creative process.

His works, in fact, are born from a dizzying sensation, from the powerful effect caused by something indefinable, from a previous emotion that precedes his work with the brushes. Once this first test has been transposed, the artist must embark on the adventure of creation like a battle, without fear, willing to make any sacrifice, to immolate himself in the act of creation. Nothing is further from the conception of art as a profession and a mere trade, for Ernesto Apomayta, art is the ultimate goal, the reason for his existence. Art is not, therefore, just a matter of method and discipline, you have to go out and look for inspiration, which does not come easily, often turns out to be elusive and suspicious.

His many trips are aimed at finding that inspiration. In Utah, he usually goes out, accompanied by his family, to a kind of retreat in the mountains, to expose himself to very strong stimuli such as long walks on the shores of the Salt Lake, to contemplate the sparkling waters and the romantic sunsets adorned with dazzling rainbows. In the midst of that desolate and melancholic atmosphere, the painter has discovered that he can rediscover that primordial tremor, those subconscious impulses emerge, the confused nebula sprouts, after a patient and arduous gestation, will find its true profile in the artistic work.

Patience is a word that, in effect, can define your working method. The artist uses a very thin and fine brush to draw and paint layer by layer using colors of different shades, which usually spends a longer time in the execution of the artistic idea or concept. All this stoic work culminates in a burst of true joy, an indescribable satisfaction when the work is finished. The desire for immortality assails him in those moments, because he would like to continue painting until the end of time.

The death that worries Ernesto the most is not physical, what worries him the most is the death of the creative spirit, and he knows that monotony and routine kill originality. For this reason, although his life is completely dedicated to painting, he flees from repetition and pigeonholing. Throughout his career he has drastically changed his style and theme, without losing the unmistakable seal of his unique style. His works are populated by characters from diverse origins, such as deities, mythical beings, animals, plants, birds, fish and natural landscapes.

Creativity lies - according to Apomayta's artistic philosophy - in finding a different angle of observation, to do what others could not achieve. Creativity is achieved not only through the development of perceptive acuity, but in his case meditation and systematic study of the Bible have helped him build his own personal universe. From the beginning of his vocation, reading about the development of art in the East and West, he discovered that more than talent, creativity is a conquest of determination and work, often of almost superhuman dimensions.

His whole life, in fact, is dedicated to art. In moments of creation, in leisure, in rest, his mind wanders and pursues new concepts and artistic ideas. He gets up every day at five in the morning and works almost non-stop until ten at night. He only makes a brief rest to eat. When it comes to large-format works, as in the case of murals, his work is even more intense, because with the patience of a hand embroiderer, he spends 3 to 5 months painting them.

Oddly enough, this patience was not acquired in China, a country he fondly remembers. Patience is consubstantial to his Aymara race and he gave proof of it in the country of the rising sun, when without pressure or haste, he dedicated himself for many years to making sketches of landscapes and figures, ancient temples, every object that hurt his retinas and the fugitive shadows of sunsets, which he recorded as if it were a writer's diary.

After returning to Peru, he threw himself into the task of converting those notes into large-format gouache and aquatint for several months. The result was a series of realistic works, of great beauty and impregnated with Eastern mysticism. The idea of applying the oriental technique to the composition of native landscapes was suggested to him by his mother, a 65 years old woman, who used to sit next to him watching him paint. Thus, we can see in his paintings, the Andean landscapes, Peruvian peasants bathed in an oriental light and seen with ancient oriental wisdom, because the key to his own style consists of assimilation, miscegenation, the combination of cultural elements.

Ernesto Apomayta, who at the age of 51 has accumulated more than a thousand paintings and some engravings and sculptures, is increasingly convinced that his destiny is to paint and his mission is to unite the different cultures to promote peace and civilization. It is not an easy task, he carries this self-imposed responsibility full of humor and an avid spirit that leads him to investigate the techniques and use of materials such as gold, silk, rice fiber paper, canvas, wood and metal. These inquiries have been poured into the books "History of Chinese Painting", "Methods and Organized Materials Oriented for the Generation of the 21st Century". He currently collaborates with articles that he published in magazines and web pages on the evolution of Eastern art, the relationship between Western and Eastern paintings, as well as on his personal experiences in the study of universal art.

The last adventure he plans is to paint a mural of Machu Picchu next to the Great Wall of China because he currently resides and works in China as a guest foreign expert. Ernesto Apomayta does not rest, he only knows the fleeting rest that he feels when he finishes a work of art.

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It is for me, a real and concrete example of current times, we do not have to try to imitate, we have to be original and do the best of what we know how to do, our personal touch should not be forgotten even if for others, it is mere ridicule. I have recovered my gaze and vision after two years, which had been wandering in the darkness and night of my life, now I have recovered from the frost that overwhelmed my dreamy thoughts full of life and greatness. I am sure and very sure that I will achieve goals like never before by only considering strategies never imagined before, based on the simple creativity that we all possess. Will you join me? In my adventurous and dreamy spirit, full of service and contribution to the culture of my race. Do not despair patience, a lot of patience, everything will come with hard work.

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