

PARAÍSO – LÍNEA NEGRA

PARADISE – BLACK LINE

MIXED MEDIA & GUNPOWDER ON CANVAS / 2016



In March 2003, a group of Arhuacos Indians toured the base of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, symbolically limiting the border of their ancestral territory. This route was called by the Arhuacos mamos The Black Line.

It's February 2016, I call my friend the photographer and war chronicler Stephen Ferry to give me clues about the places in Colombia with the greatest presence of armed groups, I tell him about my project on the Colombian landscape related to violence. Stephen quotes me for lunch and his latest book published in 2012 appears in a copy of *Violence*, in which he tells us that Los Mamos Arhuacos for a week walked the Black Line through dangerous areas under paramilitary control. "During the next decade his strategy managed to reduce violence and strengthen indigenous control of the territory."* I contemplate the moving images of that chronicle, while its author explains that this propitiatory action sought to restore the natural balance that had been altered by the presence of armed groups resorting to their ancestral rites. I cannot stop

thinking about the epic and resistance dimension of this action apart from how close it is to the idea of a total work of art. This propitiatory rite became political action but especially in poetic action.

From this revelation I set out to develop this project in which I try to revisit the action of the Arhuacos, taking their foundational intentions to the field of art; touring and documenting various places in Colombia where there was and there is presence of armed groups. Following his imprint to update the poetic sense of "The Black Line" in the context of the peace process these days; In a search for images that enhance and give new senses to that primary gesture: "Walking to heal the territory" I relate it to the situationism where Derivè leads to a revelation or a psychogeographic discovery.

March arrives, I leave for the Goal to start from the geographical center of Colombia in Puerto López, from there I continue - by prescription - to Far-offs on whose slopes you can still see the scars of war, I go in search of the valley that Wade Davis He describes in El Río as the most beautiful valley he had seen in Colombia. It is the Piemonte that crosses the Guejar River. Huge rock formations give rise to natural backwaters of crystal clear water. I think: this will soon be filled with tourists.

It's already April. Yona, a girl displaced by violence whose uncles were killed by paramilitary groups tells me: "My town, south of Bolívar, would be a paradise if it weren't for war; almost no one from outside has been able to see these landscapes "I ask Yona to take me to her village to see, tour and photograph her paradise. Yona thinks ahead of me and asks permission from the head of the cliffed guerrilla in his town. When I arrive I realize the collusion between the guerrillas, the paramilitaries and the army, who have conveniently distributed control of the area to collect what some call taxes and the other vaccines.

In May my friend Pedro Franco, who has traveled the world with his camera and his irony, shows me the forests of Chocó and the Sierra Nevada. I encourage you to look at this project, not only that you accept but generously open the doors of your house. In the following months, Yona, Pedro and I secluded ourselves in "La Cicuta" to lash out the snapshots of our front road with fire.

The images of this project come from large-scale photographs of the path through the procedure of replacing the pixels with gunpowder grains that, when burned, are pulled over the surface. The contradiction between the bucolic and

paradisiacal appearance of the landscapes and the fire with which they have been expressed evokes the paradoxes that arise when analyzing issues around the landscape and ecosystems in relation to violence. Paradoxically, the presence of armed groups preserved certain ecological niches in Colombia from progress. Valleys and primary forests in the same natural state of a century ago. This landscape that is being altered in recent times rather by the presence of formal and informal mining and that an eventual peace process will change forever.

Tomás Ochoa

*Stephen Ferry, *Violentology*, Editorial Icon, 2012