

Bayrol Jiménez  
February 18 – March 18, 2022  
Opening Friday, February 18, 11–7PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *News from the Netherworld*, Bayrol Jiménez' first solo exhibition at the gallery.

*News from the Netherworld*  
(Work by Bayrol Jiménez concerning the last dwelling of the two great emperors of ancient Mexico)

The chronicles of the feats, life, and cosmogony of the ancient Mexicans have demonstrated, before and after the Spanish conquest, a continuous relationship and coexistence between history and myth, reality and its transformation into oneiric ambiguity. In the most famous chronicles of pre-hispanic Mexico, the true stories inhabit an eternal limbo leaning towards the side of the myths of battles, pilgrimages and heroes. The gods not only reign over mortals but also present themselves suffering with them and transforming human lives within a nebulous setting of dream mythology, historic events and interpretations.

Contemporary historians study the ancient codex as well as chroniclers of the Indies. Through varying and numerous sources or stories emanating from ancient Mexico and the Spanish colony, the study of friar Diego Durán, friar Bernardino de Sahagún, Hernando Alvarado Tezozomoc or the Jesuit Juan de Tovar (amongst others), aims to put together a coherent version of a past whose natural vacillation is also a charm for the imagination and is in need of urgent research. The Toltec culture has not only been the most important and influential in central Mexico, yet it is also the direct precedent to the myths, knowledge, architecture and foundation of the ancient Tenochtitlan, today known as Mexico City. Ancient Tollan, the city of the Toltecs, was the seed that subsequently made way for the powerful Aztec empire, whose remaining traces, culture and character is still part of the fabric of contemporary Mexico.

One of its tragic heroes, was the last king of the Toltecs *Huemac*, a lover of wide hips, who was overwhelmed by the decadence of his town and, because of his own misdoings, went into exile. He took refuge in the cave of Cincalco, a sort of lacustrine of Olympus, a place of purgatory, where one suffers due to certain acts one has committed in life. Cincalco, found in Chapultepec, is where Huemac committed suicide to begin his reign in the netherworld: a lugubrous and pitiful exile, according to fray Diego Durán and other historians of the Amerindians. The Toltec decline, which took place in Huemac's conflictive monarchy, was to give rise in the future to a Mexican splendor, to the lineage of Aztecs that would begin with their first king, Acamapichtli and culminate with the brave warrior Cuauhtémoc, who fought the last battles against the Spanish.

Many centuries after the exile of Huemac, the powerful and polemic *tlatoni* or Aztec king, Moctezuma Xocoyotzin, desperate and humiliated by the Spanish warriors, tormented by his visions and dreams of defeat, and looked down upon by his own people, went in search of Huemac in the cave of Chapultepec where the Toltec was to reside for eternity. The disgrace and eroded power of Moctezuma Xocoyotzin could only be calmed by being alongside the glorious Toltec emperor, within the refuge of the mythic world that governed over the mortal vicissitudes.

The story just told, has served Mexican artist, Bayrol Jiménez, to imagine and create the large-scale oil paintings in *News from the Netherworld*. This exhibition tells the story of this cruel and fantastic myth and at the same time, encourages the viewer to relive the pre-hispanic tragedy from the perspective of a painter who is attentive to the chronicles of the conquest and of the Mexican netherworld. Jiménez' paintings are a recreation of the myth and of the wretched encounter between the Spanish conquistadors and the Mexican theocracy, but above all, they transmit in iconic and gestural form, the current and daily epopee of desperation, betrayal and death. The expressionism is dense, colorful and also maniacal; he does not describe the facts, but rather carries them to the limit of aesthetic interpretation in which the lines of the artist live a sort of martyrdom. They also create an elegy, a transcendental comic, popular and even festive. The characters that appear in his oil paintings are beings and symbols that appear in ancient Mexican history; however, each work possesses an aura of spectacle and exile of land, of funeral festivity traditions and supernatural pain. The symbols are stripped of their canonical meanings. The creation of these phantasmagoric paintings tell us that, in this series, Bayrol Jiménez has developed his own codex, a collection of works that come from mythological tales and from the pictorial imagination of the artist.

On the one side we have the indigenous myth; the natural coexistence between the dead and the living, between gods, emperors and priests, heartless visions of the future, premonitions of catastrophes, conquests and spilt blood. On the other, we do not exactly have the color of that reality, nor see the actual consequences and derangements of those cruel acts that Jiménez' intuition imagines, paints and constructs. Bayrol Jiménez not only references historic myth, but he carries it into his work as if the ceremonial fate affected by its fatal destiny could be represented as his own aesthetic temper and from the incarnation of his personal visions.

The theme of this presentation is the story of Emperor Moctezuma II, unsure of whether to march alongside Huemac, the ancient Toltec king, and inhabit the netherworld, or flee and allow death to occur like any other mortal. *News from the Netherworld* expands beyond these illustrated chronicles. The malicious and meticulous warp of each of the elements in his work (bones, skulls, faces, eagles, flesh, figures), the uninhibited and cynical color, his imagination that appears out of control, yet formed with patience and wisdom (the oil painting *Seiscientas artes de nigromancia* is a good example of this) gives us a certainty of the presence of this unique artist. Illustrated in these canvases, is an unease and suffering, a physical and moral exile. The dark prophecies that destroyed the great Aztec Emperor Moctezuma II, whose courtesy and benevolence was extended to strangers and conquistadors, did not free him from the disgrace and discredit before his subjects nor before his ungrateful guests. The works that form this series resemble the horror that arises from the unconscious and knowledge of human passion, from the history of conquest to the present social and everyday mythology of Mexicans.

The work of Bayrol Jiménez, makes explicit his relationship with artists such as Francis Bacon, Leon Golub, Roberto Matta or Jörg Immendorff, as well as a certain affinity with the grotesque dramas of Goya or with the deranged imagery of El Bosco.

Even as the visual and affective strands in his paintings multiply, the root of Jiménez' practice remains: born from his original worldview, of the color that is form and symbol, and of his knowledge of human temperament which he translates into a visual explosion. Mexican current affairs develop from its history, reincarnated from Moctezuma Xocoyotzin's guilty unease and the anxiety to reunite with the exiled Huemac. The Toltec culture and society has offered today's Mexicans their being and wisdom.

by Guillermo Fadanelli

Bayrol Jiménez (b. 1984 in Oaxaca, MX) lives and works in Oaxaca. He studied at the National School of Painting, Sculpture and Engraving, La Esmeralda, Mexico City, Mexico and at the Villa Arson National Superior School of Art in Nice, France. Recent solo exhibitions include Páramo, Guadalajara, 14a, Hamburg, Metro Northshields, Newcastle and Dukan Gallery, Leipzig. He has also participated in group exhibitions at the Foundry Darling, Montreal, Museo de Arte Carrillo, Mexico City, SeMA Nanji, Seoul and National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

For further information and sales inquiries, please contact Javier Peres (jp@peresprojects.com), Benoît Wolfrom (ben@peresprojects.com), or call at +49 (0) 30 275 950770.

For artist information please contact Nick Koenigsnecht (nick@peresprojects.com).

For press and media inquiries, please contact media@peresprojects.com or +49 (0) 30 275 950770.

Please note that attendance will be subject to all local COVID-19 related requirements at that time. We will publish updated info prior to the event.