





Lovely Daze is a curatorial journal of artists' writings and artworks published biannually in limited editions. For this special edition: Of Ease & Euphoria, we are pleased to present a collection of photographs dedicated to the cultural vibrancy and diversity of the Caribbean region of Colombia by native photographer Joaquin Sarmiento. This six-year photographic journey (2004~2010) takes us through some of the rarely visited areas of the country ranging from the remote deserts of La Guajira to the lush landscape near Cartagena.

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printed in my beloved formosa



During the past two years, after finishing my studies in the United States and Brazil and moving back to Colombia, the main focus of my independent work has been photographing the Caribbean region in Colombia. I have always traveled throughout the region while growing up in Colombia and found interest in its unique culture. In 2006, I was assigned to photograph the *Champeta* musicians who are street artists that live in the marginal neighborhoods of Cartagena. Two years later, the Museum of the Caribbean from the region invited me to photograph portraits and landscapes of this area for various exhibitions. Since the opportunity, I continued to document festivals and stories assigned by news magazines and for personal projects. I took special interest in developing a body of work around *The Coast* (as we call this region in Colombia) for the diversity of the people and the environment, their struggles and the way they retaliate. On a personal level, my grandmother is originally from Barranquilla, the largest city of the region, and even though I was raised in Bogotá, I have become curious to see what I have in common with the *costeños* (people from *The Coast*).

~ Joaquin Sarmiento

The Wayuu, a matriarchal society, is the most populous indigenous group in Colombia. They inhabit the peninsula of La Guajira, a desert in the northern tip of South America and across the borders of Colombia and Venezuela. Wayuus hold both citizenships and migrate between the two countries. However, their living situation is difficult due to abandonment by both governments and extreme climate of the desert. Their daily needs rely on raising donkeys and goats for transportation and food. Women are often in charge of majority of tasks in the villages including walking for miles to fetch water for an entire household.













Death is central to Wayuu beliefs. There are several stages in their funerals. During the first funeral, a few days after the person dies, the Wayuus pray, cry to the corpse, and drink *chirinchí* (homemade liquor made out of sugar cane). During the second funeral, often a few years later, relatives and friends remove remaining bones from the dead, leave them covered in a hammock, and cry to the corpse once again. Then they begin a grand celebration, preparing a big feast while drinking lots of *chirinchí*. The second funeral is seen as the final going away celebration where spirits take a final journey to a better world.





La Guajira desert is a designated indigenous reservation with a coastline surrounded by the Caribbean sea. The remoteness of its geographic location makes the region an ideal base for drug trafficking and smuggling. On the other hand, the Wayuu territories are rich in natural resources as salt, coal and gas. Though today, these resources have been extracted by multinational companies, the Wayuu people remain with limited access to their basic needs such as drinking water, electricity and gas.





The Caribbean region of Colombia is the most touristic area in the country and has survived the violence from the 80's and 90's. It is currently in recovery from the aftermath of the conflicts. People from this region live from fishing, agriculture and tourism, amongst others. The population is a mix of European, Arabian, African descendants and indigenous people. The diversity in culture, survival from a decade of violence, and warm climate result in a vibrant community of laid-back people.

The men of this region fish at different times during the day depending on the technique and the area. The culture of the fishermen in this region is very unique. They live life on a day-to-day basis, they do not fish thinking of the upcoming season. They collect enough to survive for the day.



As temperature raises in the mornings, people gather under the shadow of a tree to let the heat pass by. During midday, when the heat of the desert becomes unbearable, people retreat to reading, lying in hammocks, or to catching up with the latest gossips.





During the late afternoon, the men of the community assemble to play table games such as poker, dominos and billiard as they wait for late night parties to begin.

The *costeños* (coastal people) are very creative and extroverted. Here school girls are playing with balloons as they walk home from school.













During the prime season of tropical fruits, the fruits that are not sold are often left in the middle of the streets.









Corralejas is a type of bullfight that originates from Spain. It is different from the traditional bullfight in many ways; there are almost no protocols, it is not elitist, it provides entertainment for the mob, and anyone from the audience can fight or tease the bull. *Corralejas* take place in three of the eight states of the Caribbean region.

People in the upper bleacher pay cheap tickets and enjoy the *Corralejas* while listening to *Porros* (regional music based on air instruments like trumpets and trombones) and people below the bleachers enter for free.



The diversity of culture from this region is reflected by the various types of music produced here. *Vallenato*, *Porro*, *Cumbia*, and *Champeta* are just a few rhythms that one can hear all over this area. Local festivals take place all year round, but the main event where all expressions converge is the Carnival of Barranquilla.









Artist's Biography

Being born and raised in Colombia during the 80's and 90's, I got used to watching and hearing news about bombings, kidnappings, and drug dealers. In 2001, once I graduated in mechanical engineering from the United States I came back to Colombia to work as an engineer. During this period, my co-workers were kidnapped by guerrillas and we were extorted by paramilitary groups. The engineering job became increasingly unsatisfying, while living and understanding the reality of the country took over as a priority. Finally, at the end of 2004, I decided to end the career as an engineer and took the risk of pursuing my passion in photojournalism. During this time, I went to Brazil to enroll in a photography program and started my career as an independent photographer. In the past five years (three in Brazil and two in Colombia), I worked as a documentary photographer/photojournalist, organized workshops, taught photography to youngsters and curated exhibitions with photographs produced by my students. Currently, I am assembling and publishing a book of my work.

~ for more work by joaquin: www.joaquinsarmiento.com



