



MOCHILA PROJECT BELIVE 2009

Ten to fifteen well-known designers will be given the opportunity to artistically intervene the WAYUU “SUSU” mochila. These items will then be displayed and auctioned off at the Fundraising happening, Belive 2009 in Miami November.

Background:

A *mochila* is a hand woven bag (usually) made by women of the various indigenous tribes across Colombia. The different styles of bags are representative of the diverse regions of the country, and the mosaic of indigenous tribes that reside in Colombia. In modern usage, they are used as handbags, but traditionally they served as more of a ‘daypack’ for travel, often being worn with two bags, one hanging over each shoulder, to carry items across long distance.

The Way are known as the people of the desert, of sun and wind, is the largest ethnic group in Colombia, an indigenous community that inhabits the La Guajira peninsula, on the Caribbean coast, between Colombia and Venezuela. Weaving is an intricate part of the Wayuu women’s lives. It is a medium to express their creativity, and wisdom. When Wayuu women reach puberty they are taught the sacred art of weaving and are given the right to continue their ancestral art. Their pieces are characterized by the representation of beautiful shapes that symbolize elements of nature (animals, plants, paths etc. or abstract shapes). The traditional designs include flowers and geometric symbols using very strong colors. The more complex the shape, the piece becomes more valuable. The Wayuu mochila is called *SUSU* that means “that which walks with one”.

Wale'Keru, The spinning spider: Wayuu myth about the origins of weaving

The Wayuu believe that weaving is an art they learnt from Wale'Keru. The legend says that Wale'Keru lost her mother when she was very young and unfortunately she was left in her father's sisters' care, who only treated her well when he was around. Like all Wayuu men, her father spent a lot of time outside home, and when young she was the object of mistreatment: during the day she worked at domestic tasks and at night she was forced to sleep in the ashes in the kitchen. One day, when he woke up, Wale'Keru's father found a beautiful woven cloth beside his hammock. Wanting to give thanks, he asked who had made it and his sisters told him it had been them. After this, Wale'Keru's father would find a new woven cloth every morning. One night, wondering what his daughter did at night, he walked to the place where the girl would retire to at the end of each day, and he was deeply surprised to find that the mysterious and skilful weaver was his small daughter. A little before dawn, Wale'Keru's father, who had hidden from his daughter, pained because of the lack of attention he had been giving her, decided to talk to her and ask for forgiveness, with the bad luck that, when seen, Wale'Keru turned into a spider and ran away from home forever

Our Project:

We will approach various fashion personalities and invite them to imprint their creative vision to the traditional Wayuu "Susu" mochila. Selected Wayuu artisans will be commissioned to weave this vision using their ancestral art, thus creating a one-of-a kind item of fashion and art. These "mochilas" that have for centuries expressed the dreams of the Wayuu women will become the palettes for renowned designers to interweave and marry an ancestral tradition with their modern artistic creativity. The mochilas will be exhibited during Belive 2009 and auctioned to the highest bidder.

