

Peruvian Phantom Forms:  
The Paintings of Jorge Castilla-Bambaren  
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Pedro de Cieza de Leon, a scribe-conquistador who arrived in 1500 among the devastated Incas in Peru, wrote back to Charles V in Spain that Pizarro's armies of Christ "their idols destroyed, and in their place raised the Cross, to affright and terrify the Devil, our adversary." When Jorge and I were planning his exhibition (2000), he told me only half-joking his paintings represent the "re-conquest" of Peru by the demon spirits of the Incas. Jorge's body of work stands in deliberate stark contrast to the Christian, effete, sentimental, and mannerist European painterly traditions brought to Cuzco and Lima by the Spanish. Jorge's work, instead, summons up the pre-Columbian cults of the dead, the mysterious birds, foxes, monkeys, and birds of the Nazca plateau, and the fierce shape-shifting demons, jaguars, and owls of Incan pottery.

Embedded in Jorge's very name, *Bambaren*, is another archetypal reservoir of demonic inspiration. In present day Peru, there exist little studied village clusters established by escaped African slaves dating back to the late 17th century. Somewhere in Jorge's lineage is a *Bambara* tribesman from Mali, West Africa, a witch doctor who has let loose in Jorge's imagination masked figures who dance easily among the hallucinations of his Coca-leaf chewing shamanic Incan ancestors.